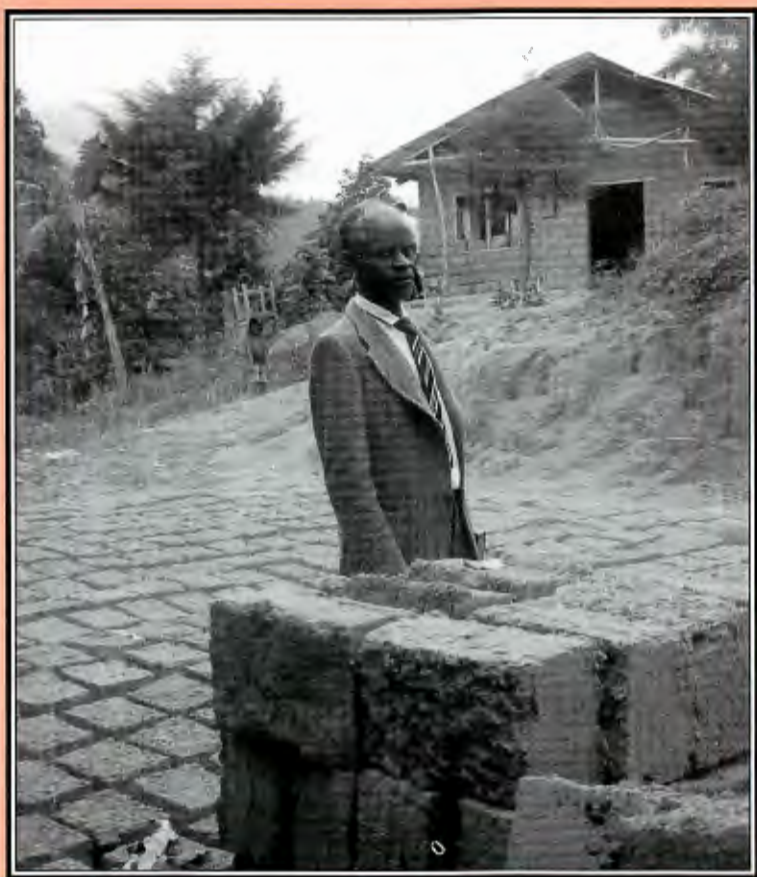


REFORMATION TODAY



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During March and April Nico van der Walt (for his testimony see RT138) ministered in Cameroon. Most of the photos in this issue illustrate that visit (see news).



Samson Khama. At his left are Pastor Robert Matuba and the President of the Convention, Samuel Becke. Seated behind is Pastor David Ntui.



Pictured above is Nico van der Walt. On his right is John Atembe and on his left Samuel, who is one of a number of men who labour among the 25 churches in the Lebialelem area.

Front cover: Pastor John Atembe standing beside his home-made brick factory. The clay bricks are baked in the sun. In the background is Grace Baptist Church of Lewoh, Lebialelem, SW Province, Cameroon.

Editorial



*Nico van der Walt with Ebenezer Church and Mount Buea, Cameroon, in the background.
A new church, designed to seat 2,500 is now being built on a nearby site.*

Greater Works?

Mark describes an event in which four friends lowered a paralytic through the roof of a crowded house. ‘When Jesus saw their faith he said to the crippled man, “Son your sins are forgiven.”’ This statement offended the critics to whom Jesus responded with the question, ‘Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven”, or to say, “Get up, take your mat and walk”?’ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... he said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, and take your mat and go home.”’ What involved the greater work, healing the man’s body or the salvation of his never-dying soul?

An American pastor related an experience from when he was still involved in healing campaigns. The instructions were that real paralytics in wheel chairs were not to come onto the platform. One night he managed to get a genuine sufferer wheeled onto the platform. When the famous healer saw this he lost his temper and ordered the woman to be taken off the platform. We are not able to do the miracles that Jesus did.

