

REFORMATION TODAY



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1994

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Ministers (some with their wives) at Perth, 19 September. Conference subject, 'The Primacy of Preaching' (see News)

THE CAREY CONFERENCE FOR MINISTERS

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

4-6 January 1995 – Theme: 'Is Real Revival an Option Today?'

DAY 1

Geoff Thomas Powerful Preaching from Daniel Rowland to Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones
What were the distinctive features of Welsh preaching which God has blessed for over two centuries, which eventually gave Wales the title "Land of Revivals"?

Thomas N. Smith The Authenticity of the Gospel Today – 1

DAY 2

Sinclair Ferguson Knowing the Holy Spirit

Bob Sheehan The Love of God for Sinners

Erroll Hulse The Implications of Revival and Revivalism Today

PRAYER AND SHARING

Thomas N. Smith The Authenticity of the Gospel Today – 2

DAY 3

Sinclair Ferguson Experiencing the Holy Spirit

Concluding session to be decided.

Dr Mohler has had to postpone his visit to us. We are grateful that pastor Thomas N. Smith of Virginia, whose ministry has been appreciated before at the conference, is able to help us.

Details and booking forms available from

John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co. Durham DL3 8BG

THE WESTMINSTER CONFERENCE

13 -14 December 1994

Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, LONDON.

DAY 1

1. William Tyndale and Justification by Faith – The Answer to Sir Thomas More - *Mark Dever*
2. The Council of Trent and Modern Views of Justification by Faith - *Philip Eveson*
3. The Puritan Woman – *John Marshall*

DAY 2

4. The Puritan Treatment of Melancholy – *Gareth Crossley*
5. The Puritans and the Direct Operations of the Spirit – *Christopher Bennett*
6. Adoniram Judson – Devoted for Life – *Erroll Hulse*

Front cover: The BAJAJ is a familiar feature of Jakarta (see News) - a mini 3 wheel taxi for 2 passengers with a motor cycle structure. It is a popular taxi service for shorter journeys.

Editorial

A look at the map of Java will show that the northern coast is punctuated by Mount Muria. The name Muria has been given to a denomination of Mennonite churches. These have multiplied in several parts of Indonesia. In 1920 a Chinese business man, Tee Siam Tat, was baptised together with his wife and 23 others. The Mennonite missionary pioneering in that area was asked to baptise the group. During the next three years a further 88 converts were baptised. Today the number is probably between 7,000 and 10,000.

In other nations Mennonite Christians have multiplied, 250,000 in the USA, about 50,000 in Zaire and 30,000 in Canada. The Mennonite assemblies in Jakarta are vibrant and enterprising. This provokes the question, What about Menno Simons? The sketch of his life shows that his resolution to be mistreated along with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time, was momentous in its implications.

With our stress on doctrinal orthodoxy and love for the 1689 Confession of Faith we have much to offer other denominations. Orthodox belief however requires to be implemented by sacrificial service. Mennonite believers have often adorned their belief in that way. We must be ready to suffer with Christ by offering ourselves in missionary service. This paramount need of love for Christ and his people is the emphasis pressed home in the final chapter of the first IFRB book, OUR



Wei En Yi (pastor), Lai Man On and Paul Chong (elders) of Shalom Reformed Baptist Church, Singapore (see News).

BAPTIST HERITAGE, published by CHAPEL LIBRARY, 2603 W. Wright Street, PENSACOLA, FL 32505, USA. (Chapel Library have just published a new 28 page catalogue of their tracts, booklets and books).

Colonel R C Thomson

When Colonel Thomson retired at the age of 64, he felt his life's work was over. He thought it was the end. In fact a new chapter of service was opening before him. His former experience, spiritual and secular, equipped him uniquely to work behind the Iron Curtain. He built up contact with hundreds of Christians who desperately needed support and encouragement from the West. The work he developed continues today, but now doors have opened which call for even more urgent needs to be met. This continuing work is described in the magazine SLAVONIA. Write for a free copy to Roger Weil, 28 Hayesford Park Drive, Bromley, Kent BR2 9DB.

Menno Simons (1496-1561)

Menno Simons' father was a dairy farmer in the village of Witmarsum in the province of Friesland, Holland. Early in his life Menno's parents consecrated him to the Roman Catholic Church. He was committed to a monastery where he learned Latin, a little Greek, and read ancient writers. The Scriptures were neglected and only two years after his ordination did Menno begin to read the Bible.

From the age of 28 until he was 40, Menno served as a priest. He was worldly and pleasure loving but he became concerned about the Mass. Did the bread turn literally into the flesh of Christ? He doubted this and began to study the Scriptures in earnest. He was helped by the writings of Luther and came to recognise that the Bible, not tradition, is the only source of authority. He arrived at this position in about 1528 but continued in the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1531 an Anabaptist believer named Snijder was executed by beheading for the crime of being 're-baptised'! Menno felt it to be awesome that a man should be willing to die because of believer's baptism. Convicted by this he studied further and came to discard the Roman Catholic teaching about infant baptism. He rejected likewise the covenant argument used by the Magisterial Reformers. He viewed that as an expedient to retain infant baptism.

These conclusions in his thinking were momentous in their implications. Menno was inevitably aligned with the despised Anabaptists. This spelled rejection by both Rome and the Magisterial Reformation.

However he occupied a comfortable position and enjoyed both prosperity and security. Hence in spite of his views he was unwilling to resign his position. Rather he chose to compromise and preach as clearly as he dared in the situation. The break finally came through a deep and irresistible conviction that he was guilty of the sin of disobedience. He was suppressing and refusing a clear call to pastor the confused and scattered Anabaptist believers. On account of a lack of clear teaching and mature leadership, many Anabaptists had been side-tracked by fanatical revolutionary leaders. Rebellion against the State led to the tragic massacre at Münster (see review article *RT137*). In addition to that disaster, a further 300 Anabaptist believers were killed in an uprising in Friesland. Included among the dead was Menno's brother.

The call to pastor and organise the scattered and bewildered Anabaptists became compelling. Early in 1536 Menno finally broke away from Rome. It is generally believed that he was baptised by Obbe Philips that same year. In the next 25 years Menno Simons laboured with all his heart and energies to shepherd the Anabaptists,

first in Holland and later in Northwest Germany where he was especially active in Holstein and the Baltic area around Lübeck.

Menno became a hunted man. As a fugitive, he moved from place to place. Notices were posted in many places offering a high reward for his capture. His writings were forbidden. One believer who had been baptised by Menno was arrested and executed for the offence of having provided a refuge for him.

During his ministry Simons had interaction in writing and debate with the well-known David Joris, a one-time Lutheran, who later fell into Münsterite tendencies. Simons was also involved in a three day debate with the Reformer John a'Lasco, an orthodox leader who recognised the difference between peace-loving Anabaptists and fanatical revolutionaries.

In spite of the dangers surrounding his life, Menno married and had children. Eventually many pressures undermined his health and he died in 1561.

Menno Simons is rightly esteemed as a great Christian leader. He was unfortunately influenced by the heresy of Melchior Hoffman that Jesus did not receive his manhood from Mary. In seeking to modify and correct this, Menno nevertheless remained confused. This reflects an overall theological weakness suffered by Anabaptists generally. Those opposed to the Baptist view of baptism and the gathered church concept sometimes

discount all Baptists on the basis that they are a futile lot as far as theology is concerned. However that conclusion is simplistic. It is a sweeping generalisation that is increasingly difficult to maintain. With the emergence of Reformed Baptists there is a strengthening of theological foundations and especially in the sphere of the unity and discontinuity of the covenants (Heb 8:7-13).

According to Menno Simons the Church of Christ should have (i) Pure doctrine, (ii) Scriptural use of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, (iii) Obedience to the Word, (iv) Love, (v) A willingness to witness, and (vi) A willingness to suffer. This desire to restore the New Testament Church has sometimes been called primitivism, meaning a return to the first or primary model.

As Reformed Baptists, who espouse and promote the 1689 Confession of Faith, we stand firmly in the Reformed and Puritan tradition. We must acknowledge however that the Confession is limited in what it has to say by way of practical application. Chapter 20 of the Confession (derived from the Savoy Declaration) is poorly expressed.

