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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2004

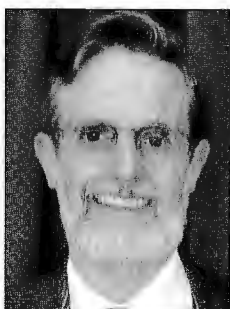
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Our apologies for a wrong e-mail number for Stan Thompson in *RT 195*

The correct e-mail is StanatRT@aol.com



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Richard Bennett hails from the Republic of Ireland. Trained by Jesuits in his early years, Richard received eight years of theological instruction and preparation for the priesthood with the Dominicans, completing his education at the Angelicum University in Rome in 1964. He spent twenty-one years as a Roman Catholic priest in Trinidad, West Indies, twenty years of which he served as parish priest. He had, therefore, the best of academic training in things Catholic. After a serious accident in 1972, in which he nearly lost his life, he began to study seriously the Bible. After fourteen years of contrasting Catholicism to Biblical truth, he was

convicted by the Gospel message.

In 1986, he saw that justification is not being inwardly just as Rome taught, but being accepted in Christ. He was then saved by God's grace alone, and formally left the Roman Catholic Church and its priesthood. He has founded an evangelistic ministry to Catholics called "Berean Beacon."

WebPage: www.bereanbeacon.org

Front cover *The venue for the conference in Rovno, Ukraine, described in the News section.*

Editorial

We are greatly encouraged with two wonderful articles by Robert Letham, the first on the trinity and creation which appears in this issue, and the second which follows in RT 198 on the trinity in the 21st century which responds in detail to Islam and Postmodernism

An 'earthquake' in Anglicanism

It is not possible or wise to ignore the upheaval that has taken place within the Anglican Communion which represents many millions round the world.

The cause of the 'earthquake' was ordination in the Episcopal Church of the USA (ECUSA) of Bishop Gene Robinson. Despite the dissent within the American Episcopal Church, ignoring the pleas of the Archbishop of Canterbury and facing down the fierce opposition from evangelicals across the Anglican Communion, Gene Robinson was consecrated as Bishop of New Hampshire on Lord's Day 2nd November.

In the presence of an audience of four thousand people and attended upon by at least fifty bishops of ECUSA led by presiding Bishop Griswold, a momentous point was reached in the history of the Christian Church. 'Receive the Holy Scriptures,' Bishop Griswold told Robinson, 'And feed

the flock of Christ committed to your charge; guard and defend them in His truth and be a faithful steward of His holy Word and sacraments.' As Gene Robinson rose after the ceremony of the laying on of hands, his homosexual lover gave him a bright gold mitre, and so the first openly sodomite bishop was formally consecrated into the Church of Christ. His divorced wife and two daughters joined in the applause. However not all the audience acquiesced, and strong objections were given from the floor, whilst outside scores of Bible-believing Christians staged a noisy protest.

Summing up the triumph of the liberals Bishop Barbara Harris, who herself was a controversial appointee to the bench of bishops, said, 'This is a power struggle as to who runs the Church, the white boys or some different kind of people.' The Rev Richard Kirker, General Secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, said, 'We believe that the spirit of honesty and openness is the way forward for God's people.' Another reaction came from the liberal Church of the Province of South Africa, which said, 'New Hampshire's historic decision to consecrate an openly gay bishop is a welcome follow-up from the prophetic decision to ordain women into the priesthood,' thus echoing the

chant of the homosexuals, 'It is our turn next,' as they heard the news outside Church House in 1993 that General Synod had voted in favour of the ordination of women as presbyters. However, in stark contrast to the joy of the liberals, Reform issued a statement which said, 'The Anglican Communion must now formalise a separatism which has already occurred.'

Typical of protest abroad is this statement from the Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria:

'We totally reject and renounce this obnoxious attitude and behaviour ... It is devilish and satanic. It comes directly from the pit of hell. It is an idea sponsored by Satan himself and being executed by his followers and adherents who have infiltrated the Church ... A clear choice has been made for a Church that exists primarily in allegiance to the unbiblical departures and waywardness of our generation; a Church that enthrones the will of man over and above the authority of God and His revealed and written Word. We cannot go on limping between two opinions.'

Rev Richard Bewes, Rector, All Souls Church, Langham Place, London responded as follows:

'His consecration has occurred in defiance of God's teaching in the Bible and very, very clear defiance of this and we simply can't recognise him as having fulfilled the criteria that are laid down in the Bible for a bishop.'

The Most Revd Dr Peter Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney said, 'We declare ourselves to be in a state of impaired communion.'

Joint statement of Reform, Church Society and Fellowship of Word and Spirit:

'The service ... was held in defiance of the statement and appeal against such an action, issued unanimously on October 14th, 2003, by world Anglican primates at Lambeth. For the presiding Bishop in America - himself a signatory to that statement - then personally to have overseen the ceremony involving Canon Gene Robinson, indicates a demeaning of his fellow primates (including the Archbishop of Canterbury) and a deviousness in Christian leadership that is unworthy of a Shepherd of the flock of Jesus Christ.'

In planning to consecrate as bishop a divorcee, now in an active homosexual relationship, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America has caved in to prevalent western cultural pressures and reverted to the paganism of the ancient Graeco-Roman world that was vigorously challenged by the early Christian Church. In doing so, ECUSA has departed from the boundaries of orthodox Anglicanism, in contempt of the consistent biblical witness to the God-given institution of marriage, and of 2,000 years of universal Church practice across all Christian traditions.'

The Editor is grateful for the above information from The English Churchman, which is a Protestant Family Newspaper...

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The Trinity and Creation

Robert Letham

God, creation and redemption

The first chapter of Genesis tells us much about God the creator. Particularly striking is God's sovereign and variegated ordering of his creation. In particular, he forms the earth in a threefold manner. *First, he issues direct fiats.* He says, 'Let there be light,' and there is light (v.3). So too he brings into being with seemingly effortless command the expanse (v.6), the dry ground (v.9), the stars (vv.14-15), the birds and the fish (vv.20-21). It is enough for God to speak and his edict is fulfilled. *Secondly, he works.* He separates the light from the darkness (v.4), he makes the expanse and separates the waters (v.7), he makes the two great lights, the sun and the moon (v.16) and sets them in the expanse to give light on the earth (v.17), he creates the great creatures of the seas and various kinds of birds (v.21), he makes the beasts of the earth and reptiles (v.25), and finally he creates man - male and female - in his own image (vv.26-27). The thought is of focused, purposive action by God, of divine labor accomplishing his ends. However, *there is also a third way of formation, in which God uses the activity of the creatures themselves.* He commands the earth to produce vegetation, plants and trees (vv.11-12). He requests the lights to govern the day and night (vv.14-16). He commands the earth to bring forth land animals (v.24). Here the creatures follow God's instructions and contribute to the eventual outcome. This God who created the universe does not work in a monolithic way. His order is varied - it is threefold but one. His work shows diversity in its unity and unity in diversity. This God loves order and variety together.¹

This reflects what the chapter records of God himself. *The triadic manner of the earth's formation reflects who God its creator is.* He is a relational being. This is implicit from the very start. We notice a distinction between God who created the heavens and earth (v.1), the Spirit of God who hovers over the face of the waters (v.2), and the speech or word of God issuing the fiat 'Let there be light' (v.3). Then, with the creation of man there is the unique deliberation 'Let us make man in our image' which expresses a plurality in God (vv.26-27). This is the high point and goal to which all God's creative activity is directed. Since Scripture has a fullness that goes beyond the horizons of the original authors, the many Fathers who saw this as a reference to the trinity were on the right track, for while this was

concealed from the original readers and from the OT saints as a whole, they were in line with the trajectory of the text. The NT gives us the principle that the OT contains in seed form what is more fully made known in the New, and on that basis we may look back to the earlier writings much as at the end of a detective mystery we reread the plot, seeing clues that we missed the first time but which now are given fresh meaning by our knowledge of the whole. In terms of the *sensus plenior* (the fuller meaning) of Scripture, these words of God attest a plurality in God which came later to be expressed in the doctrine of the trinity. The original readers would not have grasped this but we, with the full plot disclosed, can revisit the passage and see there the clues.