The Redeemer’s Tears Wept Over Lost Souls

The exposition *The Redeemer’s Tears Wept Over Lost Souls* was prompted by Bob Sheehan’s article on the love of God which appeared in the last issue of *RT*. Our Lord’s tears express the reality of God’s love for a lost world. Expounding

John 3:16 John Flavel suggests that, 'The gift of Christ is the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God to sinners that ever was made from eternity to them.' He goes on correctly to distinguish between the benevolent, gracious and complacent love of our Father. He stresses the common grace of God, 'To have food and clothing convenient for us, beds to lie on, relations to comfort us, in all these there is love' (*Works* vol 1 page 64). God's love is shown in many ways but never more than in the giving of his Son. Superlative is that love God has for us inasmuch that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Essentially the gospel is for sinners. To lose that is to lose the heart and genius of Christianity.

Psalm 5:5 says, 'You hate all who do wrong.' Righteous hatred of wickedness and a love for lost sinners co-exist in God and in ourselves. Moab was not joined to Jahweh by covenant as was Israel yet in the destruction of Moab God's pain is expressed. 'Therefore I wail over Moab, for all Moab I cry out – my heart laments for Moab like a flute; it laments like a flute for the men of KirHareseth' (Jer 48:31,36). (For article on John 3:16 and hyper-Calvinism see *RT135*.)

Why have a Confession of Faith?

Prof Michael Haykin has completed for publication a book which will probably have the title *Kiffin, Keach and Knollys* – and subtitle: *Rediscovering Early English Baptist Heritage*. He traces Baptist origins, describes the lives of William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys (see *RT144*), and Benjamin Keach, examines the reasons for the First London Confession of Faith (1644) and the Second London Confession which we now know as the 1689 Confession. Several reasons compelled the formation of the Confession and its adoption by the churches. The multiplication of the Quakers at the expense of other denominations was one reason. By the early 18th century the Quakers were almost as numerous as the Particular Baptists, 39,000 compared with 40,000. As Prof Haykin shows, the Quakers stressed direct inspiration, revelations, special leadings and miracles. In a public ministry which spanned forty years George Fox travelled five times round Britain as well as ministering in Germany, Holland and America. The Confession emphasises the primacy and all sufficiency of Scripture over against private experiences.

A contemporary example of private impressions is related by a Reformed Baptist minister in England. He was invited to a Christian Union house-party weekend. On arrival he was informed that a young lady had claimed that the Lord had appeared the previous day and told her personally that she was to be the main speaker that weekend. When the issue was put to the vote most the students voted in favour of the young lady. The visiting minister did not return home but awaited the outcome. At the first session the young lady began but in less than three minutes dried up. Heads turned to see if the visitor was still present and available. He was. The rest of the weekend went according to the original plan.

Greater Works than Jesus!

Nico van der Walt

When did you last do greater works than Jesus?

Do you find it a shocking question? Well, it is based on a very specific promise of our Lord.

Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.
John 14:12, NASB.

This verse has been the source of much controversy. It has precipitated uncertainties and doubts in countless hearts. It has been used to support heresies and deceptions without number. But it is written, nevertheless – black on white! There is no doubt whatsoever about its textual authenticity. And the NASB translation is above criticism.

A closer look at this staggering promise

How are we to understand these puzzling words? After all, when a saying of Jesus starts with ‘amen, amen’ (translated *truly, truly*) we should jump to attention. The repetition of these words is peculiar to John. The emphasis, *truly, truly*, introduces something most profound or serious. The expression *truly, truly*, tells us that the authority and affirmation of the Son of God himself is behind a particular announcement.

A closer look at this verse is quite revealing. The promise is given to him who believes in Jesus. John uses his peculiar and remarkable Greek construction to describe saving faith. And from the preceding context it is clear that the object of this faith is Jesus as the revelation of God. It is beyond the scope of this article to enter into a discussion of this.¹ What is indisputable is that this faith is not something exclusive of which only a very few spiritual giants partake. It is the faith given to all in Christ. It is saving faith.

