

THE AMBASSADOR

2 Corinthians 5:20

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“Jesus Christ – the Final Word of God”

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From the Pastor:

Our Confessional Standards speak of the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling three offices – Prophet, Priest, and King – as the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace. The next few issues of “The Ambassador” are going to delve into these offices to encourage deeper appreciation for His mediation.

What does it mean to call Jesus Christ “Mediator?” “Mediator” is a word that expresses the work Jesus Christ does as God and man in one person, bringing salvation unto His people and restoring the relationship between God and His people. Jesus Christ mediates the Covenant of Grace; that is, He pleads on our behalf before God, in order to make the promise of saving sinners from eternal damnation a reality, and He so accomplishes that salvation that God is pleased to embrace those saved as His children.

The first office spoken of is the office of “Prophet.” Many of us have a perception of a prophet from the Old Testament as an eccentric person who loudly proclaims God’s judgment upon a wayward people, using dramatic actions and sometimes doing a miracle to back up his words. All too often the OT prophet’s office is viewed apart

from Christ, and not as an expression of Him.

Peter makes it clear that their labour was to prophesy of the grace of salvation that would come in Jesus Christ [1Peter 1:10-12], and even though they did not fully see Christ as we do now, they were sent by God for the building up and salvation of God’s people in Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews makes it emphatically clear that it was “God who spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets” and that the purpose was to reveal the “heir of all things through whom He made the worlds, who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” [Heb.1:1-3]. We can miss this crucial point especially when it seems all we read in the OT is judgment upon judgment. The OT prophets were used by God to speak His Word concerning Christ. They were revealers of the divine will and salvation of God.

What Hebrews 1:1-3 makes even clearer is that their ministry was building up to the “final Word of God” – the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom God would finally and most clearly speak. It is no mistake that John refers to Christ so picturesquely as “The Word”

[John 1:1], the “Word that became flesh” so we could behold the glory of God the Father in grace and truth [John 1:14].

And it is only through Jesus Christ that, even today, God now speaks. “God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” [Heb.1:2]. And because Jesus Christ is God Himself come in the flesh, we have no need for any further prophetic word from God. Granted we do not have Jesus Christ walking around like He did in the 1st century, but we do have the continuance of His prophetic ministry through the writings of the New Testament. Combined with the Old Testament, these Holy Scriptures bring to us the fullness of the Revelation of God to man throughout all ages.

Holy Scriptures is a blessed gift from God. Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” [2Timothy 3:16]. Quite literally, Scripture is “God-breathed!” Yes it was penned by men, we do not deny that, but these men were so consecrated and filled with the Holy Spirit that the words they penned were the very words of God spoken to us [2Peter 1:21].

As a gift from God, Holy Scriptures has divine purposes. Their chief purpose is to “Reveal the Lord Jesus Christ in all His Being and work of salvation. Paul wrote in Romans 16:26 that the revelation of the mystery of Christ Jesus is now shown forth by the Scriptures “according to the command of the everlasting God.” Do the OT books show

forth Christ Jesus? To be honest the NT Christians relied more heavily upon the Old Testament to understand who Jesus Christ is and what He accomplished, than we do. What did the

Consider what the Larger Catechism says of Jesus’ office as a prophet: “Christ executes the office of a prophet in His revealing to the church, in all ages, by His Spirit and word, in different ways of administration, the whole will of God in all things concerning their edification and salvation” [LC #43].

Bereans search [Acts 17:11]; what Scriptures did Christ open to the men going to Emmaus [Luke 24:32]; what did Paul use to prove that Jesus was the Christ [Acts 9:22]?

Oh how we miss this divine gift. God wants us to know the Lord Jesus Christ, but due to our sinfulness we have no way of comprehending His glory and salvation. So God condescends to our fallen nature by giving us divine revelation. We cannot know sufficiently anything about God, or of our great need of salvation apart from such divine intervention and revelation.

Holy Scriptures also has the role of being the instrument of the Holy Spirit to bring us new spiritual life in Christ. They are “God breathed!” Where have we heard that phrase before? It was in creation when God made man and breathed life into him and

man became a living being. As fallen creatures dead to God and full of sin we need new life, and the Holy Spirit breathes into us God’s Word to regenerate us – to make us “born again!” Jesus declared, “It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life” [John 6:63].

