



MISSION

ISSUE 2 2014

CATALYST

Intelligent comment on faith and culture

MINE.

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”

ABRAHAM KUYPER



JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN

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CATALYST LIVE



IN THIS ISSUE, WE REFLECT ON SOME OF THE IDEAS PRESENTED AT CATALYST LIVE

On the first morning of **Catalyst Live** I blithely introduced Lucy Berry to her co-speakers as *Mary Berry*. I was embarrassed but the fact that she didn't bat an eyelid told me I wasn't the first person to blend poet and pâtissière!

But such blending set the tone for the day, as we allowed different speakers to weave their faith into their specialist areas. This was dangerous of course, to give the floor to people who might say things we don't agree with. And they did! And guess what – the world didn't stop spinning and the sun rose in the East the very next morning!

Like a pick n' mix counter at the sweet shop, we had theological insights on everything from tectonic plates to slavery, from Indonesian Gamelan music to the implications of reading Scripture on an iPad! It was funny, moving, interesting, educative and challenging. Through it all, the richness and diversity of the Christian faith shone through.

And it gave me great confidence for

the future. You see, the word on the gloomy side of the street is that the Church is in terminal decline in the West. If you use numbers to measure this, and we should, it's undeniable. Fewer people go to church, get married in church or know Bible stories than a generation ago. Other measures are available.

But there is a view from the sunny side of the street, which isn't in denial about what's going on but is willing to see it differently. Over here (speaks the eternal optimist) the Church is reforming (again), metamorphosing, regrouping, rethinking, challenging inherited presuppositions and unearthing precious jewels that have been lost.

There is a renewed focus on Jesus as the hermeneutic of the gospel, the lens through which we evaluate our doctrine, theology, ethics and lifestyle. Jesus as the Lord of heaven and earth, where lordship is all encompassing (tectonic plates to... iPads). Jesus with a bias to the poor (as exemplified by Pope Francis). Jesus who isn't overly interested in our denominational distinctives (as exemplified by a glowing reference to the Pope in a Baptist magazine!)

Yes it's true, if church attendance continues to decline, this will have implications for ecclesiastical structures, buildings, our

understanding of ministry, our place in society and a lot more. But our confidence is not in these things, it is in the God who breathed life into his Church, loves his Church and is renewing his Church.

The Church of the future will be different. Having less power and influence might make us kinder, a people characterised by grace and hope while remaining confident in the truths we proclaim. A Church committed to an incarnational 'living out' of the gospel alongside its proclamation.

None of this is without cost. As the chef Lucy Berry put it, reflecting on the call to embrace the 'other' as she iced one of her delicious cakes at **Catalyst Live**,

'...but Lord if we do this we will be changed!'

'We can hope,' laughed the Lord.

David

David Kerrigan
General Director

PS This edition of *Catalyst* offers a brief reprise of the 2013 **Catalyst Live** conferences. We won't publish a reprise in future years so look out for the 2014 dates to be announced soon.

FREE DVD: CONFIDENCE IN THE TRUTH

This issue of *Mission Catalyst* comes with a free DVD. *Confidence in the Truth* was produced by RZIM and the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics and features talks by **Catalyst Live** speaker John Lennox and RZIM apologists Amy Orr-Ewing, Tanya Walker and Keith Small. *It's a pleasure.*



Professor Robert White

The Director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion and Professor of Geophysics in the Department of Earth Science at Cambridge University

Vesuvius from Portici by Joseph Wright of Derby



PEOPLE OR GOD: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS?

PROFESSOR ROBERT WHITE EXAMINES NATURAL DISASTERS FROM AN HISTORICAL AND BIBLICAL POINT OF VIEW

“Natural disasters are processes which make this a fruitful world,” says Professor Robert White of Cambridge University and the Faraday Institute. “Things go wrong when human actions turn a natural process into a disaster.”

Neither earthquakes nor volcanos are negative occurrences, Professor White says. Though they have been happening for centuries, some countries have the technology to minimise damage while others do not. “Poor people are disproportionately killed by disasters,” he says. The effects are often made worse by the action or inaction of people.

Professor White cites various examples of natural disasters that have been aggravated by humans to illustrate his point.

Volcanos

In 1793, a nine-month volcanic eruption covered Iceland in ash but killed no one. The following winter was harsh, killing most of the cattle and crops, causing a famine. Neighbouring countries were aware of the conditions and did nothing to help, resulting in the death of 25 per cent of Iceland’s population.

In May 1902, Martinique’s Mount Pele erupted, destroying the city of Saint Pierre and its inhabitants. Saint Pierre’s residents stayed because the mayor, who was running for re-election, released a statement saying the volcano was not dangerous. Only one person survived.

While nothing could have stopped these volcanos from erupting, the actions of the mayor in Martinique and the inaction of the countries near Iceland claimed many lives.

Earthquakes

Although it is still difficult to predict a volcanic eruption, the technology used to prevent damage from earthquakes has advanced. When earthquakes measuring 7.0 and 9.1 hit California and Tokyo, respectively, 57 people died in California and no one was lost in Tokyo.

When a 7.0 earthquake shook Haiti, 230,000 people died. Without the ability to build quake resistant structures, Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, suffered massive losses and is still trying to recover.

Joseph, Job and God

Natural disasters have challenged the faith of Christians for centuries. Both believers and non-believers have asked God why he allows tragedies to happen.

Professor White used Joseph as an example of God working through people to prevent disasters. After being sold by his brothers, God placed Joseph in the perfect position to prepare for the coming famine. He stored grain and rationed it accordingly so that no one would starve. Later in Genesis, Joseph says to his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” This is one of the ways God works to keep a natural occurrence, like a drought, from becoming a disaster.