The promise is given to every individual Christian. The singular is used throughout. It is therefore not a promise to the Church corporately. The Greek word *meGas* (greater) denotes a difference of degree and not a difference of number (*polus*). It therefore means greater rather than more.

A burning question is what Jesus means by the word ‘works’. Apart from this verse, the word occurs 26 times in the Gospel. In 8 cases man in general is the subject with the works referring to his actions, whether good or evil. In 18 cases, however, Jesus himself is the subject with the works referring twice to the whole of his earthly work (4:34; 17:4), and 16 times to his miracles.²

The ‘works’ of Jesus’ disciples referred to here cannot be ordinary human deeds like the 8 cases above because they are compared to Jesus’ works and are clearly of the same nature.

These 'works' cannot be compared to the whole of his earthly work, as this is absolutely unique.

But one alternative remains: these 'works' of the disciples are compared to the miracles of Jesus! The immediate context confirms this. In the previous two verses Jesus refers to his works, clearly his miracles.

The condition for and key to the fulfilment of this staggering promise is Jesus' departure to the Father. This was of course the prerequisite for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). The disciples would not do the 'works' in their own strength, but through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit based on the finished work of Christ.

*No thorough, responsible and honest exegesis can escape the conclusion that Jesus promises true believers that they, like him, would perform, in the power of the Holy Spirit, astounding miraculous things; in fact that these things would be even **greater** than the miracles that he performed during the time of his humiliation!*

What about the fulfilment of the promise?

Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the early Church entered into experiences never known to believers before. Much is said about amazing miracles in the book of Acts.

It would seem logical in all this to see the fulfilment of the promise in John 14:12. Many people hold this position. And without doubt they have a case worthy of respect, deserving closer attention. Should they be right, hardly any verse in Scripture can have more profound practical implications for the Church of our day.

A careful and thoughtful study of the Word of God and Church history does however, reveal serious flaws in this belief. At no time in the early Church was miracle working by all believers accepted as universal practice. Nor can any miracle recorded in the book of Acts in any way be considered greater than those of Jesus. Even a very quick glance at the miracles recorded in the Gospel of John confirms this. And if this is true in the Church of Acts, how much more is it true of subsequent revivals, let alone Church history in general.

The position therefore crumbles under at least two undeniable realities. Firstly, the promise is made to each and every believer, but at no time over twenty centuries has the miraculous (in the sense of the above analysis of the verse) been the typical experience of Christians in general. Secondly, in no way can it be said of any so-called 'miracles' happening since the day of Pentecost, that they have surpassed the miracles our Lord in greatness.

Does this mean that we have here a promise of our Lord which has failed to materialise? Many are the disillusioned who have this suspicion lurking in their hearts. Have these poor people been deceived by false expectations? This promise has been fulfilled millions of times in the most amazing ways since the day of Pentecost.

No disillusionment is necessary as I will show. The key to the true understanding of John 14:12 is to be found within the context of that book.

The structure of the Gospel of John

Even a quick reading clearly reveals the main divisions of the Gospel. The *Main Body* is encased by the well known *Prologue* (1:1-18) and the *Epilogue* (21:1-25). The main body consists of an *Introduction* (1:19-52), *John's Message* (2:1-20:18) and a *Conclusion* (20:19-29). This leaves two verses (20:30-31) sandwiched in between the conclusion and the epilogue. They contain John's *purpose* for writing. The structure can be represented as follows:

Prologue (1:1-18)

Main Body (1:19-20:29)

Introduction (1:19-52)

John's Message (2:1 – 20:18)

Behold, Jesus, the Son of God, the Christ!
Believe in him and you will have eternal Life!

Conclusion (20:19-29)

Epilogue (21:1-25)

John's purpose in writing (20:30-31)

These two verses are vitally important for understanding the method John uses to put his message across. They therefore hold the key which unlocks the Gospel.

