

UK BIBLE STUDENTS NEWSLETTER

Mid-August 2009

ON BEING ANGRY WITH GOD

By A. Prentice

Creation is the child of imagination. Architects, novelists, musicians, artists, space engineers, all see possibilities, dream dreams, and bring the visions of their mind's eye to reality. Why is it, then, that so many people cannot see in the reality of the universe the Divine Imagination which conceived it?

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AN UNEXPECTED PICNIC (Another in our 'Young Readers' series)

Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many? (John 6: 9)

A buzz of excitement stirred the air that Spring morning as the young lad left home and joined the crowds of folk making their way out of town, following a footpath through open country, leading to the hillside slopes north-east of the Sea of Galilee. People were talking excitedly of the expected visit of a man called Jesus, a remarkable preacher who could hold the attention of his audience for hours, and who was able to cure people of their sicknesses and infirmities.

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Method and Message

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

(1 Corinthians 1: 21, King James Version)

Once a well-respected and powerful means of presenting the Gospel message, outdoor preaching, always an exercise in courage, is in today's Britain the preserve of a handful of hardy souls. Even many fellow-Christians, disdain this approach. And perhaps it would, in this age of the Internet, be considered inefficient and counterproductive. But it has a long and honourable history.

For most of the Gospel Age this method was used by God to draw in the believers. Sometimes it was the only way. Throughout the centuries many reformers were unwelcome in the established churches of the period. Having no access to church buildings, they were restricted to small home assemblies or field preaching. It was through this means that the roots of Methodism were planted deep in this country by John Wesley and his brother, Charles and, later, in the United States by Francis Asbury, the intrepid circuit rider.

On one occasion of Whitefield's open-air address to the Bristol colliers, John Wesley observed

'I could scarce reconcile myself . . . at first to this strange way, having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the sav-

ing of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.’ (Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley*, 1820; Hutchinson & Co.: 156-158)

The *New International Version* puts the emphasis on the *content* of the preaching: ‘God was pleased through the foolishness of *what was preached* to save those who believe.’

Regardless of *how* it is presented the Gospel message itself will be rebuffed and pilloried by most who come in contact with it. The Christian heritage of this land, though not dead, is under severe strain. We’ll have to get used to this, but persevere anyway. For God’s promise stands firm:

The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham’ (Galatians 3: 8, 9, *KJV*).

In the Rear-View Mirror

‘China emerges from the Second World War as one of the Big Four of the United Nations, weakest in actual achievement but with a very great potential in area and position. Before the end of the twentieth century she will probably have caught up with the West and regained her historic leadership in the East, provided that civil war does not retard her progress. . . .

‘Although it is impossible to foresee distant centuries, it does not appear likely that China will become a threat to the rest of the world. The Chinese have a peaceful and democratic tradition and, whereas they will be supreme in their own realm, their country lacks the geographic factors that might make for world dominance. Under able leadership, China will find that she has the geographic resources with which to meet her geographic needs, provided her population remains within bounds.’

G.B. Cressey, *Asia’s Lands and Peoples*. McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1944. Reprinted in *Foundations of National Power*, Harold and Margaret Sprout (Princeton University, 1945), 598-599.

DRAG-NET

Items of interest from the World Wide Web

‘Gordon Brown said in an interview with Premier Radio that he believed it was impossible for Christians to be expected to work detaching themselves from their faith beliefs, and that they should not be expected to entirely separate their faith and work.’

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‘Nadine Dorries, Conservative MP for Mid Bedfordshire and a former nurse, is opposed to moves to make assisted suicide legal and will set out a private members’ bill in the autumn to block any such change. She is planning to bring the bill to fight obvious attempts by the Government and prosecutors to effectively make it legal to assist someone take their own life.’

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A group of religious leaders and trade unionists calling for the return of usury laws have been invited to the Royal Bank of Scotland this week to speak about plans to cap lending rates to 10 per cent.

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