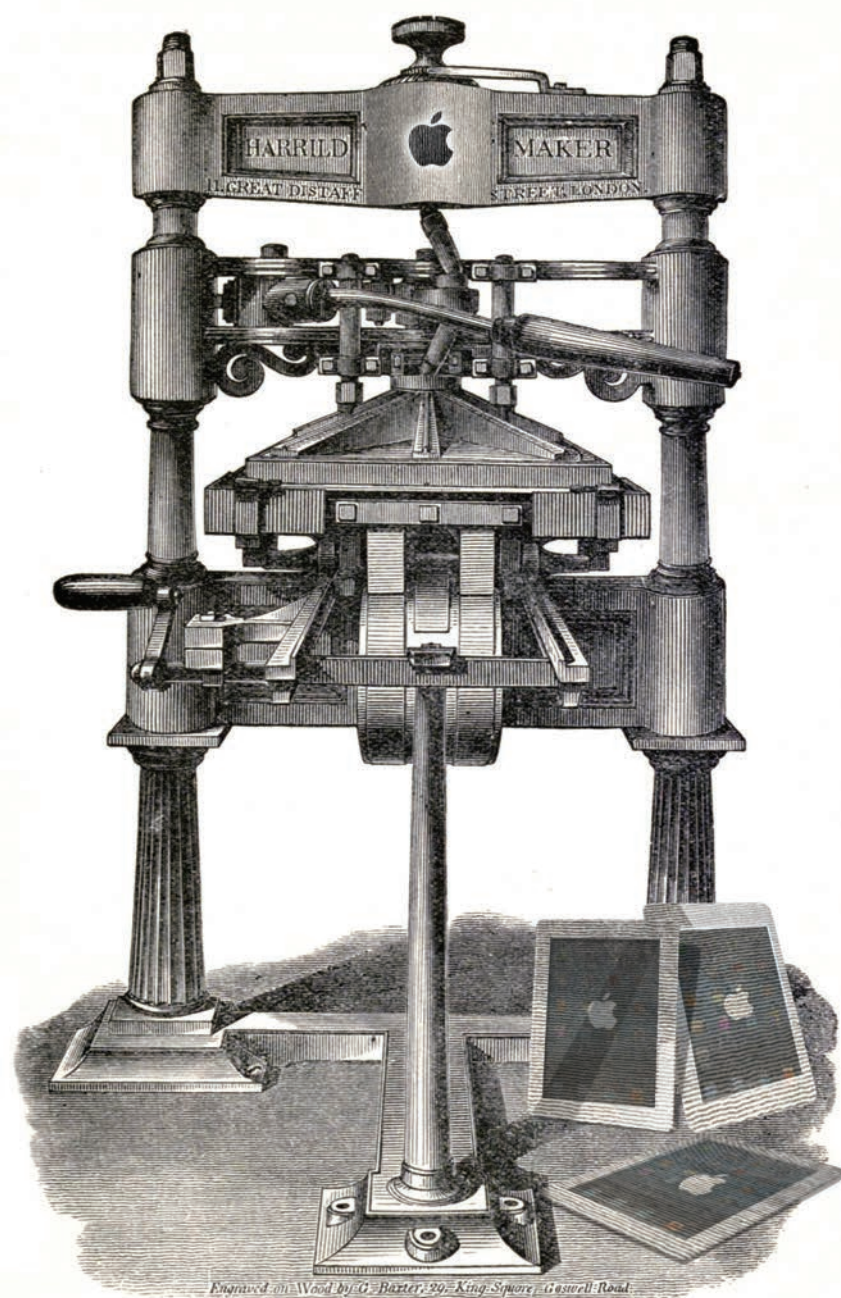
Job’s situation was different. As a faithful believer in God and a “blameless and upright man,” he could not understand why he was being punished and pleaded with God for answers.

Professor White quoted fellow **Catalyst Live** speaker, Sharon Dirckx, saying, “Things that go wrong in your life are not a punishment from God.” Instead, in response to Job’s questions, God explains his absolute power over creation, and rebukes those who have told Job he is to blame for his trials. “God is sovereign over this world, even over evil,” says Professor White. Natural occurrences happen for a reason, not necessarily because those affected have sinned.

The earth is always changing because of earthquakes, droughts, famine, volcanic eruptions and floods. God gives people the tools and warnings they need to survive these natural occurrences. When warnings are ignored or tools are not shared, that is when these events become disasters.

Words: Vickey Casey

Dr Stephen Holmes: Reading Technology Changes our Theology



Engraved on Wood by G. Baxter, 29, King Square, Goswell Road.

TABLETS, SCROLLS AND BOOKS: HOW WE READ AFFECTS WHAT WE UNDERSTAND

“I’ve got a beautiful leather Bible, but I read Scripture from a screen far more often than I do from a book these days,” said Dr Holmes at BMS World Mission’s **Catalyst Live** events – a choice that seems to be true for many of us. But does it matter? And have we ever paused to think about it either way?

Throughout the ages, Christians have constantly updated their reading technology. Dr Holmes explored the impact of these reading upgrades.

Scrolls and codices

At the time of the first apostles scrolls were in fashion, they were the hardback books of the New Testament age, but the early Christians preferred codices. “A codex is a series of sheets of papyrus or parchment or even waxed wood that are put together and then bound along one edge – it’s a book,” explains Dr Holmes.

In 2 Timothy 4: 13, Paul requests Timothy to bring him, above all, the ‘parchments’ or ‘membrana’. Holmes cites an argument that ‘membrana’ gets used primarily in Greek in New Testament times to refer to something that’s written in codex form. “Paul wants his library sent up, but he particularly wants his books, not the scrolls.”

So why did the early Christians seem to prefer books?

Perhaps it is because they liked to make lists, argues Holmes. In a book you can flick backwards and forwards, you don’t have to read in order, like you do with a scroll. And the earliest Christians collected information in lists – “They made lists of Hebrew Scriptures that seemed to be prophecies of the life of Jesus, they made lists of things that the

apostles told them Jesus said. Way back before the gospels, these lists were what connected them with the history of the risen Lord.”

Books became, for Christians, the crucial links to the life of Jesus, and thus they began to seem like the holiest and best form of reading technology. That is why books replaced scrolls when Christianity conquered the empire.

“Very, very soon, five centuries or so later, we forgot that there was ever an option. Books were the only form of reading technology we knew,” says Dr Holmes.

And reading from a book is very different to reading from a scroll – if you can read at all. Easier to flick through but handwritten and bulky, books had to be short, or come in lots of parts. Those who were fortunate enough to read and rich enough to have an entire library would have had all the books we now call biblical and some other books as well. But, of course, there wasn’t ‘a Bible’.

