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The Challenge of Corruption and Moral Reformation

How can we produce a holy people who are strong
enough to stand against the whole tide of corruption?

BY BISHOP HWA YUNG

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Malaysia National Prayer Network

Church (Walk in distinctiveness as God's new humanity)
"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me." (Phil 3:12, NLT)
Christian perfection is the perfection of a relationship to God which shows itself amid the irrelevancies of human life. (Oswald Chambers)



Pray
| Manifestation of God in our lives, which will produce a longing after God in other lives, not admiration for ourselves.
| We pray for our brothers and sisters who face injustice and suffer for the name of Christ, may God's steadfast love hold them up and His consolations cheers their souls.

MALAYSIA
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy, for we have had our fill of contempt. We have had more than our fill of the scoffing of the proud and the contempt of the arrogant. (Ps 123:3-4, NLT)

Continue to Pray
| For fair and clean elections.
| For greater accountability and maturity in the political sphere
| For politicians to truly place their focus on addressing 'masalah rakyat', and cease the rhetoric of manipulating rakyat's sentiment with racial & religious issues in their campaign against the others
| For wisdom & discerning spirit for the rakyat to stand up for justice and political transparency.
| Against the spirit of greed and corruption; and for God's righteousness to penetrate the society and the government.



BISHOP HWA YUNG & FAMILY TOGETHER WITH ALL THE STAFF AT METHODIST HQ WISH YOU A

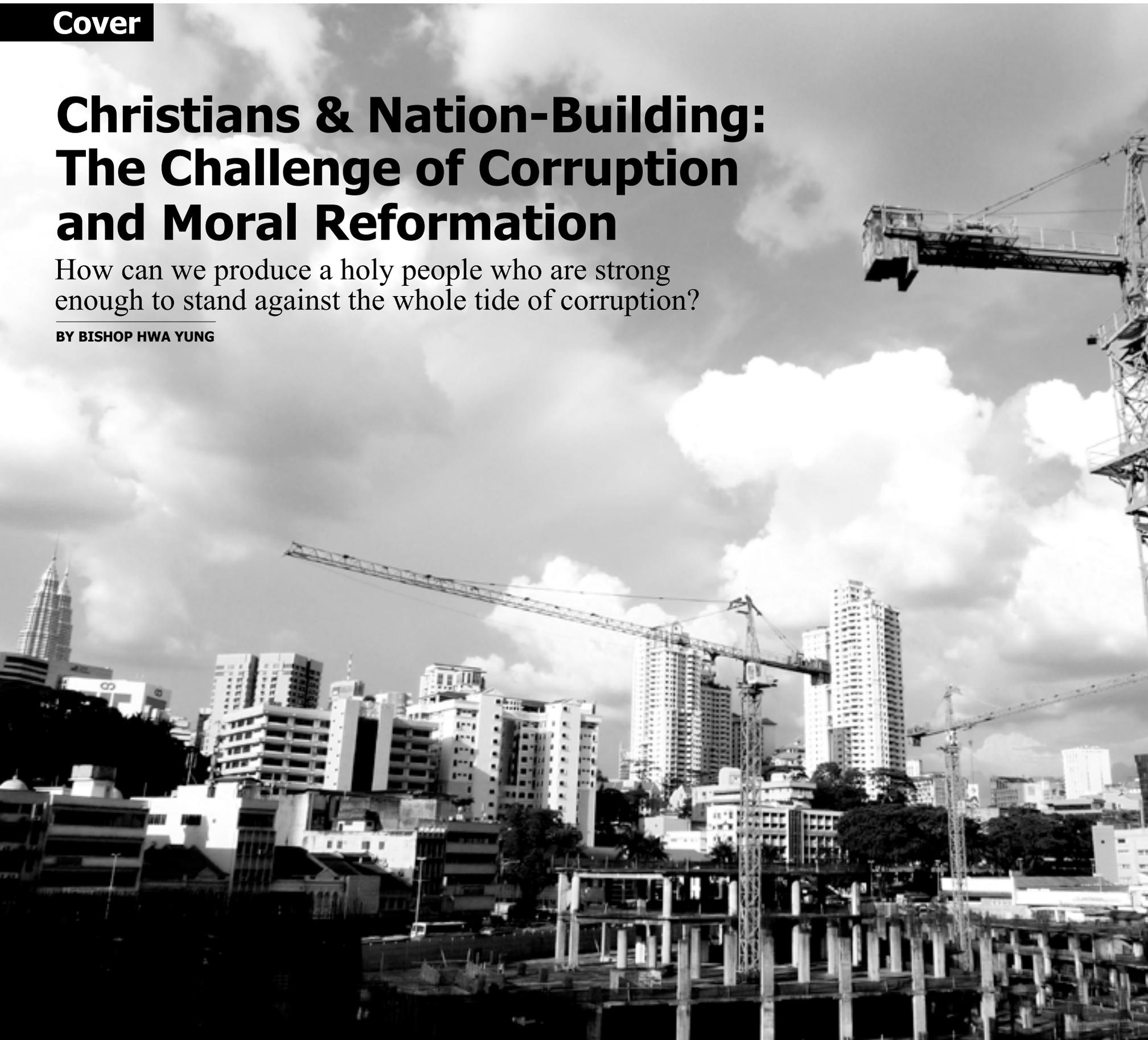
Blessed Christmas

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Christians & Nation-Building: The Challenge of Corruption and Moral Reformation

How can we produce a holy people who are strong enough to stand against the whole tide of corruption?

BY BISHOP HWA YUNG



The Sarawak elections are over, but the central issue over which it was fought was the massive corruption in the state! This is only one of many high profile cases in our country. But the problem seems to be endemic in the private sector also. For example, a member of our church who deals in housing brokerage and mortgage loans tells me of the practice by bank officers of asking agents for a 1-2%, as 'facilitation fee' for a loan approval. When I asked him whether it was only with some banks, his reply was that he faces the same problem at every bank he deals with in the Klang Valley.

In the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, Malaysia has been ranking in a middling position in the last 15 years. In 2010, it ranks in the 56th position out of a total of 178 countries surveyed, better than China (78th), Thailand (78th), Indonesia (110th) and Philippines (134th), but below Singapore (1st), Hong Kong (13th), Taiwan (33rd) and South Korea (39th). Unfortunately, compared with places Hong Kong, Korea and even Indonesia, all of whose scores have improved over past 10 years, Malaysia's score has declined somewhat in the same period!

Commentators, especially from the west, have repeatedly noted that corruption, together with crony capitalism and nepotism, are the banes of most developing nations. Despite all the laws enacted in many countries against such practices, the reality is that these are often ineffective simply because the prevailing culture and underlying values work against them.

