

PROTESTANT REVEILLE

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APOSTLE OF AFRICA

David Livingstone (born 19th March 1813)

Bicentennial

“Dr Livingstone I presume? Stepping out of the jungle gloom into the midday sun.”

[The Moody Blues – In Search of a Lost Chord (1968).]

The British rock band has added its own spin to the famous greeting of news reporter and explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, to David Livingstone, at Ujiji near Lake Tanganyika on 10th November 1871.

Livingstone was rated the greatest man of his age by the pioneer in nursing, Florence Nightingale, “the lady with the lamp”. But when in his latter years the missionary explorer sensed he was somewhat out of favour in his native Britain, his response was to follow his heart: “I do not know if I am to go on the shelf or not. If so, I make Africa my shelf.”

2013 marks the bicentennial of Livingstone’s birth in Blantyre, Scotland. The London Missionary Society (LMS) agent has sometimes been misrepresented as an aimless colonial explorer; his reputation being based on Stanley’s understated words, and for his discovery of the Victoria falls – ‘the smoke that thunders’ – one of the seven natural wonders of the world, and named after his queen.

Others see Livingstone through the mist of time, as a forerunner of Allan Quatermain, the character created by author Rider Haggard in his classic, *King Solomon’s Mines*. The far more likely real-life inspiration behind this “pot-shot” hero, is however the hunter and adventurer, Frederick Courtney Selous!

Africa Calling

Livingstone certainly did not indulge in merely meandering through ‘the green hills of Africa’, as Ernest Hemmingway portrayed the verdant and mysterious continent a century later. His steps were measured and noble, “the geographical feat is only the beginning of the enterprise”. The servant of Jesus was motivated by a more radical and higher purpose. “David Livingstone arrived in Africa in 1840 with two goals, to explore the continent and to end the slave trade.”

Born into a “poor and godly family” – not “poor but godly”, as he was at pains to point out -- the young David learned discipline at the local cotton mill, prior to his medical training in Glasgow. His missionary preparation in England included an inauspicious preaching appointment for a sick minister: “He took his text, read it out very deliberately, and then – then – his sermon had fled! Midnight darkness came upon him, and he abruptly said: ‘Friends, I have forgotten all I had to say’, and hurrying out of the pulpit, he left the chapel.” Livingstone was to prove to be a man who spoke through his actions! “Fire, water, stone walls, would not stop Livingstone in the fulfilment of a recognised duty.”

The call to Africa came in the unlikely form of a gardener turned pioneer missionary: Robert Moffat, his fellow Scot, who having sown the seed of the Word of God at Kuruman and surrounding regions, visited Britain while Livingstone was still training in London. His

intention was to go to China, which was then unfortunately involved in the Opium War. The graphic rallying call of Moffat hit home: "... specifying the vast plain to the North, where I've sometimes seen the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been." Livingstone's call to Africa became as real as the apostle Paul's Macedonian call that opened up Europe to the Gospel. It was the voice of God and not of man!

Apostle of Africa

Henceforth the lives of Moffat and Livingstone were intertwined: They had a common love and sympathy for Africa's people. However, it has been suggested that Livingstone was closer in his ideals to the resident superintendent of the LMS, Dr. John (and Jane) Philip of Union Chapel, Cape Town: "This was John Philip, whose inflexible zeal and unflinching courage had secured emancipation of the Hottentots from 'slavery' in 1828, and the first Charter of Justice in the Colony." Philip named his youngest son, Wilberforce Buxton, after William Wilberforce, the friend of John Newton, and the voice of the slave abolition party! Such were the formative influences on the young and restless missionary: "I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward."

Julie Davidson observes that it was Livingstone's marriage to Mary Moffat jnr that became Livingstone's diplomatic passport to the interior. "Mary Livingstone is a whisper in the thunderclap of her husband's reputation. Yet her own feats as a traveller in Africa are unique." The harsh and dangerous elements that the expeditions encountered occasioned strong words from the formidable Mary Moffat snr, the "beloved partner" of Robert. The children were exposed to thirst and fever, and Livingstone himself was attacked by a lion! Thankfully, his family were not at this Mabatso encounter!