The printing press

Before the printing press, the Western Church had no defined Biblical canon.

“Our best guesses as to the origin of the Hebrew canon have to do with modes of storage of scrolls. The Jews kept using scrolls, and the books that became regarded as canonical were kept on a different shelf or in a different room in the temple or synagogue library,” says Dr Holmes. “Canonicity as a concept depends in part on the physicality of modes of reading technology.”

So, while people talk about the reformation commitment to *sola scriptura* as if that was something new, Dr Holmes suggests that the reformation was actually only made possible because of the printing press.

“The invention of the printing press made the Bible a possible object, and once it existed it couldn’t be questioned”

“When you can print, and mass-produce books, and when everyone can have libraries of whole books, then suddenly you can start reading books in their entirety. When before all you had was what you could copy out by

“Steve Jobs might have killed American fundamentalism”

hand, you lived on sentence quotes and fragments.

“The invention of the printing press made the Bible a possible object, and once it existed it couldn’t be questioned.”

In the 12th century, Hugh of Saint Victor wrote a book called the *Didascalicon*, which introduces the possibility of a biblical canon by listing those books that he considers to be sacred Scripture. Just a few hundred years later, the question of canon has become absolutely set. “It was a question that moved from being unimaginable to being unimaginable.”

Even our revolutionary Baptist forebears don’t appear to have questioned whether the right books were included in Scripture. They were overthrowing the church-state link, rejecting established forms of government and ignoring set liturgy, “they were trying to question everything in their quest to be faithful to God, but they were defeated by the given-ness of a book binding.”

iPads, tablets and smart phones

Then we come in. With our paper Bibles, and our electronic ones – which constantly update, correcting errors and improving versions. Electronic Bibles are fundamentally unstable.

“Let me throw out a theory that I suspect might be true: you cannot have fundamentalism without the printing press,” says Dr Holmes. “A fundamentalist attitude to Scripture relies on the fixity of the printed text. If every Bible you pick up is slightly different, you might become ‘mad, bad and dangerous to know’ in some other direction, but you’ll never become a fundamentalist.”

“Steve Jobs might just yet have turned out to have killed American fundamentalism.”

Reading from an electronic Bible that is always changing is like working from the texts everybody in the Christian

world worked with before the 15th century. Constantly in flux.

“Translation difficulties no longer get hidden by the imprimatur, quite literally, of an editorial committee. The artificial neatness imposed by our last reading technology is lost. Instead, we know the fragile, living word with its variant readings and its ‘hard to translate sections’ all over again.” Reading from a tablet also enables you to have several windows open at once – different translations, the Greek original, and various commentaries all leading you to a better understanding of the text.

Of course, reading from a screen is, in some ways, going back to the scroll. And by scrolling, as we have seen, it is much more difficult to dot around the Scriptures. So should we stick with books?

“It’s very, very easy to assume that the new – the iPad, or the smart phone – is ‘technology’ and might be a problem,” says Dr Holmes, “whereas the old – the book – is natural and so makes no difference. But of course, a printed, bound book, is just as much a reading technology as a touchscreen tablet.”

Christians have constantly and endlessly modified Bible technology, always wanting high calibre performance. Dr Holmes reminds us that the truth is we all have to make a choice about which technology we read from, and that choice does affect the words we read.

“We can’t avoid it,” says Dr Homes, “we just need to be honest about it and have our eyes open enough to the way the technologies we’re using are shaping our engagements with Scripture, with other people, with the world out there, with our fellow believers, whatever it may be. So that we are wise to the ways that are unhelpful, and joyful about the ways in which we’re being helped to follow faithfully after our Lord and Saviour.”

“I read from a screen because, for me, the gains outweigh the losses.”

