

REVEREND ERNIE REA: Truly 'Beyond Belief'

The following article caught my eye today (27/9/2022) because of the heading to it –

Ernie Rea to step down as Beyond Belief presenter after two decades



The article can be accessed on this link -

<https://www.aol.co.uk/ernie-rea-step-down-beyond-092936267.html>

Apart from the fact that '**Beyond Belief**' was a religious programme broadcast by the BBC, the main point of interest for me was that **Ernie Rea** and I were school and sporting contemporaries.

In the article you will read how he is retiring from presenting the programme and his successor will be the current head of religion at the BBC, **Aleem Maqbool** – the article on this link gives interesting information on **Mr Maqbool**

<https://www.conservativewoman.co.uk/were-a-christian-country-so-naturally-the-bbc-makes-a-muslim-its-religion-editor/>

I have very fond memories of playing both hockey and cricket with **Ernie** on various school teams and then later for **Collegians** hockey and cricket teams. At the close of the article, I will include a couple of photos taken during our schooldays.

Perhaps you are wondering why I subtitled this article '**Truly Beyond Belief**'. Well, the sad reality is that unfortunately, **Ernie**, whilst professing to be a Christian, holds views that are utterly incompatible with being a faithful 'Biblical Christian' – his views on important issues are '**Truly Beyond Belief**'.

On Saturday 9th February 2019, in the Belfast Telegraph, **Ernie Rea's** answers to a questionnaire issued by the Religious Affairs correspondent, **Alf McCreary** were published and the following link will take you to those questions and answers –

https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/rev-ernie-rea-on-faith-my-roots-are-in-irish-presbyterianism-but-im-ashamed-of-its-direction-37796512.html?fbclid=IwAR13V720hC-vjdejeJhQ6qnW-xdEhQTOaUM2ckSff513mAAR_jXAZuq6H2I

What I propose to do is select and include several Q & A's in this article and place alongside them my own reaction to them –

Questions and Answers	Cecil's comments
<p>Q Are you ever ashamed of your own Church or denomination?</p> <p>A I worship in an Anglican church which accommodates many views. I wish the churches in England were more forthright in offering arguments against secularism, which is so prevalent. My roots are in Irish Presbyterianism, and I am deeply ashamed of the direction it has taken. The decision to cut links with the Church of Scotland and to refuse to baptise the children of people in gay relationships reduces the Church to the level of a sect. Whatever happened to "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not?"</p>	<p>ERNIE, was for a period of time an ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and that being the case he would have been aware that the PCI regards The Bible as its Supreme Standard of Faith and the Westminster Confession of Faith as its Subordinate Standard of Faith. On 'MARRIAGE', the WCF states 'MARRIAGE is between one man and one woman ... MARRIAGE ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity (blood relationship) or affinity (attraction) forbidden by the Word' – this mention of 'affinity' (attraction) reflects the many passages of scripture that show clearly God's view of so-called 'same-sex relationships' – they are in His eyes an 'abomination' and so they are utterly unacceptable lifestyles as far as He (God) is concerned. As regards his objection to the severing of Presbyterian ties with the Church of Scotland, that decision was fully vindicated when on 23rd May 2022 the Church of Scotland voted to recognise so-called 'same-sex-marriages' see https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-views/same-sex-marriage As for his reference to "suffer the little children etc" it was totally inappropriate and, in context, the incident (see Mark 10:13-16) had nothing to do with baptism.</p>

Q And what about Hell? Do you worry about it?

A If Hell exists, it is empty. A loving God could not condemn one of his children to everlasting fire. I once asked an orthodox rabbi if he believed God would forgive a repentant Hitler. The question troubled him greatly. He had lost family members in the Holocaust. There was a long, painful silence before he replied: "A repentant Hitler, yes."