Young Mary died of acute malaria at the age of 41. She is buried on the banks of the Zambezi at Chupanga, central Mozambique, her grave hardly known and sadly neglected.

Livingstone envisaged the Zambezi River as "God's Highway" to the interior. Though he could be considered a failure, with Sechele, paramount chief of the Bakwana tribe as his only enduring convert, the pioneer opened up Africa's heart to "Christianity and commerce", and confronted the slave traders.

Other prominent chiefs that Livingstone inter-acted with and influenced, were: Chief Sekomi, father of the eminent Khama dynasty of the future Protectorate of Bechuanaland (that the missionary explorer's peer, John McKenzie, pioneered in response to the likes of Rhodes' ambitions); Mosilikatse, the "terrible marauder" of the Matabele, who had fled from his Zulu king, Shaka; Sebituane of the Makololo tribe over whose death he grieved; and that chief's son, Sekewtu, who retained his respect for the foreigner with tangible humanity.

On his Knees

Dr David Livingstone died on 27th April, 1873, at 60 years of age. He was found on his knees, with his head buried in his hands on the pillow by his faithful Susi and Chuma. To the request that the servant of Africa be buried near Lake Bangweolo (Zambia), Susi replied, "No, no – very big man."

His heart was buried under a mvula tree nearby and his body was borne hundreds of kilometres to the sea, later to be interred in Westminster Abbey, London.

It is indeed fitting that Livingstone's heart remained in the land of his calling, Africa:

- "As the denouncer of the slave trade he was the fiery servant of humanity". Sin is however the real slavery, and it is universal.
- He firmly believed that the continent's resources should not be seen in mere economic terms. "Always remember man before business; because man is your business!" [Advice given to Dr Paula Hamilton in *To a Different Drum*.]
- While Britain's latest census reveals a nominal Christian population of 58% -- down from 71% in a decade! -- "Africa will soon have the highest concentration of Christianity in the world". *The Blessing of Africa*. (IVP Academic).

Bibliography:

The Life of Livingstone – Blaikie / *David Livingstone – his Life and Letters* – George Seaver / *Three Martyrs* SPCK / Wikipedia / Conservapedia / *Looking for Mrs Livingstone* – Julie Davidson / *Finding Mary* – Getaway Magazine (This recent article prompted former W. Cape police commissioner, Lt. Gen. Nic Acker, to bring the sad state of Mary Livingstone's grave to the attention of the British Consulate.)

-- Craig Hounsom: (Cape Town Union Congregational Church)

Livingstone: Quotes and Comments:

Missionary Call:

- “Jesus was the first missionary.” *DL*.
- “In the glow of love which Christianity inspires I soon resolved to devote my life to the alleviation of human misery.” *DL*.
- “It is my desire to show my attachment to the cause of Him who died for me, by devoting my life to His service.” *DL*.

Commitment:

- “Now, lad, make religion the every day business of your life, and not a thing of fits and starts; for if you do, temptation and other things will get the better of you.”
David Hogg's deathbed advice to the boy, David Livingstone.
- “The sweat of one's brow is no longer a curse when one works for God; it provides a tonic to the system, and is actually a blessing.” *DL*.
- “The salvation of men ought to be the chief desire and aim of every Christian.” *DL*.
- "I never made a sacrifice." *DL's comment on comparing God's giving to his own.*

Prayer:

- “I was impressed by the fact that he never prayed without the petition that we might imitate Christ in all His imitable perfections”. *Mr Moore, his fellow student in London.*
- “They were direct and simple just like a child asking a father for what he needed”.
On Livingstone's family prayers.
- “He prayeth well who loveth well.” *Coleridge -- In DL's possessions at his death.*
- “So runs my dream, but what am I?
An infant crying in the night
An infant crying for the light
And with no language, but a cry.” *From Tennyson's "In Memoriam"*
Above documents were with his friend Spurgeon's sermon, "Accidents, not Punishment" (Luke 13: 1-5) next to which Livingstone wrote: "Very Good DL."

