

# REFORMATION TODAY



MARCH-APRIL 2005

204



Lyn Hulse

Frederick Hodgson,  
RT Manager

Stan Thompson

Stan Thompson, an elder in the Parbold Evangelical Church, Lancashire, has served as manager of *Reformation Today* since 1995. He is retiring from this work. Frederick Hodgson of Mirfield Evangelical Church is now taking over. We are profoundly thankful for the excellent service rendered by Stan, supported by his wife Doris. Lyn Hulse acted as manager from 1980 to 1995.

She is pictured above with Noxolo aged two, at *Tshepo La Bana* (Hope for Children), Hammanskraal, South Africa, February this year.

The *Reformation Today* trustees met during the Carey Conference in January. The trustees approved the handover of the managership which is now in transition. Readers, please note the new address on back inside cover. The trustees also endorsed their support indefinitely of the editor in his present role which involves on average three-months travel each year. However we continue to search for one, perhaps a team of two or three, who will take over the editorship. (The doctrinal basis of RT is the Second London Baptist Confession, 1689). The trustees prefer that the journal be based in the UK but that does not rule out a convincing bid from abroad.

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**Contributors to this issue.** Michael Bentley is a retired pastor who lives in London. Joachim Rieck is pastor of the Eastside Baptist Church, Windhoek, Namibia. Michael Drake is co-pastor of the Tamaki Reformed Baptist Church, Auckland, New Zealand.

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*Front cover:* This photo was taken at Constantia Park Baptist Church, Pretoria, at 6.00 pm service with a congregation present of about 200. During the service Nick Clevly who has been serving as a full-time youth pastor was ordained as an elder with the laying on of hands. This brings the eldership to six; the others are: Martin Holdt, Patrick Palmer, Richard Roodt, Harry Davies and Niel Steyn. Ron Naude, pastor emeritus, recently retired from the eldership, preached at the morning service. From 1 Timothy 3 Pastor Holdt reminded the congregation of the respective functions of the elders and deacons and then called for them to come forward when prayer was made for them. At the same service he gave a spirited defence of Sunday School work. The teachers, men and women, came to the front for prayer that they should fulfil their work diligently. The service concluded when Pastor Holdt preached a 45 minute powerful exposition on Hebrews chapter eight.

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## Tsunami!

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'At 7.58 am local time on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004, tectonic plates several miles under the sea off the north-western tip of the Indonesian archipelago sprang apart with the force of more than 1,000 atomic bombs, triggering 36 earthquakes displacing trillions of tons of water and realigning a 600-mile section of the Indian Ocean's seabed. The biggest earthquake registered 9.0 on the Richter scale and the massive upheaval of water generated a tsunami, a long, high sea wave that began to race across the ocean at over 500 miles an hour.

'Twenty minutes later five colossal waves laid waste the market town of Banda Aceh in Sumatra. Thousands perished; less than 100 survived. Elsewhere in Indonesia, the busy town of Lhuknga was scoured off the face of the earth by a black wall twice as high as its palm trees. Only a few dozen of Lhuknga's 10,000 inhabitants escaped the deluge. The official Indonesian death toll eventually reached well over 220,000. As it roared across the Indian Ocean, the tsunami overwhelmed the Andaman and Nicobar islands sweeping 7,000 people to death.'

In this way John Blanchard describes the tidal wave in his 40 page booklet *Where is God When Things Go Wrong?* published by EP ([www.evangelicalpress.org/esales](http://www.evangelicalpress.org/esales)). This booklet is highly commended and it is well worth contacting EP about discounts for quantity supplies.

The day after the tsunami I received an e-mail from pastor Muralee in Sri Lanka describing the devastation but also stories of escape. Muralee reported that in one instance only one survived out a family of eleven. That was the worst loss. Many other families reported one fatality. Innumerable agencies sprang to life to provide relief and the best known professional agencies moved in swiftly to help. This will be needed for a long time before normality is restored. Pastors have visited to provide help and trauma counselling including Cristo Beetge of South Africa. Missionaries known to us personally have been working in relief work in Aceh which is notorious for its hostile and extreme anti-Christian fundamentalist groupings. We did not know of any Christians in Aceh which has a population of 3.5 million but it is rumoured that several hundred escaped because they had been compelled by persecution to occupy an area of higher territory.

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## The English Puritans and King James

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The story of the King James Version begins with the 1604 Hampton Court Conference. One thousand Puritans had petitioned the new king of England for church reform. The Conference was his response.

In 1604 the Puritans represented only about five percent of the clergy of the day. Almost sixty years later, in 1662, the year of the Great Ejection when 2,000 Puritan ministers were forced out of the national Church, they had increased to about ten percent of the clergy. Their influence for the truth was then, and is today, out of all proportion to their numbers.

At the Hampton Court Conference it was hardly likely that the Puritans would receive much from the petitions they made to the all-powerful King James. It is obvious that he was enjoying his supreme authority. Attendant bishops in their finery were obsequious in kneeling before the king. Only four Puritans were permitted to attend, although they were not even allowed into the Conference on the first day! Would you not be tempted to go home if you were treated like that? The next day they had to sit on a wooden bench like schoolboys.

Among the reforms sought, the Puritans asked for the replacement of the faulty translation of the Bible used in the Prayer Book. They wanted the popular and respected Geneva Bible to be used. The bishops opposed this. In a majestic display of his skill and ambition, King

James over-ruled the bishops, and thwarted the Puritans. He ordered that a new translation be made. The result was the 1611 King James Version. Michael Drake narrates well some of the background to these events.

In spite of its Anglican background and its defects the KJV has majesty. It has been the Bible of the majority for centuries. Its power is simply that it is the Bible. That is true of every faithful translation of the Bible. The Bible in its original manuscripts is utterly unique. It is the only perfect book in the world. All Scripture is God-breathed and therefore is infallible (2 Tim 3:16).

In transmission from the Hebrew and Greek languages, the struggle for accuracy and flow is enormous for all translators in every language. The question of the ancient manuscripts is very well described by Michael Drake. It must always be borne in mind that variants in the text add up to approximately only one percent of the Bible's text. No major doctrine is threatened.

The Puritans who sailed to America, carried with them the Geneva Bible. Oliver Cromwell used the Geneva Bible.

The article by Michael Drake is taken from his book *The King's Bible* in which he refers in some detail to the biography of William Tyndale by David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 900pp, Yale University Press, 2003.

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# Haggai and Procrastination

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*Michael Bentley*

## **The book of Haggai**

Apart from Obadiah, Haggai, with just 38 verses (barely two pages) is the smallest book in the Old Testament. The prophet is only mentioned in one other biblical book - in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 - and these verses dovetail into Haggai's prophecy, where we read that he encouraged the Jews to get on with rebuilding the temple of the Lord, which had lain waste for very many years.

We know nothing about Haggai's parents or any of his ancestors. His brief prophecy took less than four months to deliver. Then, when he had finished speaking, he disappeared from the pages of history as suddenly as he had arrived.

One of the ways that can be used to assess the divine inspiration of any Old Testament book is to see if it is referred to in the New Testament. Jesus himself believed the Old Testament to be God's Word and he quoted regularly from it; this gave it authenticity. So where do we find Haggai quoted? There is just one verse where this happens. Haggai 2:6 reads, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land."' Hebrews 12:26 reads, 'At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."' The central theme of Haggai is the temple.

## **The history of the temple**

During their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, God instructed his people to build a tabernacle where he would chiefly dwell among his people. Central to the tabernacle was the ark of the covenant in which was 'the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant' (Heb 9:4). For many years after the children of Israel had settled in the promised land, the ark of the covenant was not housed in a temple but it rested in a mere tent (2 Sam 6:17).

King David had long wanted to build a house for God's glory, but the Lord did not permit him to do so because his hands were stained with the blood of his

enemies (1 Chr 22:8). However, he was allowed to collect materials, gather treasure and buy from Araunah the site where the temple would eventually be built (1 Chr 22:3-4, 8 and 2 Sam 24:18-25).