Words: Sarah Stone

Resurrection
NEW CREATION
Hope
Christ

REBORN
FROM
DESPAIR

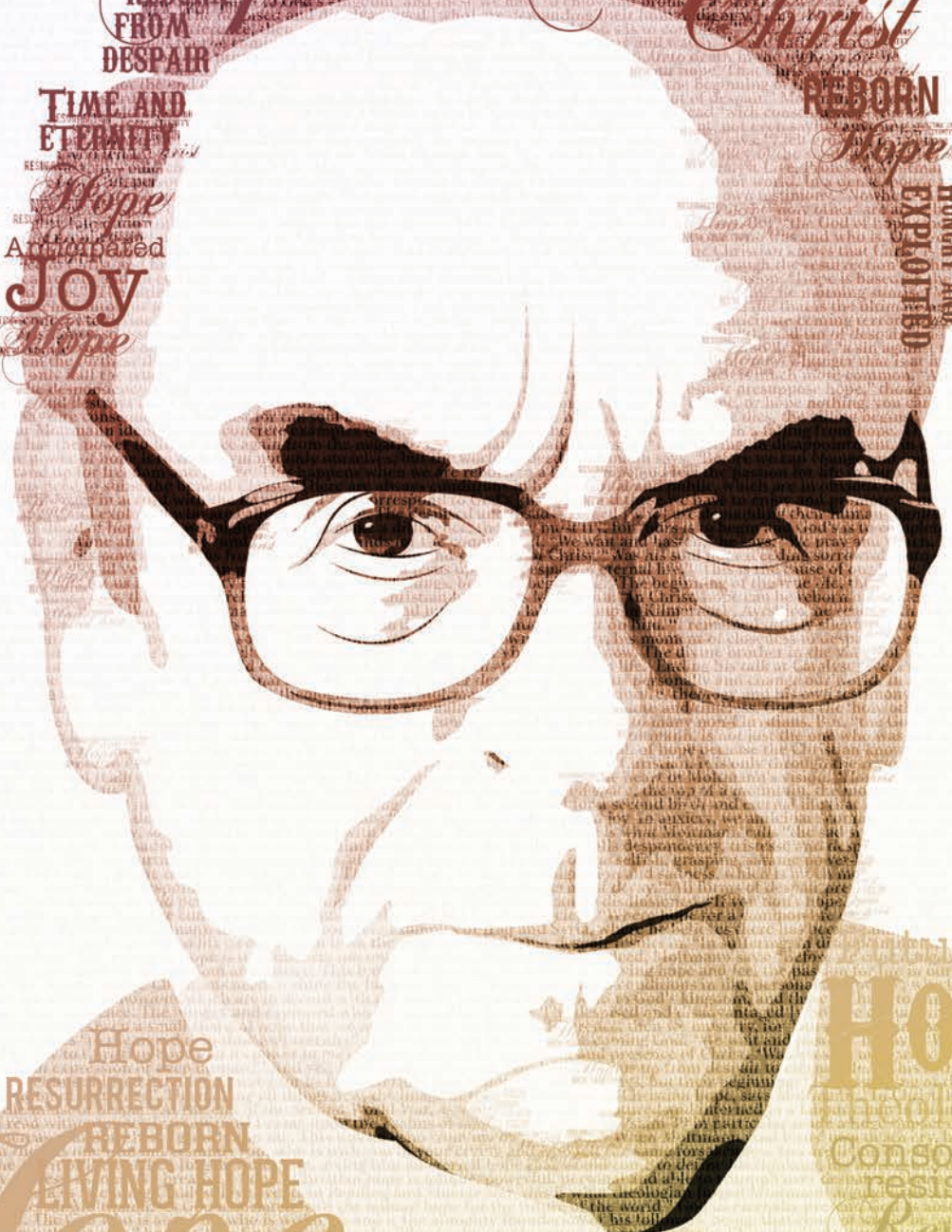
TIME AND
ETERNITY

Hope
Anticipated
Joy

REBORN

Hope

HUNGRY AND
EXPLOITED



Hope

RESURRECTION

REBORN

LIVING HOPE

HOPE

Theology of hope

Consoling and
resisting power

Resurrection

LIVING HOPE

Theology

REBORN

Remembrance
of the coming
Jesus

Sad sin of despair

Future

CHRIST

Hope LIVING

HOPE

Remembrance
of the coming Jesus

ANTICIPATED

JOY

REBORN

RESURRECTION

Future

Professor Jürgen Moltmann

Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen in Germany and one of the most influential theologians of the last hundred years

Despair

AND THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIAN HOPE

HOPE IS THE CENTRAL THEME AND THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CHRISTIANITY, ACCORDING TO PROFESSOR JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN

Christian hope is unique, powerful, personal and able to triumph over despair to change us personally and change our world. In a dense, poetic and often moving address to audiences attending **Catalyst Live** events in Reading and Manchester, this is what theologian Jürgen Moltmann argued with Scripture, theology and his own testimony.

The uniqueness of Christian hope

“Nowhere in the world of religions,” asserts Professor Moltmann, “is God associated with the human hope for the future of the world.” God as eternally present, God as absolute and timeless, God as the ‘holy other’ are all to be found outside of Christianity. The God who is above us, who is within us and is the almighty foundation of his followers’ being: that concept would be familiar to many non-Christians. But, “the God of hope who goes ahead of us into our future: that is new,” he says. “We find this only in the Bible of the prophets and the apostles.”

The Christian God, according to Moltmann, is not just the one who was and who is. Our God is the one who is to come. “Future is the essential element of faith that is specifically Christian, the keynote of all its hymns,” he says. And that future is full of hope because the Christian knows that Christ is waiting for him or her in an eternal future. “Hope is Christian when it has a resonance to Christ and his future,” he says. “It is only in his name

that hope is Christian. It is only through the resurrection of Christ that people are reborn to a living hope.”

A sense of time rooted in both our physical reality and an eternity we cannot fully comprehend seems to be at the heart of Moltmann’s vision: “Hope is based on the remembrance of the coming of Jesus who was raised from the dead and is going ahead of us.”

The ultimate symbol of Christian hope *might* be a vast open space, the top of a mountain, the morning sunrise. Moltmann tells us that the ultimate image of hope is not the far-off future, but the birth of a

self-made sickness.” Defining the act of giving up on hope as “the laziness of our hearts, the sadness of our senses, the faintheartedness of our souls,” he calls despondency, tristesse and despair, “a sin against the Spirit of life,” claiming that “many vices follow from it.”

Hopelessness can often seem the furthest thing from sin. It is, after all, almost the opposite of the selfish, grasping, satanic power-hunger that is at its heart ambitious. “We are told that original sin is the arrogance of power, but that’s only half the truth,” Moltmann says. The other half, he says, is resignation and

“ APATHY IS THE ARROGANCE OF THE POWERLESS ”

child into this physical world, containing within it the potential for a second birth and eternal life.

But hope, in the nebulous metaphors of theology, can be a hard concept to define. Moltmann defines it thus: “Hope is, in fact, anticipated joy. In anxiety, we anticipate coming terror. In hope we anticipate coming fullness of life.”

Hope and despair

But if hope is so central to Christianity, so essential to right living with God, the abandoning of hope is what Moltmann calls “the sad sin of despair” and “a

sadness, which is much more common. “Apathy is the arrogance of the powerless,” he says. “The dejection which leads to inertia. The despondency which infects everything living with the germs of decay.”

“All forms of despair presuppose hope,” though, says Moltmann. “Where a hopeful life is frustrated in every respect, hope turns against us and destroys us.” Only hope, according to Moltmann, can be disillusioned. “If you don’t hope, or hope nothing, you can’t be disappointed, but you miss living.”

And so it is that the absence or failure of hope has dire consequences, not just



for the soul but for all of society. “Where hope for a common life dies, the killing begins,” he says. “Hopelessness and brutality are often only two sides of the same coin.” Professor Moltmann identifies the concrete examples of Iraq and Syria, where he believes there has been a falling from hope.

The power of Christian hope

But if the frustration of hope can lead to despair, so hope has the power to lift us once again from the negative spirals that despair results in. “In suffering, in disappointment, in pain and sorrow,” Moltmann says, “hope will prove its consoling and its resisting power.” The power of hope is to transform not only ourselves, but the world. Indeed, Moltmann says: “Before we can change and improve anything in this world, we need to change our self. To get out of our apathy and stand up for freedom and justice. This happens when we are reborn to a living hope and feel the passion for life in our veins.”