Some of the newer nations have had some success in dealing with this, such as Hong Kong and Singapore. But usually this is the result of the confluence of several saving factors. The first is the provision of laws and institutions which provides for transparency, and democratic checks and balances of power, many of which were put in place by out-going colonial powers. Second, the existence of good and strong political leadership is vital. Third, it helps if the country is small because things are much more easily monitored. And finally, corruption is less likely where higher levels of education and average national income are obtained. But not many countries have been so blessed. And so corruption remains a cancer eating away at the vast majority of newer nations!

But even where a government has been successful in checking corruption, it does not follow that the citizens are necessarily more honest and moral. Just ask the average Singapore driver what he does when he is

caught speeding along the North-South Highway on this side of the Causeway! It is one thing to have laws against corruption that puts the fear of legal punishment among the citizens; it is another to bring about an inner moral change in the heart of man.

Clearly the answer to corruption is not easily found. But interestingly, there is a substantial group of intellectuals in China, known as 'cultural Christians,' who has been openly arguing that the answer to the needed changes in values is to be found in Christianity. Many of these are not believers themselves, but they see Christianity as providing the necessary moral framework for nation-building. One such is Zhao Xiao, a former government economist and now a professor at the University of Science and Technology, Beijing. He is well known for his views that if China is really to grow economically, the market economy as practised in the country must be imbued with integrity and built on a firm Christian moral foundation. He first came to prominence arguing this in an article titled 'Market Economies with Churches and Market Economies without Churches', written in 2002 (cf. http://www.danwei.org/business/churches_and_the_market_econom.php). Sometime in the course of his intellectual pilgrimage, he has also become a Christian.

But it is one thing to talk about Christianity providing the moral foundation for a nation; it is another for those values to be properly emplaced within that culture. Further, conversion to Christianity, even of the vast majority of a nation, does not ensure that this happens. If you doubt this, just look at the Philippines! In many western societies, Christianity has had centuries of history and culture has slowly evolved. But for many emergent nations, we do not have the luxury of such vast stretches of time. The Christian church, if she is faithful to the gospel call, cannot simply sit around and wait for such an evolution to take place. Are there models for cultural transformation from which something can be learned? I suggest that some aspects of British church history in the 18th and 19th centuries have a powerful relevance here. Other examples no doubt can also be found. But these are highlighted because they show that corruption can be consciously challenged and overcome.

