



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

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Where No Vision is...

Modern society has everything to live with and nothing to live for. Touch a button and we talk to friends all over the world. Australia and Hong Kong are as close to London by phone as Clacton-on-Sea. Touch another button and the man with a big enough aerial can watch television programmes shown in New York or Honolulu. Press a switch and your letter goes by fax right across the world in less time than it takes to read it. The shops bulge with every commodity imaginable to make life easy and pleasant.

The strange fact is however that life is far from easy or pleasant for modern society. Something more than fast foods and fast pleasures is essential if society is to find happiness. Man's machines mock him. When he has mastered the skills necessary to manipulate computers and word processors the old boredom returns. An instinct deep down in man tells him that there is a 'something' which he needs to find and which all his modern appliances cannot supply.

Society, if we are not mistaken, is in a perishing state in spite of all the political rhetoric to the contrary. In communities where marriage and morality are becoming ever rarer; where people scarcely read and scarcely think; where pleasures are snatched at random to relieve the monotony and drudgery of life; where real love, or parenthood, or hope, or religion are virtually non-existent – in such communities it can scarcely be said the people *live*. Even the educated of our modern world seem content to remain, so far as eternal things are concerned, in a permanently vegetative state.

Modern society is perishing at a great rate. Stand on the street corner of any town; read any newspaper; speak to any typical citizen and the fearful thought comes home to the heart of any spiritual person: "I live in a valley of death. The people who are moving about all around us are dead while they live. Modern society is living in a fool's paradise."

Well does Solomon tell us that "Where no vision is the people perish" (Prov 29:18). The plight of modern society is diagnosed correctly in that one brief sentence. People are sadly visionless. They do not have any ideals to excite them. Consequently there is nothing to fight for, nothing to aim at, nothing to lift...

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the heart to inspired effort or heroic self-sacrifice. Life has become devoid of purpose because it has become devoid of meaning. The word processor and the television cannot tell man what he needs to know as matters of first importance: Why am I here? Who put me here? Who is He? What does He want me to be and to do? What is to happen to me at last?

The history of our world over the past century and more is a record of vision-breakers who have smashed the vision which our civilisation was earlier based on. Charles Darwin was one of the pioneers. He stood in the forefront of a movement to overthrow the great vision of a God as the Creator of all things and ruler over all things in wisdom, power and love. Darwin was followed by men like Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley who had no faith in anything that God has said but who, along with a host of like-minded agnostics and humanists, worked to replace "the heavenly vision" which our fathers before had by a this-worldly materialism.

But the popular Victorian illusion of an ever-improving humanity was shattered by the grim realities of the First World War. The humanist's vision of a tomorrow made better, not by God but by impersonal forces of 'Nature', received a fatal blow when our war-wounded returned from the trenches and told stories of mud, machine guns and massacre on the battle lines of Northern France. Then came the bleak age of the 'Modern Poets'. They were our century's heralds of a visionless pessimism. Whilst retaining the secular mind of the Victorian humanists they added to the humanist dream the dark colours of despair: "Why go to church to worship a God who allows men to die in a sea of mud and bullets?"

By the 1920s and '30s, people were voting with their feet against the religion of their fathers: "God has let us down. The scholars no longer believe in the Bible which our fathers lived by. To go to church is to perpetuate the delusion of an ignorant antiquity.

By the '40s and '50s of this century the churches were beginning to feel the effects of this widespread drift away from the gospel. Christianity, so it was being popularly portrayed, was outdated. The vision of God and His gospel was becoming dim everywhere. Hollywood did very well out of it. It was the age of the cinema. Faithful souls still clung to the Bible but the masses were going in a different direction.

The generation which lived through the Second War made up its mind that '*their* children were going to have good things.' This meant a good education and also more money, freedom and happiness than had been known by earlier generations this century. As a result the rising post-war youth was well catered for in material things. Generally speaking, people now 'had never had it so good.' But material affluence left this maturing generation low in moral and spiritual understanding. By the 1960s the old morality, remnant of an earlier Protestant heritage, crumbled under the pressure extended by human lust to enjoy the...

baser passions of which men were before rightly ashamed.