Jesus spoke those words to people who also challenged His authority and teaching. Yet Jesus made it clear that without divine revelation none of us could have life – eternal life – in Him. Is that not what Psalm 19 proclaims? “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the commands of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes.” Anyone who claims to have belief in God, even in Jesus, but whose faith does not flow from a divine rebirth through the Holy Scriptures is to be suspect concerning Christianity.

Jesus met two men on the road to Emmaus and gave them instructions “from the Scriptures” as to the necessity of the death and resurrection and glory of the Christ from God. Their testimony ought to be reflective of every true Christian: “Did not our heart burn within us while He opened the Scriptures to us?” [Luke 24:32] That is the life the Holy Spirit brings to us – a heart inflamed to God’s Word. That is the work of Christ as Mediator – He is the Prophet of God, revealing to us all things necessary for our salvation and edification.

A Reformed Perspective:

A Godly Man Loves the Word of God

by Thomas Watson



Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

"O how love I your law." (Psa. 119:97)

Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden set with ornaments and flowers. A godly man delights to walk in this garden and sweetly solace himself. He loves every branch and part of the Word:

He loves the counselling part of the Word, as it is a directory and rule of life. The Word is the direction sign which points us to our duty. It contains in it things to be believed and practiced. A godly man loves the directions of the Word.

He loves the threatening part of the Word. The Scripture is like the Garden of Eden: as it has a tree of life in it, so it has a flaming sword at its gates. This is the threatening of the Word. It flashes fire in the face of every person who goes on obstinately in wickedness. "God will wound the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses." (Psa. 68:21).

The Word gives no indulgence to evil. It will not let a man halt halfway between God and sin. The true mother would not let the child be divided (I Kings 3:26), and God will not have the heart divided. The Word thunders out threats against the very appearance of evil. It is like that flying scroll full of curses (Zech. 5:1).

A godly man loves the menaces of the Word. He knows there is love in every threat. God would not have us perish; he therefore mercifully threatens us, so that he may scare us from sin. God's threats are like the buoy, which shows the rocks in the sea and threatens death to such as come near. The threat is a curbing bit to check us, so that we may not run in full career to hell. There is mercy in every threat.

He loves the consolatory part of the Word - the promises. He goes feeding on these as Samson went on his way eating the honeycomb (Judges 14:8,9). The promises are all marrow and sweetness. They are reviving to us when we are fainting; they are the conduits of the water of life.

"In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul." (Psa. 94:19). The promises were David's harp to drive away sad thoughts; they were the breast which gave him the milk of divine consolation.

A godly man shows his love to the Word written: (a) By diligently reading it. The noble Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:12). The Word is our Magna Carta for heaven; we should be daily reading over this charter. The Word shows what is truth and what is error. It is the field where the pearl of price is hidden. How we should dig for this pearl! A godly man's heart is the library to hold the Word of God; it dwells richly in him (Col. 3:16). It is reported of Melancthon that when he was young, he always carried the Bible with him and read it greedily.

The Word has a double work: to teach us and to judge us. Those who will not be taught by the Word shall be judged by the Word. Oh, let us make ourselves familiar with the Scripture! What if it should be as in the times of Diocletian, who commanded by proclamation that the Bible be burned? Or as in Queen Mary's days, when it spelled death to have a Bible in English? By diligent conversing with Scripture, we may carry a Bible in our heads.

(b) By frequently *meditating* on it: "It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119:97). A pious soul meditates on the truth and holiness of the Word. He not only has a few transient thoughts, but leaves his mind steeping in the Scripture. By meditation, he sucks from this sweet flower and ruminates on holy truths in his mind.

(c) By *delighting* in it. It is his recreation: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." (Jer 15:16) Never did a man take such delight in a dish that he loved as the prophet did in

the Word. And indeed, how can a saint choose but take great pleasure in the Word? All that he ever hopes to be worth is contained in it. Does not a son take pleasure in reading his father's will and testament, in which he bequeaths his estate to him?

(d) By *hiding* it: "Your word I have hidden in my heart" (Psa 119:11) - as one hides a treasure so that it should not be stolen.