In their book, *Corruption in Developing Countries* (1963; republished by Routledge, 2010), Ronald Wraith and Edgar Simpkins, point out that Britain in the 18th century was 'as corrupt as any' (p. 9) of the emergent nations Africa and Asia in the 1960s. Yet something happened and by mid-19th

century, things had completely turned around! Victorian England was not only known for integrity and virtues, but was almost certainly the strongest nation on earth. In describing this change, Professor Harold Perkins asserted that, ‘between 1780 and 1850 the English ceased to be one of the most aggressive, brutal, rowdy, outspoken, riotous, cruel and bloodthirsty nations in the world and became one of the most inhibited, polite, orderly, tender-minded, prudish and hypocritical’ (Harold Perkins, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 1969, p. 280). Leaving aside Perkins’ touch of cynicism, the point is that something fundamental had changed.

Wraith and Simpkins in their study examined various social and political contributory factors for the decline of corruption in England. Nevertheless, they also highlighted more elusive factors such as the growth of ‘the personal integrity of individuals’ and ‘the puritanical thread in the fabric of Victorian England’ which ran right through British society (p. 62). Where did these come from?

Historians have noted two keys Christian influences that acted together with others to bring these about. The first was the 18th century evangelical revival under John Wesley. This revival, which began around 1740, impacted largely the poor. Wesley’s stated goal was, ‘To reform the nation, especially the church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.’ The emphasis on holiness and moral living lay at the heart of Wesley’s pastoral concern, and the class meetings was the means by which the revival ‘spread scriptural holiness over the land.’ Wraith and Simpkins described the results as follows: ‘The Methodist movement and its aftermath coincided with the industrial revolution, and was more largely responsible than any other influence for the integrity ... of a large section of the working class.’ And it was this that gave to the emerging labour movement in the 19th century Britain ‘its stability, its thrift and its incorruptibility’ (p. 179f).

It is no wonder that Roy Hattersley, sometime Deputy Leader of the British Labour party, in his book, *John Wesley—A Brand Plucked From Burning* (2004), argues that Wesley was one of the great architects of modern Britain. The impact of his ministry was felt primarily in the 19th century. He writes: ‘*Methodism encouraged the working poor to be ambitious, industrious and respectable—the qualities which made them the indispensable backbone of industrial and imperial England.*’

The general attitude is: ‘Apa boleh buat? If you can’t beat them, join them!’

The other great Christian influence came from William Wilberforce and his friends in the Clapham Sect. (See e.g., Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce’s Circle Changed Britain*, 2010). They were Anglicans who had been touched by the Wesleyan revival and strongly influenced the upper classes. Wilberforce, in 1787, wrote in his journal: ‘God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.’ Over the next generation, both objectives were brilliantly accomplished, through a carefully orchestrated strategy and the use of innovative tactics to awaken the national conscience and reshape public opinion. Not only was slavery abolished throughout the British Empire after an epic parliamentary battle of some 45 years, but upper class morality was profoundly reformed.

Thus, it was the combined influence of people like Wesley and Wilberforce, together with the contributions of others, including the Utilitarians, Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mill, which brought about the moral reformation that England needed. Their efforts resulted in corruption being ‘virtually destroyed by the century’s end’ (Wraith and Simpkins, p. 182).

If the above analysis is correct, it would appear that the battle against corruption can be won if there is a committed group in any society working towards changes in culture and values. It is important to note that we are not here talking about the silly notion, propagated mischievously by some circles, of Christians taking over Malaysia. Even at the peak of Methodism’s growth, it never amounted to much more than 4.5% of England’s adult population. Moreover, the Clapham Sect, through which Wilberforce worked, was merely a small group meeting in a large house in Clapham, just outside London!

What may Christians learn from the above? First, there are many non-Christians who are also genuinely concerned about the cancer of corruption and the future of our nation. One of the major

challenges to the church is to learn to work together with such, whether they are Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, secularists, etc., and forge alliances with them in the public battle against corruption.