In short, this God who made the universe - establishing an order with a vast range of variety, with human beings as the crown of his creation, representing him as his image bearers - is relational. Communion and communication are inherent in his very being. In creating the world, he has made us for himself, to enter into communion with him in a universe of ravishing beauty and ordered variety. By his creation of the seventh day, he ceased from his works in contemplation of their ordered beauty and goodness, and invites us to join him. The first chapter of Genesis says to all who read it that Yahweh the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses, is also the creator of all things. He who made his covenant with his people Israel is not some merely territorial divinity but is the one to whom all nations are accountable, for he is their maker. *There is a clear unity between creation and redemption.* The mandate in 1:26-29 to multiply and subdue the earth embraces the whole creation and is also the basic building block for the unfolding structure of salvation after the fall. Reflecting on this implicitly trinitarian structure of Genesis 1, Athanasius will write of creation being in *Christ*.² Since Genesis (no less than every other part of the Bible) is to be read in the context of the whole of Scripture, we can see references in the NT to the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in creation as reinforcing this (Col 1:15-20, Heb 1:3, 11:3, Jn 1:1ff). The NT claims unequivocally that Christ, the eternal Son of God, is creator. All things were made by him and for him. He is the one who holds everything together. God's ultimate purpose for the universe is that Christ be the head, the one in supreme authority over the redeemed and renewed cosmos (Col 1:15-20, Eph 1:10, Jn. 1:1-3, Heb 1:1-3). This is the background to those events in the Gospels where Jesus demonstrates his authority over creation. For example, by walking on the water and calming the raging storm he demonstrates that he has the full authority of Yahweh, whose 'way was through the sea, your way through the great waters, yet your footprints were unseen' (Matt 14:21-33, Ps 77:19). Athanasius has a graphic illustration for this when he compares the relationship between created and divine wisdom with the printing of the name of a king's son on every building of the town his father builds, implying that the Son's name

is imaged throughout creation.³ Athanasius is right and biblical. The name of Christ is engraved on the whole creation. Hallmarks of the trinity are evident throughout. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament displays his handiwork' (Ps 19:1), and that glory and that handiwork belong to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, unto the ages of the ages.

This line of thought follows an absolutely basic principle of biblical interpretation - any passage of Scripture must be seen in the light of the whole. Just because Genesis 1 comes first in the Hebrew, Greek and English Bibles does not mean it can be viewed in isolation. In fact it is more than likely that Job was compiled before Genesis, in which case Job 38 would have claim to be read first if we were to adopt that procedure - and Job 38 forces our own limitations and God's own utter sovereignty and inscrutability into the foreground.

[The Lord] said: ... Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements - surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? ... Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place? ... Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? ... You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great! (Job 38:4-7, 12, 16, 21).

Both biblically and theologically, the Christian view of salvation cannot be separated from a Christian view of creation.

So creation and redemption are in continuity, in contrast to the gnostic separation of the two, with the god of creation different from the god of salvation. Rather, Christ is mediator of creation as well as redemption. Christianity stresses the incarnation as God's supreme affirmation of his creation. The resurrection clinches this. The Apostles' creed and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed of 381 AD both summarise the plan of salvation, grounded on the trinity. However, this entails the renewal of creation. God the Father created all things makes the trinitarianism explicit); the Son became incarnate, died on the cross and rose for us and our salvation (in this God reaffirms his creation by taking part of it into personal union); while the resurrection is itself the renewal of creation and the beginning of the kingdom that shall have no end. There is an unbreakable unity between creation and redemption - seen clearly in such passages as Colossians 1:15-20. All things declare the glory of the holy trinity. All things will be brought to their ultimate purpose to glorify the

holy trinity. The Holy Spirit is remaking the created order over. Jesus Christ the Son is reigning and will reign, to the glory of God the Father.

Vestigia trinitatis?

The Bible attests that all creation reveals the glory of God. The Psalms are full of comments to this effect. Psalm 19:1-6 speaks vividly of the creation as an icon (image), as something through which we perceive the reality of God. It is not itself God but it points to him. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork' (v 1). Paul in Romans 1:19-20 also reflects on creation in this way. The invisible things of God are clearly visible in the world around us, he says, through the things that have been made, leaving human beings without excuse for rejecting him.

Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis, emphasises that God reveals himself in creation. Moses' intention is 'to render God, as it were, visible to us in his works'. The Lord, 'that he may invite us to the knowledge of himself, places the fabric of heaven and earth before our eyes rendering himself, in a certain manner, manifest in them.' The heavens 'are eloquent heralds of the glory of God, and ... this most beautiful order of nature silently proclaims his admirable wisdom.' He 'clothes himself, so to speak, with the image of the world ... magnificently arrayed in the incomparable vesture of the heavens and the earth'. In short, the world is 'a mirror in which we ought to behold God'.⁴ There is a symmetry in God's works to which nothing can be added.⁵ The divine Artificer arranged the creation in such a wonderful order that nothing more beautiful in appearance can be imagined.⁶ In the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1541) he foreshadows his comments on Genesis in saying that the world is a kind of mirror in which we may observe God. The account here is given for our sake, to teach us that God has made nothing without a certain reason and design.⁷

In considering the separation of light and darkness on the first day, and reflecting on the differences in the ancient world in reckoning when the day actually ended and began, Calvin says that Moses accommodated his discourse to the received custom. God accommodated his works to the capacity of men, fixing our attention and compelling us to pause and reflect. There is nothing here but that which relates to the visible form of the world, 'the garniture of that theatre which he places before our eyes'.⁸ This is in line with Calvin's overall claim that in all God's revelation he accommodates himself to our capacity. Indeed, it has been persuasively argued that, for Calvin, God not only accommodates his revelation to our level but also accommodates himself, speaking to us in the prattling babble of baby-talk (*balbutire*, to prattle, is a favourite verb of Calvin's in this connection).⁹

If the world was made by the holy trinity, and it also declares the glory of God, it seems reasonable to suppose that there will be hints all around us in creation that will point to the trinity. Ever since Augustine propounded his trinitarian illustrations, this has been a matter of close debate. Proofs for the trinity were used extensively in the middle ages and also in the eighteenth century. We saw the weaknesses of this approach. Illustrations drawn from the world do not and cannot *prove* the doctrine of the trinity. In fact, rather than establishing the trinity they point to some form of heresy. For example, a clover leaf is often cited as an illustration of the trinity. It has three parts yet is one leaf. However, each part of the leaf is approximately one-third of the whole. But the persons of the trinity are not each one third of the trinity, for each person is not *part* of the trinity but possesses the entire identical divine essence. The three indwell one another, occupying the same infinite divine space. The most analogies like this yield is evidence of diversity-in-unity and unity-in-diversity. On this basis, as hints of the relationality of God and of his own unity-in-diversity, there is evidence like this all around us. However, these cannot be used as a proof in a logical or mathematical sense, nor do they adequately portray the trinity as such.

Icons and general revelation: creation as an icon

However, we return to the clear biblical teaching that creation points us to God and that God is triune. In what ways does the creation testify to the holy trinity? Reformed theology has taught that creation reveals God. It does not bring salvation to us in our fallen condition but it does not leave God without witness. In consequence, the human race is left inexcusable for its continued rejection of its creator.¹⁰ Creation itself is, as Calvin said, an icon (image), a window through which we can perceive something of its maker, a mirror by which we can see God. While the trinity may not be directly discerned, Paul has pointed to 'his eternal power and deity' (Rom 1:20) as clearly evident. I have suggested that, in particular, his unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity are clearly displayed throughout the universe. The relationality of the cosmos points unmistakably to its relational creator.