The Word is the jewel; the heart is the cabinet where it must be locked up. Many hide the Word in their memory, but not in their heart. And why would David enclose the Word in his heart? "That I might not sin against you." As a man would carry an antidote about him when he comes near an infected place, so a godly man carries the Word in his heart as a spiritual antidote to preserve him from the infection of sin. Why have so many been poisoned with error, others with moral vice, but because they have not hidden the Word as a holy antidote in their heart?

(e) By *defending* it. A wise man will not let his land be taken from him but will defend his title. David looked upon the Word as his land of inheritance: "Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." (Psa 119:111) And do you think he will let his inheritance be wrested out of his hands? A godly man will not only dispute for the Word but die for it: "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God." (Rev 6:9)

(f) By *preferring* it above things most precious: (1) Above food: "I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food." (Job. 23:12). (2) Above riches: "The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver." (Psa. 119:72). (3) Above worldly honour. Memorable is the story of King Edward the Sixth. On the day of his coronation, when they presented three swords before him, signifying to him that he was monarch of three kingdoms, the king said, "There is still one sword missing." On being asked what that was, he answered, "The Holy Bible, which is the 'sword of the Spirit' and is to be preferred before these

ensigns of royalty."

(g) By *talking* about it: "My tongue shall speak of your word." (Psa. 119:172). As a covetous man talks of his rich purchase, so a godly man speaks of the Word. What a treasure it is, how full of beauty and sweetness! Those whose mouths the devil has gagged, who never speak of God's Word, indicate that they never reaped any good from it.

(h) By *conforming* to it. The Word is his compass, by which he sets his life, the balance in which he weighs his actions. He copies out the Word in his daily walk: "I have kept the faith" (2 Tim.4:7). St Paul kept the doctrine of faith, and lived the life of faith.

Why is a godly man a lover of the Word? Answer: Because of the excellence of the Word. *The Word written is our pillar of fire to guide us*. It shows us what rocks we are to avoid; it is the map by which we sail to the new Jerusalem.

The Word is a spiritual mirror through which we may see our own hearts. The mirror of nature, which the heathen had, revealed spots in their lives, but this mirror reveals spots in the imagination; that mirror revealed the spots of their unrighteousness, this reveals the spots of our righteousness. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:9). When the Word came like a mirror, all my opinion of self-righteousness died.

The Word of God is a sovereign comfort in distress. While we follow this cloud, the rock follows us. "This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life." (Psa. 119:50). Christ is the fountain of living water, the Word is the golden pipe through which it runs. What can revive at the hour of death but the word of life (Phil. 2:16)?

A godly man loves the word, because of the efficacy it has had upon him. A godly man loves the Word preached, which is a commentary upon the Word written. This day-star has risen in his heart, and ushered in the Sun of righteousness. The Scriptures are the sovereign oils and balsams; the preaching of the Word is the pouring of them out. The Scriptures are the precious spices; the preaching of the Word is the beating of these

"...a godly man carries the Word in his heart as a spiritual antidote to preserve him from the infection of sin."

spices, which causes a wonderful fragrance and delight. The Word preached is "the rod of God's strength" (Psa. 110:2) and "the breath of his lips" (Isa. 11:4). What was once said of the city of Thebes, that it was built by the sound of Amphius' harp, is much more true of soul conversion. It is built by the sound of the gospel harp. Therefore the preaching of the Word is called "the power of God to salvation" (Rom 1:16). By this, Christ is said (now) to speak to us from heaven (Heb. 12:25). This ministry of the Word is to be preferred before the ministry of angels.

A godly man loves the Word preached, partly from the good he has found by it - he has felt the dew fall with this manna - and partly because of God's institution. The Lord has appointed this ordinance to save him. The king's image makes the coin current. The stamp of divine authority on the Word preached makes it an instrument conducive to men's salvation.

