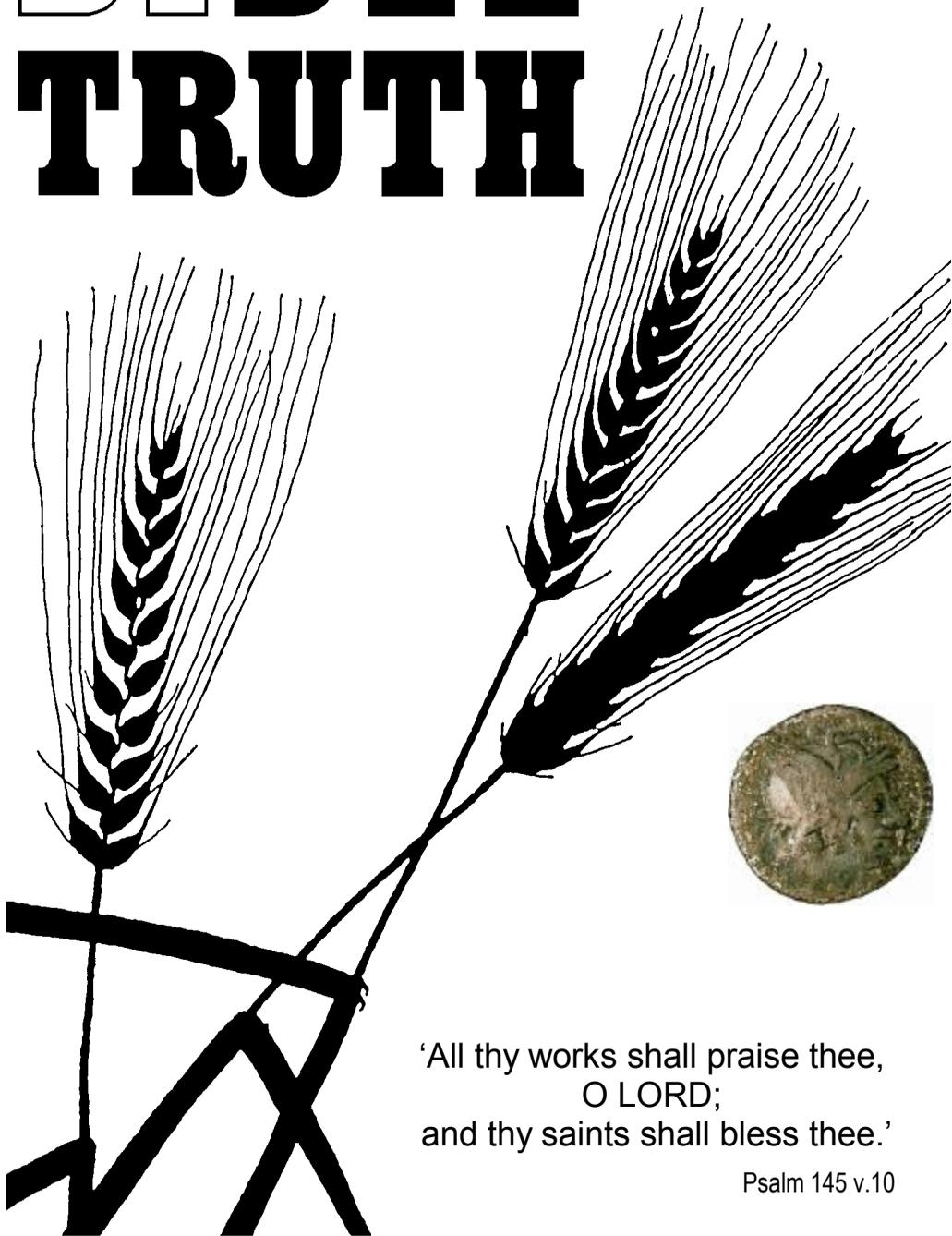


BIBLE TRUTH

No. 251
July/September
2008



'All thy works shall praise thee,
O LORD;
and thy saints shall bless thee.'

Psalm 145 v.10

High Priests and Prophets in Israel

By Paul Bogd-Lee

Sharia law

The idea of Sharia Law burst upon the nation early in 2008 at a time when few people knew what it meant. Now, there are few who do not have an opinion about it. It was the Rt Revd Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, who unplugged this volcano but perhaps it gained him more publicity than he deserves. In any case, as a result, some people have used vitriolic language to describe his action whilst others gave him a standing ovation.

Unfortunately for him the speech was made at a time when the nation was becoming increasingly unnerved about immigration, terrorism, building of Mosques and other related activities. He did it against a rising tide of people crying out for Canterbury's Archbishop to proclaim what they supposed he was appointed to do. Namely to defend the Christian faith when it was being acutely questioned, ridiculed and even persecuted.

