

The Relevance of the Reformation. Rockingham 14th November, 2021 @ 5pm

Martin Luther's testimony: *'I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans', he wrote, 'and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "the righteousness of God", because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous...Night and day I pondered until...I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and hath gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took upon new meaning, and whereas before "the righteousness Of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to Heaven.'* FF Bruce adds: *'The consequences this new insight which Martin Luther gained from the study of Romans are writ large in history'. [F F Bruce Romans TNTC IVP 1969 page 58/9].*

19. Of the Church.

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

20. Of the Authority of the Church.

The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

11. Of the Justification of Man.

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.

12. Of Good Works.

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

31. Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross.

The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.

[These Articles are from the Articles of Religion 1562 also called the 39 Articles. They are found at the back of the Prayer Books of 1662 (BCP), 1978 (AAPB) and 1975 (APBA). Clergy are required to assent to these articles which, along with BCP are 'regarded as the authorised standard of worship and doctrine in this Church'. [The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia. Section 4].

An OUTLINE.

If we do not consider the errors of our predecessors, we shall repeat them, if we do not contemplate their victories, we rob ourselves [and our children] of our rightful heritage. [A Morgan Derham].

1. **Luther's personal conversion and assurance** [could anything be as eternally relevant as our relationship with God and its enjoyment based on reality?]

2. **The sovereign merciful work of God the Holy Spirit across Europe.** Previously in England with John Wycliffe [1329-1384] to Bohemia with John (Jan) Huss [1374-1415].

And geographically to Switzerland [Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger]. France [John Calvin]. Scotland [John Knox] and England [Wm Tyndale (Bible), Thomas Cranmer (Prayer Book) and many others including Thomas Bilney, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Hooper, John Bradford].

3. **God was at work in the world of the day to create circumstances that would prosper the Reformation.**

These included:

[i] The secularisation, misuse of wealth and power along with loss of purpose and erroneous teaching of the papacy. This led to [ii] Voices of protest from church and secular leadership. [iii] The invention of the reusable type and moveable printing press. [‘Without the advent of printing, there would [may?] have been no Reformation, and there might well have been no Protestantism either’ wrote Alister McGrath]. [iv] The rise of Christian humanism, led by the Dutch scholar Erasmus [1466-1536] with the emphasis of returning to the original documents, the establishment of straightforward interpretative principles of understanding Scripture, thus moving from the allegorical [ecclesiastical] approach to get to the natural meaning of the text [so Article 20]. This had the effect of returning the Bible to all people. Could anything be as eternally relevant as an open public domain Bible [=Word of God] that could be understood by the humble and thoughtful reader?

4. **It helps us value properly marriage, sexuality and daily work.**

A reformation catch cry was ‘everything is sacred and everything is secular’. In other words we are to live in the world, as set apart people, for the sake of the world.

This led to marriage for clergy since ministers [monks. Celibate priests and nuns] were not superior to marrieds, farmers, bankers, servants, nobility etc

The relevance of this is seen in the way:

[i] We define ourselves. Not by the kind of work, trade or profession, paid or unpaid, level of remuneration etc but by our status before God through faith in Christ alone. We see all legitimate work as a vocation [a calling]. As a calling to service of others for Christ but not for our pride, leisure, riches, status, pride [or mercifully despair]. So we are to work as well as we possibly can. Which will always transform the mundane to the Godly. Emil Brunner writing 50-70 years ago reminded us that: *there is more real culture in a truly human family without art and science than in the highest achievement of art and science on the basis of a neglected family life and degenerate sexual relations.*

[ii] If the problem at the reformation was its elevation of celibacy above the normal married sexual relationship, ours today is to reaffirm, by teaching and modelling, that we are not defined by our marital status or not, but nor are we to exult sex to the primary means of real intimacy and worth. Just as Scripture never calls any person to compulsory celibacy, nor does it suggest for a moment that sex is a compulsory activity for us to define ourselves or to find real pleasure. These are to be found in relationship with God and the whole range of non-sexual friendships available to all people, especially those who belong to the church. This will equip us for marriage and enrich our marriages [thus preparing us for marriage and for singleness]. The relevant texts include: 1 Cor 7:7, Luke 18:28-30, 1 Tim 5:1-2, 1 Thess 4:1-10, Heb 13:5-6.

[iii] This work ethic does many things, so relevant to today. These include:

- a] Enriches the mundane and unnoticed or little appreciated work thus valuing all work and honouring workers equally.
- b] Puts excellence and service above salary and titles.
- c] Thus taking pressure off the pursuit of secure/well paid above serving work.
- d] Rescues capitalism from profiteering that fails to serve the interest of maximising dividends for shareholders.
- e] Rules out gambling and encourages payment of taxes.
- f] Leads to contentment, gratitude, and generosity [note the reformation of the thief in Eph 4:28 which is not complete if [s]he remains an honest worker only] and delivering us from restlessness, envy, fear and greed. It has been said that without the gospel banking [a good and honourable service], so easily and inevitably becomes banditry!

A recommended book: The Book that Made Your World. Vishal Mangalwadi. 2011 Thomas Nelson.

Reformation quotations from Reformers.