Advice:

- "Try again!" *DL's life motto.*
- “No good result is ever attained without long, patient effort. Depend upon it, a kind word or deed is never lost”. *DL*.
- “I know that you hate all that is mean and false. May God make you good and to delight in doing good.” *DL to his daughters, prior to his last trip to Africa.*
- “Fear God and work hard.” *DL to his hometown boys (in Blantyre, Scotland).*

Misrepresentation:

- “He must set aside the feelings and apparent interest of those dearest to him; duty was above everything else”. *Blaikie, on DL*.
- “Some of his brethren did not hesitate to charge him with being motivated by worldly ambition. This was the more trying, for sometimes he suspected his own motives. Others dwelt on what was due to his family. Moreover his own predilections were all for a quiet life”. *Blaikie, on DL*.
- “I got two of my best friends by being evil spoken of, for they found me so different from what they had been led to expect, that they befriended me more than they otherwise would have done”. *DL*.

Africa:

- “The day for Africa is yet to come.... Our Golden Age is not in the past, but in the future, in the good time coming yet for Africa and the world’. *DL*.
- “I beg to direct your attention to Africa. I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to try make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you”. *DL at the Senate-House, Cambridge*.

--- Craig Hounsom (Compiled)

Bibliography: *The Life of David Livingstone / Three Martyrs* SPCK

A SHORT HISTORY OF CAPE TOWN UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Bicentennial

This church, under earlier names, has been a part of South Africa’s history for nearly 200 years. On 2nd May 1813, ninety members of a Calvinist Society met under Rev George Thom and constituted themselves into South Africa’s first Free church. It really started as a soldiers’ church, for 63 of them belonged to a Sutherland Highlanders regiment. It did not become a Congregational church until 1820, when Dr John Philip, upon becoming pastor, insisted that government should be by resolution of the church meeting. Dr Philip’s wife, Jane, ran the administration of the London Missionary Society from Union church.

In 1821, the church moved to Church Square. If you look near the entrance to the Graaff’s Trust Building, you will see a circular blue plaque reading “Site of Union Chapel. First Congregational Church in S A. 1821.” For about 38 years this was the centre of South African Congregationalism. Later on, in about 1859, the church moved to Caledon Square. From Church and Caledon Squares other chapels and churches were established, among them Claremont (1840), Sea Point (1893), Observatory (1894), and Rondebosch (1903).

Many ministers of the church occupy a notable place in South African history, including Dr John Philip, Rev. James Cameron, Rev. T D Philip, and Rev. John Mullineux (MP). When in Cape Town, Dr David Livingstone of London Missionary Society (LMS) fame, and son-in-law of Robert and Mary Moffat, would preach at the desk that is now our Communion table. One prominent member of the church was actually invited to serve as prime minister; this was Saul Solomon, founder of the Cape Argus.

Unconnected with the Caledon Square church was the Trinity Congregational Church, founded by Rev Alexander Pitt in January 1898. Originally in Queen Victoria St (where St. Martini Gardens stand today), it later moved to 55A Kloof Street (the church now facing the

Lifestyle Centre). In January 1907 the Trinity and Caledon Square churches were united under Rev Pitt as the Union Congregational Church. Soon there was a clear need for larger premises, and the present site, opposite the iconic Mount Nelson hotel, was acquired. In April, 1925, the present church was inaugurated by Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone (after whose husband, the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa, the suburb of Cape Town is named).

**Cape Town Union Congregational Church celebrates its
Bicentennial (200th Anniversary) on 2nd May, 2013.**

**The Sunday service of the 5th May (9:30 a.m.) will be
the celebration of God's faithfulness.**

Footnotes:

(1) *Bethelsdorp is also seen as the oldest Congregational church in SA. Union was in existence long before being formally constituted as Congregational in 1821.*

(2) *There are suggestions that Livingstone was called as minister to Cape Town Union Congregational Church. Blaikie writes: "The office was offered to Livingstone who rejected it with no little emphasis – not for a moment would he think of it, nor would he preach the Gospel within any other man's (i.e. Dr John Philip's) line." His rejection was apparently based partly on 2 Corinthians 10: 16.*

The above comment has been challenged with a quote of Livingstone's saying that it was his associate, Ross, who received the invitation. However, there may well be truth in Blaikie's assertion: Union, it has been claimed, checked out the Scot's (i.e. DL's) theology!