The practical implications of the great commission and the requirement to live for, witness to and suffer for Christ require emphasis. The Mennonites exemplified these values as did the Moravians after them. Let us hold fast to truth but be sure that we practise it as faithfully as we believe it. *Editor.*

Colonel Thomson – Missionary Extraordinary (1886-1967)



Colonel R C Thomson

Part 2

During his successful career in the Foreign Office Colonel Thomson constantly visited the countries of Eastern Europe. In the 1920s and 1930s a glorious awakening came to Western Ukraine and what is now Belarus (White Russia). In the last stages of World War II, Colonel Thomson was instrumental in retrieving the Nazi war records crucial to the Nuremberg trials. The story continues from RT141.

by Roger Weil

Thomson – the man

I believe that R C Thomson's origins always made him feel somewhat of an outsider in English middle-class society. Such feelings never entirely left him and may explain some traits in his character. Modest by nature, he hated all luxury, pomp and ceremony. Pride of place, pride of face and pride of grace, all incensed him!

In the Foreign Office of his day he was continually passed over for promotion in favour of younger, less experienced men who had the advantage of being Old Etonians. He was a very able man and must have felt it keenly. He felt uncomfortable among such people and resented their 'class' attitudes and their behaviour to those they regarded as inferiors. This may in part explain his turning down the job of British-Consul General in Berlin, which otherwise would have been a fitting crown to his career. He also refused to go to Buckingham Palace to receive his honours, the MBE and ISO, probably for the same reason.

His true affinity was always with the poor and underprivileged, for he knew only too well from personal experience what it felt like to be in that condition! The loss of his wife too, in a road accident in 1937, must have left emotional scars, for they had no children. It may also have contributed to a certain hard streak in him that was noticeable from time to time. To the end of his days he was plagued by, and wrestled with, shortness of temper towards laziness and stupidity.

The thrift and frugality that he had learned in his earliest years never deserted him. When the trousers ('breeks' he called them) of an old suit wore out, he would keep the jacket and wear non-matching trousers from some other source, quite oblivious of his 'rag-bag' appearance. To him the great and only virtue in clothing was its economy!

He was a voracious reader of history and politics, especially that which affected European matters, but he never bought a book or a newspaper, not when they could be borrowed from the library for nothing! But he was always very generous to others, in particular to those whose poor circumstances prevented them from bettering themselves. He personally paid for the education of the son of a Christian tram-driver and then furthered the boy's career by obtaining a post for him in the Foreign Office. He also bought a nice suburban house for the family of a Christian lorry driver, then living in wretched conditions in the East End of London, and also sought to help him use it in the service of God. He always tried to help the poor so that they could realise their true potential.

In London he attended both Westminster Chapel and Grove Chapel. He much appreciated the ministry of the ministers at that time, Dr Lloyd-Jones and Iain Murray, with whom he developed a close personal friendship right up to the time of his death in 1967. He greatly valued true friendships and was a true and faithful friend to his intimates. He had a dry sense of humour but without frivolity, a serious man yet not sombre. He was meticulously honest and efficient in all that he did, a man both of his word and of the Word.

His finest hour

After the successful completion of his mission to retrieve the records of the German Foreign Office he stayed on for three years in Germany as head of the British Documentary Unit. By the time of the German surrender in May 1945 that country was completely dislocated and facing starvation; survival was the order of the day. Thomson became a focal point for thousands of food and clothing parcels sent out by Christians in Britain for him to distribute to designated believers and to those he knew to be in need: Christian refugees and displaced persons whose whereabouts were known to him personally. His flat became a kind of sorting-office, where he and his helpers sought to distribute the food, clothing and copies of the Scriptures they received from abroad. He saw to it that words of spiritual comfort and advice, written by himself, accompanied every parcel. Many were especially grateful to him for this ministry in their hour of greatest need.

A new life begins at 64

In 1949 when he finally returned to Britain he felt that his life's work was over. He was now retired and aged 64; what was there left to look forward to? He told me in later years, 'I thought it was the end, but in fact it was just the very beginning!' God now had something really important for him to do for which all his years of experience uniquely qualified him.

For almost thirty years he had been in touch with the Russia and States Border Mission. Their overseas activities had ceased with the outbreak of war in 1939, but they were one of the agencies who had been supplying aid parcels to him in Germany since 1946. In 1949 he joined their committee and took meetings for them in various parts of the British Isles. With the Russian blockade of Berlin in 1948, the Cold War had begun in earnest, bringing down an 'Iron Curtain' along the borders of all those Eastern European nations she had liberated and subsequently occupied. Even the most intrepid and determined Christian visitors who managed somehow to penetrate into these lands found there was little they could do for the believers they met, apart from being a sympathetic presence and an encouraging reminder that they had friends in the West who cared for them.

But by 1953 Stalin had died and this event was followed in 1956 by riots in Poland and rebellion in Hungary, whereupon Khrushchev conceded that satellite nations could now pursue 'separate paths to Socialism'. Tourism was then officially recognised as a convenient device for raising badly needed hard currency. Thus it became acceptable, albeit slowly and grudgingly, to have Westerners as tourists within the lands of the Communist bloc.

Personal visits to Christians in the Communist bloc

In 1959 Thomson decided to make a protracted tour of the Soviet Union and Poland, lasting over a month, to reconnoitre the conditions under which Christians were then living. His object was by no means a theoretical one, but rather to see if there was any way by which Christians in the West could now assist the Lord's work there. The believers he met in the Soviet Union made it quite clear to him that, due to the political situation, it would be unwise for them to accept any aid or encouragement from the West. However in Poland it was a different story. In the autumn of the same year he wrote in the Mission's quarterly magazine *Slavonia*:

This autumn we have gladdening news to impart. A great leap forward has been taken, with the guidance and help of our Heavenly Father. We plan to send help from time to time to two brethren who are already doing all that is possible, with large responsibilities and very inadequate means, to



Colonel Thomson standing between the pastor and oldest member of an Hungarian village church (North Yugoslavia) in 1965

advance the cause of the gospel. Other Christians vouch for their zeal and reliability. Let us pray that the help we send may make it possible for them to reach far out in winning souls.

It must be understood that Thomson's method involved far more than simply turning up at a local evangelical church in Poland and asking for a list of workers who would be worthy of support – nothing could be further from the truth! He always made a point of praying specifically for guidance in such matters. Then he would visit and most likely stay with the unsuspecting family to assess their dedication and spirituality. Of many workers he discovered and subsequently supported, here is an example in Thomson's own words:

Away out in the country. A village some miles from a small town near the mountains... A very tiny old thatched cottage whose doors everywhere force one to bend... Within the miniature domain all is very neat and tidy, with many evidences of refinement and taste. The occupant must be a student or scholar, judging from the books. He is a godly man who has stood for the best things through thick and thin, under all sorts of persecutions and trials. When one speaks with him, one recalls the salt of the earth. He is known over a wide area as a man to be consulted in all sorts of difficulties, spiritual and otherwise. As the result of a recent accident he is

suffering from a leg broken in more than one place, yet with his wife he has only a pension of about two shillings per day on which to live... Informal meetings seem to be held continually in that small cottage. A strategic stronghold in a very needy area.

He returned to Poland the following year, now aged 74, to seek out more men worthy of support and encouragement: three more were added to the three discovered previously. In 1961 he was again in Poland on the same errands. When he reported back to the Mission in London he said:

Two years ago our efforts to serve God in Poland were resumed with a couple of workers. Results quickly proved that the step was a right one, so last year three further men were added. This summer we have gone up to twelve... We are constantly meeting people who almost refuse to believe that it is possible to advance the cause of evangelisation in a country like Poland. To us it almost seems like a dream that we have been doing so for fully two years. Let us pray to God that for years ahead we may have the privilege of standing by the brave Christians who have for so long faced such huge difficulties in their work and witness. May God grant that the time will arrive when material conditions will have improved and the native church will be so strong that, not only will it not need our help, but will reach out to take the gospel to lands still unevangelised.

In 1962 he spent two months travelling constantly and extensively to all parts of Poland, covering over 4,000 miles, meeting hundreds of believers and adding another seventeen workers to the twelve already being supported. He had thus found a total of twenty-nine workers in four visits – all this at the age of 76!