As the most senior priest in the State Church, he can be seen to be akin to the High Priest of Biblical times, one whom the nation of Israel sometimes waited upon with baited breath, to pronounce on matters important.

High Priests as Law givers

The High Priest in Israel was amongst other things a law giver; so the fact that Williams deliberated on law is not unusual in itself. However, that law should be rooted in the Word of God and certainly not Islam. He seemed to muddy that distinction.

For him, Islam is no new interest; he has expertise in the subject and has actually been in dialogue with Muslims about it for some years. During the second week in May this year he convened the '7th Building Bridges Seminar' in Rome which brought together Christian

and Muslim scholars for study of relevant Biblical and Qur'anic texts. Before him in 2002, and one of the last things his predecessor, Rt Revd George Carey did whilst in office, was to host a 'Christian-Muslim Seminar' at Lambeth Palace. Within a year of that, Rowan Williams the new Archbishop, jointly presided over a 'Christian-Muslim seminar in Doha, where 'Christians and Muslims studied the Bible and the Qur'an together'. An excerpt from this seminar declared,

'. . . In Islam one cannot talk about the "incarnation" (that is, the "enfleshment") of the word, but rather of the "inlibration" (that is, the "embookment") of the Word. The Word did not become flesh in Islam; it became a book.'

Scriptures in Dialogue, Church House Publishing 2004, ISBN 0 7151 4012 4, p.20

The serious danger of this statement is that it devalues the position of Scripture to the Church. Indeed that appears to be the current attitude of some Christians today, where 'Jesus Only' is the theme rather than, Jesus and His Word which need to continue to run in parallel, with each having their own importance.

It is worth recalling the Muslim who said that, 'Islam and Buddhism are religions but Christianity is not so, it is pure revelation from God'. That revelation is recorded in His Word, the Holy Bible. Not only did Jesus, the Word, become flesh, but the Flesh is the Word, both in spirit and as the written word (John ch.1 v.1).

What about Islamic law alongside the British?

Very swiftly following the uproar after Rowan Williams' lecture to the lawyers, the Church of England publicity department swung into action with a press release about the Archbishop's talk. It was no ordinary release aimed at the press in general, but being so serious it was specially addressed to Parliament.

The Prime Minister responded by making it clear that British Law was the law of the land and it overruled all other law, including Islamic. How that statement stands against the intrusion of European Law into the British system is a moot point!

When it comes to whether two legal systems can coexist amongst the Israel peoples, the answer is a clear No. From their very foundation the Bible gave clear instruction for law in Israel.

'One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.

Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.'

Exodus ch.12 vv.49-51

The role of Priests & Prophets differs

The Priest offers the words of the people to God. Hence the familiar opening words of a prayer, 'Lead us almighty God ...'.

The Prophet, delivers the Word of God to the people and typically precedes or follows this with words such as, 'Thus saith the Lord'.

This mechanism has operated throughout the ages whereby alongside the priests, the prophets are frequently found. In a sense, those that cry against apostate priests, are fulfilling the role of the prophet.

High Priests in Israel

There are actually two High Priests in England; Canterbury and York. It happened this way in Biblical times also, as shown from this example in John the Baptist's day.

'Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'

Luke ch.3 vv.1-4

So the passage shows both Annas and Caiaphas held office at the same time and not only that but John was a contemporary of them. He fulfilled the role of a prophet and had the key task between the Old and New Testaments in proclaiming truth to all, including the priests of his day,.

In Israel-Britain, High Priests are unique on several counts. First, they are both Archbishops of England though Canterbury is what is technically termed 'of all England', thus setting him slightly to the fore of York. Second, amongst the other world primates he of Canterbury has traditionally been viewed as leading the Anglican Communion.

Third, other primates are elected by their church bodies whereas Canterbury and York are directly appointed by the Sovereign, which makes them more akin to the system in ancient Israel.

High Priests have had a poor track record throughout history

In the past, Israel has had many weak minded and apostate High Priests. Even the first, Aaron, succumbed to the baying crowd rather than God.

‘And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Exodus ch.32 vv.3-4

A few centuries after this the priests were filling their own pockets rather than looking after the fabric of the temple.

‘Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no more money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.’

2 Kings ch.12.v.7

Two centuries later still, things had got so bad that the Scriptures were not just neglected, but even seem to have been lost to both High Priest and Sovereign.

‘And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. . .

‘And Shaphan read it before the king.

. . . when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, . . .

Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

2 Kings ch.22.vv.8 & 10-13

Similarly and compared with a century ago, God’s Word is now all but lost in the nation. One wonders whether the present Sovereign might respond as King Josiah of old did. Would the Government let her?

Chief Priests

If Archbishops are seen as equivalent to High Priests, so other bishops could be equated with the 'Chief Priests' of Jesus' day.