John makes it clear that he has carefully selected and described a number of (miraculous) signs in order that his readers 'may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God'. What must be grasped and appreciated is that the Gospel is meticulously planned. It is carefully structured like a poem. What student of this Gospel will deny that it is a wonderful work of art? John structures the main body of his Gospel around seven signs or miracles of Jesus.³ These signs are strung together by some of the most profound discourses of our Lord (relating to and interpreting the signs), but the skeleton of the main body is to be found in the miracles, not in the discourses.

The introduction and conclusion of the main body

In the introduction of the main body (1:19-52), Jesus the Christ takes over the baton from John the Baptist. In the last portion of his introduction (1:44-52), Jesus leads the sceptical Nathanael to faith and confession (v 50) by giving him a very personal 'sign' (v49). Jesus then makes an announcement concerning what is to follow: '*You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see **greater** things than that*' (v50). There can be no doubt that Jesus refers to the many miracles that would authenticate him to be the Messiah (v52). Nor can there be any doubt that John describes this incident to prepare his readers for his plan of action described above. And in the very next verse he starts implementing this plan.

In the conclusion of the main body (20:19-29) the resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples. He then commissions them (vv21-23). So the baton of action is once again handed on. Then in the last portion of this conclusion (vv24-29), Jesus leads the sceptical Thomas to faith and confession (v28) by giving him a very personal 'sign' (v27). This is proof of Jesus' last, final, ultimate sign: the resurrection (2:18-22). Jesus then makes an announcement concerning what is to follow (v29). Thomas has come to faith by witnessing Jesus' final sign to unbelieving man. And this is no small thing. It is something remarkable. But what about future generations, after Christ's departure? How would *they* come to faith? Jesus' announcement is consolatory beyond words: the future will bring forth something even more remarkable, something *greater*: people will believe, without having seen any signs! The correlation between Nathanael's encounter with the incarnated Son of God and Thomas' encounter with the resurrected Son of God is unmistakable. Both are told by others: 'We have found him' (1:45), 'We have seen him' (20:25). Both react sceptically (1:46; 20:25). Both receive a personal 'sign' (1:47,48; 20:27). Both believe and call out a profound confession(1:49; 20:28). Both receive an announcement concerning what was to follow: 'It is good that you believe, but much more remarkable things are to follow – **greater** things' (1:50,51; 20:29).

What is more, both encounters are part and parcel of two of the most important transitions of all revelational history. In the first instance the Son of God is about to start his public ministry on earth. And things never known before would become the order of the day; the sovereign God would work in a completely new way. In the second instance, the disciples are about to start their ministry, having been sent as Jesus had been sent (20:21). And things never known before would become the order of the day: the sovereign God would work in a completely new way – sinners would believe without having seen!

The distinctive miracle of the last days

The riddle of John 14:12 has clearly been solved. What are the '*greater works*' the disciples would do? *After the departure of Jesus, having become partakers of the Holy Spirit, they would lead people to true saving faith in Jesus Christ!* Whereas natural man

says, 'seeing is believing', these new believers would experience, 'believing is seeing'. What is more, they in turn^s would then start taking part in the unspeakable privilege of 'doing greater works than Jesus'. For almost two thousand years now, millions have experienced this *distinctive miracle of the last days*.

A last problem to be solved

One question still remains: can it be honestly said that leading someone to true faith in our day is a *greater work* than the miracles of Jesus? It can be looked at from two points of view.

Firstly, consider what actually happens in the 'receiver' of the miracle. By and large, the contemporary Church has watered down the sinfulness of man to such an extent that conversion is looked upon as hardly more than the pulling up of one's religious socks. But the Bible clearly teaches that natural man is fallen. And this means (to refer only to one portion of Scripture, Eph 2:1-10) that he is spiritually dead (v1); that he is under God's wrath (v3); and that he is a slave of the world, Satan and also his own flesh or sinful nature (vv2,3). When such a person comes to saving faith in Christ (v8), he is made spiritually alive (v5); he is raised up into a justified life (v6); and he is made to sit in heavenly realms in a position of authority over the world, Satan and his flesh (v6).