ERNIE is openly rejecting the Holy-Spirit-inspired revelation of the truth of "hell" and it would probably take a full-length book to biblically refute what he has said so I will confine myself to one reference to "hell" by the Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew 10, the Lord is preparing His disciples for what awaits them when they are sent forth to "preach" (verses 5-7). He outlines how dangerous it will be for them (verses 16-27). And then he says in verse 28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell". The Lord is basically affirming that there is a 'fate worse than (physical) death'. The Lord, by use of the word translated "destroy" is not saying that God will 'annihilate' or 'obliterate' unbelieving people. Rather he is confirming that unbelievers will suffer both physically in their resurrected bodies (see John 5:29) and spiritually in their souls. In the 'Conclusions and Recommendations' of the book 'The Nature of Hell' published by Evangelical Alliance we read this on page 132 '6. Hell is more than mere annihilation at the point of death. Rather, death will lead on to resurrection and final judgment to either heaven or hell (1 Corinthians 15:1-58; John 5: 25-29; Revelation 20:11-14)'. This biblical truth about "hell" gives understanding of what the Lord meant when He said of Judas Iscariot in Matthew 26:24 "woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born". A 'fate worse than death' awaited Judas. In Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words, it says this about "destroy" – 'The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being'. Dr Eryl Davies, a gifted Christian theologian, and former principle of 'The Evangelical Theological College of Wales' wrote this on page 87 of his book 'Condemned for ever' – 'In hell however, unbelievers will be ... separated from the kindness and goodness of God ... In hell you (unbelievers) will be cut off from God's mercy and salvation'. The text of a helpful sermon preached by John MacArthur on the subject of "hell" is located on this link <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-376/the-truth-about-hell> Another helpful resource is the book 'Another Gospel' by Alisa Childers that challenges in chapter 10 the views of those who dismiss "hell". ERNIE used basically the same line of argument that 2 Jehovah's Witnesses used when they called at our house a few years ago when he said 'A loving God could not condemn one of his children to everlasting fire'. ERNIE clearly infers that everyone is a child of God – NOT SO – the Lord spoke to the Pharisees in John 8:44 saying "Ye are of your father the devil" and Paul, in detailing some of the "spiritual blessings" with which BELIEVERS are blessed wrote in Ephesians 1:5 "Having predestinated US unto the ADOPTION of children by Christ Jesus TO himself"- we had to be ADOPTED as sons and daughters of God and that only happened when we came to faith. A forthright article addressing

	<p>the answer given by ERNIE can be viewed on this link - https://protestantrevival.wordpress.com/2019/02/16/if-hell-exists-it-is-empty-disgraceful-claim-of-presbyterian-minister-rev-ernie-rea/?fbclid=IwAR1WFmzHXA8-N0Jc47I5jRp0G8Qf42yx9e0PUq2Zj8XTxv7a7MD9pena0TM</p>
<p>Q Do you believe in a resurrection? If so, what will it be like?</p> <p>A Yes, I do. I believe that "nothing in life, or death, can separate me from the love of God". However, I am completely agnostic about what that life will be like. It must involve challenges, triumphs and failures. I've never fancied sitting on a cloud playing a harp. An eternity spent worshipping God sounds intolerable.</p>	<p>Interesting that ERNIE didn't fully quote in his 'paraphrase' of Romans 8:38-39 the vital concluding phrase "which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". God's saving and redeeming "love" for human beings is centred on the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Romans 5:8) – it does not savingly or redeemingly extend to those who have not been "born again" (John 3:7-8) or who have not been "converted" (Matthew 18:3). The Lord savingly and redeemingly died for "the sheep" (John 10:11) – He did not savingly and redeemingly die for "the goats" as is abundantly clear from His words recorded in Matthew 25:32-33 & 41-46. What I have just written is pertinent also to the next Q & A to be addressed. However, to return to the subject of 'resurrection', the Lord again makes it clear that both the 'redeemed' (sheep) and 'unredeemed' (goats) shall be 'resurrected' (John 5:28-29) and in resurrected bodies it will be for the 'redeemed' a "resurrection of life" and for the 'unredeemed' a "resurrection of damnation". Our human finite minds cannot possibly grasp what it will be like for the 'saved' and 'redeemed' to live eternally in bodies fitted for the "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1). Unlike our present bodies our resurrection bodies will possess "incorruption" and "immortality" (1st Corinthians 15:53-54) – they will be as Paul wrote in Philippians 3:21 "like unto his (Christ's) glorious body". What shall we do eternally – whatever God requires us to do will equate to 'an eternity spent worshipping God' (which ERNIE views as being 'intolerable'). In this present life God's people are instructed "and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him ... and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily to the Lord and not unto men" (Colossians 3:17 & 19). That if you like is the continual 'temporal worship' we can offer in the here and now and which I believe will be motivationally replicated through continuous 'eternal worship' in glory – no notion in scripture of anyone 'sitting on a cloud playing a harp'. As for there being 'failures' in glory I find that a strange notion – 'failures' often generate emotions of sorrow, crying and even pain but in Revelation 21:4 we read "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away".</p>

