



Tom Holland: How Christianity Gained Dominion and A Secular Historian Loses His Faith (In Liberalism)

By David Robertson

Glen Scrivener is an Australian Anglican minister, film maker and evangelist. We didn't do this deliberately, but it looks as though we have done an 'evangelist swap'. Whilst the Scottish Presbyterian minister moved to Australia – the Sydney Anglican has gone to darkest Englandshire to bring the light of the Gospel, through a ministry called Speak Life. The English definitely got the better part of this particular swap – Glen is a brilliant evangelist who knows how to make simple films to get across profound truth. A recent example is this short video *If Bibles were Phones* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzG1z1BlgsY>

Tom Holland is a secular historian who seems to be on a journey towards Christianity. His writings are fascinating – he is probably my favourite historian. His *In the Shadow of the Sword* is an informative account of the origins of Islam – something which seems to have started Holland on his road to Christianity. His latest book *Dominion, The Making of the Western Mind* should be compulsory reading for pastors, politicians and any educated person.

So, when I heard that Glen and Tom were to get together again for a discussion on Glen's *Reset* programme, I was excited to see the end product. I was not disappointed. The resultant interview is moving, stimulating and strangely edifying - see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=favILmUsVdg> The whole thing is worth watching for yourself but it is the last 15 minutes which are stunning. When asked where he was on faith this was Holland's reply: "I've lost my faith – as a liberal – I don't really believe in it!...rather than drown completely in despair I can cling to stories – the power of Christianity is in the stories both in the Old and New Testaments." He doesn't think that they have to be literally true – but he has 'surrendered to the truth of those

stories. He is not quite there – but it is so moving to hear of his fascination with the Cross as the central event of human history.

However, it was deeply frustrating to hear him say that an obstacle to him was the reaction of the Church during this year of pandemic. He wants to hear what the Church has learned about the experience of plague during the centuries and what the bible says about plague. He heard the Pope talk about this that was 'profound, comforting and unsettling' but it went to the heart of what was going on in the world. But after that experience all he heard from the churches was just 'a pallid echo of public health announcements. "The churches are there to give answers, not public health announcements". "What does the Bible say about plagues? There is an awful lot of that in the bible. I would rather hear that from a bishop than how to wash my hands.". He is so right. Overall the response of the churches has just been a pallid echo of the culture. But when you hear a non-Christian like Holland saying that when he wanted to hear from the Church the Word of God, and he didn't – does it not embarrass, frustrate and anger you?

There is so much more in the interview (and the book) – I'll leave you with a few tasters.

Holland deals with everything from Islam to Nietzsche, Human rights to evil.

"We are so habituated through seeing the world through Christian lens, that we don't even recognise it"

"We don't need Satan because we've got Hitler... but the dread of Nazism is because we are seeing things through Christian eyes".

"Nazism is the most radical attempt to reject Christianity that

Europe has seen”

“Where do human rights come from? ...There was no concept of human rights in Greek and Rome”

“Humanity can’t bear too much reality”

Please pray for Tom Holland. He is one of a number of non-Christian writers who in my view are being used by the Lord to plough the cultural ground, thus enabling us to sow the seed of the Word, in order to reap the fruit of the Gospel. But pray for

him personally. He comes across as a humble, lovely and seeking soul. O Lord, save the Historian! And use him as you used that historian of old, Dr Luke.

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