Eastern Christianity is particularly identified with its use of icons. These are not intended to be worshipped.¹¹ They are teaching devices, windows through which to perceive greater realities that lie beyond. Thus, Leontius of Neapolis said that icons are 'opened books to remind us of God'.¹² Reformed theology believes in icons too! However, it differs from the East for it considers the Eastern view far too restrictive. For the Reformed, the whole of creation is an icon. All around us the trees, plants, grass and sky, the contours of the earth, the sumptuously variegated and ever-changing colors of the landscape, and the sights and sounds of the world cry out with

a loud roar, or quietly and soothingly breathe a gentle whisper to the effect that 'the hand that made us is divine'. They are not to be worshipped, for God made them. But since God made them, he reveals himself through them. These are the clothes God wears to display his glory. The clothes are not the person, nor is the world God, but as the clothes adorn the person so the world testifies with a powerful and beautiful voice to its triune creator.

From this it follows that art and music are spheres in which we can praise our creator, which can display his glory. In a certain sense, they are revelatory. As developed in cultures permeated by Christian influence, they readily disclose the unity-in-diversity to which we have referred. In my own experience, the monumental Eighth Symphony of Anton Bruckner enabled me, when a teenager, to realise that the human race was not, after all, an inconsequential speck of cosmological dust, and so to overcome doubts as to the existence of God. Particularly important was the masterly recorded interpretation of Eugen Jöschum and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as a live performance at a Sir Henry Wood Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London in August 1965 conducted by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, at which I was standing only six feet behind the conductor! It could not bring salvation, for only Christ does that in his gospel. But its magnificent sonority, its vast cathedral-like structure, the profundity of its affirmation of faith in the midst of a maelstrom of struggle and doubt (for as one critic wrote it stands 'at the place where music, philosophy and theology meet'), points to the utter majesty of God. Bruckner was a Christian but Beethoven was not, yet there is about some of Beethoven's music, particularly the late string quartets, a sublimity of almost super-human quality. Who can listen to the Piano Trio in B flat, Op. 97, the 'Archduke', especially the third movement - the *andante cantabile* - and not be led beyond the mundane? The question of Beethoven's beliefs is beside the point. It is irrelevant. He was a man, made in God's image, master of a creative medium that God himself has made for our good and as a vehicle to glorify him. He was working within a genre that owed its development to the Christian faith. The whole notion of developing a theme, of moving progressively and purposively to a goal, of returning after a myriad of complex modulations to a resolution, of a variety of instruments playing different notes which are all part of a single score, are all based in the matrix of realities found in the created order, which the holy trinity put there in the work of creation itself, and which reflect who he is. The turbulent rationalist Beethoven, the Angst-ridden Mahler, the syphilitic Schubert, the scatological Mozart, as well as the pious Bruckner and Johann Sebastian Bach all testify - whether deliberately as in the case of the last two, or unwittingly as with the others - to the triune God who made them and the world around them, to his own unity-in-diversity, purpose, structure, and beauty which such human creativity mirrors.

Unity-in-diversity / diversity-in-unity

In particular, then, it is in its unity-in-diversity and its diversity-in-unity - evident everywhere - that the creation points to the trinity. In this, even though it does not prove the trinity in a mathematical or logical sense, it bears witness as in a mirror.

Strikingly, the obviously non-trinitarian Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks recognises the unity-in-diversity of God's creation. He writes, 'God is in the details. Sometimes I am asked as a Jew - members of other faiths may have had the same experience - why our faith has so many laws and prohibitions, such intricate prescriptions of what we may or may not eat, may or may not do on the Sabbath and so on. Surely, they airily imply, God is above that sort of thing? I hope He isn't, because if He were, we would never have had the ordered complexity of life on earth; the 3.1 billion letters of the human genome, an error in any one of which could spell fatal handicap; the three million species of living things; the astonishing capacity of the human brain or much else of the meticulous diversity of creation. To be a true artist is to have a passion for detail. I think of Beethoven endlessly revising his scores, sometimes taking years before a musical idea reached the perfection he required, or Monet in his eighties painting the water-lilies in his garden time and again in his attempt to capture for eternity the sunlit sensation of a moment.'¹³

As I have said, music demonstrates unity-in-diversity very clearly. We noted how western classical music emerged in a culture formed by Christianity and its central features mirror the works of God - purpose, movement towards a goal, and resolution. Its unity-in-diversity is heard in a variety of instruments combining to play one integrated piece. This is particularly obvious in chamber music, where the various instruments can be heard distinctly within the overall score. String quartets feature this prominently, especially those of the classical period of Haydn, Mozart and the early quartets of Beethoven, when they were composed for private performance, written in a conversational style, the voices interacting. However, it is also obvious as the genre develops with the radical changes Beethoven makes.¹⁴ I suppose a trio mirrors the trinity even more evidently than a quartet. We referred to Beethoven's 'Archduke' earlier but this is merely an example, albeit a particularly wonderful one.

The two major challenges to the Christian faith today - the post-modern thinking of our own culture and Islam - are both deviations from the created order of unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity that the holy trinity has embedded in the world he made. In order for Christian missions to be effective in both settings, this root question must be tackled and effectively re-formed. Unless this is done, the ministry of the gospel in these contexts will be blunted. It follows that the same applies to each and

every setting in which the gospel is to be preached but these are the two most prominent contexts in which readers of this book will find themselves.

Islam - unity without diversity

Islam's doctrine of God leaves place neither for diversity, diversity-in-unity, nor for a personal grounding of creation, for Allah is a solitary monad with unity only.¹⁵ The Islamic doctrine of God is centered on power and will. There is virtually no room for love. The kind of love the Qur'an attributes to Allah - and it does so rarely - is a love for those who are just, who purify themselves and fight in his cause. It has no conception of a prevenient love for sinners, or of the supreme being himself providing the way self-sacrificially for sinners to return to him.¹⁶

In the next article we will explore this relevant subject in more detail.

¹See Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World. Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 142-43.

²Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 1, 3, 12, 14; PG, 25:97-102, 115-22.

³Athanasius, *Orations Against the Arians*, 2:79; PG, 26:314.

⁴John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, argument.

⁵*Ibid.*, on 1:31.

⁶John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:14:21.

⁷Calvin: *Theological Treatises*, J.K.S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 93-94.

⁸Calvin, *Genesis*, on 1:3-5.

⁹David F. Wright, 'Calvin's Accommodating God', in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as the Protector of the Purer Religion. Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies*, XXXVI, Wilhelm H. Neuser (Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997), 3-19.

¹⁰The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:1.

¹¹Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 38-40, 41ff, 277f; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 42-53.

¹²PG, 94:1276a, cited by Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 40.

¹³The Times (London), 22 February 2003. Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks is the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.

¹⁴See Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Quartet Companion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), especially the article by Joseph Kerman, 'Beethoven Quartet Audiences: Actual, Potential, Ideal', 7-27.

¹⁵As Toon comments, 'The Christian understanding of personhood flows from the Christian doctrine of the Three Persons who are God ... If God is simply a monad then he cannot be or know personality. To be personal otherness must be present together with oneness, the one must be in relation to others.' Peter Toon, *Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity* (Wheaton, Illinois: Bridge Point, 1996), 241.

¹⁶The Holy Qur'an, Surah 2:195, 222, 3:134, 148, 159, 4:42, 5:13, 93, 9:4, 7, 108, 19:96, 49:9, 60:8, 61:4.

The Accomplishments of John Paul II

Richard Bennett

This is an abridged version of the full article which is available with the footnotes on our RT website. Richard Bennett is an ex-Roman Catholic priest.

No other world figure has commanded the admiration he has enjoyed as the globe-trotting (over 1/2 million miles) Pope. His kindly smile and fatherly wave have made the 'Pope Mobile' a legend. Although they might disagree with his theology, both Catholics and Protestants have joined in the accolades of praise for this man. ...Billy Graham has extolled Pope John Paul as 'the conscience of the whole Christian world'.

Pope John Paul II wrapped up a gruelling week of ceremonies Wednesday [Oct 22nd 2003] to celebrate his 25th anniversary... A day after giving the 30 new members of the College of Cardinals their trademark scarlet hats, the 83 year-old Pope presented the men with their cardinals' rings, which symbolise their link to the Church and the Pope. The Pope suffers from Parkinson's disease, which in the last few months has made it difficult for him to speak clearly. He is also unable to walk or stand, troubled by hip and knee ailments and arthritis.

