

EXCERPTS FROM

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THE LINK

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

LEST WE FORGET

"...the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance". (Ps.112:6)

Christendom today conveniently forgets, indeed would like to erase [The Reformers] from memory, whilst within the ranks of those who would claim to be evangelical and Protestant, one finds either abysmal ignorance, or, a warped and distorted knowledge of the lives and witness of these noble characters. Some would even go so far as to suggest that they were bigots, their stand unbalanced and ill-advised, and the Reformation brought about by them, a great mistake.

It is a fact, yes, and a tragic fact that very few Christians today in this country, or even throughout the world take a true Reformation stand, and of the few that would claim to be reformed, only a small minority can be found who are prepared to identify and openly defy apostasy as it appears in its many and subtle forms.

God did a mighty work in the 16th Century, calling men into His service, the like of which has not been seen since the days of the Apostles, and it is the mandate of Holy Scripture that the righteous be in everlasting remembrance.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. One historian refers to him as: "The greatest human emancipator since the days of the apostle Paul". Luther's parents, Hans and Margaret Luther were humble folk. Hans was from peasant stock but left the land for the mines. They were determined to give their son the best education they could afford, which they did, in the hope that he would become a lawyer.

In his studies he became acquainted with the Latin Vulgate, and seeds were sown in his heart. This led to great uneasiness of soul, which after some time caused him to quit his studies in law and to join a monastic order in an attempt to find peace and obtain the salvation of his soul.

The young monk attended confessions daily, fasted much, prayed long, and would beat himself mercilessly in order to mortify the flesh; but all his efforts led only to deeper distress. However, the Holy Spirit of God was at work in this young man's life and in God's time light began to illuminate his soul.

The forgiving love of God, the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus, and the glorious truth of justification through faith, was made a reality to him. He came to realise that the Bible alone was the only authority. He saw too, that church order and rule was only valid if backed by the Scriptures. If the church practised and decreed what the Bible denied, then the church was wrong.

It was this burning conviction concerning the truth of Scripture and the error of the Romish church which eventually caused Luther to write his 95 Theses, and on 31st October 1517 he nailed this document on the door of the church in Wittenburg, and by so doing fearlessly challenged the Romish system and clearly identified his position. It was some time later, at the great assembly at Worms, when Luther was commanded to retract, that he made that famous statement; "I cannot submit my faith to Pope or Council, unless I am convinced by Scripture, I cannot retract ... Here I stand I can do no other. May God help me."

At this point the great battle for truth, which in the mercy of God climaxed in the glorious Protestant Reformation, was coming into focus. It would yet be proved that those humble believers, who had been persecuted in their millions over the centuries, the blood of whom had caused the rivers of southern Europe to, literally, run red on occasions, had not died in vain. Their cry "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev.6:10), was heard, and God was about to intervene.

Wycliffe and Huss had already, about 100 years before Luther, kindled a light which had begun to penetrate the darkness of Popery. Huss had been charged as: "A ringleader of heretics" and burnt at the stake. When

chained amidst the faggots, he said, "My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this for my sake, why then should I be ashamed of this old rusty one." As soon as the faggots were lighted the heroic martyr burst into song so cheerful and loud that he could be heard above the crackling wood and the jeering crowd - the rejoicing of a spirit which no fire could consume. Thus he entered the realm of everlasting glory.

However, by the 16th century the fulness of the time had come for God in his goodness and mercy to intervene, and as is his wont, he called to the kingdom chosen vessels to accomplish His purpose.

Martin Luther was, under God, to spearhead, the great Reformation; a man who was fearless; who could thunder forth truth. Little wonder that he has been styled as "The monk who shook the world". He was greatly helped and encouraged by his close friend Melanchthon. Luther did not live to a great age; he died a natural death at the age of 63. This son of a miner who lived to fearlessly challenge the Pope and Emperor must forever rank as one of the world's great men.