He identifies “God-contradicting” and “God-corresponding” situations, where Christians need to shine the hope of Christ. “There are always conditions in life, personal and public, which are in obvious contradiction to the love of God. And these we have to overcome. There are always conditions which are in accord with the love of God and correspond to God’s kingdom, and these we have to enjoy and promote as much as we can.”

This mission finds specific expression in “those who long for peace. The hungry and exploited who are calling for justice.

The despised and disadvantaged [who] are demanding their human dignity.” And the millions who are looking for the meaning of their lives. If there is even a small shard of hope that we might be able to make a difference, then we must try, for “ours is to begin and God’s is to complete.”

The power of hope, according to Moltmann, is to open all our senses “to the new day in time and eternity” and to open our minds for the coming God. “We wait and hasten,” he says. “We pray and watch. We are patient and restless, because we know we are expected.”

The key to Christian hope and its power to pull us from despair is the person and presence of Christ. “Was his soul not exceeding sorrowful, unto death in the night before he was crucified? Did Christ not die with an expression of deep despair?” And yet, Moltmann points out, “God raised Jesus up from despair to eternal life.”

This is the cause of our hope. That Christ, who knew the deepest human reasons for despair, was himself lifted from it and waits for us in an eternity that is not the end of things, but their beginning. “The beginning of the true life, the beginning of the kingdom of God. The beginning of the new creation of all things.”

The making all things new, the image of rebirth, is crucial to Christian hope,

says Moltmann: “In Christ, hope can be reborn out of despair.”

Moltmann himself experienced that hope in the midst of despair. At the end of the Second World War, as a German soldier, captured and interned in a labour camp in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, he read “with consciousness” the Bible for the

first time. “I read without much interest until I came upon the Psalms of lament,” he says. But Psalm 39 in particular made a huge impact on him. “I remained utterly silent, not even saying anything good. But my anguish increased and my heart grew hot in

me. This was an echo from my own lost soul.”

When Moltmann read Jesus’ own death cry, his moment of closeness to despair, he says: “I felt growing in me the conviction that there is one who understands you, who is with you in your crying and who felt the same forsakenness you are living through now. The divine brother in the valley of the shadow of death.”

Behind barbed wire, the Spirit of life touched Jürgen Moltmann, giving him an eternal hope that would come to define his thinking, his writing and his life.

Ending his talk at **Catalyst Live**, Professor Moltmann concluded: “I personally confess: as long as I breathe, I hope.”

Words: Jonathan Langley

“ LOVE IF
YOU HOPE
NOTHING YOU
MISS LIVING ”

THE DEPOSITION: EXPLORING CHRIST'S BURIAL

REV GRAHAM KENT EXPLORES THE BEAUTY AND INTRICACIES OF
GRAHAM SUTHERLAND'S PAINTING, THE DEPOSITION AND THE VALUE OF
HUMAN CREATIVITY AT CATALYST LIVE IN MANCHESTER



The *Deposition*, a mid-20th century painting by Graham Sutherland, is a piece that resembles art from both the Orthodox Church and Western traditions. “It is the moment when Christ is laid in the tomb,” says Secretary of the Methodist Art Collection, Rev Graham Kent. “In this light and in certain daylighting, this picture also has the beginnings of the resurrection.”

Graham Sutherland was deeply influenced by photographs from the Holocaust and images of survivors

from the concentration camps. Painted in 1947, *The Deposition* shows Jesus' lifeless and apparently emaciated form, resembling the victims in the photographs of the time, being lowered into the tomb that is set against surroundings evocative of a concentration camp.

Below the cross is what Kent describes as “the body which could be androgynous but is beginning to become abstract,” being lowered into the tomb by his followers. His figure, pale and lifeless, has developed a “spikiness” that can be found in

Sutherland's other paintings as his style developed. The sharp points of his shoulders, knees, hip and ribs emphasise the suffering that Jesus and the Holocaust survivors endured before their lives ended.

Set behind the tomb, a chalice shape fills with water, represented by the blue lines, while Jesus' blood flows down the cross and mixes with the water. Here, Sutherland presents imagery of the blood and water mixing together as a reference to what happened when Jesus' side was pierced by the spear.

Kent also described the signs of “diaconal ministry.” This is shown by Jesus' followers cleansing his body with the bowl and towels as Christ is lowered “into the double sacrament of altar and font.” A devout Roman Catholic, Sutherland uses the altar and font from this tradition in the painting. The altar is covered with a simple frontal that goes all the way around the structure. It also serves as the font, the basin that is used as Jesus' “baptismal tomb.”

Behind the tomb sit the bars for the gates of Hell, similar to a style that can be found in Renaissance paintings. “[Some] believe that Christ descended into the depths of hell,” says Kent. The figure is not just descending, but is also about to spring up in resurrection. Jesus' form appears to be either going into the grave or slowly rising out of it, both lifeless and lifelike. “This shows a real image of descent into death and then resurrection,” he says.

Kent, in his address to the **Catalyst Live** audience, related the depth and power of Sutherland's work to the importance of having creative ministry and engaging with those who paint. “We, as human beings, respond to creating things because we are created beings and have creative natures.

“Engage with all people who are creative, who agonise over the work they produce,” he encouraged the audience. “They may tell us something about the character and the nature of God. The God who loved us so much that he became one of us.”

Words: Vickey Casey

Image: Graham Sutherland/*The Deposition* from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission.

Dr Yohanna Katanacho

Academic Dean at Bethlehem Bible College, Palestine, the author of *The Land of Christ: A Palestinian Cry* and involved in church planting activities in Galilee

DR YOHANNA KATANACHO:

ISRAEL-PALESTINE AND A LOVE STRONGER THAN HATRED

GOD CALLS US TO BOTH JUSTICE AND LOVE, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF HATRED

Growing up in Jerusalem and victimised for his identity as a Palestinian Arab, for a long time Dr Yohanna Katanacho struggled to believe that God is a God of justice who is on the side of the oppressed. “I was continually reminded that God loves the Jewish people, I was never told that God loves the Palestinian people,” he says. But now he is able to stand in front of audiences speaking of his love for God and his love for the Jews.

In his talk at **Catalyst Live**, Dr Katanacho explained how God changed his heart and how we, as Christians, have a responsibility to stand alongside our Palestinian brothers and sisters in a plea for justice: because “love is not an excuse to abandon justice, love is an opportunity to pursue justice.”