Second, sociological studies have shown that even a small percentage of a nation’s population can help reshape its values and culture. But the members of the group have to be fully committed themselves to reform. One of the great tragedies of the Malaysian church is that many Christians today themselves have been sucked into the systemic corruption of the nation, from the humblest member to some in the highest echelons of the political and business world! The general attitude is: ‘Apa boleh buat? If you can’t beat them, join them!’ But that will not do, if the church is going to play a key role to moral reform. Unless our hands are clean, what moral authority do we have in standing against corruption in our nation?

Here lies the greatest challenge to the Malaysian church. How can we produce a holy people who are strong enough to stand against the whole tide of corruption and immorality in our nation and the world today? This brings us back to Wesley. At the heart of Wesley’s agenda, was his determined effort to ‘spread scriptural holiness over the land.’ What did he do? He called men and women to flee from God’s judgment and wrath against all forms of ungodliness and corruption. He required all his followers to go into ‘classes’ or small group where everyone, without exception, was held accountable for their moral behaviour on weekly basis. Those who refused to change were asked to leave. Those who wanted to advance further in their spiritual growth were gathered into ‘band,’ wherein standards of accountability were even more demanding. (The best introduction to Wesley’s pastoral method is found in D. Michael Henderson’s *A Model For Making Disciples*, 1997.) The result was the emergence of several generations of Methodists strongly marked by holiness!

Herein lies the challenge. Although many churches in our country are using small groups in the pastoral oversight today, I know of no church using small groups that emphasizes the group accountability which was central to Wesley’s discipling process. Is it any wonder why holiness is so wanting amongst us today? And unless we recover afresh the genius of Wesley’s pastoral method, Christians will never be able to grow deep in holiness and, consequently, all talk about fighting corruption will come to naught!

Special

World Council of Churches

Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World

Recommendations for Conduct

By Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue World Evangelical Alliance

Preamble

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study

this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.

A basis for Christian witness

For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.

The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ’s way by sharing the good news of God’s kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).

Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).

In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness

to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God’s continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).

Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

Principles

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ’s commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

Acting in God’s love. Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).

Imitating Jesus Christ. In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love,

giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).

Christian virtues. Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).

Acts of service and justice. Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

Discernment in ministries of healing. As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

Rejection of violence. Christians are

Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding

called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

Photograph by Issac Ng



Freedom of religion and belief. Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

Mutual respect and solidarity. Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

Respect for all people. Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

Renouncing false witness. Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they

are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

Ensuring personal discernment. Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

Building interreligious relationships. Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

Recommendations

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant,

Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, recommends that these bodies:

1. study the issues set out in this document and where appropriate formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.

2. build relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.

3. encourage Christians to strengthen

their own religious identity and faith while deepening their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.

4. cooperate with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.

5. call on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.

6. pray for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

Appendix: Background to the document

In today's world there is increasing collaboration among Christians and between Christians and followers of different relig-

ions. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See and the World Council of Churches' Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCC-IRDC) have a history of such collaboration. Examples of themes on which the PCID/WCC-IRDC have collaborated in the past are: *Interreligious Marriage (1994-1997)*, *Interreligious Prayer (1997-1998)* and *African Religiosity (2000-2004)*. This document is a result of their work together.

There are increasing interreligious tensions in the world today, including violence and the loss of human life. Politics, economics and other factors play a role in these tensions. Christians too are sometimes involved in these conflicts, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, either as those who are persecuted or as those participating in violence. In response to this the PCID and WCC-IRDC decided to address the issues involved in a joint process towards producing shared recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. The WCC-IRDC invited the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to participate in this process, and they have gladly done so.

Initially two consultations were held: the first, in Lariano, Italy, in May 2006, was entitled "Assessing the Reality" where representatives of different religions shared their views and experiences on the question of conversion. A statement from the consultation reads in part: "We affirm that, while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others' rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith."