Zwingli became converted through reading the Greek New Testament (this work, let us not forget, had an important bearing on the Reformation). He, too, became a prominent figure during this period.

John Calvin was eight years of age when Luther nailed his Theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg. Calvin was a very precise man, of great literary ability, with a passion for spiritual education. Knox states: "Calvin's is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the Apostles". The post-reformation church owes a tremendous debt to this great reformer and theologian who died a natural death in his mid-fifties.

What shall we say of such men as Bradford? Every true Christian should read his dissertation at his public examination; his dogged stand for God and truth and fearless denunciation of Romish superstition and idolatry. As he approached the stake at Smithfield he stretched his

hands toward heaven and said: "O England, O England, repent thee of thy sins, beware of idolatry, beware of false antichrists, take heed they do not deceive you".

Rogers, too, for his declaration of truth and exposure of error, was arrested. Said he, at his trial: "that which I have preached I will seal with my blood". This he did, for he too was burned alive at Smithfield on the 4th February 1555.

Tyndale was the man called to the kingdom at this time for one of the most vital of works, namely, the translation of the New Testament in Greek - prepared by Erasmus - into English. Luther translated from the same text into German. Tyndale is described as a man powerful in doctrine and sincere in life. He, too, suffered martyrdom in the year 1536. As he arrived at the sight of his execution, he lifted up his heart in prayer and with a loud voice cried: "Lord open the eyes of the King of England". He was then strangled by the executioner and burnt.

The testimony of Hooper must surely be one of the finest, yes, and his execution at Gloucester one of the most gruesome.

John Knox also, was a man valiant for the truth. With Heber we ask: "who follows in his train?" Cranmer the Archbishop of Canterbury during that same century also sealed his testimony with his own blood, in the year 1556, at the age of 67 years.

Latimer ranked as one of the noblest reformers; he has been styled: "the Elias of the Reformation in England". He together with Dr. Nicholas Ridley, were burnt alive in one fire at Oxford on 16th October 1555. As they walked to their death in their stand for truth and opposing of the Romish teaching of transubstantiation, Latimer, that grand old man, spoke those immortal words of encouragement to his younger brother in Christ, Ridley: "Be of good cheer Master Ridley, be of good cheer and play the man, for we shall light this day such a candle in England, as by the grace of God, shall never be put out".

These are but a few, of the men who, alas, today are forgotten, and their cause in this generation is a dying one, as the church is fast going back to that which God in His mercy brought her out from in that bygone age. It is a lasting shame upon her that she is so ignorant and has forgotten her history.

Viewing the contemporary scene does it not appear that these men witnessed and died in vain? If the modern gospel of love, tolerance and unity be true, then these noble figures to whom we have referred, were deluded and mistaken.

National Bible Societies, Scripture translation and Publishing Houses have long since brought in the corrupted manuscripts; and Greek New Testaments have been produced from faulty sources, from which has flowed the spate of modern versions. These to a great extent have been allowed to supersede the Authorized Version which found its source in the Reformation.

It was the declared aim of the Jesuits, following the Reformation, to infiltrate into Protestantism, not only into pulpits, but more particularly places of learning primarily to undermine the authority of the Greek New Testament of Erasmus and overthrow the Protestant Reformation.

In the preface of the Revised Standard Version, it states, concerning the Authorized Version, that by the end of the 19th Century it became evident that: "Its defects (i.e. the Authorized Version) were so many and so serious as to call for revision of the English translation".

It was the 19th Century which saw the commencement of the erosion of the Received Text. Church-wise it was a tragic century, an era of great activity but an era of FEW REFORMERS. Seeds were sown in the 19th Century the harvest of which is being reaped in the 20th. The undermining of the Received Text was a major victory for Rome. She could now become interested, and so is quite happy to unite and assist in the production of modern versions: never would she become involved with the A.V. because of its source

and base: indeed, she is bent on its overthrow, and in this she has the cooperation of vast numbers of so-called Evangelicals. Would Tyndale and the other Reformers class such as evangelical or Protestant? Indeed, if they could see the appalling drift within this field, they must surely say: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought" (Isaiah 49:4).