Dr Katanacho likens the Israel-Palestine conflict to the story of Hagar.

“She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me.’” (Genesis 16: 13)

Hagar was oppressed by Abraham and Sarah, says Dr Katanacho, the very couple whom God had called to bless the whole world. “Hagar was living in the Holy Land with the holy family and they were supposed to be a blessing,” says Dr Katanacho. “Yet, Hagar was living in their home and was not blessed. In fact, the Hebrew text tells us that Sarah physically oppressed Hagar.

“The angel of the Lord met Hagar and

transformed her identity from a slave maid to a matriarch, reminding her that God hears the cry of the oppressed. Reminding her that God sees.”

A personal revelation

A professed atheist studying at university, Dr Katanacho was terrified when God met with him one night and turned his life upside down. He started reading the Bible.

“I was shocked when I read the Sermon on the Mount because it says ‘love your enemies’,” says Dr Katanacho. Mocked by Israeli soldiers at the gates of his university and once arrested for going to a chemistry class, he didn’t need to turn to a dictionary to define who his enemies were. “I hated that text, and I didn’t know what to do.”

Wanting to obey the God he had put his trust in, but unable to love his enemies, Dr Katanacho made a compromise. He began



“**LOVE IS NOT AN
EXCUSE TO ABANDON
JUSTICE, LOVE IS AN
OPPORTUNITY TO
PURSUE JUSTICE**”

carrying flyers about God’s love with his ID card, so that whenever he was stopped by an Israeli soldier they would read about God’s love. “I didn’t want to lie and tell them ‘I love you’, because I didn’t. But day after day God started changing my heart. I started praying, ‘Lord let them stop me so I can share Jesus Christ with them.’

“God taught me that love is not a feeling, love is a decision that we make. Our love muscles grow stronger in the context of hatred.”

A complex identity

When he became a Christian, Dr Katanacho’s already complex identity became more so – seemingly full of contradictions and inextricably linked to the conflict surrounding him in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

“I am a Palestinian, Arab, Israeli Christian,” he says. “Every label in my identity is charged with a myth. It’s really hard sometimes to explain who I am.”

Yet, while people have often made assumptions about him because of his identity as a Palestinian and an Arab – having been called a terrorist and an enemy of the Jews many times – Dr Katanacho loves to demonstrate that Arabs have always had a part in God’s story. “I was surprised that the label ‘Arab’ occurs 16 times in the Old Testament,” says Dr Katanacho. “Job



is believed to be an Arab by many Old Testament scholars. Proverbs 30 and 31 were written by an Arab.” Arabs also appear in the New Testament, he says: “in fact, historians tell us that John the Baptist lost his head defending the rights of an Arab woman, because the wife of Herod Antipas was the daughter of Aretas the fourth, a Nabatean Arab.

“A Jewish prophet lost his life defending the rights of an Arab woman,” he says.

Despite their long presence in the biblical story, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs were forced off their land when the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948 and war broke out. Many of the displaced still remain in Israel or Israeli occupied territories.

An issue of land

The decades-old conflict over land continues in Israel-Palestine, affecting countless Palestinians.

“My people are suffering injustices,” says Dr Katanacho. “The problem is not the Jews, the problem is sin and oppressive measures.”

One of the key injustices from the Palestinian point of view is the continuing loss of land to Israeli endeavours such as the ‘wall of separation’ and the expansion and establishing of new illegal settlements by

“ **A JEWISH
PROPHET LOST HIS
LIFE DEFENDING THE
RIGHTS OF AN ARAB
WOMAN** ”

Israelis on Palestinian land.

“For me as a Palestinian follower of Jesus Christ, the issue of land is really crucial,” says Dr Katanacho. “I don’t want a two state solution that will exclude the Jewish people, or a one state solution that will exclude the Jewish people.

“I don’t want a political solution that is rooted in hatred or bitterness. Every Jewish person is a gift from God, I want to nourish that gift, take care of it. But that’s not an excuse to overlook injustice.”

A God of justice, mercy and love

Dr Katanacho feels his plea to UK Christians is one rooted in love and in the character of God. “When we look at John 3: 16 we talk about love,” he says. “For me that’s true, but it’s not the whole picture.

John 3: 16 is also the ultimate expression of justice. God cannot overlook sin. God has to deal with sin. But his motive is love. And his expression is love.”

Having overcome huge personal and political barriers in order to love the people he used to see as ‘enemies’, Dr Katanacho urges Western Christians to also seek after God’s heart when it comes to the multifaceted and ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

“God wants us to have a theology full of mercy, full of grace, full of love,” says Dr Katanacho. “When love is impossible, God is there next to us to make it possible. I want you to speak up, to stand with your Palestinian brothers and sisters – not against the Jews, but for the Jews. Because we need to love the Jewish people in ways that will highlight justice and righteousness, and we need to love the Palestinians in the same way.

“Let’s go to our churches and raise awareness.

“If you love the Jewish people, God bless you, I love them too. To love one group does not mean to hate the other. But to love both groups does mean to pursue justice and righteousness.”

Words: Sarah Stone

BATTLING THE NEW ATHEISTS

PROFESSOR JOHN LENNOX REGULARLY TAKES ON ATHEISTS LIKE RICHARD DAWKINS AND PETER SINGER. IN HIS TALK AT CATALYST LIVE, HE ENCOURAGED THE AUDIENCE NOT TO BE AFRAID AND TO FIGHT THE BATTLE THEMSELVES

When Richard Dawkins' bestseller *The God Delusion* was published in 2006, some Christians felt threatened by his success and that of other atheists. Like a modern day Goliath, Dawkins was effectively shouting out across the media, "There is no God, Christians come and fight me if you can," and we cowered in our churches.

But not Professor John Lennox. Lennox is a fighter for Christian apologetics. He will do battle with Richard Dawkins et al. Name the time and the place and John Lennox will be there to take them on in debates – words and theology as his weapons against 'the enemy that is ignorance'.

In his talk at **Catalyst Live**, Lennox recalled some of the 'battles' he has been in. On each occasion, to continue the Goliath analogy, Lennox slings a 'stone', a pithy one liner that shoots through the "nonsense" and "utter rubbish" of the attacks by new atheists and leaves them almost speechless.