David's son Solomon then spent seven years building this wonderful 'house of God's presence'. 1 Kings 6-7 and 2 Chronicles 3-4 give us details of this temple. It was a glorious building with much lavish golden decoration. In its centre was a perfect cube of twenty cubits (i.e. 9 square metres, or 30 square feet). This was the Holy of Holies and it was in this most sacred place that the ark of the covenant stood.

After Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the land and taken the Jews away to Babylon, they often longed to be able to worship in the temple, which was in faraway Jerusalem. Until then Jerusalem was the only place where God had given instructions for a temple to be built.

We can imagine how shattered the people must have felt when they heard that their beloved temple had been completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, who had also carried away all of the sacred vessels. They must have felt isolated from their God. It is no surprise, then, that they lamented, 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.' It is why they cried out, 'How can we sing the song of the LORD while in a strange land?' and declared, 'If I forget not Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you. If I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy' (Ps 137:1 and 4-6).

However, while they were in captivity Ezekiel, speaking the word of God, declared, 'I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them for ever. My dwelling-place will be with them: I will be their God, and they will be my people' (Ezek 37:26-27).

When the Jews eventually returned to their own land, they started to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem on the spot where Solomon's temple had stood; this was known as Zerubbabel's temple. And it is this temple and its rebuilding that we are concerned about in the prophecy of Haggai.

Zerubbabel's temple stood for nearly 500 years. It was enlarged and 'beautified' by King Herod the Great in an effort to impress the Jews and make his rule more acceptable to them. Yet, before Herod's temple was barely finished, it was utterly destroyed by the Romans in AD70. Jesus predicted that this would happen: 'The days will come upon you when your enemies will

build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another' (Luke 19:42-44).

Since AD70 the temple site has been bereft of a building dedicated to Yahweh and now the magnificent golden Muslim Dome of the Rock stands at one end of Temple Mount; at the other end is the silver-domed El Aqsa Mosque. The Dome of the Rock is important to Muslims because they believe that it was from here that Mohammed once ascended into heaven. It is claimed that he returned and was buried in the city of Medina in AD 632. No-one knows the precise spot where the temple's 'Holy of Holies' stood.

Even though some fundamentalist Christian groups (particularly from the USA) want to see the temple rebuilt on this site before the second coming of the Lord, there seems little likelihood that this will happen; (in any case, the temple revealed to Ezekiel would be too big for the site.) Nor is there any need for that temple to be rebuilt. The Lord Jesus Christ made it clear that he is the temple of God. Once, when the Jews were challenging the authority of Jesus, he said, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days?' John tells us that 'the temple he had spoken of was his body' (John 2:20-21).

Each member of the Church (i.e. the body of Christ) is, by virtue of being part of Christ's body, a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). Therefore all Christian believers have a solemn responsibility to live God-honouring lives because they, like the temple at Jerusalem in the time of Haggai, are the dwelling-place of the Lord Almighty.

### **The problem facing Haggai**

Haggai gives us precise details of when he gave each of his four messages. He commences his prophecy with these words, 'In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month.'

Haggai took his urgent message to the two most important people then in Jerusalem: Zerubbabel, the governor of the city, and Joshua, the high priest (Hag 1:1). Haggai describes himself as the spokesman of the Lord – 'the LORD Almighty, the LORD of hosts'. The temple had lain in ruins for some 76 years. When the captives returned to their homeland, they were dismayed to see the awful state of their capital city and especially the temple, which was

all overgrown with weeds and covered with rubble. Almost immediately the people prepared to rebuild the temple. They located its site and rebuilt the altar. They celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and reinstated the system of regular burnt offerings (see Ezra 3:1-11).

So why was it that some while later, in the year BC 520, we find that the work was still unfinished? What caused it to stop? This is the essence of Haggai's first message (Hag 1:1-15).

## 1. **Opposition**

The first hindrance to the work of rebuilding the temple came from those who had remained in the land; Ezra calls them 'the enemies of Judah and Benjamin' (Ezra 4:1). When these people saw what was happening, they asked if they could join in and help. Why did they want to help when they had been there for many years and had done nothing to rebuild the temple or its altar? It is no surprise, then, that the leaders of the Jews with one voice said, 'You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the King of Persia, commanded us' (Ezra 4:3). These returned exiles recognised that only God's people can do God's work in God's way. Like Peter in Acts 8:21 they said, in effect, 'You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.'

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard this they were very angry and they hired counsellors to work against God's people and frustrate their plans. They kept up this opposition 'during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia' (Ezra 4:5).

As the opposition increased, which included the intervention of King Artaxerxes (stirred up by these enemies of God's people), 'the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of Darius king of Persia' (Ezra 4:24). This brings us to the time of the statement in Haggai 1:2. 'These people say, "The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built."'

Here are some of the reasons why they might have concluded that it was not the right time to get on with the rebuilding work. The first day of the month was a feast day when everyone would be on holiday. Furthermore, this sixth month of the second year of King Darius was the month after the Jewish month Ab, in which Nebuchadnezzar had captured Jerusalem and levelled

Solomon's temple to the ground, some 67 years before Haggai started to prophesy, so the people would have been sad and loath to do anything very constructive.

God's people today so often crumble under the opposition of those who do not want to see the house of the Lord (i.e. the Church of Jesus Christ) prosper. Just as Haggai urged the people to 'give careful thought to [their] ways' (1:5, 7; 2:15 and 18), so we should remember that those who oppose the work of the Lord may seem powerful and influential in this world yet they are nothing to our God. We should act on the words spoken by Zechariah (Haggai's contemporary), remembering that God's work is done, 'not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.' In the face of strong opposition to God's work we should say, 'What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. ... Who despises the day of small things?' (Zech 4:6,7 and 10).

We should not listen to those who make the excuse that the time is not right for God's work to progress. Rather, we should remember that when we are filled with God's Spirit and we are doing God's work in accordance to the principles laid down in his Word, then we will see the mighty building up of God's Church in our land.

**2. The cost is too great!**

A second reason why the rebuilding work had stopped was because the cost was too great. From Haggai 1:6 we see that the harvest had been a very bad one that year and this led to the poverty of the people. The food they ate did not satisfy their hunger, the water they drank was not enough to slake their thirst, the clothing they wore did not keep them warm; and the wages they earned did not last very long - nor did it buy the things they wanted; it was as though there were holes in their purses. They had expected much in return for their labours but it 'turned out to be little', and what they brought home God blew away. They were puzzled why God should send bad weather at their harvest time, but when they asked the Lord why this was he told them plainly that it was 'because of [His] house, which remains a ruin' (Hag 1:9).

It seems that a further deprivation came upon them because those who had promised money and materials for the rebuilding had not done as they said they would. Therefore these returned Jews refused to do their part; they were not prepared to dig any deeper into their own pockets.

So many Christian people today find it very easy to give up and lack of resources are often the excuse given for failing to press on with the work of the gospel. Whenever there is any practical hard work to be done, the labourers are few. Although we might wish to blame others, it is true that God's work often grinds to a halt because his own people are not prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. They will say, 'I've done my bit. Now it's someone else's turn.' But so often that 'someone else' does not appear. This means that every one of God's people should stop making excuses for their procrastination. Instead they should 'consider their ways' and see whether they are hampering the Lord's work. Our wallets and our cheque books should be fully consecrated to the Lord and his work.

### **3. We are too tired!**

A third reason for the closedown of the rebuilding was because the people had become very disillusioned and grown weary in the work. Later on in their history Nehemiah also faced opposition but he was not put off by it. Instead he built the wall by having his men hold the 'materials in one hand and a weapon in the other' (Neh 4:17). However, with the opposition from the people around them, and from Babylon itself, plus the fact that the harvest had failed, it is not surprising that the people had lost the vision to rebuild the temple for God's glory.