Q What do you think about people of other faiths and denominations?

A Presenting Beyond Belief has brought me into contact with large numbers of people of other faiths and traditions. I am sure we are all searching for the same God, but by different ways. If I had been born in Saudi Arabia, I would be a Muslim; in Delhi, I would probably be a Hindu. I am struck by the similarities in our beliefs, rather than the differences. The idea that there will only be Christians in Heaven strikes me as an absurdity.

ERNIE, by this answer, reveals clearly his VERY low view of, in fact, his virtual disregard of Scripture, particularly when he says ‘The idea that there will only be Christians in Heaven strikes me as an absurdity’. God’s Word is VERY clear on this issue, unless someone is “born again” (John 3:3), unless someone is looking alone to the Person and Work of Christ (John 14:6 and Acts 4:12) unless someone hears the Gospel of Christ preached to them (Romans 10:13-14) they will not enter Heaven. In an article I wrote about C S Lewis, I wrote this on page 12 – ‘The Apostle Paul knew and taught that only those who had “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” [1 Corinthians 2:2] preached to them and who were “quickenened” [brought to spiritual life] [Ephesians 2:1] and who were “baptised” by that “one spirit” [1 Corinthians 12:13] were in “the body, the church” and belonged to Christ for he wrote in Romans 8:9 “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”. This is why Paul wrote so passionately of missionary endeavour in Romans 10:13-15 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher. And how shall they preach except they be sent.” Paul knew that “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation” [Romans 1:16] and that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” [1 Corinthians 1:21]. If there is no preaching of “the gospel of Christ” there will be no belief “in him” and no one can be “saved”. So, the effective extent of Christ’s ‘corporate’ redemption, according to the Bible, is limited to those who have “the gospel of Christ” preached to them and who by the work of the Holy Spirit are subsequently “converted” [Matthew 18:3].’ That article is located on https://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Contemporary/Lewis_Avoid.pdf As for ERNIE being ‘struck by the similarities in our beliefs, rather than the differences’ it appears to be clearly of no major significance to him that THE major and vital difference between Christianity and all other faiths is summed up by the Scripture I quoted earlier “Jesus Christ and him crucified” [1st Corinthians 2:2]. Those currently rejoicing in Heaven sing praises that echo what Paul wrote – as we read in Revelation 5:9 “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation”. That verse alone affirms the absolute necessity of the need for the likes of Muslims and Hindus to be evangelised with the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as otherwise they will perish in hell, the truth of which ERNIE basically rejects.

Q What is your favourite film, book and music, and why?

A My favourite book is Gilead by Marilynne Robinson, part of a trilogy centred on the American Civil War. Robinson is unashamedly Christian and writes about redemption and forgiveness in a very profound way.