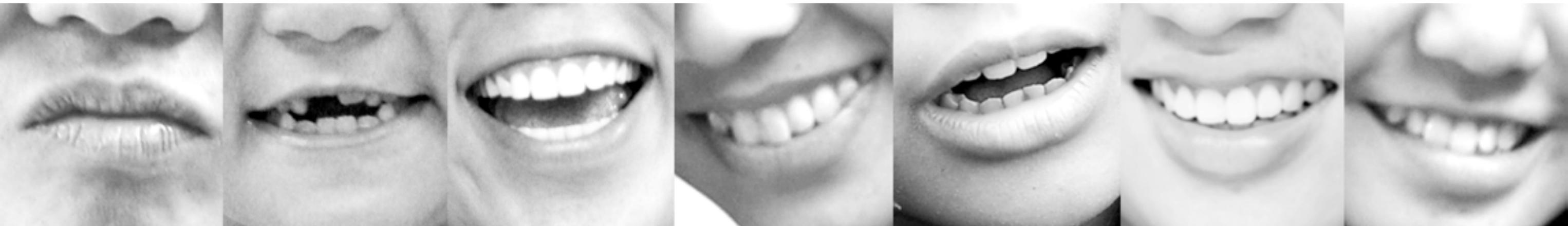
The second, an inter-Christian consultation, was held in Toulouse, France, in August 2007, to reflect on these same issues. *Questions on Family and Community, Respect for Others, Economy, Marketing and Competition, and Violence and Politics* were thoroughly discussed. The pastoral and missionary issues around these topics became the background for theological reflection and for the principles developed in this document. Each issue is important in its own right and deserves more attention that can be given in these recommendations.

The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25-28, January, 2011 and finalized this document.

说方言会“被钉十字架”？

卫理宗的“传统”不欢迎、不接纳，且否定说方言的恩赐吗？

刘世尧牧师 著



引言
马来西亚全国卫理祷告会的其中一位主要讲员，夏忠坚牧师在传讲有关“祷告与圣灵”的真理时，声称他担心在台上谈有关“说方言”的事，会“被人钉十字架”！我自问，为何夏牧师会有这担忧呢？卫理公会定说方言者“死罪”吗？卫理宗的“传统”不欢迎、不接纳，且否定说方言的恩赐吗？

新约圣经中的“说方言”

首先，基督徒当知道，新约圣经清楚启示，“说方言”（glossolalia）之恩赐在初期教会的发展中确有独特的角色。根据使徒行传的记载，五旬节圣灵降临时，在耶路撒冷的使徒和门徒们“就被圣灵充满，按着圣灵所赐的口才，说起别国的话来”（徒2:4）。这“别国的话”就是从天下各国来耶路冷过节的犹太人，或进犹太教之人的“乡谈”（徒2:5-11）。大能的圣灵在这独特的历史性时刻，赐给犹太使徒和门徒们这以十五个地区的“乡谈”来讲说上帝大作为的超然恩赐，乃因为复活的耶稣基督在升天前曾说：“人要奉祂的名悔改赦罪的道，从耶路撒冷起直传到万邦！”（路24:47）显然，这在耶路撒冷五旬节时发生的“说方言”奇事，有当下宣教布道的目的，亦有印证旧约先知所预言的属灵祝福已借拿撒勒人耶稣应验的目的（参珥2:28-32）。难

怪，彼得和十一个使徒宣告：“这正是先知约珥所说的...到那时候，凡求告主名的，就必得救！”（徒2:16-21）卫斯理约翰在其新约注解笔记中，曾为徒2:4写了以下的解释：这神迹〔即说起别国的话〕不是发生在听众的耳里（正如有些人莫名其妙地认定是如此），而是发生在说话者的口里。还有，这家庭以全世界的语言一起赞美上帝，乃预示整个世界有一天，将在适当的时候以各样的方言赞美上帝。

后来，到了使徒行传第十章，当宣教布道突破种族的藩篱，传到外邦人中时，使徒彼得亲眼见证，“圣灵的恩赐也浇在外邦人身上...因听见他们说方言，称赞上帝为大”（徒10:45-46）。在此，“说方言”印证了被犹太人视为不洁的外邦人，原来也可以借着信靠耶稣基督为主而得着圣灵内住，并因此与犹太基督徒“成为一家人”！彼得说：“这些人领受了圣灵，与我们一样！”（徒10:47）较后，在耶路撒冷会议中，彼得再次强调：“知道人心的上帝，也为他们作了见证，赐圣灵给他们，正如给我们一样...并不分他们和我们！”（徒15:8-9）卫斯理约翰在其新约注解笔记中，也指出徒10:44的重点是：“上帝的确给了清楚且令人满意的证据，即祂已经接受外邦人，如同犹太人。”

到了使徒行传第十九章，路加记载，当保罗在以弗所把基督的福音

清楚的向十二位曾受施洗约翰之洗的门徒解明后，这些门徒便奉主耶稣的名受洗，而且还在保罗按手中领受圣灵，“就说方言，又说预言”（徒19:6）。因此，说方言，无疑的，再次成为人们因信靠主耶稣