Successors in the work

The following year, 1963, saw him return to Poland again and the number of suitable and worthy witnesses to receive the Fellowship's support rose to no fewer than seventy. But this year also saw him breaking new ground as he visited both Hungary and Yugoslavia. It should be remembered of course that he was no stranger to any of these lands, having travelled extensively in them between the two World Wars. In 1964 he again visited Poland but also took in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. Realising that he could not go on forever, he began to pray earnestly that the Lord would lead younger men to assist and eventually succeed him in this ministry. In total ignorance of this, the present writer happened to meet him at Westminster Chapel and accepted an invitation to visit him at his home in Blackheath. The spiritual work I had been involved with for ten years was about to

close down and I had been prayerfully considering what to do next. After tea the conversation ranged over various topics and I recall mentioning my present predicament and asking his advice. I was somewhat startled therefore when he leant forward in his chair and, fixing me with his eye, replied with emphasis, 'I have been praying that you would ask me that very thing!' To my shame I confess at that moment the last thing I wanted to do was to travel behind the Iron Curtain and visit Christians in Eastern Europe! Thomson, however, would not let go. Twelve months later I had joined the committee and, to my great surprise, found my life's calling. Others also joined us, the brothers Michael and Peter Cross, Paul Theedam followed by Jim and Wilma Monk and Barrie Brooks, the last three after Thomson's death in 1967. In the previous year, 1966, Thomson had written,

Mr Michael Cross and his brother Peter intend to make a quick journey to Poland and back in the latter half of August. Happily we have now a number of ports of call where our young friends will be warmly welcomed. They will transport medicaments and other useful articles which are in short supply and great demand out there.

Mr Weil hopes to start off about a month later and will confine his efforts to the lesser known regions of Yugoslavia. We are inexpressibly cheered to think that younger men are setting forth on such wholesome expeditions and enjoying their experiences too. We pray for a real apostolic succession in this respect.

It was during this year, 1966, that the unexpected happened. On his eighth visit to Poland he was suddenly summoned to the local police headquarters and ordered to leave the country within thirty-six hours; no reason was given. It seems that in at least one church he had spoken out strongly against the United Evangelical Churches of Poland joining the Ecumenical Movement. Thomson was nothing if not forthright in his opinions and especially in his sermons! Although it cannot be absolutely certain this appears to have been the most likely cause for his expulsion.

In this his final year of service for the Lord in Eastern Europe, he made his longest and most arduous journey, spending three months in five countries; all this at eighty years of age! In the eight years since he resumed his visits behind the Iron Curtain he was personally helping no fewer than 144 Christian workers; but the number of those with whom he was in close fellowship must have numbered several hundreds.

As indicated earlier in this brief review of the life of R C Thomson, he regarded his final years and the development of the work of the Slav Lands Christian Fellowship as God's special gift. To talk of his crowning achievement is certainly not how he would have chosen to describe it! He was too conscious of the divine hand of his

Heavenly Father over his life ever to take any credit or glory to himself for what had been achieved. But it is nevertheless a fact that he greatly rejoiced in this pioneering work that God had specially given him to do at the end of his life. That great and godly man, R C Chapman, the friend and confidant of George Müller, believed most strongly that if the believer but makes it his business to walk humbly with God each day he will prove that 'the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day'. When just short of his hundredth year, Chapman in writing to a friend could say, 'These are by far my brightest days!' I believe that this was also the portion granted to R C Thomson in the closing days of his life.

The last journey

In the spring of 1967, aged eighty-one, he set forth once more on what was to be his last journey to the field he had loved so well and had known so intimately for the greater part of his long life. First on his itinerary was Hungary which he recalled visiting back in 1920 almost fifty years before. He alighted in Budapest but was already unwell. He was taken to the home of a Christian doctor where he suffered the first of a series of minor cerebral haemorrhages. With all possible speed friends from England went out to Budapest and brought him safely home by car, accompanied by the doctor. He remained for the last four months of his life at his home in Blackheath. Although he was often extremely confused as to his immediate surroundings and current events, yet in spiritual matters and in prayer he was as clear as ever. He enjoyed the fine weather of high summer, sitting in the shade of the old trees in the large garden that he loved so well, delighting in its peace and tranquillity. Finally he suffered a more serious fall and was admitted to hospital where, within a few days, on the 25th of August, he passed to his eternal reward and the heavenly rest that remains to the people of God.

The work that he began in 1959 still continues today bearing the title he himself gave it: 'The Slav Lands Christian Fellowship'. We look back with thankfulness and affection to our dear 'Uncle Robert', who by his example and prayerfulness, by his grit and determination, persuaded us to follow him even as he followed Christ, to the lands of Eastern Europe and beyond that to Russia itself.

A final tribute comes from Iain Murray: 'His life was a true testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has left a fragrance behind which we will not forget and he gave an example to a younger generation which I am sure was blessed to them. When I was privileged to take his funeral service, the words of Philippians 1:21 were ones upon which I could very naturally speak in referring to our dear friend, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain".'

Luther's Journey to Righteousness

Part I of a paper given at the Carey Ministers' Conference, January 1994. The title was, 'Luther: The Law and the Gospel'.

Dr W Robert Godfrey, President, Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, California, USA

Martin Luther is remembered in the United States around October 31st far and wide among evangelical Protestants as a hero of the faith. We look back at Luther as a pioneer, as a profound theologian, as a heroic Reformer. Some of us gather in Reformation Day services on October 31st to remember the great beginning of the Reformation.

On other days of the year, however, we Reformed Christians are often inclined to harbour at least some suspicions about Martin Luther. Is it true that Martin Luther did not fully reform the church from Roman Catholic elements? We may think particularly about sacraments and ceremonies as areas in which Luther may not have done all that he should have done. We may also suspect that Luther had a bit of an antinomian tendency. Is his stress on the distinction between the law and the gospel an emphasis that goes too far? Is Luther one who has made too little of the law? We as Reformed Christians may fear that he has tipped the balance on the side of antinomianism. We may harbour such suspicions about Luther because the Lutherans constantly harbour suspicions about us that we have tipped the balance in the direction of moralism.

Since Lutherans and Reformed tend to enjoy trading insults with one another – we accusing them of being monophysites and they accusing us of being Nestorians, for example – it is appropriate that we take a look again at Martin Luther and ask ourselves, what did Luther really say about the law and the gospel? What can we learn from him and are there any areas in which we may have legitimate concerns? It is not always easy for us as Reformed Christians to read Martin Luther. We need to realise if we are going to read him, and we should because there is great spiritual profit in reading Martin Luther, that Luther sometimes uses words with different definitions than the ones we are accustomed to using. Particularly in his use of the words 'law' and 'gospel', we will see that he does tend to define them differently from the way in which Reformed folk define them.

A Master of Hyperbole

We also need to bear in mind that Luther's style is rather different from the style of most Reformed authors. Luther was an expert in the use of hyperbole. He loved to

exaggerate to make a point. And if we do not bear that in mind as we read Martin Luther, if we just lift his statements out of context, we will surely misunderstand him. He loved to drive home a point by exaggeration. One of my favourite examples is, when he was resisting the medieval notion that only priests, monks and nuns had a calling and insisting every Christian occupation is a calling, he said: 'All callings are honourable before God with the possible exceptions of burglary and prostitution.' He was not, in fact, promoting burglary and prostitution, but he was exaggerating to make a point.

Luther exaggerated in part because of his reaction to medieval theology. He claimed the most important word in medieval theology was *ergo* (therefore) and that the besetting sin of Latin theology was 'therefore' – constantly resting their theology on the conclusions of human reason. The real word that should be at the centre of our theology, he said, is the German word *dennoch* (nevertheless). Theology operates not by 'therefores', but by 'neverthelesses'. We as Reformed theologians following that nice, balanced lawyer, John Calvin, may tend to be more sympathetic to 'therefores'. But if we are going to understand Luther, we have to understand his use of 'nevertheless' to drive home his point. He exaggerates and at times over-emphasises.

This point is even more important when we remember that Luther was not in the strictest sense a systematic theologian. He was an occasional theologian. He never wrote a full systematic theology. He never even sat down to write his projected systematic treatise on justification. He wrote to specific issues in the life of the Church. He exaggerated as he felt necessary for the occasion.

