

The Haemorrhaging of our Heritage (No 1)

We are all aware of our Anglican Heritage which is expressed in our Anglican 39 Articles, the book of Homilies and the Book of Common Prayer of 1662. This reformed evangelical heritage is in a serious state of haemorrhage. The doctrine of „salvation“ expressed in our Heritage is being threatened by a superficial imitation! Salvation, as expressed in our Heritage, is viewed in a threefold manner which adheres to the three Greek tenses of the word salvation expressed in the Bible, ie., it is viewed as a reality that is „past“ (Christ’s atoning work on the cross); „present“ (“we must work our own salvation” day by day as Philippians 2:12) and it is also „future“ (we are yet to be saved).

The nuances within these Greek tenses are expressed throughout our Heritage eg., in the Collect for Trinity 7 we pray, “Lord...increase in us true religion (meaning the gospel message of Christ/cross) ... and of thy great mercy keep us in the same.” The Collect affirms our faith in the message of the cross, but also indicates our „continuing“ in this faith (“keep us in the same”) to our journeys end. Such a nuanced emphasis does not diminish our „assurance“ of salvation, but rests that assurance on God’s grace enabling us to continue faithfully as Christ’s disciples. The Bible views salvation as the believer’s possession; but a salvation in which he must persevere so that he does not succumb to the peril of presumption.(see also Trinity 11,13,14)

Many people currently within the doors of Anglicanism are either ignorant of their Heritage, or have opted for what our Heritage refers to as a “fantasy of faith” ie., „easy-believism“; people who believe that having once trusted Christ their eternal salvation is guaranteed, and consequently, are not serious in their obedience to the teaching of Christ or in their allegiance to His Church. Such an attitude is a superficial imitation of biblical salvation as expressed in our Heritage. Unless the Anglican Church lays stress on its Heritage of „salvation“ (with its emphasis on persevering obedience throughout life) we will continue to haemorrhage and pander to a perilous imitation of salvation that increases in popularity.

Pastor J Lowe

The Haemorrhaging of our Heritage (No 2)

The Anglican Church, as I expressed last week, is in a serious state of haemorrhaging; we are rapidly losing the life from our Reformed Heritage; a Reformed Heritage which is expressed in our Anglican 39 Articles, the book of Homilies and the Book of Common Prayer of 1662. My emphasis, last week, was to draw our attention to the fact that our understanding of „salvation“ has been severely compromised. Many in our churches adhere to nothing more than a superficial understanding of salvation, which undermines the biblical teaching that „salvation“ is an „all of life“ perseverance in faith; it is continually under threat by the “temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil.” This false and counterfeit understanding of salvation which has flourished as a result of our haemorrhaging Heritage, leads inevitably to an unbiblical view of the Christian Ministry ie., the role of the minister/pastor of the Church.

Many younger and older clergy no longer comprehend the vital role they play in the life of the church (and as the years pass, not only are they disillusioned, but churches are starved of the biblical nourishment that will sustain them to their journeys end). A defective view of salvation, which views it as nothing more than a „decision“ for Christ that guarantees „salvation“, dramatically alters the role of the pastor; he remains a „figurehead“, but is largely obsolete as the appointed means of keeping the sheep within the fold.

Christ told Peter that his function was to “feed My sheep”. That is the role of the biblical pastor/shepherd; it is to feed and nourish the sheep of Christ’s flock to ensure that none fail to secure eternal salvation! Paul declared to Timothy in the strongest terms, “Take heed to your teaching; hold to that (don’t let anything cause you to neglect this responsibility), for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (2 Tim4:16) God has appointed that our salvation will be secured on a constant diet of preaching! Listen to the words of Prof Rob McGreggor, *“God’s true prophets (ie., ministers) fire their congregations with God’s Word and hammer them with the need for unremitting holy living”*. (see Hebrews 13:17)

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The Haemorrhaging of our Heritage (No 3)

The Anglican Church, as I have previously mentioned, is in a serious state of haemorrhaging; we are rapidly loosing the life from our Reformed Heritage; a Reformed Heritage which is expressed in our Anglican 39 Articles, the book of Homilies and the Book of Common Prayer of 1662. The churches failure to understand the ‘continuing’ or ‘persevering’ nature of biblical ‘salvation’ has led to the widespread acceptance of a superficial/false imitation. This view of salvation has led to a seriously distorted the role of the Christian Pastor. Yet another aspect of the haemorrhaging of our Anglican Heritage is seen in the widespread misunderstanding of the crucial doctrine of ‘justification’ by faith.