We, today, all too easily grow drowsy in the work of the Lord, yet we should not 'become weary in doing good'. We should remember that 'at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up' (Gal 6:9). We too quickly lose sight of the Lord's glory and our vision becomes dimmed. However, we are told that 'where there is no vision the people perish' (Prov 29:18). We ought to be fired up to reach out with the gospel to those around us, even if we have seen no tangible results for our efforts. William Carey toiled for very many years before he saw his first convert to Christ, and it seems that Jeremiah never saw any result for all his labours. God does not want wimps; he wants tough, determined men and women who will plod on, despite discouragements, to work for his glory.

### **4. The workers are too few!**

A fourth reason for the hold-up in the building work may well have been because the people had become very discouraged as all were not pulling their weight. Some had started well but then had got 'fed up'. These Jewish

builders had become greatly disillusioned. They had set about the work with great enthusiasm, but the result was slow in coming and they lacked the zeal to press ahead.

When mature Christians slacken off in the work of the Lord, then weaker believers are likely to reduce their efforts as well and even give up altogether. It is natural to be somewhat discouraged when we work hard and there seems little if any 'fruit' for our efforts. But the Word of God urges us to press onward (Gal 6:9; 1 Cor 15:58 and 2 Cor 4:1). Are we like that when it comes to prayer? Do we give up praying if we seem to get few answers to our prayers? Surely we must not give up in the work of the kingdom. We should work and wrestle in prayer and in every other way we can for the glory of God.

## **5. There are other priorities!**

A fifth reason for the delay in rebuilding the temple was because they were too busy with other things. The harvest had been poor, so a great deal of work was needed to gather in the small amount of grain that there was in the fields. All of their energies were going into this work of providing food for their families.

The Lord does not wish us to neglect our families; it is our duty to provide for them. He did not wish them to lack shelter or be deprived of the basic necessities of life. But from Haggai 1:4 we notice that they had managed to build themselves 'panelled houses'. It seems, therefore, that they had been putting a great deal of work into building grand homes for themselves instead of getting on with the rebuilding of the temple.

No doubt most of us know of Christian people who start off well but all too soon they yield to the temptation to 'keep up with the Joneses' and their main aim is to own bigger and better homes and all the latest gadgets. Very quickly they desert the Lord (see Gal 1:6) and these material things take precedence over the need to get on with God's work. Can't they hear, thundering down the centuries, the words of Haggai, 'Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin? (Hag 1:4)' and the voice of the Lord, 'My house ... remains a ruin' (Hag 1:9)?

But it is all too easy to 'point the finger' at others. The message of Haggai is a very personal one to all God's people. We all need to stop and 'give careful thought to our ways' and not to say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD'S house to be built.' We should get our priorities right. We are often

too taken up with committees, procedures and church 'politics'. If we are not very careful, these can take time and resources that should be given to reaching out with the gospel and building up the Church of Jesus Christ.

## **6. The time is not right!**

A sixth reason for their dilatoriness may have been a distorted view of prophecy. Both Jeremiah and Daniel had prophesied that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years (Jer 25:11 and Dan 9:1-2). The people would have known all these prophecies. The very reason they had to undergo the deprivations of captivity was because they had not heeded the warnings given by the Lord through his prophets. As a result Jerusalem had lain waste for many years.

It could have been then that these Jews had said, 'There are three more years remaining before the 70 years are fulfilled, so we can't do anything about this rebuilding work.' They concluded, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built,' and so they refrained from working on the rebuilding of the temple.

They had assumed that the 70 years began with the fall of Jerusalem. They could say, 'Only 67 years has passed since that time, so we have three more years before we can start to rebuild.' However, with the benefit of hindsight, we know that the 70 years must have begun three years before the eventual fall of Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar had first of all surrounded the holy city (see 2 Kings 25:1-2).

It is possible to sustain the mentality that we cannot really achieve much for the gospel until God sends revival. That is a subtle way of saying it is not the time now to work.

## **Conclusion**

We must search our hearts to ascertain whether one, some, or all of the above excuses support our procrastination in going forward in the work of God.

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*Michael Bentley is a retired pastor living in London. Recently he gave a series of expositions on Haggai at Newlands Evangelical Church Family Weekend, Cape Town, S Africa. His book 'Building for God's Glory - Haggai and Zechariah simply explained' is published by Evangelical Press.*

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## Modernism in South Africa

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### *Editor*

Three annual Grace Conferences take place in South Africa in early January. The first is at Stellenbosch set in the mountainous beauty of the Cape. With 100 attendees the residential venue was at its capacity. The speakers were Bill Hughes, John Newby of the Church of England of South Africa (a reformed denomination) and myself. Bill Hughes originates from Liverpool, pastored a church in Glasgow for a number of years and then accepted a call to a Baptist Church in Florida, USA. The same speakers repeat their material at two further Grace Conferences held at Mount Grace Conference Centre in the country area of Magaliesburg which is about 100K westwards from Pretoria. These were attended by 174 and 160.

These occasions continue to be marked by cross-denominational unity and outstanding spiritual blessing and edification. The Augustine Bookroom and the book ministry of John MacArthur Jr add to the enrichment. By this means theological strengthening flows out far and wide through the many churches represented.

A constructive suggestion comes from a missionary who knows South Africa well. He suggests that in reformed terms the neglected part of South Africa is Kwazulu Natal. He urges that the visiting speakers should extend their energies even further to include a conference in the Durban area and that this should be African in setting and culture.

The overwhelming impression from fellowship with pastors and students during a six week tour of South Africa is the continued collapse of the mainline Afrikaans denomination (N G Kerk). I matriculated in 1948, the year the National Government came to power. That regime ruled until the revolution in 1994 - the advent of the new South Africa. During the apartheid years it seemed as though the dominant National Party were invincible. During 2004 just ten years after the revolution the National Party disbanded and ceased to exist. During the 1950s a full-blooded expository ministry prevailed in the Afrikaans churches.

Since the 1950s theological modernism has invaded the seminaries and through the baneful influence of the seminaries modernism has infiltrated the churches. All this happens under the guise of Academia, the umbrella of modernism. Many, though not all, evangelical students arrive at seminary full of hope for the future and then have their faith systematically undermined and destroyed. Some group together and do their best to survive. How is it that a professional apparatus is paid

to destroy the saving gospel of Christ? This enemy within Christendom is far more lethal and destructive than enemies opposed to Christianity from the outside. Does the Bible anticipate this kind of betrayal? It certainly does! Jude and 2 Peter 2 describe the phenomenon of modernism which has been going on in different forms since the mid-nineteenth century. C H Spurgeon opposed it in the Downgrade Controversy. B B Warfield was a bulwark against it and following Warfield came J Gresham Machen. Having been inspired and informed by a biography of Machen and his battle with modernism by John Piper (audio cassette), I shared this with some who are distressed by the present propagation of modernism. It surely is a judgement of the most severe and terrible kind that the Lord has withheld a leader of Machen's calibre from the major Afrikaner denomination. There seems to have been no robust leadership to withstand the tide of unbelief promoted by unregenerate theologians (see our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3).

I shared the story of Albert Mohler and Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, with a reformed university professor who has lived to see the takeover of seminaries by modernists. His face was filled with incredulity. He could not hide his amazement. He said that if Southern Seminary had been won back from modernism to the truth then that was an outright miracle! 'When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him' (Isa 59:19 NJKV). However, moving outside the camp, as Machen did, is the only solution when deterioration is so advanced.

It was a privilege to spend time with a group of Reformed Baptist leaders, mostly Afrikaans. They have prepared a document called SOLA5. This 14 page reformed contemporary statement falls into three parts. Part one describes the practical constitution of membership for individuals and for churches. Part two is a robust reformed confession. Part three is a five page summary of core values, which addresses twenty most relevant practical points which Christians face in a postmodern society. Among the sections are these: Authority in family, church and society, sanctity of life, marriage and sexuality, the discipline of children, gender roles, good works and social concern, racial harmony, animals and the environment, independency and interdependency, ecumenism, pluralism, liberty of conscience, and hyper-orthodoxy.

SOLA5 should prove to be a uniting place for churches and individuals who know they have been betrayed by unfaithful leaders who have allowed their churches to be taken over by unbelievers. I urged that it be advertised widely and sent to all churches including main-line churches. We should emulate the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformers, exercise faith and know that all things are possible with God (Jer 32:17).