Also, he wrote at great speed. When he wrote his treatise in 1520, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, which was his analysis of the sacraments of the Church, he began the treatise saying that there were three sacraments: Penance, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He concluded the treatise saying there were two sacraments. He had developed his thought in the course of writing the treatise, but had no time to go back and revise it. We need to bear this in mind as we read and study Martin Luther.

Luther the Conservative

Let us begin by looking at Luther's life: Luther the radical conservative. Luther, I think, must be understood as a conservative who took conservative principles to a radical conclusion. Luther had nothing of the revolutionary in his soul. He did not seek to change the Church. He did not set out to make all things new. He did not really like change. He reached his reforming conclusions by taking the conservative positions of the medieval Church to their logical conclusion. He was a radical conservative. As Heiko Oberman in his very interesting biography of Luther, *Luther, Man Between God and the Devil*¹ argues, Luther was not really a Reformer. He did not set out in any conscious or perhaps even unconscious sense to reform the Church. There had been many Reformers through the Middle Ages. Luther really did not have

anything of that sense about himself, Oberman argues. Luther was much more the prophet who comes to challenge the people that they have not lived up to their own ideals. Luther comes to Protestant conclusions not so much out of a desire to change or out of a desire to be a revolutionary, but out of a desire to get the Church to be consistent with its own most basic principles.

Luther grew up living the traditional life, the son of a prospering German businessman. He grew up as a loyal and obedient son. His father looked around and asked what his son should do to advance the family fortunes. The answer in his day – as well as in ours – was, become a lawyer. So Papa Luther determined to send his son off to study law. And loyal, faithful son Martin went to study law. Yet Luther went with a heavy heart because he was not only a loyal son of his family. He was also a loyal son of the Church.

Caring for One's Soul

The Church had been educating Luther with the truth that one must take care for one's soul. The Church told Martin Luther that the soul was a precious thing and that the salvation of the soul was difficult to accomplish. The Church advised that anyone who wanted to be really serious about his soul and about salvation should become a monk because the life of a monk was precisely the life of giving oneself over to the salvation of one's soul. When Luther became a monk, he did so because he was a conservative. He had listened to the voice of the Church that said to him, 'You need to take care of your soul first and foremost.' He illustrated the medieval proverb that said, 'Doubt makes the monk.' Luther became a monk because he doubted. He doubted his relationship to God.

Luther's very enthusiasm for monasticism made him in some ways obnoxious in the monastery. He kept going to his confessor to confess minor sins. The confessor kept sending him away saying he did not want to talk to him because he did not have anything significant to confess. Yet Luther was burdened with a sense of his sin and tried to make faithful use of the medieval sacrament of penance to deal with his sin.

Now a wise leader in the monastery set Luther to work studying because he recognised him as a man of unusual brilliance. Luther began to study. Although this is something of an over-simplification, we can say his study led him to two crucial theological conclusions: one in the area of authority and the other in the area of salvation.

The Matter of Authority

Authority in late medieval tradition

If we look first at the matter of authority, we see that the late medieval tradition was rather undifferentiated and somewhat confused in its approach to authority. The late

medieval tradition basically said that the Bible was authority, that tradition was authority, that reason was authority, and that the Pope was authority. And late medieval religion basically believed there was no tension among those authorities. They were all equally authoritative. But as Luther set to work, he began to find that in fact there were tensions among these authorities. He found that he could not really reconcile one authority with another.

His confidence first began to waver in reason as an authority. Luther later in his life would make one of his famous hyperbolic statements when he said that reason was a whore. What he meant was not that one should never reason, or that reason was not in fact very useful in conducting the affairs of this life. Rather what he meant was that when one reflects on spiritual things, when one thinks about theology, reason will only lead you astray. Reason gets you nowhere. One has to find truth through revelation, was Luther's ultimate conclusion. And so, already in the early years of the second decade of the sixteenth century, Luther began to move away from the great confidence in Aristotle and his reasoning that the medieval theologians had taught.

Authority – Aristotle versus Augustine

In September 1517, about a month before his posting of the famous '95 Theses', Luther wrote some theses entitled 'Disputations on Scholastic Theology'. In those disputations he shows that he had reached the point where he was rejecting Aristotle as an authority in religion. One of the theses states: 'The whole Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light.'² So Aristotle has nothing to teach us in theology.

What was his antidote to Aristotle? In these theses the antidote was Augustine. Here he was pitting, in effect, two traditions of the Church against each other. What he contrasted then was Aristotle with Augustine.

At the beginning of these theses he wrote: 'To say that Augustine exaggerates in speaking against heretics is to say that Augustine tells lies almost everywhere.'³ Now that in fact was a very revolutionary thing for Luther to say because the standard medieval way of dealing with Augustine on predestination was to say that he had exaggerated in his opposition to Pelagius. Pelagius was so bad in his theology that Augustine had to overstate his position on grace and predestination as an antidote to Pelagius. But here Luther has clearly reached the conclusion that Augustine was not exaggerating when he wrote about grace and predestination. So Luther was changing by 1517 in the matter of authority. He was rejecting reason and counterposing to that the authority particularly of Augustine as the great doctor of the Church.

Scripture, not tradition as the sole authority

His thought continued to develop and again we have the feeling that we can almost see his thought crystallise in the great debate that he entered into at Leipzig in 1519.

There he confronted one of the great theologians of the Roman Church, Johannes Eck. The debate turned into a disputation especially about authority. Eck kept pressing the point that Luther could not be right when he stood against the Pope, the doctors, the bishops, the councils and the tradition of the Church. What right did he have to claim that he was right and everybody else was wrong? Eck really pressed Luther into a corner. Eck in fact knew the history of the Church and the decisions of the doctors, the theologians and the councils of the Church much better than Luther did. In that situation where he could not answer history with history, Luther kept falling back on the Scriptures. That after all was what Luther had been studying through the years. He was a professor of the Bible at Wittenberg. So he kept returning to the Bible and arguing against the history of the Church from the Bible. Eck finally charged him with behaving just like John Huss. Huss was, of course, a condemned heretic. To be identified with Huss was to be utterly identified with heresy. Luther – really on the spot – seemed finally to have realised that the only absolute authority in theology was the Scripture. Tradition was not a genuine authority. Tradition was not a reliable guide to truth. Tradition did not speak with one voice: what tradition, whose tradition, which tradition? Luther came, in time, clearly to realise that Scripture alone must be our authority.

Scriptural teaching of the use of the law in salvation

Similarly, over time, he came to a fresh understanding of the matter of salvation. He entered the monastery a convinced medieval Catholic and for the medieval Catholic, the gospel was the new law. Christ was the new law giver. You can see that displayed in various forms of iconography in the Middle Ages: Christ appears in various pictures looking almost like Moses with the book of the law in his hand. The gospel really was seen as a more demanding law than the Old Testament law. Luther took all that with great seriousness and saw the Christian life as this arduous road towards obedience.

You may have heard of the reply of John Calvin to Cardinal Sadoletto in his defence of the Reformation. But most of us have not read Sadoletto's original letter to Geneva urging them to come back to the Roman Catholic faith. In that letter Sadoletto rather brilliantly summarises this medieval Roman position on salvation. He wrote,

And since the way of Christ is arduous, and the method of leading a life conformable to His laws and precepts very difficult (because we are enjoined to withdraw our minds from the contamination of earthly pleasures and to fix them upon this one object – to despise the present good which we have in our hands, and aspire to the future, which we see not), still of such value to each one of us is the salvation of himself and of his soul, that we must bring our minds to decline nothing, however harsh, and endure everything, however laborious, that, setting before ourselves the one hope of our salvation, we may at length, through many toils and anxieties... attain to that stable and ever-during salvation.⁴

You see there the medieval picture. It is toil and worry and work to the end, in the hope that perhaps one might be saved. In reaction to that pattern of teaching, to that understanding of salvation, Luther came gradually to understand the gospel.