Is this change a small thing? No one who has any understanding of the radical depravity of natural man, and the staggering privileges of someone united to Christ through faith can ever think so. In fact, people who personally know the reality of this great work can never stop thinking about it in awe, and exploring the riches of salvation becomes their lifelong and passionate endeavour.

The greatness of this 'greater work' is therefore not primarily to be sought in numbers. The miracle is that even one believes, without having seen. It is like a high jumper. The incredible thing is not that he clears seven feet forty-two times, but that he clears seven feet at all.

Secondly, consider the consequences for the 'receiver' of the miracle. Jesus healed lepers, the blind, the lame, the dead. And we can just marvel at that. But all those people died again physically. And without God's saving grace each one of them will spend eternity in hell. On the other hand, each time the Spirit's effectual call works through my ministry, one more person will spend eternity in the glorious presence of God!

Need more be said? A sinner coming to saving faith in Christ is a greater thing than Lazarus being raised from the grave.

Underlining this is not to belittle the glorious ministry of our Lord on earth (God forbid!). It is accentuating the majestic sublimity of the triune God's gracious work of recreation in a sinner's life. It is putting the emphasis where God's Word puts it. And it is celebrating the staggering biblical revelation that he uses feeble and impotent men

and women as co-workers to bring about his mighty works. It is therefore not presumptuous to say with the apostle Paul that our Lord has given us this mission:

'I am sending you to them to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me' (Acts 26:17-18).

Majoring in God's majors

Let the reader test this subject himself.

Suppose you had to make a choice. Either, you could from now on have a healing ministry like Jesus and the ability to walk on water, to multiply food and to raise the dead. Or, in the time left to you in this life, you could enjoy the privilege of leading one person to saving faith in Christ. Which would you choose?

Does your answer reveal that you have true biblical foundations?

There is a promise, an 'amen, amen promise', written down in the Gospel of John, chapter fourteen, verse twelve. This has been given by the omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth to those who believe in him. But it is more than a promise, it is also an implicit command. And because the Lord has not yet returned, we can confidently conclude that all the harvest has not yet been brought in.

Let us not grow slack in our evangelism. Let us not become unfaithful in our high and holy calling. Let us not lose courage, but go on seeking to do greater works than Jesus.

References

1. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary Series, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, USA, pp335-337. D A Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus*, Baker Book House, USA, pp32-43.
2. John uses the two words, *semeion* (sign) and *ergon* (work) virtually as synonyms to describe the supernatural acts of Jesus, generally referred to as his 'miracles'. Only once, in 4:48, does he use *teras* (wonder); and never *dunamis* (mighty deed; miracle) - the two words frequently used in the rest of the New Testament to describe miracles.
3. Water into wine (2:1-11) ['first sign' (2:11)]; Healing nobleman's son (4:46-54) ['second sign' (4:54)]; Healing lame man (5:1-18); Feeding multitude (6:1-13); Walking on water (6:16-21); Healing man born blind (9:1-41); Raising Lazarus (11:1-57). John explicitly numbers the first two of these to bring to his readers' attention that he is following a carefully planned arrangement.
4. Even Jesus in his humiliation and 'emptied' state was utterly dependent upon his Father and the equipping work of the Holy Spirit (as especially the Gospel of John emphasises over and over again). How much more then is it true that even regenerated man can never do a miracle unless the Holy Spirit works through him. Let no one therefore think that this verse glorifies man or puts him centre-stage. What the Lord Jesus does here is to bring forward the mind-boggling privilege of his disciples in being his Spirit-equipped co-workers.
5. See Revelation 22:17.

