

Book review: The Death of Western Christianity

***The Death of Western Christianity*, Patrick Sookhdeo
Isaac Publishing, 244pp, 2017, £12.99**

This is a well-written, bold and clear presentation of Dr Sookhdeo's thesis that Western Christianity has died as a result of, in the words of the subtitle, 'Drinking from the Poisoned Wells of the Cultural Revolution'.

In his introduction, by the use of various global and secular statistics, Dr Sookhdeo develops his argument, lamenting the decline of church attendance over recent decades. He does not hold back in explaining what he sees as the reasons for this trend:

Since the 1960s Christian leaders have progressively betrayed the gospel... humanist leaders were zealous and creative evangelists, surpassing the fervour of Christian missionaries.

In this book we have an analysis of Western culture, morality and materialism today (Chapters 2-4), a diagnosis (chapters 5-8), and a proposed solution (Chapters 9-10).

The author asks where truth may be found in a post-Christian era. 'Post-truth' ideology is defined and while recognising that 'there are no absolutes in postmodern thinking', he laments that people 'are too scared to challenge lies, because they themselves do not know what to believe'. Where does the visible church stand here? Dr Sookhdeo acknowledges it is not unaffected by this worldly infection and the implications of living in a post-truth era are spelled out. The intolerant marginalisation of Christianity is found to lie in the rejection of Christianity's claim that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ who alone is God's final revelation. Therefore, the West's problem today is its loss of a Christian identity; unbelief has created a vacuum and Islam is poised to fill the gap.

What is to be done? Dr Sookhdeo suggests that the church returns to the basics of the Christian faith as witnessed in its creeds, which should be re-introduced into its corporate worship services. Christian communities also need to train their young people and disciple its converts to believe that the Great Commission is still operative today.

Dr Sookhdeo is well equipped to write this book. He has been in the vanguard of holding forth the truth as it is in Jesus while being fully engaged for over forty years in evangelism and church planting. Through the work of Barnabas Fund he has provided the global church with aid in times of famine, war and natural disasters while also delivering essential training for Christian ministers. His expertise includes a thorough knowledge of Islam in its various forms and the forces that are now working havoc in Christendom. What Dr Sookhdeo says needs to be heard and taken to heart without losing heart. Acknowledging that things are this way we must surely ask, 'What can the righteous do?'

This book reminds me of that helpful volume, *Evangelicalism Divided* by Iain Murray (Banner of Truth, 2000) which records the crucial theological changes in the years 1950-2000, especially within the evangelical camp of the Church of England on the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. Dr Sookhdeo's work is a contemporary sequel in this very sad saga of gospel decline in the West. He analyses the sick patient – the visible Church – and gives a clear diagnosis and prognosis.

This book is not easy reading as it documents attacks on the people of God. It exposes the hypocrisy of the visible church and reveals that the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office considers Christian missionaries to be 'spreading prejudiced views' and holding 'hateful attitudes towards homosexuals, transgender and intersexuality' (125).

This book is guaranteed to drive its readers to urgent prayer. This is needed because wisdom and grace are required from God to negotiate the present climate of opposition to biblical Christianity. Prayer for revival is urgent.

Rev Ian S McNaughton

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