Luther's liberation

In his famous 1545 preface to his Latin works, he reflected back on his life as a monk and on how much he was trapped in this works-righteousness. He said:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, 'As if, indeed, it is not enough that miserable sinners eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!' Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience.⁵

He wondered how one could not hate a God who comes only with righteous demands that cannot be met. That was the anguish of the soul of Martin Luther as a monk. It was that anguish that drove him into the Scriptures and led ultimately to what we know as his evangelical breakthrough. He came to realise that when God speaks of righteousness in the gospel, he is not speaking of the righteousness that he demands, but of the righteousness that he gives in Christ. And Luther said that that apparently small difference absolutely turned his world upside down. Again he wrote about his discovery: 'Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.'⁶ He said he ran his mind through the Scriptures with his new insight and saw passage after passage revealed in a completely new light. Luther had committed the New Testament to memory and also vast sections of the Old Testament. As he went through that memory of Scripture, he saw the doctrine of justification by faith coming through.

To be completed

References

- 1 Heiko Oberman, *Luther, Man Between God and the Devil*, New Haven (Yale), 1989.
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- 3 *Ibid*, p 9.
- 4 *A Reformation Debate*, ed. John C Olin, New York (Harper Torch books), 1966, pp 32f.
- 5 *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger, New York (Anchor), 1961, p 11.
- 6 *Ibid*.

News



Standing from left to right, Paul and Linda Fernandez (administration) David Ellis of Cuckfield, Sussex, David Rivero of Leon, Spain, Chris Richards and Roger Cook, both of Grace Baptist Mission, and on front from left Paul Appéré of Paris, France, Keith Johns of Caterham and Daniel Molla of Bienne, Switzerland

*From David Ellis, Polestub Cottage,
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FEBE formal inauguration

The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists in Europe (FEBE) met for its biannual conference at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon from 8-12 August, 1994. The three language groups represented were French, Spanish and English and some 115 participants enjoyed good ministry in a relaxed holiday atmosphere. Each language group provided speakers and each session was simultaneously translated.

The overall theme was 'The Church the World Needs' and each talk was

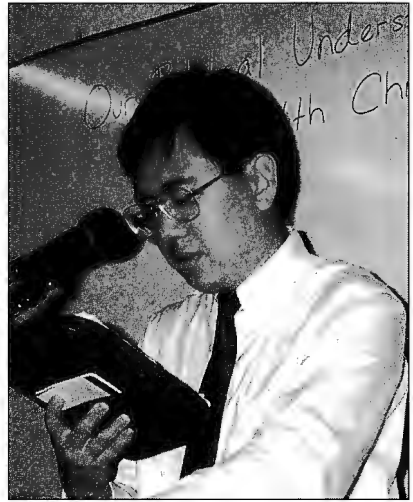
exegetical in character. The first session each day looked at the Church from its infancy to glory, each followed by a period of fervent prayer. The question: 'Why does the world need a Church?' occupied the main morning sessions. We were brought forcefully to consider the cross as our measure for the whole of life and to deal with the matter of influencing the world or being influenced by it. Afternoon meetings gave an opportunity for sharing information from the various situations represented and the evenings were given to studying how the Church brings the gospel to people of different backgrounds.

There was time for relaxation and a visit to Cambridge was organised by some friends from Eden Chapel.

On the final morning FEBE was officially constituted, twenty-eight churches having



Peter and Judith Ong, Singapore. (Peter is our RT agent – see back inside cover)



Pastor Wei En Yi, Singapore

decided to join together. The FEBE has existed on an ad hoc basis for around thirty years, but now has its own Basis of Faith, Aims and Objectives, and Constitution. An International Committee was duly elected and FEBE became official!

Thus the foundation has been laid for future generations to continue what this generation hopes to accomplish in working together across the language barriers of Europe. FEBE now hopes, by all legitimate means at its disposal, to promote a balanced Baptist position especially in areas where this is under threat from the Charismatic movement on the one hand and the Liberals on the other. Its International Committee comprises Rafael Maye (Barcelona), Paul Appéré (France), Daniel Molla (Switzerland), Roger Cook (Abingdon) and David Ellis (Cuckfield) for the UK.

Further information about future plans may be had on request. The next conference will be held in Paris if the Lord wills.

From the editor

Indonesia

With a population of nearly 200 million, this archipelago of 6000 islands stretching across a span of 4000 miles is the fourth largest nation in the world. There are about 8 million Evangelicals in all kinds of Christian denominations under the category Protestant. Every citizen has to have marked on his identity card: Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist, or Hindu. Remarkable turnings to Christ have taken place and continue, but it is better to be discreet in reporting.

I enjoyed fellowship with leaders of several denominations and was encouraged to observe a dynamic combination of Bible-centredness and practical outreach. Stephen Tong is an evangelist who preaches in Indonesian and Mandarin often in Chinese centres to congregations of anything from 12,000 to 50,000. With three brothers he has established two seminaries (see photo of seminary at Bandung). I noted a resolute



Eric Michael with brother Ban of the Philippines at the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Bandung, Indonesia. Although only 2 years old, there are 115 students in training. The Seminary is firmly committed to the Reformed faith.



A Christian worker from Sumatra pointing to the locality of his labours.

commitment to the Reformed Faith of the Puritan (Banner of Truth) kind, together with a realistic awareness of the evil track record of Liberal theology.

Specifically Reformed Baptists are very few and scattered, but those implicitly so may be more numerous than at first appears. There are well established Baptist churches. I visited one Baptist pastor who is impressed with the 1689 Confession of Faith, now available in Indonesian, and currently being revised with a view to a better than mimeographed edition. His church numbers 1000 members! One of his assistant pastors expressed a strong desire to attend the Carey Conference in Britain in January 1995.

The challenge to reach the unreached people-groups is pressing. By far the best equipped for that urgent task are the indigenous Indonesians, but training is needed to equip the workers and enhance the quality of the work.

The original family of Mennonites has grown into a grouping of between 7,000 and 10,000 (see editorial). They are multiplying and are scattered over a wide area of Java. It was pleasing to see the 'Berean' attitude prevailing – 'If it is Biblical we will take it, if not we will reject it!'

Australia

It was my privilege to address about 30 ministers for 3 sessions on the subject of, 'The Primacy of Preaching' – i *Expositional*, ii *Evangelistic* and iii *Theological*.

Six Baptist churches united for a weekend camp, subject: 'The relevance of revival today'. John Campbell of Melville Baptist Church has contributed well to maintain an interest in the usefulness of Reformational heritage.

I was encouraged to observe missionary zeal. Included in my time was a visit to



One of many Muria (Mennonite) churches that have multiplied in Indonesia

the Baptist Seminary (West Australia). The Westminster Presbyterian Church is growing well. I noted a fine combination of freedom in worship together with love for preaching and the doctrines of grace.

Singapore

Pastor Wei En Yi (wife Wendy and baby Jemima) is pastor of Shalom Church which is well attended and meets in a school. There is an evident appreciation of expository preaching. The church has 3 elders, En Yi, Lai Man On and Paul Chong. The public system of travel is the cleanest and most efficient that I have come across in my travels.

It was encouraging to visit Peter Ong and his wife, Judith. In their home they stock many Puritan books including all the *Soli Deo Gloria* titles. Arriving at the gate, one is met by a fairly ferocious watch dog. Once he is assured that you are a friend of the Puritans access is permitted and he becomes docile! While in Singapore I had lunch with Tan Kiah Siang formerly of Trengganu and Hamilton, New Zealand.

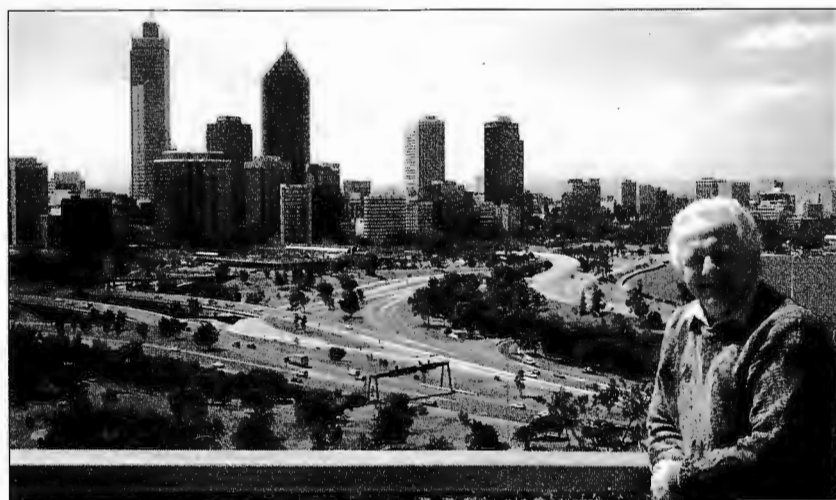
A letter from Poland

We recently received a letter from Tadeusz Zielinski, a Reformed Baptist who has promoted the Polish translation of the 1689 Confession. He and his friend, Tomasz Kalisz visited us in 1989. Tadeusz reports that Tomasz runs an evangelical library in Katowice. Tadeusz himself is a lawyer and has become a Member of Parliament, being the first Polish Baptist to occupy such a position.