(3) *Dr John Philip resided (1821–1846) next to the old Union chapel in Church Square, Cape Town, behind the landmark NGK's Groot Kerk.*

-- Craig Hounsom

Comment by the editor: The Free Church Legacy:

The Protestant Reformation (31st October 1517) under Martin Luther, gave fresh impetus to freedom of religion and conscience. The yoke of papal tyranny was broken by the Word of God, the Bible, and replaced by the easy and light yoke of Jesus.

British Nonconformity, a century later, tended to have a close affinity to Ulrich Zwingli of Zurich, and particularly John Calvin, the French reformer of Geneva, who had contact with future leaders, such as John Knox of Scotland. This religious revolution resisted ecclesiastical monopoly, and state control of religion, loosely known as Erastianism.

Also known as Dissenters and Puritans, Nonconformity included the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists -- the latter two are often both referred to as Independents, e.g. John Bunyan of *Pilgrim's Progress* fame. It is indeed true that "Congregationalism is more easily identified as a movement than a single denomination." (Wikipedia)

The impact on democracy in Europe, and the Pilgrim Fathers of the USA are part of the legacy of the Free Church. Its missionary heritage, though not as old as the Moravians, has changed the lives of people from all continents, including Africa. Nelson Mandela started school at the local Wesley mission school.

Will the churches continue with the Great Commission so lovingly promoted by the likes of Dr. Andrew Murray of the NGK, and the English and German speaking churches that have spread the Gospel here? "The spirit of the Reformation, which was on the side of freedom and simplicity, and the return of Christianity to its source, had in England soon been diverted by political needs."

Bibliography: *Cromwell*: J. Buchan / Wikipedia / www.ctucc.co.za

Baar Statement – Bizarre Consequences

Jesus' 'Great Commission' contradicted

Today Christians in almost all parts of the world live in religiously plural societies. As their daily lives are increasingly affected by other faiths, the Church is looking for new ways of understanding and interpreting community.

The German liberation theologian Hans Küng said: *“There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.”* (1) This word has meant a great deal to the *World Council of Churches*, and in 1971 the *WCC* established a programme of *“Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.”* This programme does not aim at promoting the *Creation or Cultural Mandate* (Genesis 1:28), or the *Great Commission* (Matthew 28:18-20), but it encourages the Churches to accept other religions.

Interfaith prayer, interfaith worship, and interfaith action have become commonplace. The New South Africa, for instance, was conceived in terms of a multi-cultural society. The former ostensibly Christian orientation was replaced by a secular dispensation. All religions were placed on an equal footing. Christian observance has been played down in public life and its teachings generally removed from state schools. Though the basis of much of the political unrest was removed, viz, Apartheid, South Africa has been struck by a wave of immorality and disorder.

The Baar Statement

Most people are unaware that this development started with the *World Council of Churches*. In January 1990, in Baar, near Zürich, the *WCC* completed a four-year study programme entitled *“My Neighbour’s Faith and Mine – Theological Discoveries through Interfaith Dialogue.”*

“Dialogue with people of living faiths,” says the *Baar Statement*, *“is to be understood as the common adventure of the churches.... We cannot set limits to the saving power of God.... Where there is truth and wisdom in their (the non-Christians’) teachings, and love and holiness in their living... this is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God is with them as they struggle, along with us, for justice and liberation.”*

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, a former associate of the *World Council of Churches*, entirely agrees, saying: *“The Holy Spirit is not limited to the Christian Church. For example, Mahatma Gandhi, who is a Hindu... the Holy Spirit shines through him.”* (2) One of his best friends is the Dalai Lama, who is regarded by many as a living god.