Application: Let us test by this characteristic whether we are godly: Are we lovers of the Word? *Do we love the Word written?* What sums of money the martyrs gave for a few pages of the Bible! Do we make the Word our bosom friend? As Moses often had 'the rod of God' in his hand, so we should have 'the Book of God' in our hand. When we want direction, do we consult this sacred oracle? When we find corruptions strong, do we make use of this "sword of the Spirit" to hew them down? But alas, how can they who are seldom conversant with the Scriptures say they love them? Their eyes begin to be sore when they look at a Bible. The two testaments are hung up like rusty armour which is seldom or never made use of. The Lord wrote the law with his own finger, but though God took pains to write, men will not take pains to read. They would rather look at a deck of cards than at a Bible.

Do we love the Word preached? Do we prize it in our judgments? Do we receive it into our hearts? Do we fear the loss of the Word preached more than the loss of peace and trade? Is it the removal of the ark that troubles us?

Again, do we attend to the Word with

reverential devotion? When the judge is giving his charge from the bench, all attend. When the Word is preached, the great God is giving us his charge. Do we listen to it as to a matter of life and death? This is a good sign that we love the Word.

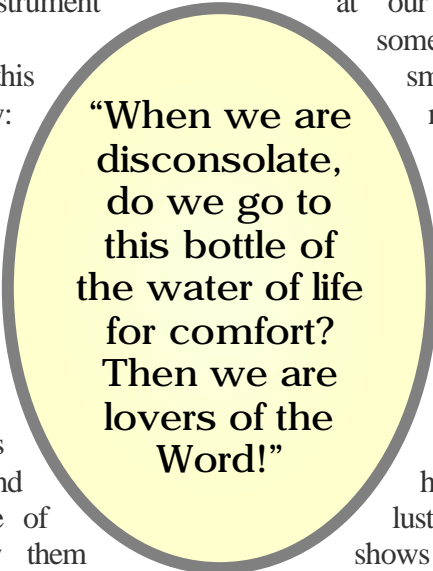
Again, do we love the holiness of the Word (Psa. 119:140)? The Word is preached to beat down sin and advance holiness. Do we love it for its spirituality and purity? Many love the Word preached only for its eloquence and notion. They come to a sermon as to a performance (Ezek. 33:31,32) or as to a garden to pick flowers, but not to have their lusts subdued or their hearts bettered. These are like a foolish woman who paints her face but neglects her health.

Again, do we love the convictions of the Word? Do we love the Word when it comes home to our conscience and shoots its arrows of reproof at our sins? It is the minister's duty sometimes to reprove. He who can speak smooth words in the pulpit, but does not know how to reprove, is like a sword with a fine hilt but without an edge. "Rebuke them sharply" (Titus 2:15). Dip the nail in oil, reprove in love, but strike the nail home. Now Christian, when the Word touches on your sin and says, "You are the man", do you love the reproof? Can you bless God that "the sword of the Spirit" has divided between you and your lusts? This is indeed a sign of grace and shows that you are a lover of the Word.

A corrupt heart loves the comforts of the Word, but not the reproofs: "They hate the one who rebukes in the gate." (Amos 5:10). "Their eyes flash with fire!" Like venomous creatures that at the least touch spit poison, "When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth." (Acts 7:54). When Stephen touched them to the quick, they were mad and could not endure it.

Question: How shall we know that we love the reproofs of the Word?

Answer 1: When we desire to sit under a heart-searching ministry. Who cares for medicines that will not work? A godly man does not choose to sit under a ministry that will not work upon his conscience.



**"When we are
disconsolate,
do we go to
this bottle of
the water of life
for comfort?
Then we are
lovers of the
Word!"**

Answer 2: When we pray that the Word may meet with our sins. If there is any traitorous lust in our heart, we would have it found out and executed. We do not want sin covered, but cured. We can open our breast to the bullet of the Word and say, "Lord, smite this sin."

Answer 3: When we are thankful for a reproof: "Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked." (Psa. 141:5). David was glad of a reproof. Suppose a man were in the mouth of a lion, and

another should shoot the lion and save the man, would he not be thankful? So, when we are in the mouth of sin, as of a lion, and the minister by a reproof shoots this sin to death, shall we not be thankful? A gracious soul rejoices when the sharp lance of the Word has pierced his abscess. He wears a reproof like a jewel on his ear: "Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to an obedient ear." (Prov. 25:12).

To conclude, it is convincing preaching which must do the soul good. A nipping reproof prepares for comfort, as a nipping frost prepares for the sweet flowers of spring.