Luther's Journey to Righteousness – Part 2, Freedom and Law

by Robert Godfrey

*Part 2 – the earlier study (RT142) traced Luther's journey from conservative monk under the authority of tradition and the unbroken misery of bondage to sin; to justification by faith under the authority of Scripture. He wrote, 'I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.'*¹

'Works and Glory' versus 'Faith and Grace'

What Luther had experienced intensely in his own life was the contrast between works and glory on the one hand and faith and grace on the other. He began to address the Roman Church's theology of glory: the glory of the use of the human mind and reason to understand human theology, the glory of the human experience in gaining a theology of the cross where a man comes to recognise that his own mind could not bring him to the truth and his own works could not bring him to God and that it was only on the cross, that ultimate place of foolishness, that God was to be found. Luther again in his hyperbolic manner would talk about finding God where he ought not to be and not finding him where he ought to be. Where ought God to be? He ought to be found in the beauty of nature, in the glories of this world. But God was not to be found there. He was to be found on the cross. But God should not be found on the cross, the place of condemnation, the place of failure. God did not belong there, but nevertheless, that was where he was to be found. That was where the only hope for salvation was to be found.

So Luther's theology was very much a personal theology. It was a theology that resulted from his personal experience following the advice of the Church, becoming a monk, becoming a student of Scripture. From that study of Scripture and from that examination of his heart and soul, Luther realised that salvation was to be found only by grace through faith.

Luther, a Reformer of the Church

Now that experience led Luther into a public path that made of him, no matter what he wanted, a Reformer of the Church. He had to explain and to defend

what he had learned and taught. We see Luther the Reformer still speaking powerfully through his writings.

One of the most productive years that Luther ever had in terms of writing was 1520. He wrote his *Appeal to the German Nobility* in which he petitioned the princes to take the leadership in the reform of the Church since it was obvious that the bishops would not. He also wrote *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in which he criticised the seven sacraments of the Roman Church and came to the conclusion ultimately that there are only two sacraments that our Lord had instituted. Then he wrote what many regard as his best treatise entitled *The Freedom of a Christian*.

Interestingly enough Luther himself regarded his best treatise to be that on *The Bondage of the Will*, the one that we Reformed folk particularly love to read and quote to some of our Lutheran friends.

One Lutheran claimed that Luther did present such a position once but never repeated it again. That claim is not really accurate because late in his life Luther said that if all his works were destroyed he hoped only two would survive, his *Small Catechism* and *The Bondage of the Will*.² So, Luther treasured his work on *The Bondage of the Will*. But many observers do believe that among his finest works is *The Freedom of a Christian*.

The Freedom of a Christian is the closest thing we have to a treatise on justification by Luther. It really is a splendid work and one that reveals in more detail the hyperbolic nature of Luther's theology. We can see here Luther's love of contrast, Luther's love of the *dennoch*.

Luther began that treatise with an open letter to Pope Leo X expressing the hope that Leo might still be moved to reform the Church. Now Luther was rapidly coming to the conclusion that the Pope was anti-Christ, but in this letter to the Pope he did not espouse that point of view. Rather he suggested that the Pope had been corrupted by evil advisers. He appealed to the Pope to see the truth and rise up to reform the Church. (This approach reflected a medieval self-justification that was regularly used to excuse insurrection against one's sovereign. One claimed that the sovereign was not at fault, but that the sovereign was surrounded by evil advisers.)

The Importance of Doctrine

Luther expressed his reforming concern in a very interesting way in this open letter to the Pope. He said that the Pope needed to be aware that his concern

was not about bad morals, but about ungodly doctrines. Reform in the Middle Ages had always been directed against bad morals. The aim of reform had been to promote holy living. Luther made clear that it was a fundamental misunderstanding of his Reformation to view it as the pursuit of holiness. Now we will see later that Luther was not at all opposed to the pursuit of holiness. He was in favour of the pursuit of holiness. But he was adamant that he was not seeking in the first place to challenge the morals of the Church. He was in the first place challenging the doctrines of the Church. The teaching of the Church had gone astray. He believed that unless doctrine were rectified, the morals of the Church would never be straight. In fact, Luther at one point said that the morals of the Protestants were no better than Roman morals. It was their doctrine that was better. Now that, too, I hope was hyperbolic (although sometimes looking at the present state of Protestantism, one is not so sure). But nonetheless, Luther's passion was to set doctrine right.