One stalwart of the faith of this present generation recently said, that if things continue as they are going, the Reformation will have to be fought all over again. This is perfectly true: the tragedy is that the fight ever ceased. The Christian can never lay down his arms: there is no discharge in this war. Disarmament for the church of God is a foreign term. The true people of God are ever to be on the 'offensive' and 'defensive'.

The giants of the 16th century never claimed to 'have reformed' or to 'be reformed': rather were they 'REFORMERS'. This is an ongoing and continuous work; assailing error every time and everywhere it rears its head: positively declaring ALL TRUTH and opposing ANY DEPARTURE from it, ever mindful of past history.

The sad plight of the church today is that she is faced with the desperate challenge of REFORMATION but lacks REFORMERS. An all-prevailing drowsiness has set in upon the people of God, and whilst Christian men and women sleep, ecclesiastical movements in opposition to the Truth sweep thick and fast upon us. An avalanche of apostacy is about to engulf the whole church. Brethren and sisters AWAKE, forget not the Protestant Reformation.

That which the Reformers of that period began, should have been, and still should be, CONTINUED. The candle which they lit in England should not be allowed to be put out, but alas, it is; and the reason is - the lack of REFORMERS in the 20th century.

The idea is widespread that controversy is unworthy of the Gospel, we must live and let live! If folk claim to be Christians and are members of apostate Christendom, then,

we must accept and welcome them in spite of the fact that they are in error! This is entirely false.

The preacher is to "preach the Word" - all of it - and at the same time "earnestly contend for the faith". However, the Evangelicals of this age who should be 'THE REFORMERS' have become apologetic, and compromise marks the whole scene.

Two things occasion this:-

1. A lack of absolute confidence in the Word of God.
2. A widespread ignorance of history.

The bitter persecutions of the past are overlooked and the great principles that once divided Romanists and Protestants, Apostates and Evangelicals, are not only watered down, but often decried. This attitude affords an open door to Rome and many other false concepts. Both sides welcome each other, mutual love and understanding being the order of the day.

In the 'so called' strength of such union and fellowship, vast enterprises are undertaken, such as is reported in The Western Times & Gazette, 13th May 1983, where a huge tent is to be erected in a Devon Town. The report states: "Not because the circus is coming to town but because of a Christian Crusade supported by all the town's churches ... The most remarkable thing about the crusade ... is that all of the Christian churches are supporting it - Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Gospel Hall".

There are also plans afoot for nationwide missions in which will figure certain evangelistic Pied Pipers and to their tune will run all shades and persuasions. To be led where? Still further down the hill of apostacy and unholy alliance. Has not the drift of these things become increasingly apparent over the past twenty years?

Surely, only the ill-informed or wilfully blind can fail to see the subtle design of it all.

Again one asks, where are the Bradfords who stretch out their hands toward heaven and cry, "O England, O England beware of idolatry, beware of false antichrists, take heed they do not deceive you".

The true people of God ought to have been alerted from what appears on the very surface of these so-called evangelistic enterprises of more modern times. Is not stadium-orientated, committee-administrated evangelism a grave departure from the New Testament mandate of autonomous local church-based testimony? And has it not been seen over and over again that, at best, it is but a preaching of part of the truth; so much is always seen to be conveniently left out.

However, with the up-to-the-moment mixed multitude, preaching is fast being replaced altogether by singing, concerts, mime, drama and the like; whilst sacraments claim superiority over exposition. All this is but the setting of the stage for a return of mediaeval pageantry and sacramentalism. "...Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:" (Isaiah 60:2).