Tadeusz asks for advice on primary sources in the preparation of a PhD thesis devoted to 'The History of the Separation of the State and Church'. The Anabaptist and Baptist contribution to the concept and practice of separation is almost unknown in Poland. Any help that can be provided on this subject will be welcomed. Please communicate direct to Tadeusz J. Zielinski, ul. Kotlarza 11a/25, 40-147, KATOWICE, POLAND.

Evangelicals Now

EN and Evangelical Times are both British monthly evangelical newspapers.



John Campbell with the city of Perth in the background

EN maintains a high standard of journalism, especially on overseas affairs. EN separated from ET over the issue of cessationism. EN has distanced itself from Charismatic excesses and firmly so with regard to the latest Charismatic craze, namely, the laughing revival. However in a naive review of the book *Surprised by Power* by John Deere, Simon Vibert does not merely leave the door unlocked or ajar, but wide open to the signs and wonders movement. We need the continued observations of medics like Dr Peter May who is prepared to challenge those who claim miracles and blow the whistle on those who imagine that they are healers.

The 'Toronto antics' in Yorkshire

Those who have attended 'Toronto style' meetings organised in Yorkshire report ludicrous, mindless antics, some rolling on the floor laughing; others barking like dogs. It is noted that nothing here remotely resembles the beautiful nature of Christ, or the blessings He describes in

the beatitudes (Matt 5). This behaviour, and the monstrous claims that attend it, remind us of the gulf that has developed between Revival, which is sent from heaven, and 'revivalism' which is organised and orchestrated by human agency.

The theme of the Carey Conference for ministers (see front inside cover) is *Is Real Revival an Option Today?* Where is the power? Pastor Thomas N Smith of Virginia will expound the subject of the preaching of Christ Crucified, and Christ's present living intercession as our sources of power. The Holy Spirit's principal work – our knowledge of Him and our experience of Him will be explored by Prof Sinclair Ferguson. It is likely that *The love of God for sinners* by Bob Sheehan will conclude the conference. The power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in the free, unfettered proclamation of the Gospel. 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom 5:8).

The Translation of Scripture

Bob Sheehan

The revelation which God has given of himself and which is recorded in the Scriptures is of limited use to the people of the world if it is locked away in the original languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Historically, some branches of Christendom and some scholars have been very pleased to have the Scriptures kept away from the masses because this leaves the interpretation of the Scriptures in the hands of self-declared 'experts' only.

The Scriptures themselves, however, declare in various ways that they ought to be available to the people of the earth and in their languages. The fact that God has given a revelation of himself in Scripture means that he wants to make himself known to his creatures. To hide the Scriptures from the people is, therefore, to oppose God!

Those who tested the apostle Paul's preaching at Berea by comparing it with the Scriptures are commended.¹ Their good example can only be followed if the Scriptures can be read by the hearers of preaching.

John's Gospel was written as an evangelistic tool to bring his readers to faith in Christ Jesus.² His aim would be frustrated if the knowledge of Christ which he imparts in his Gospel could not be read.

The blessings of the book of Revelation are promised to those who read and hear its words.³ If the Scriptures are locked away in foreign languages the blessing must be missed.

It is irrefutably clear that the original Scriptures were never written to experts but to individuals and churches. They were not written in highly intellectual language but in the language of the people. Therefore, the Scriptures written for the people must be made available to the people in their language.

Some Guiding Principles

Our doctrine of Scripture ought to determine our translation procedures. Humanists do not make good Bible translators because they have no insight into the truth of the book they are translating. The spiritually dead are not useful translators of the Word of life.

Bible-believing people, however, do not automatically make good translators. The principles that guide them in translation are very important. Good men may work with bad principles. Some of the guiding principles for Bible translators are:

1. Remember the implications of the Bible being God's Word

Translators of any human writing should take the utmost care in translating the original work. How much more so should a Bible translator take care when dealing with God-breathed Scriptures.

In the modern world many Bible translators have shifted the emphasis from God the giver of Scripture to man the receiver. The understanding of the Bible reader has become all important. Communication has become a 'god' and the message communicated has become secondary. A proper regard for the Bible as God's Word ought to restrain this tendency and cause the translator to regard it as his highest duty to represent faithfully what God has said even if that leaves some things a little ambiguous and in need of clarification by preachers and commentators.

2. Remember the implications of verbal inspiration

A Bible that is verbally inspired – given in the words God wants to convey his message – is a different type of literature from a book which is correct in its general argument but not in its detail.

While it is true that no language can be translated into another language word for word and make sense because each language has its own form and grammar, translators have to make sure that they convey the exact sense of the original in their language form and not merely the general sense, and that they convey no more than the original language.

Bible translators have a very difficult 'tight-rope' to walk. The modern tendency is to slip over from being translators to being interpreters far too often. What is ambiguous in the original language should be ambiguous in the receptor language. What is hard to understand in the original should be hard to understand in the translation.⁴

3. Remember the type of language God used

The Bible could have been written in a high style of Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. The literati of the first century wrote their books in a type of Attic Greek. The original Bible was not written in a high literary style beyond the reach of the ordinary people. Nor was the Bible written in the language of today's newspaper, a type of urban slang. It was language not 'slanguage'!

The Bible was written in the language of the ordinary man. Very few of its words are of its own creation. The language of the Bible is the language of the people. Of course, all of us use a wide variety of words. The language of the people has a very extensive vocabulary. It is not all one syllable words and devoid of technical terms and specialised uses. Therefore, the Bible has to be written in a good quality but common style. The desire to make a literary masterpiece out of a translation or to

make it on a level with the 'gutter press' are desires contrary to the intentions of God the giver.

To put these general principles into practice is no easy thing. A good Bible translator wants to convey God's Word in his own language accurately, but what is accuracy?

The Definition of Accuracy

Bible translators have genuine differences of opinion over the nature of accuracy in five areas:

1. Accuracy and language form

The whole nature of a Bible translation is determined by the answer to one question: Is the translation into English to be ruled by the grammar and construction of the original language (in so far as that is possible), or is the structure of the original language to be reconstructed in the form of the receptor language?

For example, in the original languages of the Bible there are long sentences which are often endlessly joined together by the use of words meaning 'and'; there are double negatives for emphasis. In modern English, however, sentences tend to be shorter. Sentences beginning with 'and' are not approved. Double negatives give a positive sense. Is the translator to produce Hellenised English or Anglicised Greek? The answer to this question makes a profound difference to the style of the translation. Which is more accurate?

2. Formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence and paraphrase

Formal equivalence means that the translator seeks wherever it is possible to give an exact equivalent in the receptor language to each word in the original language.

Dynamic equivalence means that the translator seeks to express what is said in the original language in that way that it would have been said if originally written in the receptor language.

Paraphrase means that the original words are explained, simplified and developed so as to convey the maximum understanding of the intention of the original writer.

It is to be accepted as an incontrovertible fact that formal equivalence cannot always occur. No two languages are exactly parallel word for word. Therefore, all translations contain some element of dynamic equivalence. However, there is a large area of variation among translators as to the degree of subjective interpretation in the translation.

For a large part of the Bible, formal equivalence is possible. Where it can be used it should be. It is a fact, however, that dynamic equivalence is also necessary sometimes. In the end, any translation can only be partially accurate.

3. The use of technical language

A few modern translations abandon technical language and seek to give simplified definitions to words such as propitiation, redemption, justification etc. The argument is that modern men do not understand these terms so they have to be explained.

The fact is that such words were just as technical and theological to the Hebrews and Greeks to whom they were first written as they are to us. As in the original languages there was a certain irreducible amount of words which are packed with meaning and significance, it is inevitable that their attempted simplification will reduce their meaning and create a false understanding. Every department of human learning has a certain amount of technical terms in its text books and Christianity is no different in that respect.