Justification is a technical biblical term that describes how guilty and sinful men/women are made ‘just’ in God’s sight; accepted and approved; brought into fellowship with God. Thomas Cranmer says in his Homily on Salvation

“three things which must go together in our justification; upon God’s part, His mercy and grace; upon Christ’s part, justice, that is, the satisfaction of God’s justice, or the price of our redemption by the offering of His body and shedding of His blood with fulfilling of the laws perfectly and thoroughly; and upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ ... out of which faith springs good works ... and a life according to God’s commandments”.

The commonly held understanding of justification by faith confines the word ‘faith’ to a mere intellectual assent to Christ’s atoning death on the cross. Such a view rightly wants to exclude any notion of works of obedience to God’s law as contributing to, or meriting our salvation, but it has also wrongly lead to the widespread understanding that obedience has no place in our acceptance before God! While human works/obedience do not contribute any ‘merit or ‘earn’ our salvation/justification, they nonetheless reveal the very nature of true salvation/justification ie., a life of holy obedience to God’s laws as

Cranmer states above. If we do not stop the haemorrhage of our Heritage with respect to the biblical teaching on justification, indwelling sin will continue to convert and pervert God's grace into cheap grace.

Pastor J Lowe

The Haemorrhaging of our Heritage (No 4)

The Anglican Church, as I have been previously mentioning, is in a serious state of haemorrhaging; we are rapidly losing the life from our Reformed Heritage; a Reformed Heritage which is expressed in our Anglican 39 Articles, the book of Homilies and the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 (BCP). This Heritage is now seen as obsolete, irrelevant, and ineffectual as a means of reaching the 'unconverted'. It is viewed as obstructionist to the 'mission' of the Church. This has led to the adoption of methods with respect to ministry and evangelism that conflict with the Scriptures and our Reformed Heritage.

The premise underlying modern evangelism is defective and undermines our Heritage.

What is that premise? Modern evangelism is equated with and measured by 'results'; it defines evangelism in terms of 'conversions' produced! But as Dr James Packer says, "This cannot be right ... evangelism is man's work, ***but the giving of faith is God's***... the question whether or not one is evangelizing cannot be settled simply by asking whether one has had conversions... ***we ought not to define evangelism in terms of achieved results.***" Why not? Because many who claim to make a 'decision' for Christ never progress to a life of discipleship! (parable of the Sower/Soils) Because of this flawed premise in evangelism many clergy and congregations are wrongly judged, and Christians/churches labour under false expectations.

If the Church perceives 'evangelism' in terms of the 'results' attained we have dangerously strayed from our Heritage. Dr David Wells says, "*Conversion can be spoken of as a single act of turning, .. But conversion, our turning to God is better understood if we view it as a complex process .. incrementally built knowledge .. Conversion is not an isolated event but is related to the entire life of faith that follows from it .. The evangelical world has strangely perverted this truth. Evangelicals often make the test of spiritual life one's willingness to testify about the moment of birth .. This shifts the focus from where it ought to be – the evidence of the Spirit's renewing work in producing God-centered life, a God-fearing heart.*" Such an emphasis is reflected throughout the Liturgy of the BCP. Evangelism cannot be defined in terms of 'achieved results', and 'conversion' or 'regeneration' is a 'complex process' (the result of multifaceted processes over considerable time), which in turn is related to the 'entire life'. (see Collects for Christmas Day, Trinity 7, 11,13,)

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