The 1960s witnessed a quantum leap from decency to decadence in the moral realm. The West passed through a veritable paradigm shift in its ethical outlook. The rights of God over the consciences of men were now unashamedly rejected. In their place it was being openly asserted that it is *man* who has all the rights. This was the crossover point. A "new morality" was emerging on all sides. Men have their *rights*, it was said. Women, too, discovered they had *rights*.

It was the age of nostalgic popular music. The artists were young and had no time for Jesus Christ – and were not afraid to say so. Those who believed God or who followed the old standards were 'square,' presumably misfits in this brave new and amoral world. It was felt to be wonderful to be alive (probably you were young and could enjoy the new freedom which was breaking down all the old barriers). There was now no crime except to be old-fashioned and sourly moral. Everyone who was anyone drank, danced and tried drugs.

But sin (not at the time a popular term for this new lifestyle) is a monster lying at the door. No sooner does man abandon the way of God than he becomes the tragic victim of his own newly-invented pleasures. Unheard of disease now struck our race. Those who play with fire must burn their fingers. So it came to pass at the very moment when anything and everything was to be an orgy of pleasure that our sad visionless society found that pleasure sought in the wrong way is a scorpion whose sting is in its tail. All the combined resources of rich nations could find no remedy for an insidious new form of death which reduced a strong and healthy young man to a living shadow, vulnerable to every passing virus. The vision of unlimited pleasure was proving to end in nightmare.

It is beyond our powers to know whether our sad, visionless and deeply lost society is to sink still farther into the morass before it cries to God for help. We fervently hope that it will not sink lower. Should God's hand permit society to slide still farther away from the light and truth of the Bible into yet deeper darkness, we shudder to imagine what manner of society it will become.

What we see and know to be happening all around us is grief enough to Christian minds. With deep gratitude we thank God that the apostasy is not total, the eclipse of the gospel not complete, the abandonment to sin not universal. But the outlook must surely be bleak if our nations do not receive grace to see the vision which once made them the great nations they were by God's grace.

But there is no way out apart from the old vision which God's Word sets before us: God upon the throne; man a sinner in need of gospel mercy; Christ a loving, living Saviour ready to "save to the uttermost all who come" to him by faith. This vision is what raises men and nations to do exploits worthy of undying remembrance. This is the vision which upheld Luther at Worms as he faced a frowning world. This is the vision which kept Calvin from a quiet scholarly...

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seclusion and nerved him to brave a thousand ills at Geneva. This is the vision which constrained the Oxford martyrs, Latimer and Ridley, to 'light their candle' in Reformation England. This vision was before the eyes of those brave Founding Fathers who sailed in 1620 to New England. It drove out Carey to India; Livingstone to Africa; Judson to Burma... and a host of others to the remotest boundaries of the world.

Without this gospel vision nations perish. When society loses or else rejects the truth of the gospel it slides backward into the vices which disgraced the old world before the Flood and which called down God's fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. If these societies had known and loved the gospel they would, said Christ, have remained unto that hour (Mt 11:23). The gospel vision is what integrates society, gives it cohesion, unity and purpose. The nation that worships God in truth rides high, conquers its enemies, plants its influence in every corner of the earth, makes its mark in history for ever and for good.

Just so long as any society of men and women is ready to hear God's Word and to shape its life in conformity to it, repenting of sin and trusting in Christ, it is safe. It may be scoffed at as 'primitive', 'old-fashioned' or 'out of date' but it will not lack help from above: "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." These favours are so because his "eyes ... see the King [Christ] in his beauty;" they "behold the land that is very far off" (Is 33:16-17).

Never perhaps in our history have we been in greater need of being reminded of the words of Solomon: "Where no vision is the people perish" (Prov 29:18). It does not take prophetic skill to see that modern society is deeply sick. No simple remedy can put us back on the way to health and recovery. The reshuffling of government ministers cannot do it. Nor the re-drawing of national boundaries. Nor the introduction of new laws – though some new laws (or better still, some of our old laws) are greatly needed. The plain truth is that the vision of God and of Christ has perished from our national leaders almost completely. If we are not vigilant it could slip away even from the institutional churches too.

Modern society is drugged and poisoned with atheism, scepticism, humanism, modernism, postmodernism, nihilism. Men cannot *live* in our modern society but are stifled and smothered. What is called for is a new "clean air" act. Let in the oxygen of truth and pure religion into men's homes and lives. From the palace to the poor man's attic the nation needs fresh air to breathe and fresh ideas to feed on.