In its *Baar Statement* the *WCC* says: *“The God we know in Jesus Christ may encounter us also in the lives of our neighbours of other faiths.... We... need to move beyond a theology which confines salvation to the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ.”* God’s *“presence and power cannot be limited to any one community or culture.... We affirm unequivocally that God the Holy Spirit has been at work in the life and traditions of peoples of living faiths....”*

In the past decades, these interfaith ideas have filtered down into the Churches, indeed even into the prayer liturgy of this year’s *Women’s World Day of Prayer*. One of the intercessory prayers reads: *“We pray for families where one or both parents are of foreign origin and who recognise their difference and create a shared life. We pray with them as they integrate their religious and cultural values.”* (3)

Such integration is to *“deepen our own life of faith”* and give us a *“fuller understanding and experience of truth.”* The *Baar Statement*, then, is a typical example of how Christianity can be distorted with *“Christian”* arguments. It blatantly denies the First Commandment: *“I am the Lord your God.... You shall have no other gods before Me.”* (Exodus 20: NKJV). It also denies the uniqueness of Christ: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the*

Father except through Me.” (John 14:6: NKJV). And what about the Trinity? “I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper... the Spirit of truth....” (John 14: 16 & 17: NKJV)

By claiming that Christ is inherent in unbelievers, that they are saved without knowing Him, and that His Spirit is guiding them, is blasphemy. Though the *Baar Statement* is now twenty-three years old, its principles are very much alive. They have permeated the world's Churches and affected the whole of society.

We must always remember that the *World Council of Churches* was originally conceived as a spiritual complement to the *United Nations Organisation*, and that through its *National Councils of Churches* (in our case the SACC) it is diligently establishing the UN's multicultural and religiously plural One World system.

We pray that Bible-believing Christians will affirm anew the First Commandment, the uniqueness of Christ, and the Holy Trinity.

And we also hope that the Church will recommit itself to the infallible Word of God and to a pure and wholesome Reformation Doctrine.

-- Dorothea Scarborough

Footnotes:

1. Interfaith Dialogue, Wikipedia.
2. St Alban's Cathedral, Pretoria, 23.11.78, The Archbishop and the Bible, GDL 1989
3. The 2013 title is: *“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”* The prayers focus on migration and multiculturalism.

Editor's Comment: PASA supports “freedom of religion” by the state, and condemns the death penalty imposed on Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani (subsequently acquitted), for converting to Christianity! The WCC's naïve attempt to palliate other religions, by contradicting Jesus' exclusive claims, will certainly not be reciprocated by them.

For your diary:

Reformation Sunday: 27th October, 2013

Remember our Protestant Heritage every day!

Book Review:

Finish The Mission

Editors: John Piper and David Mathis (Crossway)

“Excellent, motivational, challenging, but if you are looking for a how to do mission, then you will be disappointed with this inspiring book. This is because the work really points one back to the instruction manual we all need to read, the Holy Spirit-inspired Word of God – the Bible. And it is there that we find the answer to the challenge of finishing the mission: Matthew: 28: 18 & 19. Empowered by the Spirit is the how.” [Evangelist: Brett Viviers]

“Finish the Mission – bringing the Gospel to the un-reached and unengaged.”

Well, the full title is a breath of fresh air against the old call for a moratorium on missions (well answered by Prof. Peter Beyerhaus in *Bangkok 73*), and the current pseudo-

ecumenical movement's flirtation with, and embracement of pluralism, i.e. all roads lead to Rome, or heaven!

Though the book is a bit glib and disjointed, due to its having a few contributors, it is racy, popular and reasonably solid all at once. The introduction, while talking of the West as increasingly 'post-Christian' (and now 'post-Christendom'), shows the changing demographics of professing Christians:

- Europe is in a state of spiritual decline, while Latin America and Africa are embracing Christ, almost half -- 360 million -- of the African population, in fact. "This may mark the largest shift in religious affiliation in world history".
- Also, the number of practising Christians in China is nearing that of the USA!

Concerning our Lord's Prayer, "Your (Thy) Kingdom Come", on the Middle East, Michael Oh does not mention God's ancient people, the Jews or Israel. However, the apostle Paul clearly wrote of the restoration of Israel: "... blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." (Romans: 11:25)

A conversation with the book's contributors is included toward the end.

The appendix includes an interesting quote from Robert Coleman's, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (1963): "If Billy Graham had been a pastor".

The gist of the response is that the evangelist would have gathered a small group of men around him, not unlike our Master and His twelve, who in turn would disciple others. Wise advice, but the question is -- what of the role of deacons or elders?