"Through the mouths of preachers Christ will do His work, just as a workman uses a tool to do his work." [John Calvin]

The ARP Seal

The seal of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church expresses through symbolism the basic convictions of the denomination.



- The **SHIELD**, the basic form of the seal, is an emblem signifying complete faith, or trust, in God as Paul suggests in Ephesians 6:16.
- The **CROSS** forms the central emphasis of the seal, and represents the Person and the sacrificial redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Living Word. The Celtic cross is suggestive of our roots in Scottish history.
- The **CIRCLE** (or nimbus) is emblematic of eternity, and was used in medieval symbolism to represent God the Father. Here the nimbus additionally signifies the eternal benefit of the redemption secured on the cross by the death of Jesus Christ.
- The descending **DOVE** represents the presence of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16) as He witnesses to the Church and through the Church to the world.
- Through these symbols (the Cross, the Nimbus, the Dove) witness is given to the living presence of the Trinity - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - in the Church.
- The **BOOK** at the bottom of the shield represents the Bible - the written word of God.
 - The **BURNING BUSH** (Exodus 3:2) on the left or Old Testament page suggests the indestructibility of God's word.
 - The monograms, **ALPHA** and **OMEGA**, on the right or New Testament page, symbolize the final authority of Jesus Christ who has declared Himself to be "the beginning and the ending" (Revelation 1:8), revealed through the written word.
- The colours are chosen for their meaning as well.
 - **BLUE**, traditionally expressive of fidelity, appropriately colours the "shield of faith" and the unconsumed bush.
 - **GOLD** suggests royalty and wealth - on the cross; it particularly represents the royalty and wealth of Jesus Christ.
 - **RED** is the colour of sacrifice and the blood of Christ - precisely the costly sacrifice of Christ by which man's redemption is secured.
 - **WHITE** suggests purity - the sinless purity of Him whom God "made Him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Something to Think About:

by Rev. Kevin Carter

“The Most Essential Quality of a Preacher”

We do believe that Jesus Christ does exercise the office of prophet “both in His estate of humiliation and exaltation” [Larger Catechism #42]. Now we recognize very clearly how Jesus accomplished this office in His humiliation. He proclaimed the Word of God teaching with authority; He demonstrated His authority in the mighty miracles He performed; and He showed Himself to be “the brightness and expressed image” of God through His full keeping of the Law of God and in the purging of our sins upon the cross as a sinless sacrifice.

But how does Christ exercise this office in His exaltation? Christ is now in glory, having ascended to the right hand of the Almighty; yet the Hebrew writer states “In these last days God has spoken to us by His Son” [Heb.1:1-2]. How is He a prophet among us now?

Well there are a few means by which He fulfills this office even now. We have the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who is our Helper, whose very purpose is to declare the things of Christ unto us [John 16:13-14]. There is also the gift of Holy Scriptures which has been given to make us wise unto salvation in Jesus Christ [2Timothy 3:14-17].

I would submit a third means and that is “Preaching.” Consider Paul’s words of Romans 10:14-17 “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: *How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!* So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” God has elevated preaching [and by simple relationship, the preacher] to that role of moving people to call upon the Lord.

Interestingly, as I read several books on preaching I noticed a common theme. It was about one of the most essential qualities of a preacher, which might surprise some – earnestness. C.H. Spurgeon wrote “What in a Christian minister is the most essential quality for securing success ... I should reply ‘earnestness’” [Lectures to My Students]. Jonathan Edwards wrote, “If true religion lies much in the affections, we may infer that such a way of preaching the Word...that has the tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend is much to be desired”

[Religious Affections]. William Perkins [16th Century minister] wrote “It may seem an unusual course for God to confirm and energize His servant in zeal and courage [speaking of Isaiah’s commissioning]. Yet it is clear that this is the way the Lord takes. It teaches us that all true ministers...must be first of all marked by a great sense of fear...even a sense of amazement and astonishment, full admiration for God’s glory and greatness” [Art of Prophecy].