1. **Thomas Bilney.** *After this [his conversion], the Scripture began to be more pleasant to me than honey because there I learned that all my travails [in penitential works] were a hasty and swift running out of the right way but that sinners could obtain quietness and rest when they believed in the promise of God.[John Foxe Acts and Monuments. 57]*
2. **William Tyndale.** *In believing the heart is saved from the fear of everlasting death, and made sure of everlasting life; and then being overcome with this kindness, begins to love again and to submit itself unto the laws of God, to learn them and to walk in them. Note now the order: first God gives me light to see the goodness and righteousness of the law, and my own sin and unrighteousness; out of which knowledge springs repentance....Then the same Spirit works in mine heart trust and confidence, to believe the mercy of God and his truth, that he will do as he hath promised; which belief saves me. And immediately out of that trust springs love toward the law of God again [58].*
3. **Thomas Cranmer** was known for his ability to forgive and not hold onto grudges [Shakespeare had Henry VIII put it: 'Do my Lord of Canterbury a shrewd turn, and he is your friend forever']. Better to listen to Cranmer's own reasoning. *What will you have a man do to someone that is not yet come to the knowledge of the truth of the gospel...? Shall we perhaps, in his journey coming towards us, by severity and cruel behaviour overthrow him, and as it were in his pilgrimage stop him? I do not take this to be the way to allure men to embrace the doctrine of the Gospel. And if it be a true rule of our Saviour Christ to do good for evil, then let such as are not yet come to favour our religion learn to follow the doctrine of the Gospel by our example in using them in a friendly and charitable manner [65].*
4. **Thomas Cranmer** [replying to Henry VIII]. *But, if the profession of our faith of the remission of our own sins enter within us into the deepness of our own hearts, then it must kindle a warm fire of love in our hearts towards God, and towards all others for the love of God,-a fervent mind to seek and procure God's honour, will, and pleasure in all things,-a good will and mind to help every man and to do good unto them, so far as our might, wisdom, learning, counsel, health, strength and all other gifts which we have received from God, will extend,-and, in summary, firm intent and purpose to do all that is good, and leave all that is evil. [69].*
5. **Cranmer on the essential clarity [perspicuity] of Scripture.** [i] *All Scripture is divinely inspired, etc....that whatsoever truth is necessary to be taught for our salvation, or the contrary to be reproved, whatsoever is necessary for us to do, and what to forbear and not to do, all is completely contained in the Scripture, so that a man thereby may be perfectly instructed unto all manner of goodness [Cranmer's Great Commonplaces. 84].* [ii] *The apostles and prophets wrote their books so, that their special intent and purpose might be understood and perceived of every reader; which was nothing but the edification or amendment of life of them that read or hear it [Preface to the Great Bible. 84]* [iii] *There is no thing spoken under dark mysteries in one place, but the self same thing in other places is spoken more familiarly and plainly, to the capacity of both learned and unlearned [Homily on Scripture 84].*
6. **The refreshing Bible taken to heart and believed.** [i] **John Jewel.** *But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his word, and all was changed. Error fell down, and truth stood up: men forsook their idols, and went to God. The Kings, and priests, and people were changed: the temples and sacrifices, and prayers were changed. They forsook their gods, their kings, their priests: they forsook their antiquity, customs, consent, their fathers and themselves. What power was able to work these things? What emperor by force ever prevailed so much? What strength could ever shake down so mighty idols from their seat? What hand of man could subdue and conquer the whole world, and make such mighty nations confess they had done amiss? This did the Lord bring to pass by the power of his word and the breath of his mouth? [John Jewel Works 91].* [ii] **Cranmer.** *In the Scriptures are the fat pastures of the soul [Preface to Great Bible 92].* [iii] **Katherine Parr** [the widow of Henry VIII]. *'Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I shall refresh you'. What a most gracious, comfortable, and gentle saying was this, with such pleasant and sweet words to allure his enemies to come to him? When I behold the beneficence, liberality, mercy and goodness of the Lord, I am encouraged, embolden and stirred to ask for such a noble gift as living faith.... By this faith I am assured; and by this assurance I feel the remission of my sins. This is it that maketh me bold. This is it that comforteth me. This is it that quencheth all despair.... Thus, I feel myself to come, as it were, in a new garment before God, and now by his mercy, to be taken as just and righteous [The lamentations of a Sinner 1548 p106].*

Note: All these quotes are from *Reformation Anglicanism Edited by Ashley Noll and JW Yates. Crossway 2017.*

Some Reformation Prayers from the Book of Common Prayer, 1662

1. Whit-Sunday (Pentecost)

God, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen*

2. Good Friday

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before thee for all estates of men in thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry may truly and godly serve thee; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen*

3. A General Thanksgiving

Almighty God and merciful Father, we give you hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all people. We bless you for our creation and preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such a sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be truly thankful and that we may praise you not only with our lips, but in our lives, serving you in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever. *Amen*

4. The Second Sunday in Advent

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen*

5. The Prayer of Preparation before Holy Communion

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

6. The Second Collect at Evening Prayer

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by

thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen*

7. The First day of Lent, commonly called Ash-Wednesday.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

8. Versicles and responses at Morning and Evening Prayer

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.

Answer. And grant us thy salvation.

Priest. O Lord, save the Queen.

Answer. And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Priest. Endue thy Ministers with righteousness.

Answer. And make thy chosen people joyful.

Priest. O Lord, save thy people.

Answer. And bless thine inheritance.

Priest. Give peace in our time, O Lord.

Answer. Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.

Priest. O God, make clean our hearts within us.

Answer. And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

9. After Holy Communion

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words, which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praise of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

10. The First Sunday after Easter.

Almighty Father, who has given thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification; Grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

11. The Conversion of Saint Paul.

O God, who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*