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## Martin Rautanen – Pioneer Missionary

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*By Joachim Rieck*

The written history of South West Africa (today 'Namibia') has spanned barely more than 200 years. In diverse ways South West Africa was spared for many years from the colonialisation attempts of the European nations due to its remote and inhospitable location and distance from major trade routes. Europeans have been known to have traveled in these remote areas - particularly hunters, explorers and Portuguese slave traders. A fourth category of Europeans to set foot on our soil were the missionaries. The first missionary society in Namibia was the London Missionary Society (1806-1830). The Wesleyan (Methodist) Missionary Society operated between 1820-1867, the Rhenish Missionary Society between 1842-1957, and the Finnish Missionary Society from 1870 - 1954.

We focus on the Finnish Missionary Society and its most prominent missionary, Martin Rautanen, whose life work spanned 50 years. He lies buried at Olukonda, the tribal land of the Ndonga people (one of the seven tribes of the Ovambos) in Northern Namibia. Rautanen together with Carl Hugo Hahn (1818-1895) of the Rhenish Missionary Society, were the most influential missionaries in the history of missions in Namibia. Kalle Elonheimo, a contemporary Finnish preacher, called Rautanen *'the apostle of*

*the Ovambos*'. The Ovambo people named him 'Nakambale - the man who wears the hat'.

### **Early childhood**

Martin Rautanen (1845 -1926), was born in Novasolka, Finland on the 10th November 1845. His father died of alcohol poisoning when Martin was only 11 years old. His mother struggled to raise the three children of whom Martin was the eldest. He recounts that his mother shed many tears. The hard life however led her to trust in Christ, and she was truly converted. Thus she was able to persevere with God's help. Martin never heard her complain; quite to the contrary, she always praised God and diligently prayed on her knees. She was instrumental in leading her son into the true faith and died at the ripe old age of 83 in 1906. Martin described her as a 'priesterliche Mutter' - a pastoral mother! She was a mission-minded believer. It appears that this had rubbed off on young Martin .

In August 1862 the Mission magazine of the Finnish Missionary Society carried the announcement : 'Next October a Mission School will be opened in Helsinki and those who wish to become missionaries are requested to send their applications to the board. The School will admit young men between 15 and 25 years of age. They are required to have an awakened conscience, a good knowledge of the chapters of Christian doctrine, talents and good health.' The Missionary Society would take care of the costs, and thus poverty was no hindrance. Rautanen started in 1863 and spent 5 years in the Training School for Missionaries. Apart from Bible subjects they learned languages like German, Latin and Greek. Contrary to popular expectations he eventually proved to be an outstanding linguist. He spoke Finnish, German, Ndonga, Herero, Dutch, Afrikaans, English and Russian. He eventually translated the New Testament, and a large part of the Old Testament, into Oshindonga. At the Training School they were also taught practical subjects like wagon making and tailoring. Music was also considered an important subject.

By 1867 it was known where the young men would be sent. The annual meeting of the Missionary Society in June 1867 determined that they would be sent to the Ovambo people south of the Kunene river. All this was initiated in 1861 by Carl Hugo Hahn, a Baltic/German missionary who was a friend of Rautanen's principal, Sirelius. Hahn had been working among the Herero people of Namibia for almost 20 years and happened to be on furlough at this time when he appealed for Finnish missionaries to be sent. The question arose whether Martin Rautanen could be included in the group. Rautanen's progress



*Since Martin Rautanen the Gospel has spread all over Namibia. This is a photo of the humble meeting house of the Benguella Baptist Fellowship Luderitz, a harbour town in the very arid region of Southern Namibia. It is named after the cold Benguella current which passes the Namibian West coast. Luderitz is isolated being 850 kilometres from Windhoek. We desperately need to find a pastor/church planter to encourage this work.*

Joachim Rieck

at school had been slow because of his humble background. Contrary to popular opinion (particularly the opinion of his principal, Sirelius) Martin Rautanen became the most outstanding amongst his contemporaries.

Rautanen and four colleagues arrived at Walvis Bay, a natural harbour on the infamous Namibian 'Skeleton Coast', on February 1869. At that stage there was no infrastructure and no people living there. Upon arrival they had to fix some of the desolate buildings that had been left there by early traders and hunters, and had to wait for three weeks before word was brought to Carl Hugo Hahn at Otjimbingwe. Hahn went to fetch them with 8 ox-wagons. The Finnish missionaries, all good musicians, greeted him with trumpets proclaiming, 'A mighty fortress is our God'.

The Finnish missionaries stayed at Otjimbingwe, Hereroland, for over a year before they journeyed to Ovamboland. At that time South West Africa was divided into 3 regions, according to the 3 nations that inhabited it. The North was called Ovamboland; the central area, Hereroland and the Southern part, Namaland.

Martin Rautanen and one of his colleagues became boarders in the household of the widow Johanna Kleinschmidt at Otjimbingwe. She was the daughter of Johann Heinrich Schmelen (1777-1848), the first missionary of the London

Mission Society to South West Africa, indeed the first Missionary Society operating in Namibia. The main occupation of the new missionaries was to study Herero under the leadership of Carl Hugo Hahn. Again, it is interesting to note that Hahn felt that Rautanen did not make good progress in language studies. Some of his colleagues made far better visible progress. In the meantime Rautanen fell in love with the youngest of the Kleinschmidt daughters, Friederike (Frieda), who at this stage was only 15 years old! As you may imagine, the young couple had a tough time to persuade Carl Hugo Hahn (Frieda's guardian) who was entirely opposed to Rautanen. He angrily declared: 'The Finns will not take even one of my daughters.'

In May 1870 the Finnish missionaries eventually left for Ovamboland and arrived there in July 1870 after an arduous 2½ month trek. They settled at Omandongo where they were met by King Shikongo shaKalulu. He agreed to give hospitality to the missionaries.

### **Ovamboland 1870 - 1874: First Challenges**

Omandongo became the first base of the Finns in Ovamboland. The first group of missionary workers there consisted of 6 ordained men and 2 laymen. It is a sound mission policy that missionaries should be sent as teams and not as individuals. Apart from providing a variety of natural and spiritual gifts, they also serve as an encouragement to each other. The missionaries started their mission initially amongst 4 tribes :

- i Omandongo mission station among the *Ndonga* people under King Shikongo;
- ii The Elim mission station among the *Kwambi* under King Nuyoma;
- iii Rehoboth mission station among the *Ngandjera* under King Tsheya and
- iv The work among the *Kwanyama* people .

Rautanen began to work among the Kwambis in 1870. Two years later he was forced to leave the territory of King Nuyoma. All the mission stations except Omandongo were eventually abandoned by 1873. For the next 30 years the Finnish Mission focused only on the Ndonga area. Starting his work in Uukwambi under king Nuyoma was a real challenge. The kings did not invite the missionaries for the sake of the gospel, but for political and economic gain. When this did not happen, the kings were disappointed and actively resisted the missionaries. The Ovambo kings consumed too much alcohol which was bought from Portuguese slave traders who exchanged alcohol and other goods for slaves - something which these missionaries such as David Livingstone actively resisted.

Rautanen decided to move to the Ngandjera in May 1871 under King Tsheya. Some little anecdotes from Rautanen make interesting reading as he dealt with this pagan king. Once when he wanted to buy an ox from the king, he received the answer: 'Omukwetu (my relative), we live in the same house. My oxen are your oxen and your oxen are my oxen.' Rautanen responded: 'And may the Lord also grant that my God would be your God.' In another instance Rautanen was preaching from Psalm 36:6,7 on God's love and righteousness, when the king started to laugh loudly and disturbed the service. Rautanen stopped him and said that in God's eyes there was no difference between a chief and a herdsman and he ordered Tsheya to be quiet! It must be emphasised that Rautanen was never disrespectful to the kings. Quite on the contrary, he was among them as a humble servant. Rautanen was a true Lutheran in recognising that Christians were still the king's subjects, and regarded himself as a loyal subject of the king. Rautanen however understood that on this occasion the king, the congregation and Rautanen were sitting under the Word of God, and thus under the authority of the King of kings. Earthly kings must be silent when the King of kings speaks by his Word. This story reminds us of another king, James the 6th of Scotland, who was notoriously rude when attending worship services. The Presbyterian minister, Robert Bruce, was preaching, and in his usual manner King James began to speak to those around him. Robert Bruce paused, and the king fell silent. The minister continued preaching and the king started talking again. The preacher stopped him and addressed him directly : 'When the lion roars all the beasts of the field are quiet: the lion of the tribe of Judah is now roaring in the voice of his gospel, and it becomes all the small kings of the earth to be silent.'