The world is quite clearly being prepared for the death of the Pope. As the world gazes with fascination on this man and his endeavours, it is of paramount importance to know what the Pope believes, as his title and teachings have captivated the hearts of millions. In human terms of worldly success and acclaim it is hard to find an equal to John Paul II. During his twenty-five year reign as head of the Roman Catholic Church, he has travelled more, spoken more and published more than any of his predecessors.

John Paul II has logged more than 1,126,541 kilometres from visits to 102 countries, which is like going around the earth close to 30 times...But perhaps the most lasting imprimatur he has left is his contribution to Christianity's growing list of saints....Vatican observers credit the Pope with being the single biggest influence in the collapse of Communism and the Berlin Wall, for

instance his opposition to Poland's Communist régime early in his career showed him as a man who was not just part of the crowd... In 1980 in his address to the United Nations General Assembly he had hoped that there would be 'no more war, war never again!' ...In more recent times, in the wake of 9/11 he has appealed to the Christian world not to equate Islam with terrorism. The Pope has not only sought collaboration between various churches but also preached reconciliation between the religions of the world...Witness his gift for the grand gesture of kissing the soil of a country on arrival, visiting a mosque, inserting a scroll into a crevice of Jerusalem's Western Wall, embracing the handicapped... Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, who heads the Vatican office responsible for saints' causes, came somewhere close to assessing 25 years of John Paul II's pontificate, when he said early this month: 'I think this Pope will deservedly pass into history as the Pope of sainthood. The Pope often recalls that sanctity is part of the Church's nature, it is in its DNA.'

But the question is this: Has sanctity of life been the consequence of the accomplishments of the Pope? Christ Jesus said, 'Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth.' Has there been this sanctity of which the Lord spoke? The mark of authentic sanctity is obvious in the Word itself, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words... He that loves me not does not keep my sayings.' The duty of those who claim to be Christ's followers is keeping his Word. Since the Pope in 1994 proclaimed to the world that his 'certainty about all revealed truths was not derived from the Holy Scriptures alone, but that "both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence", he must be evaluated in line with the Lord's measure, for '...the Scripture cannot be broken'.

The faith and practice of John Paul II

The Pope professes to work sanctity in the hearts and souls of men. He and his Church state publicly that baptism regenerates the soul of man. By anointing with the oil of Christ, he claims that young people and adults are filled with the Holy Spirit by the sacrament of confirmation. By the words, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," uttered in the confession box, the Pope purports to forgive sins. Four words uttered at the altar during Mass, he believes, change the bread into the body of Christ. The Pope then claims that power effectively flows from the element of Communion itself: 'Holy Communion separates us from sin.' This bread is also called the 'Eucharist', of which the Pope teaches, 'The Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins.' These enticing words teach the age-old

tradition of looking to a physical substance to obtain protection from sin. What makes the doctrine all the more repulsive is that this very teaching, which speaks of preserving from serious sin, is itself blasphemous. Such teachings as these come under the eternal curse of perverting the gospel of Christ. Christ Jesus' words are spirit and life: 'it is the Spirit that quickens.' To propose an oral ingesting of Christ's body in Communion is bad enough; however this is the very centrepiece of the teaching of John Paul II. It is the 'Eucharistic face of Christ' of which he recently wrote,

'By proclaiming the Year of the Rosary, I wish to put this, my twenty-fifth anniversary, under the aegis of the contemplation of Christ at the school of Mary. Consequently, I cannot let this Holy Thursday 2003 pass without halting before the 'Eucharistic face' of Christ and pointing out with new force to the Church the centrality of the Eucharist.'

A big part of gala and pomp that is now capturing the world is this 'Eucharistic face of Christ'. Those closest to the Eucharist are Catholic priests; they confess it in Mass and receive it each day. One would therefore think that they would by far surpass other people in sanctity of life. It is, however, the opposite. Well-informed victims' advocacy groups in the United States estimate there are between 2,000 and 4,000 abusive priests in America at this time, or a number between 4 percent and 8 percent of the 48,000 American priests. If true, that would reflect an incidence of abuse alarmingly above that of the general population.... The Saviour gave the proper test of sanctity. Christ Jesus said, 'By their fruits you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?' Pretensions belong to man-made religion. Conduct is the fruit that determines the nature of the doctrines that have been taught. The Pope also teaches, 'Priests have received from God a power that he has given neither to angels nor to archangels... God above confirms what priests do here below.' The New Testament established pastors and elders to lead the Lord's flock; the Pope, however, conveniently bridges over twenty centuries to join his sacrificial priests to Christ himself. It is of utmost importance therefore that the Pope's beliefs be understood, as they convey some of the greatest temptations that can be imposed on the souls of men and women.

Oldest, most alluring temptation

The Pope's beliefs and teachings are in fact the oldest temptation known to man. Physical things, instead of symbolising spiritual realities, are presented as bringing about sanctity and salvation. Looking to physical things to give

spiritual life was a first lie of Satan. '... In the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' Satan offered the fruit as the efficacious means of bestowing good upon Eve. She believed in the fruit's inherent efficacy to open the eyes and to give knowledge of good and evil. In the same way, the Pope and his Church present the seven physical sacraments as the inherent means of obtaining the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Pope and his Church teach, 'The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation. Sacramental grace is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.' All of this sacramental power is cleverly intertwined with the political objectives. The Pope recently claimed for his Church 'a unique contribution to the building up of a Europe open to the world'. In his document, *Ecclesia in Europa* (The Church in Europe) he states,

'... The Catholic Church can offer a unique contribution to the building up of a Europe open to the world. The Catholic Church in fact provides a model of essential unity in a diversity of cultural expressions, a consciousness of membership in a universal community which is rooted in but not confined to local communities, and a sense of what unites beyond all that divides.'

The pronouncement is a stunning ploy that purportedly proclaims the Christian message, while in fact it teaches the rites and rituals of the Papacy. For example, the concept of the 'gospel of hope' is mentioned forty times in the dissertation. The message, however, is not one of hope; rather it is an adept counterfeit. For example paragraph 74 begins by stating,

'A prominent place needs to be given to the celebration of the sacraments, as actions of Christ and of the Church ordered to the worship of God, to the sanctification of people and to the building up of the ecclesiastical community.'

The Pope continues to present his physical symbolic sacraments as the efficacious cause of sanctity and salvation. In place of the direct obedience to Christ Jesus, as demanded in the gospel of faith, the sacraments purport to be 'actions of Christ'. This is where the Vatican's pretence of 'hope' lies. Rome sets aside the direct grace of God in Christ Jesus through her sacraments and attempts to steal from Christ his priesthood, robbing him of his power as Mediator. Through them she also attempts to rob God the Spirit of his peculiar work as the Sanctifier, attributing to her own sacraments his power of giving grace. From God the Father she attempts to take his prerogatives of justifying and forgiving sinners. The reality and power behind the concept of 'sacramental grace' is purported to be 'the grace of the Holy Spirit'. This

identification of sacramental grace with the Holy Spirit of God is a formal and explicit sin against the Holy Spirit. This teaching is all the more to be condemned because it leads millions into fully relying on physical sacraments for salvation.

Pope's creed satisfying to many

The gospel is never more dangerously attacked than when the counterfeit is concealed under the pretence of having divine power. However, people in general seem well pleased with the Pope and his message. Generally speaking, the world and those inside Catholicism love the Pope and his activities. People love a religion that has everything as it were 'on tap'. In Catholicism there is something that corresponds to every class and liking, emphasising adaptability to most tastes and receiving the support of men of diverse intellectual and moral temperament. To the person who likes rituals and pomp, here is everything to satisfy him to his heart's content; sacramental rituals being acted out amidst candles, palms, charcoals, ashes, and the perfume of incense, men in multicoloured vestments. Catholicism has some of the finest architecture in the world and some of the most captivating music. To the politician or military man, it has all the grandeur of rank and hierarchy. For one seeking direct communication with God, it has a long tradition of mysticism. To the ascetic, there are penances and sacrifices in monastic and convent life. For the Catholic charismatic, there are drama, signs and wonders. For those captivated by visions and apparitions, there is on hand a vast, world-wide assortment of Marian apparitions and messages. For those seeking the pleasures of life, there is the tradition of carnival, yearly parish festivals with liquor, parish dances, and parish bingo. The Papacy is an organisation fully adapted to man. It corresponds with the whole scope of his hopes, fears, desires, passions, quirks, and preferences. The world can find in the Papacy something that matches most tastes and affections.