What do we say to this? Is earnestness and zeal the primary mark we look for in a preacher and pastor? Many of us look at their talents and abilities: do they know Scripture and doctrine; are they in touch with the youth; will they visit us in our homes; can they speak well; [you fill in the blanks]. Now, all those points are very important and must be diligently inquired of when looking for a minister, but I submit my agreement with each of the men mentioned above.

Recall what was observed of Jesus by the disciples – “Zeal for your house has eaten me up” [John 2:17]. Consider Paul’s exhortation to Timothy in light of all the trials he was facing, “Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season” [2Tim.4:2]. Think of Paul’s own conviction “Necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel” [1Cor.9:16]. It appears that God’s Word affirms such earnestness, not blind zeal, but sincere earnestness for preaching. A preacher, first and foremost, ought to be and must be earnest for proclaiming God’s Word.

Why? First, because they have been entrusted with this stewardship [1Cor.9:17]. Second, because they have been moved by the Spirit with ability to do such [1Pet.4:11]. Third, because it is the means of encouraging faith in hearers [Rom.10:14-17]. Fourth, and most importantly, because they are the gifts of Christ unto the church in His exaltation [Ephesians 4:8-16]. Preachers, pastors, ministers, have been commissioned by Christ and are used mightily by Him for the continuance of His prophetic office and ministry in this world. Now this does not take away from each Christian’s role in witnessing, but there is a higher stress of Scripture to these “watchmen/shepherds” of Christ [Ezekiel 34].

As we look at modern ministry it truly begs us to ask the question “What are ministers today most earnest about?” Something for you to think about.



From the Mission Fields:

Pray for Muslims around the world:

Brahui People of Pakistan: Six-year-old Omar looked at the 500 sheep that were pouring into the large, brown meadow, and asked his father, "Are all of those sheep ours?" His father chuckled and replied, "I wish I had so much wealth! No, those belong to everyone in the khalk (community). The deal is this, I

take good care of the sheep of the other families in the khalk, and they pay me with the wheat that they earn working for farmers. The sheep are less likely to wander when there are lots of them together. Many sheep, one shepherd: That is the best way." The Brahui people live mostly in western Pakistan's Baluch Province and southern Afghanistan, though some live in Iran. Though they are expert shepherds, very few of them can be counted as sheep in God's flock. The few who have put their faith in Christ are like sheep without a shepherd. Pray for the efforts of the Church Missionary Society that has worked among the Brahui people for many decades. Pray for God to raise up Brahui shepherds to pastor communities of believers in Christ. Pray that they will heed the call of the Good Shepherd when they hear radio broadcasts in their own language.

News from Bhopal, India:

01/31/2006: First Attack against Bhopal Christians

A Gospel for Asia [GFA] radio program producer was among at least 25 GFA missionaries and Bible college students who were severely beaten in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, on Saturday. Anti-Christian violence is frequent in the more rural areas of Madhya Pradesh, central India. But this was the first attack against Christians in Bhopal.

The believers were meeting for a church service when 35 youths belonging to an extremist anti-Christian faction began smashing windows and damaging property, including a vehicle. The youths proceeded to beat the Christians with iron rods and wooden poles.

"They then attacked Pastor Sadhwani and others with sticks and beat him mercilessly," Lalachan, GFA's regional leader, reported. Pastor Sadhwani suffered serious head injuries and collapsed, unconscious. "Pastor Sadhwani is undergoing medical treatment and is now out of danger," Lalachan said, "but he is vomiting blood continually." Another pastor suffered a broken leg, and "everybody suffered head injuries and fractures," reported Lalachan.

The local leader of the extremist group behind the violence condemned the attacks to the press, but accused the Christians of offering incentives to the poor if they would convert. In April 2005, a committee published a report on "proselytizing" among tribals. Blaming Christian missionaries and government laxity, the report claimed that the Christian population in Madhya Pradesh had grown by 80 percent from 1991 to 2000. In response, the state government said it intended to stop tribal conversions by amending its anti-conversion law.

The report was called one-sided, and even leaders of anti-Christian organizations said there was no evidence that tribals were being forced to convert. However, persecution has increased in the state since the committee's report.

Lalachan asks for prayer that the authorities will act justly, that the believers will recover quickly and that the youth who carried out the attacks may realize the nature and power of God and give their hearts to Jesus.