In the meantime Rautanen had received permission from his Mission Society to marry Frieda Kleinschmidt who had by now turned 18. Martin's home language now became German, since Frieda was German speaking. It is worth noting at this point that Rautanen spoke Finnish, German, Ndonga, Herero, Afrikaans, English and Russian, fluently! Rautanen and his young bride returned to Ngandjera only to find that his mission station had been vandalised. King Tsheya of the Okandjera, as in the case of King Nuyoma of the Kwambis, had made life very difficult for missionaries, for the missionaries seemed to offer no prospect of improvement in economics (i.e. liquor and slaves). There was nothing to be gained from them, except the gospel, which at this stage they did not want. The Portuguese slave traders suggested to the kings at times that if they allowed the missionaries to continue to influence the people's minds, their lucrative trade would cease. This brought the Finnish Mission work into jeopardy. Rautanen had to withdraw from the Ngandjeras and settled in Omandongo, among the Ndongas in July 1874.

## 1874 - 1885

In the 1870s the European colonial powers had started the 'scramble for Africa'. The British took possession of Walvis Bay in March 1878, and the Germans sought to bring the rest of present Namibia into its influence in 1884.

We move on rapidly through the developments of this period. In Ondonga, the chief missionary area of the Finnish Mission, three men ascended to the throne in rapid succession after King Shikongo, who had invited the Finnish missionaries to Ovamboland, had died in 1874. He died of alcohol poisoning and was followed by King Kambonde I (1874-1883), who was succeeded by King Iitana yaNkwiyu, who ruled for less than a year (1883-1884). The latter was succeeded by King Kambonde II whose rule lasted a quarter of a century. Kambonde II died in October 1909.

The first spiritual breakthrough came in 1882 when 6 young men asked to be baptized after 12 years of spiritual labour. The situation of the Namibian mission field is thus more than comparable to William Carey's experience in India. Carey laboured for 7 years without a single convert! King Kambonde Mpingana brought a total change of attitudes of the people towards the Finnish Mission. The new king had confidence in Rautanen. Rautanen became his personal friend, adviser and doctor. Some of the chief's family believed and were baptized. 1883 marks the year in which the first congregation among the Ovambo people was founded at Omandongo.

This period of spiritual advance was not unaffected by sorrow. In 1880 the Rautanens' firstborn, Heinrich, died. In fact, only three of the Rautanens' nine children reached the age of majority. The Rautanens were well acquainted with grief, and yet there appears to be not a hint of bitterness in either Martin or Frieda against the Lord whom they served so faithfully. They continued to love, serve and worship God with all their hearts. When their fourth child, Ludwig, became very sick, Martin wrote in his diary: 'At half past five in the afternoon our Lord took him in his arms. Lord, teach us to say from the heart, "The Lord gave, the Lord took away, may the Name of our Lord be praised."' We ought to be greatly humbled by such faith. Modern people find it difficult to deal with death, mainly because they do not wish to accept that God is the Giver and Taker of life. The Rautanens understood that in the taking of their children's lives, God was still the good and faithful Father. In the midst of such losses Martin and Frieda themselves frequently battled with severe bouts of malaria and other sicknesses which made them weak and often unproductive for long periods. Martin nearly died in 1890. The words of Revelation 12:11

were true for these missionaries: *'They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.'*

### **1885 - 1900**

In June 1880 the Rautanens had moved to Olukonda, the place where Rautanen would live for over 40 years. King Kambonde I who was often sick, due to excessive alcohol intake, came to regard Rautanen as his personal physician. Rautanen's influence however was particularly significant in the life of Kambonde II, the king who reigned for almost 25 years. The king soon learned that the Christians were his most faithful subjects.

The time had now come for Rautanen to go on furlough in his native Finland. He not been home for 23 years, and his family's health had deteriorated so much that they desperately needed a break. They arrived in Helsinki in June 1891. Sadly, the Mission did very little to welcome him back home. One gets the impression that the Mission was very removed from its missionaries. This fact however was compensated for by the joy of meeting their oldest son Reinhold, whom they had sent to school in Finland 6 years earlier, and Martin's aged mother, Annikka Rautanen. Once it was known that he was back in the country, Rautanen had plenty of opportunities to speak about the Mission, and the meetings were generally packed. He mentions that at Tyrvaä there were 15,000 – 20,000 listeners! He had brought a good number of displays from the Ovambo culture and traditional way of life and this attracted the interest of a good number of Scientific Societies which frequently requested him to address them. He was even made a member of the Geographic Society in Finland – a rare honour bestowed on a non-academician. The Rautanens returned to Ovamboland in October 1892.

In the meantime Germany began to make its official claim on South West Africa. Portugal made an agreement in 1886 fixing a boundary line between German South West Africa and Portuguese Angola. The boundary would divide the Ovambo tribes. The Ndongas were not affected, but the line certainly divided the Kwanyama tribe. Major Theodor Leutwein became the first governor for German South West Africa in 1894. It is interesting to note Rautanen's feelings upon this development. In writing to his Mission director he said: *'God willing the German government does not come to Ovamboland for a long time, for if earlier there came much godlessness with white people to Ovamboland, then the Germans will bring a disgusting kind that even the heathen are ashamed. Their main sin is revolting adultery and dissipation'* It goes without saying that he loved the Ovambo more than the Germans!

King Kambonde II in conversation with ‘Nakambale’ on the legality of the Germans’ intention to seize their ground was amazed that the Germans did not obey God’s word – ‘*you shall not covet your neighbour’s possessions*’ (Ex 20:17). Rautanen explained to him that the fear of the Lord did not depend upon learnedness or unlearnedness, but that it was manifested in one’s love for God. Then he turned the conversation to the gospel. He explained to the king that the coming of the Lord was at hand, and that the gospel had to be preached to all nations, including the Ndongas, and he urged the king to receive the Word of God personally.

### ***1900 - 1920***

The new century saw the Germans establishing themselves in South West Africa. In January 1904 a tragic thing happened. Herero Chief Maherero gave an order to kill all white people except missionaries, women and children. His instructions were not carefully followed, and as a result over a hundred people were killed, among them 5 women. The Ovambos were very tempted to join the uprising, but Kambonde II adopted a cautious view. The next tragedy happened when the Germans engaged the Hereros in battle at the Waterberg in central Namibia. The Germans chased the Hereros through a dry desert where many of them perished of thirst. This is known as the ‘Herero genocide’ – often referred to in political discussions in which leaders of the Herero demand restitution from Germany. The Ovambos generally avoided conflict with the Germans, mostly thanks to the wise counsel of Rautanen. The Ovambo tribes were joined to the German colonial empire without firing a single shot, and were ruled by the Germans until 1914 when the first World War broke out, when the Germans had to surrender to the British / South African regime.

### ***1920 - 1926***

Rautanen celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the mission field on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1920. His son Reinhold was appointed field superintendent. Martin Rautanen was decorated by his country, Finland, with the ‘Order of the White Rose’ in recognition of the outstanding contributions which he had made in the mission field. Martin was unwilling to wear the decoration. This was entirely in character with a man who sought God’s approval far above the approval of men.