Perhaps the best solution to the translator's dilemma is to retain technical terms in the text but to give definitions in the margin where available, or to leave that as part of the work of the preacher. It is worse to have an inadequate definition in the text which gives it an air of authority than to leave a complex word in place which needs further study and definition by use of aids outside of the Bible itself.

4. Cross-cultural terms

Biblical people were used to cubits, the denarius, the choinix etc. Their weights and measures are not ours. Some Bible translators leave these alien names in the text and give notes or leave the reader to find out the meaning some other way. Others try to assist the readers by giving modern equivalents. The problem with this latter approach is that inflation changes money values, and the government has, in England at least, spent much of the last few decades changing weights and measures. In the average congregation some are confused if the Bible reading mentions feet and inches, pounds and pence, while the rest still struggle with metres and litres, pounds and 'P's'! There is no easy answer to this problem nor any infallible definition of accuracy in this matter.

5. The second person singular

One issue which affects the whole way in which a version is translated is the understanding of the significance of the second person singular. Is it to be translated 'thou', with the associated 'thee' and other word forms, or as 'you'?

Considered as a translation issue *alone* the answer is not complicated. In modern English 'thee' and 'thou' are no longer in use, and, being obsolete, have no place in

a modern English translation, unless we adopt the view that the original languages must control the receptor language, even to the degree of imposing archaic forms upon it.

Supplementary arguments based on tradition or archaic forms as an aid to reverence while not totally irrelevant to a wider issue, are not really to the point when translational factors alone are being considered. They are not scriptural arguments but subjective or historical. The sensitivity of this issue in the eyes of some makes it the controlling factor in some arguments over translations, but it ought rather to be a factor not the determining issue.

These five major problems are at the heart of the translator's concerns. Whatever decisions he makes on these matters will affect the sort of translation he produces, and our opinion of them will affect the choice of translation which we make.

Translation Choices⁵

Not everyone in choosing a translation is guided by principles. Prejudices can also play a large part. Some people hate anything that is new and must abuse it. Others are so unstable that they always welcome anything new and detest anything old and must attack it. We must distinguish in our assessment of translations between the comments of those ruled by prejudice and those governed by principles.

Some are guided in their choice of translation purely by tradition. They love the Bible they have used for years, whatever version it may be, and see no reason for change. Such people should allow others freedom to make choices also and to find a favourite version.

Those, however, who want to be guided by principles must decide on which side of the argument over the nature of accuracy they align themselves. Then they need to weigh how each version applies those principles and which corresponds to them. A choice of a translation because of well considered principles will be a rewarding activity. Hopefully, each person will be allowed to make his or her choice without being subjected to abuse from those who differ.

References

1 Acts 17:11

2 John 20:31

3 Revelation 1:3

4 2 Peter 3:16

5 For a further discussion of the issues in this chapter see Sheehan, Bob, *Which Version Now?* Carey Publications (available from EP, 12 Wooler St, Darlington DL1 1RQ, UK).

The Righteousness of God

Don Garlington

Part 2

Of all biblical doctrines, the righteousness of God must be reckoned as of foremost importance, both theologically and practically. In our previous article on the subject, we attempted to present a sketch of the biblical data, concluding that 'righteousness' articulates the Christian's fundamental stance toward life itself, in brief, his commitment to the new age which has dawned in Christ and its attendant values. Because of its significance, we shall first review the ground previously covered, with special reference to righteousness in its christological dimensions. Thereafter we shall attempt to draw out some of the practical implications of righteousness for the internal life of the Church and its dealings with the outside world.

The biblical idea of righteousness is rooted in creation. In Eden a family bond (covenant) was established between the Creator and his creatures. Genesis 1 and 2 record God's pledge to bless, multiply and sustain the human being made to hold fellowship with him and be the recipient of his fatherly care. It is loyalty to this relationship of mutual love and faithfulness which is called 'righteousness'. The Sinai covenant, with whose inception the terminology of righteousness becomes especially prominent, continues the creation emphasis on a relationship between God and his people, the outstanding metaphors for which are husband/wife and parent/child. It is within this family unit that the law of God forms the 'house rules', the norm according to which the behaviour of Israel is to be measured. The adjective 'righteous' henceforth becomes the standard term to designate those who remain loyal to Yahweh's covenant and endeavour to do his will: it is they who love God and their neighbour as themselves (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Matt 22:37-40).

The New Testament inherits this conception of righteousness, but with a distinctively christological emphasis. Romans 3:21-8:39 elaborate that God's justifying act has restored those 'in Christ' to their obligatory submission to the Creator. But it is specifically Christ, the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15) and God's new beginning (Rom 5:12-19), who is to be obeyed (Phil 2:12-13), because he himself was obedient to the Father (Phil 2:8). Consequently, having put on Christ, it is to his image that believers are being conformed (Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; Rom 8:29; 13:14); it is to him they render the obedience of faith (Rom 1:5; 16:26). Whereas once they were the slaves of sin (John 8:34; Rom 5:6-10; 6:17, 20-21; Eph 2:1-3; Col 3:5-7), they are now those in whose hearts the peace of Christ reigns (Col 3:12-17). In short, it is 'in Christ' they

have become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 5:16-19). Righteousness, then, entails the acceptance of one's identity as the image of God and the consequent obligation of creaturely (covenantal) service, made possible by the gift of God's own righteousness in Christ (Rom 1:17; 3:21-26; 5:17; 6:23).

In sum, righteousness is the Bible's compendious way of designating loyalty to a family relationship – the covenant – and the behaviour appropriate to that relationship. Accordingly, righteousness has both a personal and an ethical dimension: it is love of family members, as accompanied by conformity to a set of 'house rules' which govern the everyday life of the family. In New Testament terms, righteousness is specifically a commitment to Christ and his people, resulting in a determination to please both. Righteousness is thus the sum and substance of the Christian ethic and of Christian character.

In its distinctively biblical sense, righteousness has primary reference to the way in which Christians relate to one another in the common body of Christ, under his lordship and governed by his law (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2). As the concrete and practical will of Christ for his new, righteous humanity, righteousness regulates the relationships of husband/wife (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19), parent/child (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21), and master/servant (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-24); it prohibits falsehood (Eph 4:25), unjustified anger (Eph 4:26-27), theft (Eph 4:28), evil talk (Eph 4:29), bitterness, malice, and misrepresentation of others (Eph 4:31); it must eventuate in kindness and forgiveness, modelled on the divine pattern (Eph 4:32); and it can do none other than maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3-16), because the renewed human spirit is clothed with love, meekness, forbearance, and patience – the fruit of the Spirit (Eph 4:2-3; Gal 5:22-24).

It is love, most conspicuously, which binds all acts of righteousness together in perfect harmony (Col 3:14) and thus distinguishes the people of Christ as a community of love, forgiveness, and mutual service (Matt 18:22; John 13:12-17, 34-35; Eph 4:2; 5:2; Col 3:12-15; 1 Peter 1:22). With Jesus as its Lord and example (John 13:12-17), the Church is depicted as the embodiment of ideal humanity, i.e., a family marked by love, peace and harmony. Inasmuch as Christ has restored his people to their proper role as truly human beings, they must be servants one of another (John 13:12-17; Gal 5:13), in conformity to him who trod the path of sacrifice and self-denial.

Because righteousness and love are so closely allied, the restoration of offending Christians in 'a spirit of gentleness' occupies a place of particular importance (Gal 6:1-5; 2 Cor 2:5-11; Eph 4:31-32). Over against the circumcision party, whose 'own righteousness' (Rom 10:3; Phil 3:9) engendered an attitude of biting and devouring, self-conceit, envy, and provocation of others

(Gal 5:15, 26), Paul required that his converts walk by the Spirit (Rom 8:5-17; Gal 5:25) and bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-24) – pre-eminently love and its attendant attitudes (Gal 5:13-14, 22-23). It is none other than love which fulfils the law (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14), because the law was never intended to articulate a purely idealistic standard of behaviour apart from the well-being of those under it; rather, its design was to create and sustain a community rooted and grounded in love (Eph 3:17). Thus, the ‘law of Christ’ achieves its reason for existence when the people of God ‘bear one another’s burdens’ (Gal 6:2); and Paul is understandably anxious that ‘righteous indignation’ over sin be tempered by the realism of a still vulnerable human nature.