On The Internet:

by Rev. Kevin Carter

No doubt many of you have been hearing and perhaps reading articles about the "Gospel of Judas." It is a writing, from around the 3rd century that "gives a different view of the relationship between Jesus and Judas, offering new insights into the disciple who betrayed Jesus. Unlike the accounts in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in which Judas is portrayed as a reviled traitor, this newly discovered Gospel portrays Judas as acting at Jesus' request when he hands Jesus over to the authorities." [as quoted from the National Geographic May 2006]. The intent of this writing is very clear – it seeks to recast Judas as one who was a victim, not a perpetrator; one who was only doing what Jesus wanted Him to do; an intent which National Geographic unashamedly echoes – "Judas, reborn, is about to face the world."

Here are some comments made respecting this writing and even interaction with a church Father – Irenaeus taken from the website www.earlychristianwritings.com/gospeljudas.html .

Information on the Gospel of Judas:

Charles W. Hedrick writes in the *Bible Review* ("The 34 Gospels: Diversity and Division Among the Earliest Christians"):

In sum, in addition to the four canonical gospels, we have four complete noncanonicals, seven fragmentary, four known from quotations and two hypothetically recovered for a total of 21 gospels from the first two centuries, and we know that others existed in the early period. I am confident more of them will be found. For example, I have seen photos of several pages from a Coptic text entitled "The Gospel of Judas" that recently surfaced on the antiquities market.

The document of which Hedrick speaks has since surfaced and been published under the auspices of the National Geographic Society.

Tixeront, translated by Raemers, states (A Handbook of Patrology, p. 67): "Besides these Gospels, we know that there once existed a Gospel of Bartholomew, a Gospel of Thaddeus, mentioned in the decree of Pope Gelasius, and a Gospel of Judas Iscariot in use among the Cainites and spoken of by St. Irenaeus (i, 31, 1)."

Here is the Roberts-Donaldson translation of this section from Irenaeus:

Others again declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are related to themselves. On this account, they add, they have been assailed by the Creator, yet no one of them has suffered injury. For Sophia was in the habit of carrying off that which belonged to her from them to herself. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas.

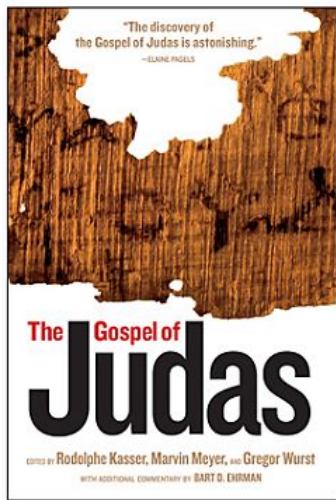
H.-C. Puech and Beate Blatz write (*New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, p. 387):

Dating: the Gospel of Judas was of course composed before 180, the date at which it is mentioned for the first time by Irenaeus in *adv. Haer.* If it is in fact a Cainite work, and if this sect - assuming it was an independent gnostic group - was constituted in part, as has sometimes been asserted, in dependence on the doctrine of Marcion, the apocryphon can scarcely have been composed before the middle of the 2nd century. This would, however, be to build on weak arguments. At most we may be inclined to suspect a date between 130 and 170 or thereabouts.

On the new discovery, Bart Ehrman says,

The reappearance of the Gospel of Judas will rank among the greatest finds from Christian antiquity and is without doubt the most important archaeological discovery of the past 60 years. What will make this gospel famous—or infamous, perhaps—is that it portrays Judas quite differently from anything we previously knew. Here he is not the evil, corrupt, devil-inspired follower of Jesus who betrayed his master; he is instead Jesus' closest intimate and friend, the one who understood Jesus better than anyone else, who turned Jesus over to the authorities because Jesus wanted him to do so. This gospel has a completely different understanding of God, the world, Christ, salvation, human existence—not to mention of Judas himself—than came to be embodied in the Christian creeds and canon. It will open up new vistas for understanding Jesus and the religious movement he founded.

It remains to be firmly established that the recently uncovered "Gospel of Judas" corresponds to the Gospel of Judas mentioned by Irenaeus of Lyons.