不要高举说方言的恩赐，或因说方言有“属灵的骄傲”

而领受圣灵内住，并成为基督教会一分子的印证。难怪，保罗会大胆宣告：“我们不拘是犹太人，是希利尼人，是为奴的，是自主的，都从一位圣灵受洗，成了一个身体，饮于一位圣灵！”（林前12:13）卫斯

理约翰亦根据林前12:13而兴奋的说：不拘是犹太人，是希利尼人—乃指因血统不同而保持距离的人。是为奴的，是自主的—乃指因律法和风俗不同而处于最大距离的人。我们都饮于一位圣灵—即我们却都因信同饮一个杯，饮于同一位圣灵，也就是那位首先光照我们，并继续保守在我们灵魂中之上帝生命的圣灵。

显然，若单看使徒行传第二、第十与第十九章的三个历史性个案，“说方言”似乎确是初期教会的信徒们领受圣灵的不二印证。难怪现代五旬节运动（Pentecostal Movement）的鼻祖，美国人巴罕（Charles Fox Parham, 1873-1929）就坚称，说方言是信徒领受“圣灵的洗”—他视“圣灵的洗”为圣灵大能和恩赐的充满—的必要“圣经印证”和“最初印证”（BIBLE EVIDENCE and Initial Evidence of Spirit Baptism）。但是，持这种神学结论的人忽略了使徒保罗清楚的教义性教导。他指出，说方言之恩赐的确重要—因它也是源于圣灵（林前12:7-11）—却非必要—“岂都是说方言的么？”（林前12:30中）。这位外邦使徒对有关“说方言”之恩赐的教导可归纳如下：方言是圣灵随意赐给信徒的其中一个重要的恩赐，为要叫信徒得益处（林前11:4-11）；方言必须在“爱加倍”（agape）的基要恩赐上运用

（林前12:31-13:8）；说方言是对神说，而且是在心里讲说各样的奥秘，故能造就自己（林前14:2-4）；那说方言的，当求着能繙出来，而且也当操练用悟性祷告（林前14:13-15）；不要高举说方言的恩赐，或因说方言而有“属灵的骄傲”（林前14:20-22）；在公开聚会中，由于有不通方言的人参与其中，先知讲道的恩赐和其使用是优先，以劝醒和申明会众。若有说方言的，只好两个人，至多三个人，且要轮流着说，也要有一个人繙出来；若没有人繙，就当在会中闭口，只对自己和上帝说（林前14:23-28）；要切慕作先知讲道，但也不要禁止说方言（林前14:39）。

卫斯理论“说方言”

卫斯理约翰坚信“说方言”是圣灵所赐的其中一个重要恩赐。在他的一封信件中，他如此写：所赐于使徒之教会的主要属灵恩赐有：(1) 赶鬼；(2) 讲新方言；(3) 脱离诸危险，否则必死无疑；(4) 医治病痛者；(5) 预言（即预言未来的事）；(6) 异像；(7) 异梦；和(8) 辨别诸灵。这些属灵恩赐，有的是特为使犹太人和外邦人归主而设的，就如赶鬼和说新方言；有些是特为基督徒的益处而设的，如医病、预言，和辨别诸灵。然而，全部的属灵恩赐都是为了使那些使用和看见这些

恩赐的人，“能存心忍耐，奔那摆在他们前头的路程”，得胜所有逼迫风暴的冲击，即那根深蒂固的偏见、狂怒、恶意。（Letter to the Rev. Dr. Middleton; The Works of John Wesley Vol. 10, p.16）

今日的卫理宗会友当明白，卫斯理约翰常语重心长的强调，上帝的儿女和教会须兼具圣爱的“属灵果子”（即品格生命）和发挥各样的“属灵恩赐”。前者使基督徒的生命和生活充满“众水都不能熄灭的爱火”（即能全心、全魂、全意、尽力的爱上帝及爱人如己），后者则使所有基督徒在各尽其职中，能以建立基督的身体，成全圣徒，在基督再来之前发光作盐！

结语

圣经清楚记载，“说方言”的恩赐在初期教会之宣教拓展过程中的独特重要性。使徒保罗也明确的教导“说方言”的美好，却亦明言“说方言”不是每一位上帝的儿女都必要拥有的属灵恩赐。忠于圣经启示的卫斯理约翰更不会将有“说方言”恩赐的信徒“钉十字架”。他本身在其讲章和信件中也没拒谈“说方言”的恩赐。卫斯理的关怀是，基督教会是否有累累的“属灵果子”（圣洁）和各样的“属灵恩赐”（圣工），以宣扬圣经圣洁，更新转化国家。〔刘世尧牧师为卫理神学院讲师和卫斯理研究中心主任〕