By the grace of God there are still some good amongst the Chief Priests of our land today even though many of these are reticent in boldly proclaiming God's prophetic Word. Even so, one such, the Bishop of Carlisle, has bravely made prophetic utterances like,

'I happen to believe that our Government is moving into the realm of imposing its morality and it is therefore becoming a Revelation 13 Government rather than a Romans 13 Government.'

Daily Telegraph 16 February 08 reporting on the Church of England General Synod)

However, fellow bishops have been quick to distance themselves from him after making such statements. How is it that when others deny Bible truths they usually go uncriticised by colleagues? Here are some examples.

Chief Priest of Liverpool

On 5 February 2008, *The Guardian* ran the story, 'Exegesis from here to wherever' and concluded,

'Bishop Jones, has argued that the Bible sanctions same-sex relationships.'

In his treatise Jones apologised for his criticism of Jeffrey John being a homosexual upon his appointment as Bishop of Reading.

After criticism of his active homosexuality being inconsistent with the high office he was offered, Jeffrey John first did what seemed to be the decent thing and declined the appointment. Then, instead he accepted the post of Dean of St Albans after declaring he would remain celibate. Next he renewed the relationship with his male partner. Finally at Easter 2007 he declared that,

'Christ did not die for sin'.

and that clergy who preach this Easter that Christ was sent to earth to die in atonement for the sins of mankind are,

'Making God sound like a psychopath'.

The Bible very clearly teaches against such behaviour.

'A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, . . .'

I Timothy ch.3 v.2

‘Tutu and Carey wade into conflict over gays’

So wrote the *Daily Telegraph* 18/19 November 2007 when these two retired archbishops battled it out before TV audiences with Tutu for and Carey against, practicing homosexuals.

Chief Priest of Salisbury

David Stancliffe is one of more than a dozen bishops that failed to sign the Lambeth 1998 resolution limiting influence of homosexuals. Also, he continues to support their activity by inviting Ms Katherine Jefferts Schori, Primate of The Episcopal Church in the United States to preach in his cathedral prior to Lambeth 2008. She openly condones homosexual behaviour and in her consecration sermon proclaimed, ‘Mother Jesus gives birth to a new creation’.

At the time of writing it is said that Stancliffe has invited the liberal retired bishop Frank Griswold from the United States to the forthcoming diocesan pre-ordination retreat for new clergy.

Chief Priest of Southwark

‘Boozy Bish - Why didn’t he get bashed?’

On 7 June 2007 *The Daily Mirror* ran this headline. It featured the story of Rt Revd Tom Butler who was found apparently drunk, near the Hop Exchange in Southwark, in the back seat of somebody else’s car. He had just returned from an Irish party in Belgravia. The prophet Isaiah warned of this.

‘Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!’

Isaiah ch.28 v.1

Ephraim-Britain certainly has a drink problem; lager louts, excessive underage drinking, and the significant rise in working age women turning to spirits, are all raising national concern. One would hope that the Chief Priests would not get themselves into a position where they might exhibit a bad example of themselves.

Maybe the bishop thought he was just being sociable but the Epistles give teaching of a different sort on a bishop’s behaviour.

‘A bishop then must be ... given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine,’

1 Timothy ch.3 vv.1-3

Chief Priest of Oxford backs Mosque's amplified prayer call

The Daily Mail on 24 January 2008 reported that the Rt Revd John Pritchard said,

'those opposed should relax and enjoy community diversity'.

Perhaps he ignored or did not realise that the Prayer Call asserts the role of Mohammed as God's messenger rather than Jesus the Saviour. Either way, a senior Christian cleric gives the appearance of favouring a Muslim request in preference to promoting his own faith.

Chief Priest of Guildford

The Times on 22 February 2008 reported, 'Church gives generously to a centre for all faiths', when an unprecedented £250,000 was given by his diocese towards a multifaith building. Note that this was done when many cathedrals cannot now keep a roof over their heads because thieves are stealing the lead from them!

High Priest of York

'Sentamu stands the Pope a beer', read the headline in *The Guardian* when York's Archbishop visited Rome 23-28 January 2008 during a week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Whilst there he presented the Pope with a beer called 'The Holy Grail'. In doing so was he oblivious to Titus' Epistle teaching the following?

'For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, ... sober, just, holy, temperate;'

Titus ch.1 vv.7-8

These are just some news items from recent weeks which stand amongst a sea of deplorable such stories. Their theme is nothing new for, even 3000 years ago while the good priest Samuel was training, his mentor Eli failed to condemn his own sons' immoral behaviour.

'Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. ... Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, ... Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? ...

And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.'