In the Papacy, flagrant wealth and pomp join hands with poverty and pain. The Pope, in his palace, arrayed with crown, and surrounded with Cardinals and Archbishops decked out in scarlet and purple, welcomes the poor and suffering of the world, and all are impressed. Nothing seems too exalted for him, while at the same time, nothing is too low to be beneath his care and concern. The Pope's religion is the religion of man and the world loves to have it so. The honour and veneration paid to the Pope is great. The world wonders after him, they admire his power, and policy and success. So great is the darkness, degeneracy and madness of the world!

The clinching touch

This Pope encourages mankind in its yearning to contact the dead. He publicly teaches communion with the dead. 'In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the earliest days of the Christian religion, has honoured with great respect the memory of the dead... Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective... We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.'

John Paul II knows right well how to enforce his will in law. In few things is his genius more conspicuous than in this. There are no checks and balances to his absolute power authority. In the official commentary on his Canon Law is the following,

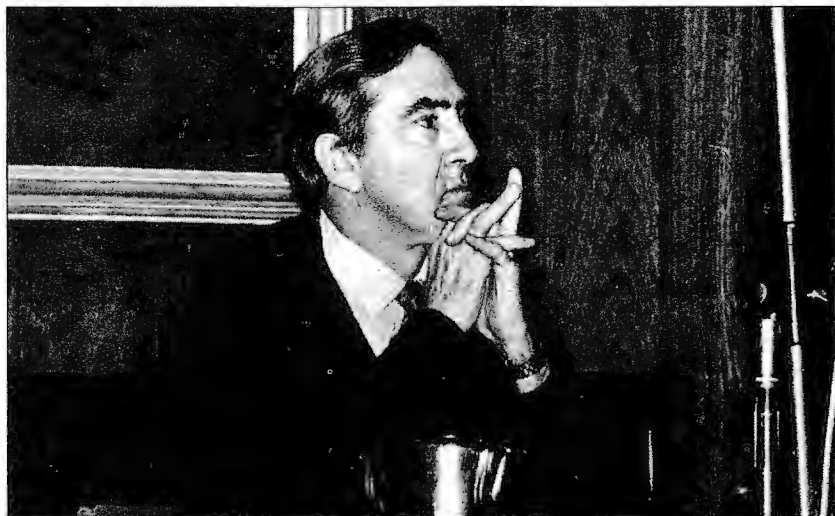
'The Church's governmental system is vastly different from the notion of a balance of powers. In fact, the three functions are situated in the same office....Unlike the American system, ecclesiastical law does not arise from the will of the governed, nor does the Church's juridical structure rely on a system of checks and balances to maintain its effectiveness...The Code promotes this system through a hierarchical structure that is more vertical than horizontal. Ultimately, the highest judge, the Pope, is also the highest legislator and administrator...'

John Paul II, while purporting to be Christian, sits among God's people speaking ex cathedra with a declared absolute authority, as his own teaching proclaims, 'The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority...' He has usurped the title and counterfeited the function of 'The Holy Father', claiming to be 'The Vicar of Christ'. He professes to impart Christ by Masses and the Holy Spirit by sacraments. He claims to fortify the faithful with crucifixes, rosaries, statues, holy water and saints. He alleges that he can shorten the sufferings of souls in purgatory by indulgences. He professes to mediate between God and man; to hold the keys of heaven and hell; to forbid marriage to his priests, and to control lust and sexual scandals by the rule of celibacy. He has commanded to abstain from meats and has clothed his cardinals in purple and scarlet and fine linen with gold and precious stones.

It is lamentable that there has been no reformation since the mighty call to reform in the 16th century.

Herbert Moore Carson (1922-2003)

*Herbert Carson, whose funeral took place on November 12, was gifted with a fine intellect. He played a leading rôle in the Carey Ministers' Conference in the 1970s when he often acted as chairman and took the difficult rôle in concluding the conference with a sermon. During the 1970s he acted as chairman of **Evangelical Press**, Darlington, UK.*



This photo was taken at the Carey Conference in 1975

David Kingdon pays tribute to our brother who is survived by his wife Delphine. During the last years Herbert and Delphine have both benefited by devoted Christian care in Pilgrim Homes, Evington, Leicester.

I first encountered Herbert Carson in the last days of 1957. He was a speaker at a Theological Students' Fellowship conference in Birmingham that I attended. One of his addresses was on the sovereignty of God. It provoked some strong reactions, as I recall. One of the other speakers, Dr Wood, a Methodist minister, commented to me that the trouble with that man Carson is that he brings theology into everything! To me that was his strength.

Born in Ulster Herbert was brought up on his father's farm at Ballykinlar, Co Down. Through the influence of his Christian home and that of Christians at a nearby camp he came to know the Lord. He studied Divinity at Trinity College, Dublin where he met his future wife Delphine. They were married in 1947, and were blessed with five children in a union that lasted 56 years. Each of the children embraced their parents' faith and all are married to Christian partners. Herbert was ordained into the ministry of the Church of Ireland. He served as a curate at Gilnakirk and then worked for nearly four years as Irish Travelling Secretary with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now UCCF). In 1953 he became vicar of St. Michael's, Blackheath Park in South-East London. In 1958 he became vicar of St. Paul's, Cambridge, a well-known evangelical church. After years of struggle, movingly recounted in his *Farewell to Anglicanism*, he resigned from the living in 1965, was baptised as a believer together with his wife, and stepped out in faith that God would lead and provide for him and his family.

After a period assisting Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel, London, he became minister of Hamilton Road Baptist Church, Bangor, in 1967. He moved from that pastorate in 1982 to become the minister of Knighton Evangelical Free Church, Leicester. He retired in 1988 but he was active in preaching and writing until the very last years of his life. It is my considered opinion that Herbert Carson exercised his most influential ministry during his Bangor pastorate. He gave a courageous lead to Christians tempted to walk the path of Protestant extremism, in his booklet *Riots and Religion*. On the other hand he engaged in courteous yet firm debate with Roman Catholic theologians, often surprising them by his knowledge of the doctrines of their Church. Even after his retirement Herbert continued to minister to the numerous small evangelical churches that emerged in the Republic in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Herbert Carson had all the straightness and wit of an Ulsterman. Yet both were tempered by love for God and his people for whom he cared deeply. It was a privilege to have known him and to have fellowship with him over many years.

News

Ukraine

Iain Murray

Forty years ago Robert Thomson, a veteran Scots missionary behind the Iron Curtain and a member of Grove Chapel (where I was then minister), urged me to go with him to Eastern Europe. I did not then see my way to do so but last week I thought of this good friend, long since in glory, during four days in the Ukraine. I had been asked to go to a pastors' conference and speak with James Renihan of Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, California. The organisers were Evangelical Press and the gathering was timed with their publication of my book, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, in Russian. With four friends from EP we flew to Kiev, and then took a car journey, twice as long, to the conference venue some twenty or more miles north of Rovno, in the north-west of the Ukraine. It was all a new world to me - first the high, colourless blocks of flats in the suburbs of Kiev, then the long roads through very flat terrain with clusters of farm houses - with corrugated iron roofs at first, then the thatch of older properties as we went further west. After dark we arrived at our destination, a large building on four floors, with wings enough to hold hundreds, and set deep in the midst of a pine forest.



Jim Renihan, Slava and Iain Murray

Deciding on suitable sites for conferences in the former USSR is by no means easy. This year the EP sponsors had relied on the help of a Christian worker in Rovno who had fixed the venue. It turned out to be a kind of sanatorium, built some ten years ago (after the Chernobyl disaster), as a treatment and convalescent centre for the sick, but it was also in use for conferences and for school groups. It was comfortable, the food was good and we had the exclusive use of a small theatre, with tiered seats. About a hundred, perhaps, were present (some having come long distances to be there); by no means all were pastors, and the line between 'pastors' and Christian 'workers' is somewhat blurred as it seems that all the pastors present had to rely on secular work for their living. Very few spoke any English and the help of interpreters was constantly essential.