Living

And Jesus answered him saying, "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4)

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The Wisdom of Men and the Power of God. Basing ministry on the true foundation of faith

BY JOHN PIPER

The power of God

So is it not reasonable, and is it not very urgent, that in all our efforts to win and to strengthen faith, we draw people's attention not to the wisdom of men but to the power of God? And so now we must ask, what is that? Chapter 1, verse 18: "The word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." First Corinthians 1:23 reads: "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Therefore, the power of God in 1 Corinthians 2:5 in which our faith should rest is the divine power unleashed by the death of Christ to save sinners—to justify the ungodly. When Jesus was at his weakest in the agony of the Cross, God's power was at its strongest, lifting the infinite weight of

sin and condemnation off the backs of all who would believe on him. Because Jesus died and bore the punishment of our sin, all the power of God, who created the universe, was loosed for the benefit of God's elect. As Paul said in Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, surely (by his infinite power) he will give us all good things with him."

But don't make a mistake here. Just as the wisdom of God is foolishness with man, so the power of God is viewed by men as weakness. God wills it that way: chapter 1, verse 27: "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong." The divine power in which our faith rests is not the power of a May Day in Red Square; it is not the power of big business or bloc voting; it is not the power of personal savvy and cool self-assertion. The power in which saving faith rests is the power of divine grace sustaining the humble, loving heart and radiating out through weakness.

That is the inimitable power that we see in Christ—meekly, humbly, lovingly mounting the cross for our sin. The power of God's grace sustaining the humble, loving heart of Christ and radiating out through his weakness: this is the resting place of saving faith, and this is the demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Cor. 2:4).

So I commit myself as your pastor and call upon you to commit yourself as ministers in the church to act and speak in a way that will lead people to trust not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The means of Paul's ministry: suffering and weakness

Now let's shift the focus from the aim of Paul's work to the way he achieved it. I mentioned earlier that in our day, just as in Paul's day, there are peddlers of the gospel who seem to have forgotten that at the heart of our faith is "an old rugged cross, an emblem of suffering and shame," and that to trust Christ crucified is to be identi-

fied with him in the humiliation of his death, and that only in the age to come will we be glorified with him, and that while this age lasts, we walk the Calvary road. Oh, to be sure, not without joy—indescribable joy and full of the hope of glory—but always joy in weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities.

Watch out for the slick preachers who never mention these things, for whom the

good can I do for Christ?" but rather, "What good can Christ do for the world through unworthy me?" It was not, "How much power can I muster for Jesus?" but, "How much power can Jesus show through my weakness?" Remember 2 Corinthians 12:8 and following? Paul said about some special infirmity that he had: "Three times I besought the Lord about this that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My

death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Now I hope you will understand when I say: I come to you as your pastor today with weaknesses (which you will learn soon enough) and in much fear and trem-



If you try to base saving faith on the "wisdom of men," it ceases to be saving faith.

Cross is a mere token symbol, for whom the exceeding sinfulness of all our hearts is scarcely mentioned, who use power, wisdom, fame, and luxury to beckon the self-centered, middle-class American to consider himself Christian at no cost to his pride and self-sufficiency.

Contrast the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:3, "I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling." Paul would have never made it on the major networks. Remember what his enemies said of him in 2 Corinthians 10:10: "They say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech of no account.'" There is a brand of Christianity today that would have asked of Paul, "What good can he do for Christ? Why, he'll just turn everybody off. What Christ needs is shiny people, people with education, power, status, flair. Otherwise, how are we going to be able to sell Jesus to the public and get America Christianized?"

Paul's question was not so much, "What

grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' I will all the more gladly boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Paul knew that if he was to be an agent of the crucified Christ to win people to faith in him, then he had to follow the way of Calvary. That is, he had to draw people's attention not to his own power, wisdom, status, or flair, but to the power of God made perfect in weakness. He knew that if human power or beauty or intelligence or class got center stage, whatever conversions happened would not be conversions to the crucified Christ.