Lennox may be confident in rebuffing the new atheists but he astutely recognises that for most of his audience, this is not the case. Many Christians are afraid to defend their faith publicly.

"As I get older I find the major battles for Christians are in two areas: one fear,

the other shame," he says. "There is such pressure in our contemporary society for the privatisation of faith. You want to believe in God? Fine. But do it in your private space. You want to believe in Jesus? Fine. But don't mention it in the public square. The effect of that, the enormous pressure piled on by the new atheists claiming to speak in the name of science, has been that I meet many people in their middle life who go to church, who read the Bible, say their prayers, lead their family in worship but they have long since lost any cutting edge of public witness. They have been silenced. I had a senior university

them."

"I don't care how old you are – we all get afraid," Lennox says. "There are only two kinds of Christians: those who get afraid and those who lie about it. We need to encourage each other to overcome the fear barrier and in a country like ours, where political correctness is paralysing public debate, our generation and the younger generation need to get the courage to stick their heads above the parapet and be counted."

We should be ready to engage with people and share what we believe and why we believe it, Professor Lennox argues:

“ THERE ARE ONLY TWO KINDS OF CHRISTIANS: THOSE WHO GET AFRAID AND THOSE WHO LIE ABOUT IT ”

professor in this country at the top of his profession weeping in my presence not long ago. He said, 'John, they've silenced me.'"

Professor Lennox quoted from 1 Peter 3: 14 in his advice to Christians on how to handle atheist attacks: "Have no fear of

"We may not have all the answers but the important thing is to engage. The hardest thing is to overcome the fear and shame barrier and get engaged. It's because you feel that you have to know all the answers before you can start."

Professor Lennox argues that you don't.

“You’ve got to be able to say ‘I don’t know.’ And you’ve got to be honest with people and say ‘I’ve never heard that question before but I would love to think about it. Can we meet again to discuss it?’ You will discover the result of that will be maximally encouraging because then your Christian engagement will be real and not just a theoretical answer to bunches of questions you think you have mastered.”

Lennox recognises that science has got “enormous authority” in our culture and that many leading scientists like Stephen Hawking are coming out as atheists. This was not always the case.

“If you go back to the rise of modern science in the 16th and 17th century, the leading scientists were all believers in God,” said Lennox. “Now we are told you cannot believe in God and be a scientist. I am very interested in why that has happened. CS Lewis put it this way: ‘Men became scientific. Why? Because they expected law in nature; because they believed in a law giver’. In other words, belief in God, the rational mind behind the universe, was not a hindrance to early science, it was the very motor that drove it.”

Many scientists now see God as a God of the gaps, says Lennox – an argument that people hold onto where there is no scientific evidence to prove otherwise.

“You see, up to relatively recently if someone like me lectured about God, everyone understood I was talking about the Judeo-Christian God, the God of the Bible. But what I have noticed now is that is no longer the case, especially when I talk to a scientific audience because they think I believe in a so called God of the gaps. Crudely put, I can’t explain it so God must have done it. Slightly less crudely put, a God of the slightly eastern kind where the Greeks for instance, didn’t understand lightning and thunder and they thought it was the anger of the gods.

“If you define God as a placeholder to cover your current scientific ignorance: ‘I can’t explain this bit of biological evidence, therefore God did it,’ then you have to choose between God and science. Because that is the way you have defined God. The God of the Bible is not the God of the gaps. He is the God of the whole show, the bits we do understand and the bits we don’t.”

Lennox was concerned not only by the redefinition of God but also the redefinition of faith in our culture.

“One of the cleverest tricks that has been played on our society, and so many people have bought into it, including some Christians unfortunately, is that faith is a



Lithograph by Osmar Schindler (1869-1927)

“ FAITH IS ESSENTIAL IN EVERY DISCIPLINE ”

religious word, and that it means believing where there is no evidence. This is such a doubly wrong concept – we need to fight it with all our hearts. Faith, trust, belief is essential in every discipline, in every walk of life, in all our experiences, in all our personal lives.

“The Christian faith is evidence-based.”

In the final part of his talk, Lennox focused on the gaps in science, the limitations to what it can explain. He said that “scientific explanation is limited even within itself”, that what he called

‘Scientism’ as a belief that ‘science is the only way to truth’ was false and that “science succeeds because of the limits to the questions it asks.”

“God is not the same explanation as science,” Professor Lennox said. “If you understand that you begin to see that actually the Christian has a bigger explanatory paradigm than the atheist.”

And so Professor Lennox finished and left the stage. But it won’t be long until he is back again, taking on his atheist opponents. Unlike David, his fight with ‘Goliath’ has not ended. Their battle will go on at another university in another time zone.

Words: Chris Hall

A poem by Lucy Berry

Lucy Berry spoke at Catalyst Live in both Reading and Manchester. She is a poet, URC minister, sometime radio personality and her book, Trouble with Church is available from kevinmayhew.com

But Lord

But Lord – if They come to our church
we might hear about Life outside.
You would,
said the Lord.

But Lord – there is no Life apart from you.
That's right,
said the Lord.

But Lord – then there is no Life outside of church.
Not true,
laughed the Lord.

But Lord – to learn their story is to
feel their loneliness.
My loneliness,
said the Lord

But Lord – to listen to Them is to
know their terror.
My terror,
Said the Lord.

Or to hear Them is to
know their fear.
My fear,
said the Lord.

And to know Them might be to love Them
or to hate Them
To love me, or to hate me
said the Lord.

Or to embrace Them truly, truly,
we would then belong to Them.
Truly, truly, you would belong to me.
said the Lord.

But Lord – if we do this we will be changed.
We can hope,
laughed the Lord.
We can pray.

But Lord – if we do this thing
we would no longer be our church.
No!
My church.
said the Lord.
You would be My church.

© Lucy Berry

CALLED TO BE RADICAL

BAPTISTS SHOULD NOT FORGET THE EXAMPLE OF BAPTIST DEACON AND JAMAICAN SLAVE SAM SHARPE IN THE WAY THEY ACT TODAY

Does the life of a Baptist deacon who lived as a slave in 19th century Jamaica have any relevance for Baptists in the 21st century? Many think that Sam Sharpe is a role model for Baptists today, not just in Jamaica but here in the UK as well. Wale Hudson-Roberts takes this view, focusing on Sharpe as the topic of his talk at **Catalyst Live**.