The age range was significant. They were almost all young people, few middle

aged, let alone old. This corresponded with the young age of many of the churches from which they came. Why the age group was thus limited was not clear but one of the most interesting features of the conference was the unexpected addition to our numbers of others who happened to be attending the sanatorium for their health. They were very definitely old people, with faces lined from the hardships of many years. At first only one or two came in to our meetings, attracted, we wondered, by some additional warmth or by the music they overheard. But their number soon multiplied and, after noting the closeness of their attention, it was no surprise to learn that some, perhaps many of them, were Christians. One proved to be a retired pastor who has been imprisoned in former times. One old lady said she belonged to a Baptist church that had 1,000 members.

At one session some of the younger men gave their testimonies. This was a high spot for us visitors, as we heard the translation. Some of the speakers had been converted in the army, several after going far from God; one - an evident leader among them - had been an officer in the KGB. We were a little like Barnabas at Antioch who 'when he came and saw the grace of God, was glad' (Acts 11:23). There was much else to encourage us, not least the large book table with well-known authors, from Calvin and Spurgeon to Pink and Lloyd-Jones, all in Russian. Even the volumes of Ryle on the Gospels are available. More than one agency is involved with EP in producing these. I was told that my *The Forgotten Spurgeon* cost about the equivalent of US \$1.40 to produce and would sell at about \$2.50. While that may sound very little to us it might well not be to our brethren there. We were deeply conscious of how

little we understood of the conditions but I think there was evidence that what was said was helpful and valued. A number there clearly had a heart attachment to the truth of God's grace and it was wonderful to see how the very sort of thing Spurgeon preached long ago was so evidently true in their own experience. (What an evidence of the truth of the gospel that the message has the same supernatural effects among people who often know nothing of Christians in other ages and nations!)

We left reluctantly at 5 am last Saturday morning, for the return journey to Kiev. Even at that hour, lights were on in cottages, muffled up figures could be seen walking beside the country roads in the darkness, and we would pass the occasional horse and cart. Frozen frost covered the trees. There were moon and stars at night, but in the day we saw no sun all the time we were there. Once back in Kiev we had enough time before our plane left to see the centre of the city, where many magnificent buildings contrast with the suburbs, and we learned by the sight of a great statue that Kiev, like Scotland, claims St Andrew as its patron saint!

I am sure we were remembered in prayer and still more sure that prayer was answered. At least in the book I have left part of myself in the Ukraine and, with others, will never think of that great land in the same way again. It was a little strange to leave an airport with no armed police anywhere in sight and to find the opposite on landing in Edinburgh.

PS For a biography of Colonel Thomson by Roger Weil referred to above, see *RT* 141 and 142.

Spain

Mostyn Roberts, pastor of Welwyn Evangelical Church, and his wife Hilary visited Spain and sent us this report.

There is always a warm welcome in Spain, even when the weather, as we were told, was more typical of a late November. Our first stop, on the Monday, was Cuenca, with Luis and Pilar Cano. We had a couple of days relaxing in the beautiful old town and countryside and on the Sunday, having returned from Alcazar in the afternoon, I preached at the evening service in the church planted by Luis 16 years ago. The congregation numbered about 30, attentive to the Word of God. The after-church fellowship revealed the diversity of the group - not only Spanish and English, but Ukrainians and Romanians. What interesting conversations followed - with numerous translations! The work is hard and slow, a tribute to prayer, patience and perseverance, but there is a good spirit and a lively desire to evangelise.

In Moral de Calatrava we stayed with Demetrio and Jenny Canovas and were brought up to date with the work of Editorial Peregrino, the Reformed publishing house. The midweek Bible study, with Demetrio translating for me, was well attended and they are encouraged in the work. It was an added pleasure to have lunch with Andrew and Vivienne Birch in Ciudad Real - though next year Andrew will, God willing, be taking on the pastorate in Palma, Majorca.

In Alcazar de San Juan - the heart of Don Quixote and windmill country - we stayed with Jose and Virtudes Moreno. Pepe (Jose) took me to the nearby village of Camunas to speak at an evening meeting which he is praying will develop into a



Mostyn and Hilary Roberts

church. Up to eight ladies gather at present, about half unconverted. After the sermon there was animated discussion about spiritual things, largely stimulated by a young lady recently converted and full of the zest of a new believer. It was a thrilling evening, and we need to pray for the development of the work there.

On the Sunday morning, before returning to Cuenca, I preached in Alcazar, Pepe celebrating his twelfth anniversary there as pastor that very day - 26th October. Although the church is saddened by the departure of three valued couples due to work or retirement, others are coming in and there are real encouragements, such as the growing attachment to the church of a small group of 'believers' who have until recently kept their distance.

The Spanish work has suffered many blows this year, with serious illness and the death of valued friends and colleagues. Please remember these workers and their families. They acutely feel the lack of Spanish men called to the ministry. This is a particular prayer point - please make it one of yours.

Romania



The conference hall

Editor

At the opening of this the first conference of its kind, John Rubens, pastor of an independent evangelical church in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, and missionary secretary of *Evangelical Press*, explained the origin of the conference. It was organised by Dinu Moga, the founder and director of the *Editura Faclia* publishing house and was sponsored by EP. Dr Robert Oliver, of Bradford on Avon, and I were the visiting speakers. Dr Paul Negrut, one of the senior pastors of Emmanuel Church in Oradea, was the conference preacher.

The venue for this two-day event was the Baptist University of Oradea. 200 pastors and students booked in. The nature of the conference can be determined by the subjects. Paul Negrut preached from Revelation 1:1-8 and Acts 1:1-8. In the application of his excellent expositions he compared the pre-industrial age with the industrial age and then drew our attention to the fact that we are now well and truly in the post-industrial age of computers and websites. One was heard to say to a companion afterwards, 'Brother if you do not keep up to date with computer science you had better go back to the farm!'

Robert Oliver described the beginning of the 16th-century Reformation as it



Part of the Baptist University campus

developed in a titanic struggle in the heart of Martin Luther. He then outlined the fruits of the consequent Reformation as it impacted Europe. In a second paper he described how John Owen portrayed Christ's glory in the last book that he wrote, *The Glory of Christ*. The necessity was driven home of disciplined meditation to gain a loving appreciation of Christ's glory.

In my first paper, *The Puritans and the Moral Law* I could refer to my book *Who are the Puritans?* which is beautifully printed by *Editura Faclia* in Romanian. I pointed to the biblical theological structure of chapter 19 of *The Westminster Confession* and explained why the threefold division of the law is essential to our understanding of Scripture. In a second exposition I reviewed the foremost literature on mission, presented a historical overview of missionary work through history, and then surveyed the massive work still to be accomplished around the world. Romanians will surely have their part to play in the missionary advance of the 21st century.

If the Bible conference continues it will be used as an inspiration for men already labouring in churches and encourage those training for the ministry.

This Bible conference at Oradea is not denominational. All evangelicals are welcome.

The Evangelical Library

Founded by Geoffrey Williams (1886-1975) the Evangelical Library is centrally and conveniently situated in LONDON. Chiltern Street runs parallel to Baker Street and the library is just three minutes' walk from Baker Street tube station.

Over the years this Library has formed a treasure house for students, pastors, researchers and historians. From the early years there was a vision to establish branch libraries all over the world. In that way about 385 libraries have benefited. For legal reasons these are no longer called 'branch' libraries but simply 'other' libraries. A library is a living organism that needs to be cared for and kept up to date. Without a vital, efficient librarian a library will not function and for lack of such librarians many of the earlier 'branch' libraries ceased to function. However in most cases the books were successfully transferred to functioning living libraries. The EL in London is currently in communication with 143 'other' libraries.

Children are not left out. As an example several parcels of children's books have been sent to a library in Orissa, India, following the rescue of hundreds of orphans as a result of the devastating floods there.