1 Samuel ch.2 vv.12 & 22-34

So an insignificant prophet delivered a significant message to Eli, the High Priest of his day, the horrible truth of which soon came to pass; sons slaughtered, ark lost to the Philistines, High Priest broke his neck, and the glory departed from Israel (see 1 Samuel ch.4).

Blasphemy - the Third Commandment

Recently the Archbishops wrote to the UK Government in a very positive way about preserving the charge of blasphemy.

Interestingly during Jesus' time it was the charge of blasphemy that both the High Priests and the Chief Priests accused Him of.

'... Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

Ye have heard the **blasphemy**: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.'

Mark ch.14 v.61-64 (& Matthew ch.26 vv.64-66)

It was early in 2007 that the institution called Christian Voice fought a High Court case invoking the existing Blasphemy law against the BBC for showing the vulgar *Jerry Springer the Opera*. The case was lost on the grounds that the current law was said to apply to civil strife and not to personal offence. Christian Voice appealed to the Law Lords who decided not to hear the case because it was not felt to be within the public interest. This decision was rather odd considering that alongside it in time the Government was rushing through an amendment to abolish the law, the latter of which was certainly public news!

British MPs eventually reconsidered the Blasphemy Law on 9 January 2008 and it did not escape notice of the press that, at the same time it was being debated, Labour MP John Austin tabled his early day motion calling for the disestablishment of the Church of England. The motion number was 666! (See Revelation ch.13 v.18.)

Two peers tabling amendments to repeal the law prompted the Government to present their 'blasphemy' amendment to the House of Lords in February. During the debate, Archbishop Sentamu of York, though acknowledging defects in the current law, emphasised that something better must be put in its place to protect the offence of blasphemy before it was repealed. At the debate's close, 3 bishops voted to retain the law and 3 were against or abstained, thus giving no clear view from the Lords Spiritual, the Chief and High Priests, of the Church's mind on the matter.

Sabbath keeping - the Fourth Commandment

Surely priests should be expected to uphold the Sabbath Day as a priority. How is it then that cathedral shops open on the Sabbath, ministers change service times to avoid clashing with secular events or they are held on Saturday evening in order to free-up Sunday as a 'fun' or 'family' day? This is sometimes done in the name of expediency in order that members of broken families can meet together.

There is also a fast growing trend amongst the nation, including Believers, of not attending church on the Sabbath Day. Some people argue that the wrong day is being kept. Though this idea may have an amount of merit, for it to work, it can only be if those people regularly meet with others of like mind on another set regular day. Another reason given is the claim that it is fruitless to sit under the teaching of false shepherds. A reasonable idea perhaps, but it must be set against not gathering together at all with the faithful.

In spite of Jesus' criticism of the religious leaders of His day, He regularly attended the synagogue on the Sabbath, and when requested, taught the congregation.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.'

Luke ch.4.v.16

Note that He was asked, in spite of His teaching differing to what they were used to. He was prophetic and they were astonished at His teaching (Matthew ch.13 v.54). Mark ch.5 v.22 records that even rulers of synagogues came to Him for help.

The disciples followed Jesus' example.

'And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.'

Acts ch.13 vv.15-16

So there is good reason to attend churches regularly, however frustrating the services may be. It has been claimed that there are more than 1000 Identity Believers in the land. If that be so, it is worth noting that an extraordinary large number of them, more than 50, are known to be leaders in Britain's churches.

Conclusion

Much of this article has been very negative against senior priests in Israel-Britain today and a similar story could be told of those ministering in the United States, Canada and elsewhere.

Before closing, it must be emphasised that some God fearing men of the cloth exist and God be praised for raising them up who, like the prophets of old, bravely cry out against apostasy.

Also, of those who appear bad some of the time, they are not necessarily bad all of the time. Let us face it, these people have been ordained to declare the Gospel and that should be acknowledged.

Even so, what has been presented here is but a small selection from the news headlines in recent weeks regarding the behaviour of senior priests. The important thing is that the media have rightly discerned dubious statements and activities from those who should know better. These are the issues that are noticed and by which these shepherds are judged. No wonder many of the flock disrespect them and cry out for good spiritual food!

Jeremiah prophesied this concerning these Last Days.

'Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.'

Jeremiah ch.23 v.2

It could well be that, because of its immoral behaviour, the nation has got what it deserves from its leaders. Take heart though, the following verses show that the Lord has a plan and it is wonderful!

'And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.'

Jeremiah ch.23 v.4

At present, this is only a future hope but in the meanwhile, God has chosen us to deliver His Word to our generation. If we believe we come from the Hebrews then let us shoulder the prophetic mantle whilst taking special note of words from the Epistle by that name.

'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. . . .

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.'

Hebrews ch.4 vv.12-14

Not only do the Epistles reveal that Jesus, 'a great prophet is risen up among us;' but this passage shows His other attribute of being our Great High Priest. That is the Gospel - the Good News for all people.
