

A walk with Mr O (37)

Do it now!

Mr O, your generation is slowly passing away, isn't it? Already the leadership of our churches is mostly in the hands of the generation following yours. And before long it will be our turn. What can I do to prepare myself for such an enormous responsibility?

I can answer that in one word: read!

Read?

Yes, turn off the television, put your phone on silent, and read! Seven days a week read the Bible, until you know it from end to end, forwards, backwards, and upside down! In addition to that, on six days a week, in two sessions of twenty minutes to start with, blow the dust off some books and read!

Read what?

Read devotional books and biographies that will stir you up to pray. If our churches are not filled with a spirit of prayer, there is no hope for us. On the whole, devotional books and biographies are fairly easy to get through. Except for Sunday, never, never go a day without reading one.

What else?

Read doctrine. Many evangelical churches today are not worth attending. Why? Because they are not self-consciously Trinitarian. This is clear from the songs they sing and the way they pray and preach. If you are not self-consciously Trinitarian, you are worshipping a god who does not exist. And how have those churches got into such a mess? It's because their leaders are doctrinally lazy.

I'm quite shocked by what you've just said. So where shall I start to avoid being – as you put it – 'doctrinally lazy'?

An excellent place to start would be by reading G.I. Williamson's commentary on *The Shorter Catechism*. This was written for young people and its short chapters are easy to take in. And I am not joking when I say that if you regularly read through that book you will have a better grasp of theology than the vast majority of people who have been through theological seminary. I repeat, I am not joking.

The Bible. Doctrine. What else should I be reading?

The church of Jesus Christ didn't come from nowhere. It has a history and you should know that history. The Lord has wonderfully looked after His church and we should tell each new generation about His glorious works. Sadly, however, the church has often made lots of mistakes and fallen into all kinds of errors. A good knowledge of church history will help us not to do the same.

But Mr O, when it comes to reading church history I wouldn't know where to begin.

Read an outline first. This will give you a framework into which you can then fit every event you will learn about later. And the more church history you read, the more appetite you will have for it. That appetite will grow and grow. To get you going, however, I recommend *The Story of the Church* by A.M. Renwick. I don't know a better introduction than that.

The Bible. Doctrine. Church history. That's not everything, is it?

Of course not! We have to live the Christian life in this modern world where armies of satanic forces are combining together in such varied realms as politics, economics, education, medicine, genetics, geology, biology, climatology, religion, philosophy, ethics, retail, sport, music, media, social media and public opinion in a concerted move to dismantle western civilisation and to banish biblically-based Christianity from the planet. We need mature believers who are up to speed in what is going in all these areas and who can keep our churches informed.

If Christians don't read widely our churches are doomed. The great unloosing of Satan described in Revelation chapter 20 has arrived. The individual challenges that we face, such as evolution, abortion or transgenderism, need addressing biblically. But these are symptoms of the real issue and are not the issue itself.

We must not spend our time wrestling against flesh and blood. Satan is the problem. The Bible tells us how to deal with him. So, does the great devotional literature of the last twenty centuries and more. So, does the extraordinary example of that long list of men, women, boys and girls who have been martyred for Jesus' sake. And you won't know about them unless you read about them.