It is to the ‘spiritual’, those made ‘righteous’ through the work of Christ (Gal 3-4; 1 Cor 6:11; Rom 3:21-8:39; Phil 3:8-9; Titus 3:5-7) who await ‘the hope of righteousness’ (Gal 5:5), that Paul assigns the task of restoration through burden-bearing (Gal 6:1-5). The ‘burdens’ (Gal 6:2) are specifically the sin-burdens of the one who has fallen. ‘The burdens apparently in the first place refer to whatever oppresses man spiritually, threatens to induce him to sin, or to keep him in sin. This is pictured as a burden because one goes bowed under its weight and fears that he will succumb to its pressure.’ But how are such burdens to be borne?

For one, sin always has its consequences, its ‘burdens’. Frequently, the consequences have a domino effect, meaning that problems can be multiplied and compounded almost indefinitely because of one foundational mistake. To ‘bear the burdens’ of the other, in this case, is to get involved in the difficulties occasioned by sin. Sometimes, of course, these problems are intricate in the extreme, particularly where sexual sin is involved and families are broken as a result. Yet fulfilling the law of Christ may require involvement to this degree. In this light, the logic of Galatians 6:2, as it connects with the love-motif of Galatians 5:13-6:5, is self-evident: there can be no higher expression of love than bearing one another’s burdens – this is love going into action. In the second place, we are to bear with the person himself. Sin is not eradicated overnight. There may well be a period of time – even a lengthy period – during which the power of sin is being mortified. Since the process is not instantaneous, the original ‘trespass’ may at times reappear. Therefore, to bear the burden of sin means to forbear the person who has sinned. Not that we are condoning sin, but we are telling the sinner that he is not rejected, either by Christ or by us. As Paul writes elsewhere: ‘I ... beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Eph 4:1-3).

The treatment of those who sin embodies the very genius of righteousness, inasmuch as it represents the practical outworking of love, the commitment of the members of Christ's family to one another, the fruit of the Spirit borne by those against whom there is no law (Gal 5:23). To bear one another's burdens is to reflect God's own parental care (1 Peter 5:7) as one fulfils 'the law of Christ', his demand for righteous living within the new covenant. In brief, righteousness is love, and love is righteousness. Because righteousness is precisely the love and service of others, the concept can be applied beyond the covenant community. Rather than grow weary in 'well-doing', Christians are, as opportunity is granted, to do 'good' to all men (Gal 6:9-10). The terms 'well-doing' and 'good' in Paul's letters have specific reference to the creation ideal of service to God (Rom 2:7, 10; 7:13-20; 15:2; 16:19). Thus, as he occupies a place in society, the believer is to extend the love of God to all who bear God's image. 'The universal character of God's redemption corresponds to the universality of Christian social and ethical responsibility. If God's redemption in Christ is universal, the Christian community is obliged to disregard all ethnic, national, cultural, social, sexual, and even religious distinctions within the human community. Since before God there is no partiality, there cannot be partiality in the Christian's attitude toward his fellow man.'

It is this evangelistic and humanitarian purpose which compels the Church to be salt and light to the present generation (Matt 5:13-16; Phil 2:14-16), blameless before a watching world (1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 4:17-24; 5:3-20; Phil 2:4; James 1:26-27; 1 Peter 1:13-21; 2:11-25), caring for the destitute (James 1:27; 1 Tim 5:3-8), submissive to civil authority (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:17), and prayerful for those in positions of responsibility (1 Tim 2:1-4), that humanity outside of Christ may come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4-6). With this great vision before him, the believer strives to maintain a conscience devoid of offence before God and man (Acts 24:16), anticipating the time when justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream (Amos 5:24; Gal 5:5), when the earth is filled with knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9).

The substance of this article is to appear in 'The New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology' (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, forthcoming).

For further reading:

Herman N Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p 213.

Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) p 311.

Rediscovering Expository Preaching

Rediscovering Expository Preaching – *Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition* by John MacArthur, Jr. and the faculty members of The Masters Seminary. Word Publishing, Dallas, USA. pp 410, hardback.

Nineteen chapters on expository preaching are presented in five parts:

- I Proving the priority of expository preaching.
- II Preparing the expositor.
- III Processing and principalizing the biblical text.
- IV Pulling the expository message together.
- V Preaching the exposition.

In part I, Richard L Mayhue quotes the Puritan William Gouge:

Ministers are herein to imitate God, and, to their best endeavour, to instruct people in the mysteries of godliness and to teach them what to believe and practice, and then to stir them up in act and deed, to do what they are instructed to do. Their labour otherwise is likely to be in vain. Neglect of this course is a main cause that men fall into as many errors as they do these days.

Mayhue reviews the biblical commands to present the Word, defines expository preaching and provides a summary of minimal elements which identify expository preaching. He also tells us that

expository preaching is not a compound of moralistic advice, unwise opinions, and the latest psychology.

John MacArthur explains the significance of the inerrancy of Scripture for expository preaching: **1.** *God is* (Gen 1:1; Psalms 14,53; Heb 11:6). **2.** *God is true* (Exod 34:6; Num 23:19; Deut 32:4; Ps 25:10 and 31:6; Isa 65:16; Jer 10:8,11; John 14:6, 17:3; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18; 1 John 5:20,21). **3.** *God speaks in harmony with his nature* (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Rom 3:4; 2 Tim 2:13; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18). **4.** *God speaks only truth* (Ps 31:5, 119:43,142,151,160; Prov 30:5; Isa 65:16; John 17:17; James 1:18). **5.** *God spoke his true Word as consistent with his true Nature to be communicated to people* (a self-evident truth that is illustrated by 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 1:1).

The only logical response to inherent Scripture, is to preach it *expositionally*. He goes on to declare, 'God gave his true Word to be *communicated entirely as he gave it*, that is, the whole counsel of God is to be preached (Matt 28:20; Acts 5:20; 20:27)... God gave his true Word to be communicated *exactly* as He gave it.'

James F Stitzinger provides a well-researched and inspiring survey of expository preaching. He reminds us of the fact that William Perkins (1558-1602) had a profound influence on the entire Puritan movement producing *The Art of Prophesying*, the first manual of its kind for preachers. Stitzinger refers to leading expositions up to the present time, and provides choice citations from outstanding preachers to drive home the absolute priority of an expository approach.

Part II is stimulating: the priority of prayer (ch 4), the character of the preacher (ch 5) and the work of the Holy Spirit in illumination (ch 6).

Part III explains the technical expertise required. In recommending the best books on Hermeneutics, Stitzinger misses Milton S Terry (Zondervan, 782 pp).

Part IV, Pulling the expository message together, is splendid, especially on central ideas, outlines and titles: Find the outline; don't create it. Let the passage dictate to you; don't dictate to it. Titles should reflect the content of the message. The title should complement the message... In his chapter on 'Expository Preaching from Old Testament Narrative', David C Deuel could be firmer and clearer in warning against using OT characters for moralising (p 282) but Irvin A Busenitz is apt on the subject of history and biography when he quotes Koller:

It must be remembered that the Bible was not given to reveal the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but to reveal the hand of God in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; not as a revelation of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, but as a revelation of the Saviour of Mary and Martha and Lazarus (p 271).

A serious weakness in the book is an overall lack of stress on expository preaching as God's way of saving sinners. 'You do you will both save yourself and your hearers', 1 Tim 4:16. A whole chapter on evangelistic preaching is needed. Note Spurgeon's example in *Lectures to my Students*, 'Conversion as our Aim'. Also Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in a chapter explaining why he did not use the invitational system at the same time pressed home the paramount need to persuade to repentance and faith. (*Preaching and Preachers*). A less serious fault is inadequate stress on theological preaching. Preachers need to be flexible and incorporate theology. Too easily the preacher can become over-constrained by his text and context. In the understandably urgent call to get back to real expository preaching it will be a pity if some fall into the trap of being boxed in. When all the exegetical work is done, let us have a truly clear structure (in which very few seem to have success), but at the same time Holy Spirit freedom and flexibility.

This is an excellent and valuable volume, highly commended. *Editor*.

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