In 1925 the first Oshiwambo pastors were ordained. On that occasion Rautanen preached from the text: ‘Be assured that I am with you always, even

to the end of the age.’ He related how the Mission had begun with the clearing of a plot of land in Shikongo shaKalulu’s time. He asked them at that time: “Where were your fathers and mothers at that time? In the darkness of paganism. And where are they now? Workers in the Kingdom of God. Man’s strength and wisdom had not brought it about, but He who says: ‘Be assured, I am with you always.’ In his diary he wrote afterwards: ‘Lord, I thank thee that thou hast allowed my dear Frieda and me to see this day...’

Thus it was that Ovamboland became Martin’s home on this earth. One of his closest co-workers Albin Savola, reminisced about their years together and he said : ‘For 3 years I sat at the same table with Martin Rautanen. For me these were lessons of a lifetime: Diligence, punctuality, trust in the future and a childlike faith in the Saviour...’. In his 80<sup>th</sup> year, in 1925, Martin Rautanen was granted an honorary doctorate from the University of Helsinki. Rautanen died at Olukonda on 19 October, 1926. One of the missionaries recalls how on a moonlit night, an Ovambo man stood at Nakambale’s grave very deep in thought. Then he said: ‘Truly, he loved us very much.’

### **Vital lessons from Rautanen’s life**

1. Martin Rautanen was a devoted believer who had learned a passion for missions from his mother. This illustrates the importance of 2 Tim 1:5 – the importance of godly parents who teach their young ones.
2. Despite being an unpromising candidate in the beginning (being of humble origin) he proved to be the most persistent and persevering missionary of all the Finnish missionaries sent into the South West African mission field. Unpromising beginnings are not always indicative of later failure. This illustrates the fact that our Lord Jesus chose 12 disciples – mainly poor uneducated men for the great task of gospel preaching. How God shames the wise and the learned through the humility of the cross. (1 Cor 1: 26-31).
3. He was a man of the Word and of prayer (Acts 6:4). Many demanded that he should give more attention to matters like orphanages and schools and other humanitarian upliftment schemes. Rautanen was not drawn to this sort of work, for he knew that the work of the true missionary was the work of prayer and the preaching of the gospel. Everything else would follow from this. All other work needed to be built on this foundation. He often

clashed with his superiors (who sometimes were influenced by modernistic thinking) on this matter. At one meeting in which his fellow missionaries addressed the importance of schools for the Ovambo nation, Rautanen asked of them: 'What do we aim at with our schools and what are the means to reach it?' His answer to the first question was: 'To lead people to Christ and to His congregation.' His answer to the second question was: 'With the Word of God. It is the only means of missionary work, according to the command of our Saviour. We have to present Christ both in our sermons and in our schools. All other things like geography and arithmetic, etc. are secondary matters...' This matter remained a concern for Rautanen as his years drew to a close. In a letter to the Mission director in 1924 he writes: 'In many mission fields education is in fashion now and is worshipped. There are many subjects in education that are not the gold of the gospel, but like wood, grass and straw, which will burn on the last day...'. This does not mean that he was narrow-minded in his interests. He was interested in languages (philology), ethnology, botany and even climatology.

4. Rautanen's chief contributions lay in the translation of the Oshindonga Scriptures. He believed that the people whom he loved and ministered to should have the Scriptures in their own language. The complete New Testament was published in 1908. The whole Bible was available in Oshindonga in 1924.
5. He was radically committed to the people to whom he ministered. His life was incarnational. He lived humbly among the people to whom he preached. He respected the authority of the kings, even when he radically disagreed with them. By and by he won the battle of faith, and before long the gospel had taken hold of many people. Today the work in Ovamboland rests on these foundations, for the gospel has free and unhindered access there, unlike those days when missionaries were chased away. This radical commitment to the Ovambo people is seen especially in these words which he spoke to a friend in Finland, who wanted him to stay a little longer on his furlough. He said to him; 'May God protect me from that. I have two fatherlands like everybody else. You have heaven and Finland, I have Finland and Ovamboland.'

Martin Rautanen was a rare missionary. Like the Lord Jesus he gave his life for those he came to save.

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## The King James Bible

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*Michael Drake*

King James set very specific rules for the writing of his Bible. One of the most important rules ensured that this would not be a translation at all, but a revision of the earlier Bishops' Bible. Instead of starting with the Greek and Hebrew, the translators were required to begin with the Bishops' Bible, and after consulting other English versions, versions in other languages, and the Greek and Hebrew, make as few changes as possible. The translators were faithful to this direction, for although they would frequently consider the original languages, their discussion was just as frequently about selecting the best turn of phrase in English from the various possibilities offered by as diverse a range of sources as the Catholic Latin Vulgate and Tyndale's first English version.

The king also directed that certain 'old ecclesiastical words be kept' specifying by way of example that 'Church' was not to be translated *congregation*. 'Church' was a recent inclusion in English translations and could hardly therefore be called an 'old ecclesiastical word', but to protect the High Church Anglican centralised 'Church' structure it was essential that no sense of congregationalism be allowed in the King's Bible. The Roman Catholic humanist Erasmus had translated *ekklesia* as 'congregation', as did Tyndale in 1525. Modern readers might wonder how important just one word is, but it was very clear in Tyndale's day that this was fundamental. '... the gathering of Christians together is a congregation of equals, not a church of divisions and hierarchies, where priest and bishop and pope are essential ... The bishops saw that this idea could make the whole Church structure fall apart.'<sup>1</sup> This was one of Tyndale's 'heresies' for which he and his translation would be burned. Eighty-six years later King James and *his* bishops were as vehemently opposed to biblical doctrine and plain English translation as their predecessors.

This was just one of several ways in which Anglo-Catholic doctrine, and the relationship of king to Church, was to be protected in the 'translation' of the King's Bible. The translators were not free to give an accurate rendering of the Greek and Hebrew. On the contrary, political and doctrinal bias was stamped on their work from the very beginning, and continued to the very last stage of 'translation'.

This principle was also followed in the next rule, ‘When a word hath divers significations, that is to be kept which hath been most commonly used by most of the Ancient Fathers ...’ In other words, preference was to be given to words of antiquity rather than words of contemporary meaning. The king wanted little change, except for the provisions of his sixth rule: ‘No marginal notes at all to be affixed...’. While he does allow marginal notes that explain Hebrew or Greek words, or cross reference quotations, he wants none of the commentary in marginal notes that caused him to hate the Geneva Bible!<sup>2</sup>

Indeed the translators were so supportive of the king’s anti-evangelical thrust, that they explained their motivation in making this new translation as, in part, to suppress Puritans and Baptists! This was no passing comment, but one of the stated aims given in their formal preface to the Bible.

The last set of rules related to the organisation of the committees and their work.

### **The Greek New Testament used for the King’s Bible**

In the providence of God the original manuscripts on which the Bible was written have disappeared long ago. Bible translators must now rely on a collection of over 5,000 Greek manuscripts and more than 8,000 Latin (and other ancient language) versions.<sup>3</sup> Few of these are complete. Often these manuscripts overlap, sometimes extensively; yet there remain differences and uncertainties about the exact wording of the original New Testament. Such small differences between overlapping passages in different manuscripts are not frequent and they are not very significant, but in the interests of accuracy in the Word of God, the Greek specialist has to try to decide which variant - which little variation - is the best. We are left with having to choose between variants without any certainty; in the providence of God translators have to make judgements about which letter, form of punctuation, word, or expression is most likely to have been in the original.

It is important to note however, that while there are minor variations in the texts from which we translate our Bibles, ‘nothing we believe to be doctrinally true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardised by the variants’.<sup>4</sup> The existence of these variants ‘should not overshadow the overwhelming degree of *agreement* which exists among the ancient records’.<sup>5</sup>



*New Zealand Reformation Today agent Mrs Priscilla Drake with daughter Hannah Van Ballegooy and her husband Rick. All were foundation members of Tamaki Reformed Baptist Church and Rick and Hannah were the first couple married in the church. Michael Drake is the author of the book The King's Bible. The section published here is a small part of his book.*

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## **Textus Receptus**

The manuscripts now available in this wonderful array are grouped together by things they have in common, mainly to do with historical, geographic and linguistic issues.<sup>6</sup> One such group is associated with the 'Textus Receptus' which means 'Received Text'. This group is based on manuscripts that come from the Eastern or Byzantine Empire which continued to use Greek after it separated from the rest of the Roman Empire. Frequently reference is made to the Textus Receptus<sup>7</sup>, as if it is a single New Testament Greek text, one that is said to be reliable to the exclusion of all other manuscripts.