So what are Christians to make of this new "find?" Well let's not get too distracted. Remember that the fallen world is always looking for a venue to challenge the authority and inspiration of Scripture. Anytime they can cast doubt they will try. Here is nothing new under the sun", wrote Solomon, and this is true of the "Gospel of Judas." This is not the first time in our generation Judas has been made to look more innocent than he actually was. Recall the 1970's movie "Jesus Christ Superstar" strived to do the same.

Here is a bit of advice. Know what Scripture affirms to be true concerning Judas: Matthew 26:14-16; 46-50; Mark 14:17-21; 41-46; Luke 22:21-23; 47-48; John 12:4-6; 13:10-11; 18:1-5; Acts 1:15-20. Also note that this writing was dealt with a long time ago by the early church fathers who recognized its fallacy and cast it off.

For the Youth:

Parchment Commandments

(www.dltk-bible.com/crafts/mtencommandments.htm)

Materials:

Cold coffee or tea (about 1/2 cup)
Sheets of white paper *
A blow dryer
Some markers



Instructions:

1. Take a piece of nice white paper and rip off all the edges (don't cut them with scissors, rip them!). If you rip the paper a bit more than you meant to, it's not the end of the world.
2. Crumple the paper up as tightly as you can into a ball.
3. Flatten the paper out again and put onto a plate or cookie sheet.
4. Pour coffee or tea over the paper. Swoosh around with your hands to make sure it covers everything.
5. Let it sit for about 5 minutes.
6. Pour the coffee or tea off into the sink.
7. Blow dry with a hand held blow dryer on high for about 5 minutes (leave it sitting on the plate while blow drying or it will tear to pieces). When it's pretty dry (and starts to lift a bit) switch the blow dryer to low to finish off (about another 2 minutes).
8. Have the children write out the 10 commandments on their parchment (in their own words or use the original ones if that is your preference).
9. OPTIONAL: You can roll the parchment up and slip into a 1/4 toilet paper roll holder which you can decorate with markers or stickers or you can tie with a ribbon to make a rolled up scroll
10. OPTIONAL: Add some invisible ink messages to spice up the project even further. Use lemon juice and a paintbrush to print God Loves You to your parchment. Then, when an ADULT holds it over a candle or hot light bulb, the invisible ink turns visible and brown.

Here is a sample of putting the Ten Commandments in your own words:

1. Love God only.
2. Worship God right.
3. Use God's name with respect.
4. Remember God's Sabbath.
5. Honour your parents.
6. Don't hate others.
7. Be faithful in marriage.
8. Don't steal.
9. Don't gossip.
10. Don't be envious of others.

* This option has also been suggested:

Take brown craft paper, or a paper bag, tear it into the shape you want, and then dunk it in water and wad it up. Squish awhile and then half-heartedly smooth out and let air dry. It will become almost leathery. It's very easy to write on and really looks old.



Sunday Services

9:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Services are held at the Kentville Lions Club on River Street, off Aberdeen Street in Kentville.

All are welcome! Nursery available.

Birthdays

May 12 Chris Killacky

May 24 Albert Gerrits

May 26 Henry Hogeterp

May 29 Matt Carter

June 8 Kevin Carter

June 9 Andrew Gerrits

June 21 Brian Nash

June 22 Sybren Halbersma

Church Calendar:

May 12-13 - Valley Reformed Bible Conference, New Minas Civic Centre

May 18 Monthly youth meeting, 7:00pm. Meet at the bowling alley in New Minas. [June's meeting details TBA]

Wednesday Evenings Bible Study, 7:30pm at Mr & Mrs Halbersma's home. Examining Worldviews and the Christian's response. [This study season will end June 14, with the last two meetings being special prayer sessions.]

May 20 / June 17 Monthly Session meetings at 7:30pm

May 28 / June 25 Monthly Psalm services (afternoons); offerings for Covenanters Building Fund and Missions (respectively).

Synod Meeting June 6-8

Church Family Picnic July 8, at Henry & Joyce Hogeterp's home

More information...

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If you have any comments regarding this publication or if you would like to contribute an article, children's activity, or announcement, please contact one of the editors.

WEB SITES

www.arpnovascotia.com/covenanters

www.arpsynod.org