Christendom is fast becoming the "habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (Rev. 18:2). A voice from heaven is calling - "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev.18:4). "...God hath remembered her iniquities" (Rev.18:5). "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

Yes, GOD REMEMBERS Luther, Knox, Hooper, Bradford, Latimer, Ridley: He has them and all the faithful in everlasting remembrance. Nothing less is expected of us in our situation than was expected of them in theirs.

W.H.Molland.

WORDS OF COUNSEL

from

J.C.Ryle

Let us make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the history of the English Reformation. My reason for offering this counsel is my firm conviction that this highly important part of English history has of late years been undeservedly neglected. Thousands of Churchmen now-a-days have a most inadequate notion of the amount of our debt to our martyred Reformers. They have no distinct conception of the state of darkness and superstition in which our fathers lived, and of the light and liberty which the Reformation brought in. And the consequence is that they see no great harm in the Romanizing movement of the present day, and have very indistinct ideas of the real nature and work of Popery. It is high time that a better state of things should begin. Of one thing I am thoroughly convinced: a vast amount of the prevailing apathy about the Romanizing movement of the day may be traced up to gross ignorance both of the true nature of Popery and of the Protestant Reformation.

THE REFORMERS

They taught that Christ gives salvation freely without money or price and that we must go directly to him. In searching the Bible, they found nothing about the Mass, the Confessional, Image or Mary Worship - instead they found Christ as the all-sufficient Saviour. They did not read of a place called Purgatory but rather that "the blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth from all sin". They rebelled against Rome and went to the stake, rather than deny Bible truth.

God's Word says "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." Can you wonder that the people of old-time, when reading these words for the first time, went out and smashed down the images!

John Huss, born about 1370 in Bohemia (present-day Czechoslovakia) and who died at the stake, said "I would not for a chapel full of gold recede from the truth. If I cannot deliver the truth in spite of all I do, at least I refuse to be the enemy of the truth and will resist to the death all agreement with falsehood." "It is better to die well than to live badly."

THE REFORMED FAITH AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

[A] Reformed faith is the faith of the Church of Christ re-formed from the errors and corruptions in accordance with the Word of God. It produces a distinctive kind of worship and witness based on a clear perception of the greatness, majesty and sovereignty of God.

The worship of a reformed congregation is distinctive. It is not based on beautiful music, impressive liturgy, elegant or moving rhetoric, but on the reading and preaching of the Word of God, together with prayer and congregational praise. The people of God come before the Lord, aware of His glory, filled with awe by His majesty, humbled by His grace, joyful in His mercy.

A reformed congregation will be an instructed people, taught in the great doctrines of the faith through sound preaching. It must be understood that preaching is not a brief discourse by the minister on some religious topic. It is the exposition and application of the Word of God, beginning with the Scriptures and moving from what God regards as interesting and necessary for the church to its relevance in the life of the congregation.

For this reason, preaching occupies a central place in our public worship. This accords with what Scripture tells us about the nature of preaching and the place it should have in the Christian church. There can be no compromise with modern replacements and alternatives to the preached Word of God, whether they are films, discussions or concerts.

The essence of a reformed faith is its consistent and comprehensive biblical theology. It demands that every sphere of life and every element of human experience be subjected to the authority of the Word of God and this includes the important matter of man's salvation.

The doctrines of grace which are at the heart of the Reformed faith define the nature of the gospel. These biblical doctrines assert the radical sinfulness of human nature and the necessity of divine intervention in the hearts and lives of sinners to bring them to salvation in

our Lord Jesus Christ. They define the gracious character of redemption, that there is nothing of man in it; that from start to finish, in every sense, it is all of God.

This is the gospel that is to be preached in the churches of the Reformation, the gospel of the grace of God. The context in which it is presented is all important, and that context is the whole counsel of God contained in Holy Scripture. Sinners are called upon to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in the confidence that this gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

As J. R. de Witt (to whom I am indebted for some of these observations) has put the matter: "We address ourselves to the conscience when we preach and we command men to repent, and we exhort and plead and remonstrate, and we warn as to the consequences of unbelief. But we do not resort to expedients that rob God of his glory, and exalt the ability of man. The sinner is responsible. But he is not able to choose God. Only as God works can faith come alive. And when God has worked, then faith will come alive, and be true and genuine and lasting - eternally lasting".