Hudson-Roberts has been heavily involved in the Sam Sharpe Project, launched in 2012 by the Jamaica Baptist Union in collaboration with BMS World Mission, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and other Baptist associations. One of the aims of the project is to reflect on the life and legacy of Sam Sharpe and what it means for Baptist Christians today both in Jamaica and the UK.

Hudson-Roberts referred to Jamaica historian, Dr Cawley Bolt on the significance of Sharpe, especially his involvement in the 1831/32 Jamaican slave revolt.

“Dr Cawley Bolt, hit the nail on the head when he wrote ‘The Baptist communion then were in the forefront of the struggle for political and religious liberation,’” says Hudson-Roberts. “For Baptists, all people mattered. Baptists recognised that all people had been created in the image of God. Bolt goes on to argue that it was this central truth, recognition, revelation, that all people are created in the image of God that spurred this revolution and enabled persons to think that if they were created in the image of God so were others.”

Being recognised as being made in the image of God was important to Sharpe and his fellow slaves, in Jamaica and beyond, because of how they had been treated.

“They were victims of circumstances completely beyond their control, defined by Empire as nobodies, defined by Empire as insignificant people, defined by Empire as persons who had not been created in the image of God,” says Hudson-Roberts.

“And so they too self defined themselves, not as persons created in the image of God but as persons who had little, if anything, to bring to the table. They saw themselves, like others saw them, as insubstantial human beings, perhaps not even as human beings. As far as they were concerned, or so they were led to believe, their principal rationale was to generate vast sums of income.”

The Jamaican slave revolt, in which slaves went on strike and refused to work until they got paid, first bemused their plantation owners, then led them to act violently to suppress it with over 2,000 people killed.



incumbent upon us, not only to endorse it but also to practise it as Baptists.”

Hudson-Roberts took another lesson from Sharpe on how we can be slaves to the organisations and rules that we establish as churches and Christian

“ WE MUST BE A PEOPLE ENGAGED IN LIBERATION JUSTICE ”

“The aftermath, the debris, was visible to the naked eye in Jamaica,” says Hudson-Roberts. “Jamaican rivers were polluted by blood. The streets in Jamaica littered with dead bodies and hanging from the trees were naked dead bodies that had been lynched.”

This rebellion, in which Sharpe was a leader, eventually led to the end of slavery in Jamaica. Hudson-Roberts says the lesson for Baptists today is to stand up for what we believe:

“It is incumbent on us... to be a people engaged in liberation justice, a movement that speaks truth to power,” Hudson-Roberts says. “A people that are constantly saying no to injustice in all its various forms. That was our history. Surely it is

organisations. We should always be master of them, not the other way round.

“We learn surely, that as Baptists we must never become a people that are disabled and even undermined by structures and processes that thus prevent us from engaging in mission here and now,” says Hudson-Roberts.

“Surely through this enslaved person we learn that such mechanisms must enable us and empower us to bring in God’s kingdom today. That through such mechanisms we speak truth to power, and we speak about a holy and just and merciful God who has created all people in his image.”

Words: Chris Hall

CATALYST LIVE: UNPLUGGED

The density and depth of the packed programme at **Catalyst Live** will have made it hard to process everything that was said by our contributors. That, along with the fact that many of our readers could not make it to either of the events, is why we've put this issue of *Mission Catalyst* together. It's also why we thought you'd like this opportunity to go a little bit deeper with materials from our speakers. Some of it you may already be familiar with, but all of it is worth taking time to consider.



TO READ

THE LAND OF CHRIST: A PALESTINIAN CRY

By Yohanna Katanacho (Katanacho.com)

Don't judge a book by its cover. This is not about doves or charismatic gifts. It's for the theological mind, wrestling with the biblical issues surrounding the land of Israel-Palestine.

The author's charismatic conversion introduces a theology of praxis based on love before exposing the failings of dispensationalism, Zionism and restorationism. He expounds the identity of Israel, exposes the shallowness of fixed borders and refutes claims that the land belongs to Israel. Drawing on well-known theologians from Von Rad to Moltmann, Katanacho focuses on Christ's ownership of all lands, with a message of hope based on God's justice and the resurrection of the Messiah. He concludes with a vision of a new Jerusalem described in the Palestinian Kairos document (kairospalestine.ps).

ETHICS OF HOPE

Jürgen Moltmann

Are you searching for a biblically driven Christian ethic to challenge scientific bio-medical advances that threaten to endanger life at its beginning and end? An ecological theology that relates to the earth on which we live? Perhaps you seek an articulation of a hope that inspires Christian resistance to a unified global culture of growth and consumerism? Are you interested in a transformative eschatology that has inspired peacemakers like Martin Luther King and Gandhi to "make ploughshares out of swords"? Then *Ethics of Hope* is a must-read book for you. Jürgen Moltmann writes as someone who has clearly lived life in the light of the Resurrection but has also experienced its pain.

Reviews by Gareth Wilde, pastor of Broadmead Baptist Church, Woodford Green.

SEE ALSO:

Trouble with Church – Lucy Berry

God's Undertaker – John Lennox

Beyond Belief – Robert White (co-author)

International Journal of Systematic Theology – Steve Holmes (editor)

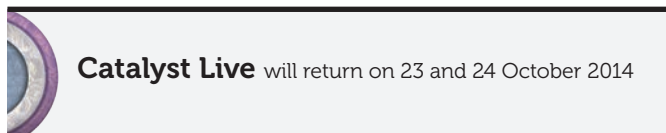
TO WATCH

CONFIDENCE IN THE TRUTH DVD

John Lennox, Amy Orr-Ewing, Tanya Walker and Keith Small of RZIM and the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics speak about sharing Christian faith in the postmodern world.

CATALYST LIVE VIDEOS ONLINE

Every **Catalyst Live** speaker, in glorious colour, available for streaming or download (in video and audio format), all in one place. Go to bmscatalystlive.com/videos and have your mind expanded.



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