Let me say as an aside that it is particularly troubling today to see so many evangelicals in America saying that doctrine really is not important, but that the Christian life is really important. I find that especially ironic as someone from Westminster Seminary because the liberalism that Dr Machen faced in the 1920s was a liberalism that precisely said doctrine was not important, but that Christian living was important. And if I may be permitted a non-sixteenth century note, I believe that we in America are reliving in many ways the situation of the second and third decade of the twentieth century. Liberals in the 1920s all insisted that they were evangelical. I see the evangelical movement in America now being stretched theologically to breaking point once again.

Now Luther said near the beginning of this treatise on *The Freedom of a Christian* that it contained the 'whole of Christian life in a brief form'³ and then proceeded to say that all of what he was teaching could be reduced to two propositions. The two propositions were these: i) 'A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none;' ii) 'A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.'⁴ We are perfectly free and nevertheless perfectly subject. That dichotomy is the essence of the Christian life.

Freedom and Holiness

First the Christian is a free lord of all, subject to none. Luther explicated that statement in relation to justification. As we live before God, as we live *coram Deo*, we are perfectly free. We are free from the law: free from the demands of the law, free from the threatenings of the law, free from the condemnation of the law. Now Luther was not saying that we do not need the law. We do need

the law precisely to drive us from the law. We need the law to drive us to Christ. We do need the law to make clear to us how weak and hopeless we are before the demands of the law. We must be crushed by the law before we can ever understand the gospel.

The Use of the Law

Luther at one point in his 1535 Galatians commentary said that there were two uses of the law, one to teach civil righteousness and one to condemn us and to drive us to Christ. And he said it was that second use of the law which is the principal use of the law. The second use of the law is:

The theological or spiritual one, which serves to increase transgressions. This is the primary purpose of the Law of Moses, that through it sin might grow and be multiplied, especially in the conscience. Paul discusses this magnificently in Romans 7. Therefore the true function and the chief and proper use of the Law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well deserved wrath of God.

That is what the law teaches.

Hence this use of the Law is extremely beneficial and very necessary. For if someone is not a murderer, adulterer, or thief, and abstains from external sins as the Pharisee did (Luke 18:11), he would swear, being possessed by the devil, that he is a righteous man; therefore he develops the presumption of righteousness and relies on his good works. God cannot soften and humble this man or make him acknowledge his misery and damnation any other way than by the Law. Therefore the proper and absolute use of the Law is to terrify with lightning (as on Mount Sinai), thunder, and the blare of the trumpet, with a thunderbolt to burn and crush that brute which is called the presumption of righteousness.⁵

So the law has this absolutely necessary function for Luther.

We must realise that this condemning function of the law is not primarily conceived by Luther as chronologically prior to the gospel. Luther does not mean that you preach the law until someone is crushed, and then you leave the law behind and move on to the gospel. Rather Luther would say all our preaching to Christians throughout their lives must be a preaching of the law and the gospel. The Christian never reaches the place where he does not need

the law to remind him of his sin, to remind him of his tendency to works-righteousness, to remind him of the danger of living in his own accomplishment and yet again and afresh to drive him to Christ. That was Luther's great concern about the law. So he could say: 'For although the Law is the best of all things in the world, it still cannot bring peace to a terrified conscience but makes it even sadder and drives it to despair. For by the Law, sin becomes exceedingly sinful.'⁶ That was the great function and purpose of the law. Therefore, for Luther, it was crucial to distinguish between the way the law functioned for justification and the way in which the law might function for other purposes. He said:

From this you should learn, therefore, to speak most contemptuously about the Law in the matter of justification, following the example of the apostle, who calls the Law 'the elements of the world', 'traditions that kill', 'the power of sin' and the like. But, then he says: 'Apart from the matter of justification, on the other hand, we, like, Paul should think reverently of the Law. We should endow it with the highest praises and call it holy, righteous, good, spiritual, divine, etc.'⁷

Luther insisted that the crucial work of the theologian is to distinguish the law from the gospel. If we do not understand that distinction, we have not understood the very basics of theology, Luther said. So what was the law for Luther? The law for Luther was the demands of God. Wherever you have demand, you have law and that law is good, that law is holy, that law is spiritual. But its effect in the arena of justification will be only to drive one to despair. There is no healing in the law. There is no hope in the law because the law only holds up the demands of God which we cannot meet, which we cannot fulfil.