Hywel W. Roberts.

(Mr. Roberts is the minister of Clarence Street Baptist Church, Penzance and the above article is included with his kind permission).

"The public ministry of the Word is a standing ordinance to be continued to the second coming of Christ, there will be ministers and so a ministry unto the end of the world, and this will not be until all the elect of God are gathered in. The world and the continuance of, is for their sake. The reason why the coming of Christ is seemingly deferred is because God is not willing that any of his beloved ones should perish but that all should come to repentance; and when they are brought in, he will then come and burn the world. Hence the work of the ministry will be continued until all the elect of God come to the unity of the faith".

Dr. John Gill 1769.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION.

To be held on SATURDAY 23rd July 1983.
Guest Speaker - Mr. Kenneth Dix (Minister of
Dunstable, Beds. Baptist Church).
Afternoon 3.30 pm. - Tea 5 pm. - Evening 6 pm.

VISITING PREACHERS FOR THIS QUARTER.

Sunday 24th July...Mr. Kenneth Dix (Dunstable).
" 21st August..Mr.J.Roberts (General Sec.
Lord's Day Observance Society).
" 28th August..Mr.K.Matrunola (Portsmouth).

HISTORICAL LECTURE.

Mr.G.Ashdown (Protestant Alliance) will give an
illustrated lecture on the LIFE OF MARTIN LUTHER on
THURSDAY - 29th September 1983 at 7 pm.

THE "DRIVE-IN" CHURCH.

From SUNDAY 17th July to SUNDAY 4th September, our
Evening Services will be held on the River Bank Car
Park at 6.30 pm.

On Wednesday 20th April after a service in the Chapel we
laid to rest, in the Higher Cemetery, the body of our dear
sister in the Lord, Mrs. Annie Whitlock. God had granted
her length of days for she was in her 95th year, and up
until some few months ago was still attending the
services. Although somewhat cut off by her severe
deafness, yet she entered into things and maintained a
keen interest. She was an industrious and diligent woman,
and a loyal worker at North Road Chapel for many years. We
thank God for her life marked by sincerity and humility
and rejoice that she is now at home with the Lord.

EDITORIAL

The leading article this quarter is on "REFORMATION", a continuous and an on-going thing. As pointed out "The challenge is great and the reformers few". What can we do, how can we help? Some may ask. Beware of churches moving toward Rome: Avoid 'mixed multitudes': Shun the bandwaggon of modern evangelistic enterprise: Do not fellowship with those who by-pass doctrine and preach only love and unity: Seek out the company of those who openly stand against these things: Identify with believers who stand 'FOUR SQUARE' upon the Word of God and declare ALL its truth ...

Get informed, obtain and pass on literature pertaining to these matters, and such as are relevant to our present day situations Speak openly, be bold, and above all PRAY: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4)

Several matters may have been touched upon in this magazine which may have left the reader bewildered. If further information or help is required on subjects such as Reformation history, The Received Text of Scripture, or the perils of to-day's [ecumenism]; then do not hesitate to contact us.

Much interest was shown in our last edition of THE LINK which dealt briefly with differing lines of prophetic thoughts additional copies were printed and are available, as are also certain other back numbers.

"FAR BETTER TO SEPARATE FOR TRUTH THAN TO UNITE IN ERROR".

Regular visitation of the elderly in the local Nursing Homes and Hospitals, continues. It is evident that this has been a blessing to many as they near the end of life's journey.

The cassettes continue to be in demand over an ever-widening area and we are thankful to God that the preaching of His Word has thus been brought to many outside our own congregation.

Editor (L.W.Gee)