There are some individuals who are desperate for even one book. In poverty-stricken countries many preachers crave just one reliable Bible commentary. Old books and new are sent abroad: doctrine, history, biography.

In 2002 the EL in London faced the necessity of urgent repair and refurbishment. Much of this work has been completed but it has meant that the EL continues to face a rocky time ahead. There is a sense in which this valuable resource belongs to all those who love the truth of the gospel. There is a current appeal that friends of the library commit £25 for every month for the next 12 months. That is one way to help preserve and develop this wonderfully rich resource for future generations.

The Evangelical Library, 78A Chiltern Street, LONDON, W1U SHB

Book Reviews

Bill James

Counted Righteous in Christ

John Piper, 141pp pb, Crossway/ IVP (UK)

The doctrine of justification is under attack, not least from the 'New Perspective' on Paul's writings. There are those who claim that the whole notion of 'imputation' of the righteousness of Christ must now be abandoned. There is a tendency to blur the lines between justification (our right standing before God) and sanctification (our increasing likeness to Christ).

Piper's little book is an answer to this attack, and provides a robust exposition of the doctrine of justification. The opening chapter argues that understanding of doctrinal truth (and justification in particular) must be at the heart of our personal and church life, and if we lose clarity here then so much of our activity and experience will be crippled in consequence. So there follows a serious engagement with the theological arguments (particularly those of Robert Gundry who represents the new position). Chapter 3 - the longest and most substantial chapter - is a thorough exegesis of the biblical texts, especially from Romans.

What is most striking is the readability and helpfulness of Piper's writing. So many volumes on this subject tend towards technical and detailed argument that leave most behind. But the purpose of this book is to be accessible and edifying to both pastor and layperson alike. Even chapter 3 is structured clearly and simply. More than that, we are left not only with an intellectual understanding of the issues and biblical truth but also a heart-warming joy in God's work of salvation in Christ.

The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century (Volume 1)

Ed. Ligon Duncan, 443pp hc, Mentor (Christian Focus)

This is the first volume of a collection of essays to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the Westminster Assembly. Westminster theology is

explored and discussed, and its relevance for today is seen and commended. There are 14 essays in this volume; there is only space for a few to be mentioned here.

Palmer Robertson examines 'The Holy Spirit in the Westminster Confession of Faith', while Richard Gaffin writes on 'Westminster and the Sabbath'. Timothy George looks at 'Baptists and the Westminster Confession', giving a brief overview of the distinctive elements of the Second London and Philadelphia Confessions. David Wright's essay on 'Baptism at the Westminster Assembly' makes the bold assertion that 'The Confession teaches baptismal regeneration' (and if we doubt that we only need consult the unambiguous wording of the Westminster *Directory for Public Worship* p.169). However such efficacy is only enjoyed by 'worthy receivers' - namely those to whom grace belongs 'according to the counsel of God's own will' p.70. There is an interesting consideration of the faith required of parents of infants to be baptised, of 1 Corinthians 7:14, and other issues.

A choice essay is by Mark Dever on 'Calvin, Westminster and Assurance' helpfully surveying the views of Calvin, Perkins and other Puritans. He shows that the Puritans did not undermine Reformed theology, but like them reflected scriptural teaching. Michael Horton examines 'Finney's Attacks on the Westminster Confession', showing the historical background to Finney with his distinctive theology and practice. The legacy of Finney in modern evangelicalism (particularly in America) is exposed.

Marriage: Sex in the Service of God

Christopher Ash, 394pp pb, IVP (UK)

We might wonder if any more could be written on the subject of marriage; but in the event this proves to be a valuable addition to the library. The author is conscious that we live in an age of family instability and 'churning' of partners - and he gives a brief survey of the current situation. Our response is not to retreat but to refresh our convictions about God's purpose for marriage. This is after all a creation ordinance instituted by God for all peoples. It is also an enduring ordinance - through both Old and New Covenants, finding its ultimate fulfilment in the relationship between Christ and the Church.

The distinctive element of this book is the emphasis on marriage being for the purpose of joint service. The relationship is not to be introspective, or self-serving; intimacy is not an end in itself. (This is in any case self-destructive in its expectations and demands of the partner as the focus of fulfilment.) Rather, the union of man and wife is for the partnership of serving God together and fulfilling the creation mandate. Procreation in turn is a blessing from God, so that children are born and raised in such a way that they ultimately will also be servants of the Lord. There is a helpful emphasis on godly nurture as being part of procreation - far more than just 'making babies'.

There is much helpful material in this substantial volume; perhaps even more yet to come as the author suggests that another book may be on the way to deal with singleness, divorce and remarriage.

The Message of Ezekiel The Bible Speaks Today series

Christopher J H Wright, 368pp pb, IVP (UK)

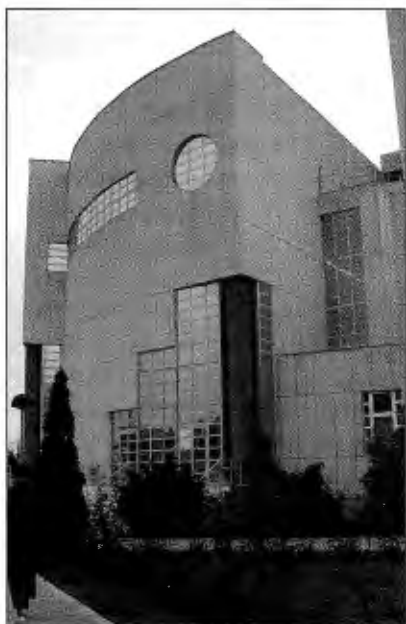
The Message of Zechariah

Barry Webb, 186pp pb, IVP (UK)

This work on Ezekiel was briefly commended in RT 190 but deserves a fuller mention here. The preacher daunted by the scale and extraordinary images of this prophecy will find this work invaluable. The text is broken into 9 sections, each with its own heading and subheadings. Generally these follow the order of the text, but on occasion Wright is not afraid to gather together material topically - for example his chapter 'Who can be saved?' gathers together sections from chapters 14, 18 and 33 to demonstrate that 'Only the righteous will be saved', 'Only the wicked need die' and 'Only repentance makes the difference'. Wright is a safe guide through the vivid images and eschatological pitfalls of this book.

Similarly, the volume on Zechariah helpfully expounds a sometimes obscure prophetic book. There is of course a link with Ezekiel, as in chapter 2 the man with the measuring rod shows that Ezekiel's vision of the new Jerusalem has been realised. It would be sad if we neglected this section of Scripture, as it is so rich in its teaching of the gospel and of Christ.

The Revival in Romania



Emanuel Baptist Church, Oradea

Editor

Today the *Emanuel Baptist University of Oradea* is the only Baptist University campus on the continent of Europe. Its existence can be traced back to the revival in the Baptist Church in Oradea in 1974, a revival that can only be understood against a background of extreme persecution. The Communist régime made an all-out attempt to stifle and ultimately destroy the witness of the Church.

Life in socialist Romania was terrible. Under one of the most tyrannical régimes in Europe, food and energy shortages meant that many starved or froze to death. All dissent was suppressed. One in ten of the population was in the pay of the dreaded Securitate. Every telephone in the country was 'bugged'. People who tried to escape across the borders were shot. The churches were the special targets of the State system of repression and terror.

The official strategy was well thought out. The authorities focused a lot of attention on the leaders of the different denominations. Existing leaders were manipulated by bribery or threats, or were replaced by those who were more compliant or amenable. Priests and pastors of local churches were restricted in what they were allowed to do, and their preaching licences were withdrawn on the smallest pretext. Those who survived these attacks were further harassed by threats, smear tactics, physical assaults, and anything which would discourage them and hinder their effectiveness. Many were imprisoned or forced to leave the country. Of those who remained, all were 'encouraged' to inform on members of their congregations and an unknown number gave in to such pressure and became informers for the Securitate.