I have only cited ERNIE's answer in relation to the matter of a 'book' as it is the only one worthy of comment in the context of this article, the other answers being 'non-controversial'. It was fascinating to see his choice of 'book' and author 'Marilynne Robinson'. Why fascinating, because another book called 'Home', and part of the 'trilogy' that ERNIE made reference to was the favourite book of the influential, so-called 'Progressive Christian' theologian Andrew Cuning who featured in my article on <https://www.takeheed.info/pdf/2022/March/Andrew-Cuning-Progressive-Theologian.pdf> (His book choice is on page 14). There is a short video review of the book 'Gilead' on this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2ocK8b4-Xc> and it reveals I think a general 'feel-good, all will be well' factor possibly in this book. Unlike ERNIE, the reviewer makes no pointed reference to 'redemption and forgiveness in a very profound way' but that's not to say that perhaps there is such content. In my article on Andrew Cuning, I wrote this about Marilynne Robinson - 'I found a review of the first book, 'GILEAD' written by my good friend, Pastor Gary Gilley of Springfield IL. His short review can be found on - <https://tottministries.org/gilead-by-marilynne-robinson/> and he mentions that it does touch on the 'philosophy and theology' expressed by one of the main characters in the book. The fact that Gary doesn't challenge anything expressed in those areas is comforting but I would surmise, and this is only a guess, that 'philosophy and theology' are relatively minor players in this work of fiction'. It would appear that Gary also did not take note of 'redemption and forgiveness' being addressed/expressed 'in a very profound way'. For me, it was not only fascinating but also revealing that ERNIE had, as I wrote earlier, selected an author liked by so-called 'Progressive Christian' theologian Andrew Cuning because the reality is that much of what ERNIE professes to believe would sit comfortably in the camp of so-called 'Progressive Christianity, particularly their Scripture-shredding and over-emphasis on 'God is love' – I drew attention to this in another recent 'Progressive Christian' article located on <https://www.takeheed.info/pdf/2022/September/Redeemer-Central-Church-full-on-Progressive.pdf> where I wrote - 'Back in July 2020 I was sent links to several sermons preached at 'Redeemer Central' and the one on this link is by ... David Armstrong. This is the link - <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/love-alone-iscredible/id626165868?i=1000483217817> ... it certainly was an important step along the path that has led 'Redeemer Central' to the 'Progressive' point that they have now arrived at. It is a 100% focus on 'God is love' to the exclusion of the many other attributes of the unchanging God revealed in both the Old and New Testaments.

	<p>Yes, the Bible teaches that “God is love” (1 John 4:16) but it also teaches, contrary to what Mr Armstrong suggests, that He can be “angry” and “hateful” and “violent” (Psalm 2:11; Psalm 106:40; Proverbs 6:16-19; 2nd Kings 21:6; John 3:36; John 2:13-17; Luke 19:45- 46) ... Mr Armstrong makes the familiar ‘Progressive’ mistake of elevating “love” to being the supreme attribute of God whereas “holiness” is His supreme and distinguishing attribute (see Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8; 1st Peter 1:15-16) and the truth is that ALL His other attributes, including “love” can only be properly understood and appreciated in the light of His “holiness”.</p> <p>ERNIE’s failing is that his theology is not based on ‘Sola Scriptura’ and here again he shares a common failing with so-called ‘Progressive Christians’. Speaking recently, I mentioned the basis of the theology of Andrew Cuning and what I said can in part be applied to ERNIE – by going to this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mo9fDLJL9s&t=1494s and scrolling to 1.15.07 you will see where I talk about Mr Cuning’s views on theology and how they are poisonous.</p>
Summary	<p>When the answers given BY ERNIE, not only those I have cited in this article, but also the others recorded in the full Belfast Telegraph article, are examined under the searching spotlight of God’s Word there can only be one verdict upon them, they are ‘Truly Beyond Belief’.</p>

CONCLUSION

This has not been an easy article to write as it concerns someone I have great and fond memories of, particularly our sporting ‘adventures’ together. I am in truth deeply concerned for ERNIE’s eternal well-being and I shall endeavour to contact him to make him aware of this article. Please join me in praying that God, in His grace and mercy, might yet speak savingly into ERNIE’s heart and mind – thank you.

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 1st October 2022

PS: I did say on page two that I would include a couple of photos taken during our schooldays.

The first is of the Methody ‘Under 14 XI’ **cricket team** of 1959.

ERNIE is 3rd from the right (front row)

Yours truly is on the left (front row – the one with the ‘bandy-legs’ 😊)

The second is of the Methody ‘First XI’ **hockey team** of 1962.

ERNIE is 3rd from the left and yours truly is 2nd from right (both front row)



