

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

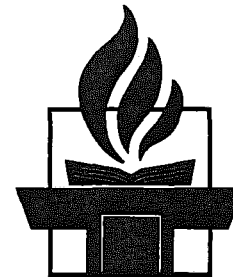
PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php

Reformation
& Revival



A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership

Volume 3, Number 4 • Fall 1994

The Lord acknowledges no place as His temple, where His word is not heard and devoutly observed.

John Calvin

We shall never see much change for the better in our churches in general until the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians.

C. H. Spurgeon

The Lord has chosen His church in order to bear testimony to the truth.

John Calvin

Every church should be engaged in continuous self-reformation.

John R. W. Stott

He cannot have God for His Father who does not have the church for his mother.

St. Augustine

A holy church is an awful weapon in the hand of God.

C. H. Spurgeon

Putting all the ecclesiastical corpses into one graveyard will not bring about a resurrection.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Obey not too quick to bury the Church before she is dead.

John Flavel

There are no little churches; all churches are the same size in God's sight.

A. W. Tozer

"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). The desire to have some insight into the present and/or past is one which drives all those who think and especially those who think in religious terms. It is clear, however, that restricted to the senses, we stand under a lonely streetlight in the midst of an encompassing darkness. The attempt to see beyond this personal cone of consciousness is one of the greatest witnesses to the fact that we are spiritual creatures.

The night about us is black as a mine. We see only that which is illuminated by our senses and modified by our personal experiences. Beyond our consciousness lies the past, the future, the spiritual universe, the real nature of those around us and, in fact, the depths of our own beings. We strive all our lives to reach beyond this state of limited understanding into a larger sphere and context for our lives.

Our age is particularly limited by the fact that the dominant philosophy admits to nothing real that lies beyond the limits of our own experience. "If I am not capable of experiencing it then it is not real; it may be real to you but unless I can experience it through my senses it has no genuine existence," is the persistent cry. In such an atmosphere those who come claiming to have gained the capacity to see deeper into themselves, the spiritual world, the physical universe, history, or the future are venerated with the awe reserved for shamans and prophets. This is why we have the present reverence given to scientists, spiritists, futurists and any other who claims to have a larger view of life.

The temptation to venerate the "knowing ones" and follow them is overpowering in this society. Each advance in knowledge brings us to a fuller realization of realms of knowledge which we never suspected and so leaves us ever more confused.

Humanism has denied that anything beyond our personal capacity to experience or verify is illusion or myth.

Taken to its logical conclusion this means that real history cannot exist, for what we have can only be the sketch of what some experienced in the past. Genuine science cannot exist because both observation and conclusions are bound to be exclusively personal. Genuine, objective knowledge is unattainable.

What have Christians done in the face of such an approach to life? They have tried to reduce revelation to a personal experience. Spiritual life is real because it can generate genuine emotions which I personally experience. Miracles are real because I can experience them first hand. Revelation is possible because I can have personal revelation or be in direct contact with those who do. Christians have accepted the presumption of the age and are trying to limit spiritual life and its expression to the confines of a severe materialism.

Neither Christ or the apostles would consent to such a limitation. Christ claimed to be the one who illuminated the whole world. Through His revelation the past, the future, the present, the heart and soul of all men everywhere were and are exposed. He is the light of the world because He provides the true basis for seeing and understanding everything. Those who have the life which gives have a growing capacity to see and understand the universe both physical and spiritual. This is one of the most offensive claims which can be made. It challenges the innate arrogance of the human spirit which wishes to be the measure of all things.

Christ said to Nicodemus: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Nicodemus, "Israel's teacher," could not understand because he did not have the life which was necessary to grasp the truths which could come only through the enlightenment which comes from such life.

Christ said to the foremost religionists of His time: "But

you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep" (John 10:26).

The problem was not with the amount of evidence available but with the lack of life and capacity of the hearers. To believe requires life and illumination which they did not have.

Paul described his ministry by saying:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:12-16).

The apostle is very clear. The message which he preached was one which could not be understood unless the hearer had spiritual life. Without that life which comes from the presence and work of God's Spirit it is impossible to grasp the gospel message. In fact the message itself seems, to the unenlightened, foolishness. The whole of the Scripture witnesses to the enlightenment which comes from God upon those who are His people. They see, they understand, they comprehend what is incomprehensible to the mind of the unenlightened.

This is a common claim of those who on one basis or another claim to be "the illuminati," the knowing ones. The difference between the Christian's claim to enlightenment and understanding the other "illuminati" is that this understanding and insight do not come from a superior intellect, education or occult powers. This understanding is from life

given by God which results in the supernatural capacity to understand God and His world through Christ the one who is the source of the life which enlightens the knowledge which informs that life.

At the present time Christians are trying by all means to prove the reality of Christianity to those who have no senses which can register their proofs. Knowledge is limited to the sensors which we have to measure the world around us. Human beings in their natural state are separated from the life of God and have no sensors by which accurate measurements can be made. They float in the cocoon of their own limited and distorted consciousness, unable to absorb the knowledge of God. To try and convince the nerve dead of sensation in any area is a hopeless task.

We have a message which God uses miraculously to bring life to the dead. That message is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christ the light of the world, the illuminator and the life giver. Let us speak it clearly, in the idiom of our generation, depending upon God's supernatural power embodied in that message to bring life and enlightenment.

Christians are the true illuminati. We have life for which we can take no credit and feel no superiority. We have a life and light which we are called to propagate as agents of the kingdom of light which brings freedom and life. Let us approach our mission and our living from this understanding. We are called to live by supernatural energy and preach a message charged with supernatural, life-giving power.

Author

Don Cook is pastor of Beresford Baptist Church, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, and serves as agent and representative for Reformation & Revival Ministries, Canada.