Morning service in the Baptist Church in the village of Maginea

The way the Romanian Baptist churches fared is a good example of what happened to all Christian groups. Of the 1,196 Baptist churches and preaching stations, 532 were closed as 'unnecessary'. Of the 952 pastors, 787 lost their licences for 'irregularities'. Many of those who survived did so at the cost of their integrity. Only a few students were permitted to stay in the seminary in Bucharest, usually less than ten. Pastors were only permitted to preach in their own churches; they were not allowed to accept invitations to preach in other congregations. No evangelism, no children's work, no youth work, no special meetings for men or women, no charity work with church funds were permitted. Lists of church officers and potential officers had to be officially approved, as did the lists of baptismal candidates. Only children of Baptist parents could be baptised; all other baptisms were looked on as 'proselytising' of Orthodox members, which was

illegal. In this one regard the Orthodox views were accepted, and used by the State authorities.

For three years before the revival began in the Second Baptist church of Oradea in 1974 a small group of five pastors met on Mondays for prayer. Josef Tson and Vasile Talos, both of whom stood courageously

against the régime, were in this group. According to Vasile this prayer meeting explains all the amazing events that followed.

In the meantime Liviu Olah, who had qualified as a lawyer before training as a pastor, was called to be assistant pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Oradea in 1974. (The Hungarian Baptist Church is the First in Oradea.) Olah had been debarred from the pulpit and spent much time in prayer and fasting. When he began his ministry he preached powerfully on the Great Judgment and on the reality of eternal hell. The church was in a very lethargic dispirited condition. There had been some distressing and scandalous incidents of drunken members.

Liviu Olah called for repentance. He began his sermons in a quiet tone. After about five minutes people were crying and under deep conviction of sin. They would call out for mercy.

Those present spoke of 'divine power floating in the air'. The whole church seemed to be in tears. Those deeply burdened with sin came to the church. When they came to Christ they were filled with joy and would leave feeling that they were flying and not walking. Liviu preached evangelistic sermons clearly and powerfully. He did not confine his evangelistic preaching to Sunday services but preached at funerals and weddings when large numbers of unbelievers would be present.



A new Baptist Church in one of the villages

By June 1974 over 100 converts had been baptised. In the next six months a further 249 were baptised. 149 were baptised in a single service.

The increase in numbers created a physical problem. The gallery began to crack under the weight of those cramming into it. In order to make room the side of the church was broken open to bring into view an area large enough to accommodate a further 800. This was achieved in spite of fierce opposition from the Communists who felt threatened by the gospel of hope which contradicted everything they stood for.

The Character of the Revival

Liviu Olah's powerful preaching was allied to prayer - his own prayer-life and also his insistence on intercessory prayer in the life of the

church. Liviu Olah encouraged the members at Oradea to make the weekly church prayer meeting the very heart of the church's life. He emphasised fervency in prayer. He also urged believers to form prayer groups in homes in different parts of the town - something almost unheard of at that time!

He told people to draw up lists of relatives, friends, and workmates. He encouraged them to be very specific in praying for these people to be converted. He even suggested that they include the names of the local mayor and other Communist officials on their prayer lists! On one occasion a visitor asked Liviu Olah the 'secret' of the revival. Olah turned to a child of eleven nearby and asked, 'How many people are on your daily prayer list?' The child replied, 'Eighty-six.' 'There is your answer! That is the reason for the revival,' said Olah.

The two classical 'ingredients' of revival, prayer and powerful preaching, were at the very centre of this spiritual awakening. A third classical emphasis of revival should be noted, repentance. Liviu Olah called for evidence of repentance. The saying developed, 'the repentance of the Repenters' - the need for radical holiness.

Olah emphasised that a holy God whose judgment is revealed against the sinfulness of unbelievers is also displeased with the sin and compromise in the lives of his people. He urged Christians to make a clean break with every known sin in their lives as individuals. But he went further and called on the Oradea church as a whole to make a stand on the need for absolute holiness.

What has taken place since the revival in the church in 1974?

When a stone lands in a pool ripples go out in concentric circles. This is the case with revival. There was a day of revival at Herrnhut in Moravia in 1727. Ripples spread abroad from that remarkable revival. Over 2,000 Moravian missionaries went to the ends of the earth over the next 150 years. This year we celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of Jonathan Edwards. The revival in Northampton in 1735 followed by the general spiritual awakening in New England in 1740-41 produced ripples

which spread far. To this day we are influenced by the effects of that revival through the books written by Jonathan Edwards.

A revival began in South Korea in 1907. Like the living water seen by Ezekiel that revival has continued in its effects ever since. From a tiny beginning the Church in Korea has increased steadily to millions, about twenty percent of the population. Revivals which are soundly based in Scripture can be like the waters described by Ezekiel.

'I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. A man with a measuring line in his hand — led me through the water that was ankle deep. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee deep. He led me through another thousand and led me through water that was up to my waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in' (Ez 47:3-5).

Did the 1974 revival in Romania continue? It is seldom that a revival will retain the same intensity which marks its genesis, but the effects will spread.

In order to answer that question in correct historical context we recall that the Revolution took place in



Lidia and Dinu Moga



The headquarters of the publishing house which is also the home of Dinu and Lidia Moga

1989. Josef Tson had been exiled. He continued to minister through radio Monte Carlo into Romania. It was strictly forbidden to listen to these broadcasts but that only made them more valuable. The Revolution moved with astonishing speed. Ceaucescu and his wife tried to escape the country by helicopter. The pilot conveying them away said he had engine trouble and brought them down to soldiers who arrested them. The couple were executed by a firing squad, an event which was witnessed worldwide by TV.

In place of the former oppression the new government adopted a friendly and generous attitude to the Evangelicals.

The Second Baptist Church continued to grow and now has close to 4,000 members. A new contemporary style auditorium seating over 2,500 has been built.

Adjacent is a new Baptist High School for 500 scholars. Twelve hectares of land have been provided for the Baptist University referred to above.

Ten churches have been planted. Four of these have new buildings. On Lord's Day morning 26th October I was driven to one of these at Maginea, a village 60 K from Oradea. I was asked to preach at a baptismal service. The new church building is situated on the top of a hill beside the village. The place was packed. Significant visitors were those of Romanian Orthodox background which is about half the population. Converts are from that sector of the community. I was told to preach for over an hour and to explain the meaning of believers' baptism by immersion and the meaning in practical terms of church membership. There seems to be no constraint as to time. The

congregation relishes worship. The singing was vibrant and joyful led by three young men. The hymns were mostly the well-known old redemption hymns glorying in Christ and his saving power but I noted that they had translated a couple of our best contemporary songs. They sang a couple of hymns that I did not know. Perhaps they were by Nicolae Moldoveanu who is the Charles Wesley of Romania. He has composed over 3000 hymns. One of these is famous because Nicolae testifies that one striking verse came to him while he was being pressed into freezing concrete by the boot of a prison officer on his back. Nicolae's fellow prisoner was Richard Wurmbrand.

We returned from Maginea stopping on the way back for me to take a photo of another new Baptist Church in a village called Salard. 5.00 pm is the time of the evening service at the Emanuel Baptist Church in Oradea which now has a population of about 250,000. One percent of that population fill this church at each service. The building is designed so that the pulpit is central to a 180 degree arc. The steep gallery seats about half the congregation in a design calculated to bring as many as possible close to the preacher. I took Acts 4:12 as my text and explained why I believe this will be the most important text of the 21st century. The features of our immoral Western

Postmodern philosophy will impact Romania increasingly. We must know the nature of this enemy and how to deal with it from Scripture. 'For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword; it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart' (Heb 4:12).

A large church has its own problems. Spurgeon sought that every member should have a work to do. Many from Emanuel go out to help other churches and are involved in church planting in the towns and villages.

Conclusion

I have retold in broadest outline the story of the revival in the Second Baptist Church of Oradea. The Pentecostal churches have multiplied too and the Christian Brethren can tell of their experiences. The revival in Romania was not confined to one denomination. There is a paramount need to train men as pastors for the new churches. Books are required. Hence it is encouraging to observe the development of publishing houses like *Editura Facilia* with about 50 titles small and large.

Note. *I am indebted to Ron Davies for his description of the origin of the revival at Oradea published in RT 136.*

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