Such a single original text does not exist, despite a published compilation of texts being given that name. Although there is obviously a group of texts contributing to the 'Textus Receptus', that they should have special powers associated with 'being received' is nonsense. For a start, this group does not produce a single Greek New Testament about which there is total certainty, even among those who treasure it. It is not simply a choice between Textus Receptus and other sources of manuscripts - choices have to be made even when translating from all the manuscripts within the Textus Receptus group. Most advocates of Textus Receptus now recognise that it originates in a broader group of manuscripts<sup>8</sup> in which there are about six to ten variants per Bible chapter about which these choices have to be made.<sup>9</sup> In fact the handful of manuscripts used to construct the Textus Receptus were not even all the manuscripts then available. Its compiler, Erasmus, was in such a hurry he had to make do with what was at hand at the time, instead of making a comprehensive collection.

The idea of such a superior text or group of manuscripts upon which they could rely was completely foreign to the king's writers. They used other language versions of the New Testament based on manuscripts that were not Textus Receptus, openly bewailing the limited number of manuscripts available to them, and saying they would have consulted more texts had they been able to. Not only does a single, completely reliable Textus Receptus not exist, the concept was not invented until long after the king's writers had completed their work. Although they made use of the texts now called 'Textus Receptus', they did not do so exclusively or consciously. They simply had no idea there would ever be a Textus Receptus!

Too often the polemics of those who want to use the Textus Receptus go from the extreme to the foolish. Objection is made to alternative texts as coming from Roman Catholic sources<sup>10</sup> – but so did the Textus Receptus! Westcott and Hort are significant textual critics who favoured an alternative textual tradition. Their work has influenced modern translations. Their faith and integrity are criticised, and become a basis for rejecting their scholarship. Critics ask, 'How can we rely on the textual criticism of men who do not meet the high standards of our evangelical faith?' If that is the case, how then can we trust the work of the Roman Catholic who compiled the text that forms the Textus Receptus from sources that include Roman Catholic ones?

### **Erasmus' Text**

The writers of the King's Bible had to rely mainly on a Greek New Testament compiled by the Roman Catholic humanist Erasmus from several incomplete and sometimes conflicting manuscripts. Parts of these were made up because there was no Greek available - in some cases it is still not available, within or beyond the Textus Receptus group.

Erasmus managed to find a small number of Greek manuscripts - probably about six or so out of the many then in circulation. He disliked and therefore discarded one because, although it was the oldest one, it differed too much from the Latin version he had! Several passages were missing from all the manuscripts he had. For the Gospels he used a manuscript from a Roman Catholic monastery in Basle and for Acts and the Epistles another one from the same library. With most passages he was able to compare two or three different manuscripts to decide which might be the best rendering - although we have no idea what persuaded him that one text was to be preferred above another at any point. For the Book of Revelation he had only one manuscript and nothing to check it against. The last six verses of Revelation were missing, so Erasmus made them up from the Latin. He then translated the

Greek back into Latin, apparently in an odd attempt to show he got his Latin translation from the Greek! He did the same with several other passages in Revelation. 'In Erasmus' self-made Greek text are readings which have never been found in any known Greek manuscript - but which are still perpetuated today in printings of the so-called Textus Receptus.'<sup>11</sup>

The same thing happened in Acts 9:6 where the question, 'And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' is not found in any Greek manuscript at this point (it can be found in some manuscripts at Acts 22:10 however!). Erasmus simply took it from the Latin and made up the Greek. Yet this too remains part of the Textus Receptus.

Erasmus was in a great hurry to produce his Greek New Testament because he knew that others were working on a similar project. As a result he rushed it into print without proper editing or checking. It contained hundreds of typographical errors. The first edition was published in 1516, and it went through five revisions till the final version was printed in 1535. In the fourth edition he made ninety changes to the Book of Revelation alone.

Erasmus came under vigorous criticism for leaving out verses 7 and 8 of 1 John 5, what is now called the *Comma Johanneum*. Considering his willingness to fill in gaps from the Latin in other passages, his obstinacy here is fascinating. Erasmus simply said he could not find it in any manuscript.<sup>12</sup> He even examined a number of manuscripts that were not available to him when he first wrote the translation, and was still not able to find it. But the Latin version, declared by the Pope to be the true Bible, had this passage, and by refusing to include it Erasmus was challenging the might of Rome. He dug in! He would include the passage only if it could be shown to him in a Greek manuscript.

Eventually a copy of the passage in Greek was found, or rather manufactured. What Erasmus suspected we now know to be the case: some time around 1520 a Franciscan friar at Oxford in England named Roy or Froy wrote an ancient looking manuscript by translating the Latin into Greek.<sup>13</sup> This was presented as an authentic manuscript to Erasmus who kept his word and included the passage in the third edition of 1522, but in a footnote he expresses his suspicions that the whole thing has been contrived. Apart from this manuscript, only three others have since been discovered to contain the passage.<sup>14</sup> One is a 12<sup>th</sup> century manuscript that has the passage inserted in the margin in a 17<sup>th</sup> century style of handwriting; the second is a 16<sup>th</sup> century copy made from another New Testament published around the same time, the Polyglot Bible (containing many languages); and one that is dated from either the 14<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century, depending upon which specialist is listened to. Just as significantly it does not appear in the oldest Latin versions and the first

mention of it in non-biblical literature is a 4<sup>th</sup> century quotation attributed, not to the Bible, but to the sayings of an early Church leader.

How did Erasmus choose between the variations in the texts he had available to him? We do not know. Why is this tiny collection of texts preferred when others were available? He did not have time to look at the others. Is there any reason why his text should be used while other manuscripts are ignored? Market forces ruled - he published first!<sup>15</sup> Subsequently a Robert Estienne (or Stephanus) issued four editions of the Greek New Testament. His work, notable for the introduction of numbered verses, is largely a development of Erasmus' work. The Reformer Theodore Beza then published nine editions that varied little from the work of Estienne. Two of Beza's editions are the ones used mainly by the writers of the King James Version.

It was not until 1633 that a passing advertising note by a publisher tagged this Greek version as the 'Textus Receptus'. The publishers of that version of Erasmus' New Testament, modified and edited by a number of scholars and publishers including Theodore Beza, actually referred to it in this way: this is 'the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted'<sup>16</sup>. In other words this is the text that had at that time been accepted for use; they in no sense suggested that it was to be 'received' in opposition to other Greek texts, much less received from God in some mystical way or with unusual powers or integrity. It was simply the text passed on to them and commonly used. The publishers were attempting to establish with readers that because of this, theirs was a trustworthy translation.

Textus Receptus represents the choices of one man to favour selected variants over other equally valid options, to make up missing passages, and to bend his scholarship to the requirements of Roman Catholic tradition. Some people may have a preference for it. It may happen to be the text used for English Bibles for nearly 400 years. But neither evangelical superstition nor dogma can justify exalting this significant and useful but limited collection of incomplete texts to a position of cultic reverence.

There are other issues relating to the relative merits of the different groups of texts now available, but it is clear that the Greek text used by the king's translators was not entirely reliable. Whatever position is now taken on the reliability of the various textual groupings - which of the 5,000 plus texts now available are accepted as most reliable - the text used by the king's translators had weaknesses and outright errors. The Greek they consulted (and sometimes rejected) was not the best available then and is not the best available now.<sup>17</sup> Departure from the Textus Receptus (and from the King's Bible) is not indicative of heretical tampering with the Word of God.