It is clear that the Risen and Ascended Son of God, has not cancelled missionary enterprise. We need to *Finish The Mission* in the power of the blessed Holy Spirit. "Thy Kingdom Come"!

-- Craig Hounsom

Finish The Mission

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NGK Dominees Speak Out ...

In view of various un-Biblical pronouncements, we as members hereby declare the following:

1] We declare that the Bible as a whole and in all its different parts is the infallible Word of God. We confess, as stated in article 3 of the Belgic Confession (BC) “this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but *men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*”, as the apostle Peter says.

[2 Pet. 1:21. See also: 2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 1:2; Deut. 4:2, and art. 7 of the BC.]

To understand the Word, we believe that Scripture interprets Scripture.

2] In accordance with the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, we believe that God is a Trinity: One God, eternally existing in three Persons distinguishable as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[BC art. 8; Deut. 4:35; Matt. 28:19; John 17:5]

3] We confess the divinity of Christ (BC Art. 10) as well as His incarnation and two natures (BC Art. 19). He is truly God and truly Man (John 1:1,14; 10:30). We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and in His vicarious and mediatory suffering and reconciliatory death on the cross. We also believe His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension and personal return. We believe that “no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” (Matt. 11:27)

4] We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who is rightly worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son.

[Nicene Creed; Acts 1:8; John 15:26; Acts 5:3-5; 1 Cor. 2:12-14; John 16:13-15].

5] As stated in Articles 14 and 15 of the Belgic Confession, Lord’s Day 1 and 2 of the Heidelberg Catechism (HC), and the second, third, and fourth Heads of Doctrine of the Canons of Dort (CD), we believe that man, created in the image of God, is dead in sin and transgressions as a result of the fall, and that he can be raised to life only by the elective and gracious intervention of God.

[BC Art. 16; Eph. 1:3,4; Rom. 8:29,30; 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 2:1-10; John 6:44]

After all, we were conceived and born in sin. (Ps. 51:5)

6] In accordance with Articles 27 to 29 of the Belgic Confession, we confess that the Church is “a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, having been washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.”

Furthermore, we confess that it is stated very clearly in Scripture and the Articles of Faith that the marks by which the true Church is known are:

- (1) The pure preaching of the Gospel;
- (2) The pure administration of the sacraments; and
- (3) The exercising of Church discipline. (BC Art. 29)

7] According to the Bible, the devil is a person, and the source of all evil.

He is the “ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray”.

[Rev. 12:9; Eph. 6:12-16; Jam. 4:7; Matt. 4:1-11; BC Art. 37; HC Question and Answer, 127]

By holding to the above-mentioned truths, we confess our only comfort in life and death in the words of Answer 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

-- Cape Study Group

The above is a summary of the original Statement: the full Statement can be obtained by contacting ds. Danie du Plessis by email (dapedu5@gmail.com) or by phone (021 855 2391 or 072 726 6018).

Pope Benedict XVI's Resignation

The fragile nature of man, in this instance the pope, endorses the warning of the Bible that we place our trust in God alone. 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man'. (Psalm 118: 8: the central verse of the Bible).

- No man is infallible -- even when he speaks 'ex-cathedra'!
- Jesus, is the only Head of the Church.

-- Craig Hounsom

Our Secret Sins: CH Spurgeon

"Cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Psalm 19:12)

Thou canst mark in me faults entirely hidden from myself. It were hopeless to expect to see all my spots; therefore, O Lord, wash away in the atoning blood even those sins which my conscience has been unable to detect. Secret sins, like private conspirators, must be hunted out, or they may do deadly mischief; it is well to be much in prayer concerning them.

In the Lateran Council of the Church of Rome, a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once a year to the priest, and they affixed to it this declaration, that there is no hope of pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter into heaven, since, besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins, which are as truly sins as those which we lament, but which are secret, and come not beneath our eye. If we had eyes like those of God, we should think very differently of ourselves.

The transgressions which we see and confess are but like the farmer's small samples which he brings to the market, when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared with those which are hidden from ourselves, and unseen by our fellow creatures.

-- Ulster Bulwark (October – December 2012)

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