It is time to ring out the old and to ring in the new. To all who have ears to hear we say: ring out the old irreligion, superstition and ungodliness and ring in the gospel of Christ in their place. Let society hear in clear plain language that God is ready to forgive all sin and blasphemy, that heaven and glory are freely offered to all who will repent and come to Christ.

A new millennium looms up before us. It is time to abandon the old visionless paths which have led our civilisation nowhere. The true vision is that which shows us the Lamb upon the throne and all the heavenly host crowning him with many crowns. The ennobling vision is that which points sinners to the cross of Christ and promises peace with God through the blood of Jesus. This vision once flashed powerfully upon the minds of men all over Europe and made it a place of enlightenment to all nations. The vision needs to be seen by us all again, not in Europe only but throughout *all* nations: Jesus Christ is Lord!

Blessed will be the man whom God raises up to preach with great power to a new millennium and to tell men of a Saviour's grace and love. Meanwhile, blessed are they who persevere in this task in the cloudy day. Sowers and reapers in gospel work are at last to rejoice together (Jn 4:36). After all, only the gospel vision is the truth.

Rev Maurice J. Roberts
(Adapted from *The Christian's High Calling [Banner of Truth Trust, 2000], 2-9*)



YAF outing to Hyde Park on 3 November 2007

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

CHURCH THEME: WALK IN THE NEWNESS OF LIFE (Romans 6:4)

Our **worship services** begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm**.

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

| Worship Services | | | WELCOME |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Morning | Today: 04/11/2007 | Next Week: 11/11/2007 | We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We specially welcome Xing Zhang, Victor Loi, Ellen O'Shea and Dominic Boon to the morning worship service last Lord's Day. |
| <i>Chairman:</i> | Jonathan Kim | John Poh | |
| <i>Preacher:</i> | Pr Mok Chee Cheong | Pr Mok Chee Cheong | |
| <i>Message:</i> | The Consummation of Salvation | What Shall I Do? | |
| <i>Text:</i> | Titus 2:13 | Acts 2:37 | |
| <i>Organist:</i> | Anthony | Yanning | |
| Evening | | | |
| <i>Chairman:</i> | John Poh | Jonathan Kim | |
| <i>Preacher:</i> | Pr Mok Chee Cheong | Pr Mok Chee Cheong | |
| <i>Message:</i> | The Whole Burnt Offering | Servant of the LORD | |
| <i>Text:</i> | Leviticus 1:1-17 | Exodus 14:31 | |
| <i>Pianist:</i> | Grace Lim | Joy | |
| Other Duties | | | NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS |
| | Today: 04/11/2007 | Next Week: 11/11/2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Worship: This month's family worship (and joint YAF meeting) will be held at Joy Blundell and Grace Lim's apartment on 09 Nov 07 at 7.30pm. Those who are interested to join in, please inform Pr Mok. Also for those who would like to open up their homes for family worship in December, please approach Pr Mok. • Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Please note that there will be no prayer meeting and bible study on 10 Nov 07. • Memory Verse for 3rd Quarter: Please note that the deadline for the review is Nov 2007. • DHW Lessons: Please note that DHW lessons are held at the fellowship hall immediately after every morning worship service. • Road Closure: Please take note that the road along Summerfield Avenue will be closed between 29 Oct 07 and 17 Nov 07 due to water works. |
| <i>Ushers</i> | Evelyn/Wah Soon | Daniel/Joyce | |
| <i>Sunday Sch:</i> | Carol | Esmeralda | |
| <i>Lunch:</i> | Volunteers | Constance | |
| <i>Washing-up:</i> | Volunteers | Volunteers | |
| <i>Bible Study:</i> | DHW - Genesis | DHW - Genesis | |
| Appointments of the Week | | | |
| Fri 09 Nov | 7:30 pm | Young Adults Fellowship: YAF Meeting cum Family Worship | |
| Sat 10 Nov | 4.00 pm | Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: No meeting | |
| Last Week's Worship Service Collections | | | |
| Offering: £428.52 | | Lunch: £28.50 | |
| Memory Verse | | | |
| <p><i>Previous Week (Oct 07 Wk 4): Romans 10:9</i></p> <p>That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.</p> <p><i>This Week (Nov 07 Wk 1): John 14:1-3</i></p> <p>Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.</p> | | | |