If it is the power of God manifest in the weakness and death of Christ that kindles and sustains saving faith (as 1 Corinthians 2:5 says), then the way to reflect that power in our lives for the sake of others is to carry the death of Jesus in our own bodies. This is how Paul described the power of his own ministry. He said in 2 Corinthians 4:7-11: "We have this treasure (of the gospel) in earthen vessels (our weak bodies) to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, always carrying in the body the

bling. Not that I distrust the power and promise of God but that I distrust myself. Not so much that I will fail—as the world counts failure—but that I might succeed in my own strength and wisdom and so fail as God counts failure.

There is a kind of paradox here. We are told: Be anxious for nothing. "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold you up with my victorious right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). Yet Paul trembles as he undertakes to preach the gospel; I tremble at the awesome responsibility of ministering the word to this church. Is it because Paul and I lack faith? Partly, yes. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.

But there is another reason why we tremble. During this age in which the sinfulness of the human heart remains even among God's people, and in which the temptation to self-exaltation and self-sufficiency is relentless, God has appointed that his servants tremble with a profound sense of insufficiency, so that we will never forget that it is God's power and not man's wisdom which creates and sustains saving faith. [On July 13, 1980, John Piper preached the following installation sermon at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis.]

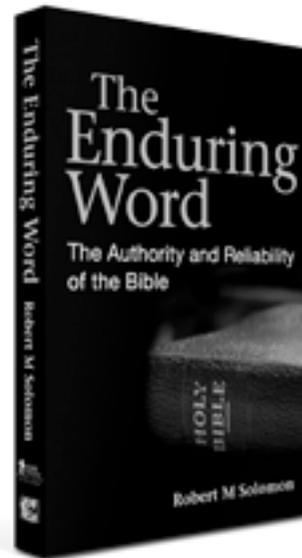
Arts

“The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” (Deut 7:6)

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Knowing the Word of God

A Review of *The Enduring Word: The Authority and Reliability of the Bible* by Robert M. Solomon



The Enduring Word

Author: Robert M. Solomon

Publisher: ARMOUR Publishing Pte Ltd

BY WOON TIEN LI

The Bible is the most important book in the world because it is God’s Word. But why are there so many versions of Bible? Why do some Bibles contain ‘extra books’? How do we know if the Bible we have today can be trusted as the Word of God?

Questions such as these often pepper conversations about the Bible. Many of us do not know much about how the Bible came about and persisted till its current form today.

Bishop Robert Solomon in his latest book *The Enduring Word* helpfully answers these and similar questions. All Christians will benefit hugely from the research and

material contained in the book. The author is exceptional at introducing historical and theoretical concepts of Bible translation to the lay Christian simply and easily yet with much scholarly insight.

The book demystifies issues such as the canon, biblical manuscripts, textual variations, base texts, and bible translation. Apart from narrating the history of the Bible, Bishop Solomon also compares and contrasts popular English versions and discusses complicated passages like the Johannine Comma. *The Enduring Word* aims to inform readers of the facts and to strengthen their confidence in the authority and reliability of the Bible – so that it continues to be read seriously and obeyed.

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The Christmas Star

“After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.” Matthew 2: 9

Around Christmas time it is common to hear some authority trying to explain the star that the wise men followed to find the infant Jesus. It is commonly explained as a comet, or the conjunction of two or more planets or stars. The question is, are these and similar theories possible?

About all you need to evaluate these theories are a Bible and a map of the Holy Land. Matthew 2:1 tells us that the wise men came from east of the Holy Land. Verses 2 and 9 further tell us that these men had seen the star indicating His birth in the eastern sky. They had not followed the star

to Jerusalem, as often depicted in Christmas cards. When they arrived in Jerusalem, we learn from Matthew 2:9 that the star they had seen in the eastern sky moved to lead them to the Christ Child.

By this time, Mary, Joseph and the Child may already have returned to Nazareth, or they may still have been in Bethlehem. No matter which was the case, the movement of the star was now from the eastern sky to either the northern or the southern sky. That is very un-starlike. In fact, the movement of the star was even more un-starlike in that it directed them to a specific house! No

comet, conjunction or other natural object of the night sky will do that.

These wise men from the East were accustomed to the sights of the night sky. They could easily identify the unusual. This star was clearly created by God to announce the birth of the Savior to the world He came to save!

Prayer: Father in heaven, You create and control powers I could never comprehend. I thank You that You led the wisemen to the infant Jesus, clearly showing that His birth was for all of us on earth. Thank You for bringing me into His kingdom. Amen.

Merry Christmas



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