- 1 Daniell *William Tyndale - A Biography*, Yale UP, New Haven, 1994 p.122.
- 2 The issue here not whether or not a good Bible translation should include marginal notes or commentary, but the king's desire to prevent a commentary to which he objected.
- 3 D A Carson *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1979, p17. (See also the Preface to the Revised Authorised Version of the Bible or New King James Version, Samuel Bagster, London, 1982, p.vi.)
- 4 Carson p.56.
- 5 *Preface to the Revised Authorised Version of the Bible or New King James Version*, Samuel Bagster, London, 1982, p.vi.
- 6 The discussion of relative merits of these different groups as a basis for Bible translation is beyond the scope of this book. Because so much is made of the Textus Receptus by some advocates of the King's Bible, the inconsistencies of their argument are considered here as relevant to claims for exclusive use of the King's Bible. We have made no attempt to advocate one group or another, but have merely aimed to show that *within the group that includes the Textus Receptus* what the king's translators used was not entirely reliable. For the wider discussion see Carson and Metzger.
- 7 'Textus Receptus' properly refers to the compilation of Greek texts published in 1633, but is by some applied to the manuscript group supporting that text.
- 8 'This large body of manuscripts is the source of the Greek text underlying the Authorised Version. It is the Greek text presently known as the Textus Receptus, or Received Text.' *Preface to the Revised Authorised Version*, p.vii.
- 9 Carson p.68.
- 10 for example E T Chacko *By His Singular Care and Providence*, a tract published by *The Westminster Tradition*, Singapore, 1993: 'The contention of Hort and Westcott was that the Alexandrian Text is superior ... But I think Hort's and Westcott's proposition is shred to smithereens when we realise that the manuscripts they championed had the Papacy's endorsement. For the Sinai manuscript came from St Catherine's Monastery and the Vatican manuscript came right from the Vatican Library.'
- 11 B M Metzger *The Text of the New Testament* Second Ed, Oxford UP, Oxford, 1968, p100. See also Carson pp.34f.
- 12 Martin Luther was just as sceptical! See Brian Edwards *Nothing But the Truth*, Evangelical Press, Darlington, 1993 p.200.
- 13 Metzger p.101.
- 14 Carson p.35.
- 15 Speaking of the haste, Erasmus himself said his Greek New Testament was 'precipitated rather than edited'. Quoted by Robert Martin *Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version*, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1989 p.79.
- 16 Translated by Metzger, p.106; in the Latin (in which this was written) the words are 'Textum ... receptum: ...' from which 'Textus Receptus' is derived.
- 17 Robert Martin, while strongly advocating the reliability of the KJV compared with modern translations, nevertheless graciously closes his discussion of the Textus Receptus in words with which we concur: 'My purpose merely is to ask that no unique or exclusive place be given to the Textus Receptus or the King James Version, to the exclusion of other safe guides in the Scriptures.' p.82.

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## A Thousand Revivals!

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*A review article*

### **A God-Entranced Vision of All Things**

#### **The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards**

John Piper and Justin Taylor

Crossway, 286 pages, 2004

2,500 gathered in Minneapolis in October 2003 to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) who is esteemed by many as the greatest philosopher-theologian of American history. Eleven audio cassette recordings emanated from that memorable conference, all valuable and spiritually refreshing.

In reviewing this significant and encouraging conference in RT 198, I pointed out that one principal issue had been overlooked. Edwards was passionate in his belief that this world will be evangelised through outpourings of the Holy Spirit (see his book *The History of Redemption*). Of all theologians Edwards is *the* theologian of revival. If we include his biography of David Brainerd which describes the revival among the Indians no less than six books came from his pen describing, defending, analysing and promoting prayer for spiritual awakening. These books include his classic *The Religious Affections*.

This book brings together the rich materials of the conference: the God-entranced vision of Edwards by John Piper, the story of his life by Stephen Nichols, Sarah Edwards by Noel Piper, revival by Jim Packer, the spiritual disciplines of the Christian Life as practised by Edwards by Don Whitney, the dismissal of Edwards from Northampton by Mark Dever, owning slaves by Sherard Burns. There are three chapters on doctrines which were finely tuned by Edwards: Original Sin (Paul Helm), The Bondage of the Will (Sam Storms), the Religious Affections (Mark Talbot).

The advantage of publishing a book after a conference is that improvements can be made and in this instance the one outstanding improvement is that Jim Packer rectifies the omission in the conference on

revival by contributing a major chapter on that subject. He is at his brilliant best when he shows that Edwards' theology of revival is perhaps the most important single contribution that Edwards has made to evangelical thinking today (p. 16). This 27 page study is worth the price of the whole book. Here is how Packer defines revival:

'What exactly happens in a reviving visitation from God, gradual or sudden, brief or prolonged, large- or small-scale, as the case may be? From the archetypal revival era, we can put together a general answer to that question, all the specifics of which can be illustrated, one way or another, from Edwards' revival writings. To be sure, no two episodes of revival are identical, if only because the various individuals and communities to which, and the various cultural backgrounds against which, the reviving of religion takes place have their own unique features, and in every narrative of revival these should be noted. But the same generic pattern appears everywhere.

'Revival is God touching minds and hearts in an arresting, devastating, exalting way, to draw them to himself, through working from the inside out rather than from the outside in. It is God accelerating, intensifying, and extending the work of grace that goes on in every Christian's life, but is sometimes overshadowed and somewhat smothered by the impact of other forces. It is the near presence of God giving new power to the gospel. It is the Holy Spirit sensitizing souls to divine realities and so generating deep-level responses to God in the form of faith and repentance, praise and prayer, love and joy, works of benevolence, and service, and initiatives of outreach and sharing.'

Packer goes on to outline the ingredients that are intensified in revival. 1. God's holy presence is sensed and felt as our hearts are searched. 2. God's Word penetrates with power. 3. Conviction of sin is deeply felt. 4. Repentance runs deep (Zech 12:10ff; John 16:8-11). 5. Christ's cross is valued. 6. Reformation in life and behavior is advanced. 7. Love breaks out, 'The town seemed to be full of the presence of God: it never was so full of love as then'. 8. Joy fills hearts. 9. Churches are revived. 10. Satan makes his counter-attacks.

If Edwards were alive to day with the command of the information that we possess he would pray earnestly for global revival - national revivals in every nation of the world, people group revivals as they are evangelized

for the first time as David Brainerd evangelized the Indians, revivals in seminaries, colleges and schools, and revivals in denominations. Nothing less than this can sufficiently glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. He must see the travail of his soul and be rewarded for his work on a global scale (Ps 22:27-31). He must be honoured by all nations, tribes and people of every language (Ps 2:8,9; Ps 67; Isa 49:6,7).

*Basic to this vision is a God-Entranced Vision of All Things.*

John Piper saw the Edwards' anniversary as an opportunity to further promote the supremacy of God in all things as Edwards wrote, 'God is glorified not only by his glory being seen but by it being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it' (p. 26).

Edwards described that divine daybreak when he was in his late teens:

'The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. 1:17, 'Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever, Amen.' As I read these words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before.' (p. 112).

For Piper 'no one in Church history with the possible exception of St. Augustine has shown more clearly and shockingly (starkly) the infinite importance of joy in the very essence of what it means for God to be God and what it means for us to be God glorifying. Joy always seemed to me peripheral until I read Edwards. He simply transformed my universe by putting joy at the centre of what it means for God to be God and what it means for us to be God-glorifying' (p. 24). He goes on to trace this to the inner life of the Trinity (p. 25).

A heart experience of the supremacy of God in all things rejoiced in is like a second blessing or akin to a power experience. Embracing the sovereignty and glory of God in salvation is like a second blessing which fills one's soul with joy inexpressible (1 Peter 1:8).

The title *A God-Entranced Vision of all Things* is therefore an appropriate title pointing to issues of infinite importance.

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**CONTENTS**

- |           |   |                 |
|-----------|---|-----------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Tsunami!</b>                             | Editor          |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>The English Puritans and King James</b>  | Editor          |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Haggai and Procrastination</b>           | Michael Bentley |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Modernism in South Africa</b>            | Editor          |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Martin Rautanen – Pioneer Missionary</b> | Joachim Rieck   |
| <b>23</b> | <b>The King James Bible</b>                 | Michael Drake   |
| <b>30</b> | <b>A Thousand Revivals!</b>                 | Editor          |