The Good News of the Gospel

On the other hand the gospel contained no demand. Then what was the gospel for Luther? The gospel was purely good news. There was no threat in the gospel. There was only promise. You see this is where Reformed people sometimes worry about an antinomian aspect to Luther's thought. We worry because we tend to read Luther as if he were speaking chronologically about the law and the gospel. We worry that he is suggesting that one should preach the law until the listener is crushed and that then one preaches only the gospel, that is only promise without any demands. Then we wonder if Luther is not really being antinomian. But we must remember that Luther insisted that the faithful preacher always preached the law and the gospel. There was always

demand in Luther's preaching but it was the law that demanded. Such preaching also presented the gospel which came as promise to encourage, to support and to cheer: '...the Gospel is a light that illumines hearts and makes them alive. It discloses what grace and the mercy of God are; what the forgiveness of sins, blessing, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation are, and how to obtain these.'⁸

We Reformed sometimes have trouble communicating with Lutherans because we tend to define the gospel somewhat differently, somewhat more broadly than they do. We do not see any great problem in including in the gospel some direction, some positive guidance from the law. But that is why Lutherans tend to think we have become moralists. They think we have put some elements of the law in the gospel. I think very largely this is a difference of terminology rather than a difference of substance between Lutherans and Reformed.

So you see Luther's great passion was that the gospel really be understood as the gracious and good promise of God. He insisted that no one compromise that truth, that no one lead consciences back to the notion that they are going to justify themselves or earn God's favour in any sense or at any point for their salvation. Luther saw this moralism as a recurring problem and temptation: 'My temptation is this, that I don't think I have a gracious God. This is because I am still caught up in the Law. It is the greatest grief, and, as Paul says, it produces death. God hates it, and he comforts us by saying, "I am your God."⁹' The gospel, for Luther, declared, 'I am your God for Christ's sake.' The gospel was not 'I will be your God if you do certain things,' but 'I am your God for Christ's sake.' For this reason he could say: 'This is our theology by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active [righteousness of my doing] and the passive [righteousness of Christ's doing], so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused.'¹⁰

To be concluded

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3. *Martin Luther*, ed. J Dillenberger, p 52.
4. *Ibid*, p 53.
5. Martin Luther, 'Lectures on Galatians', 1535, *Luther's Works* vol 26, Philadelphia (Fortress), 1963, pp 309f.
6. *Ibid*, p 5.
7. *Ibid*, p 365.
8. *Ibid*, p 313.
9. Martin Luther, Table Talk, *Luther's Works*, vol 54, Philadelphia (Fortress), 1967, p 75.
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John Atembe's home in the mountains of Lebialem, SW Province.

Cameroon

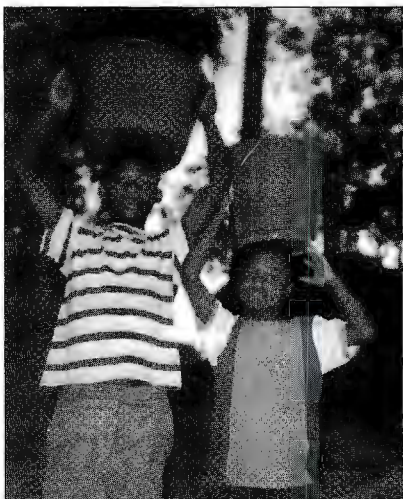
During 1992 Pastor Mike Gaydosh of Grace Reformed Baptist Church, Long Island, New York (see News RT145), and the editor visited Cameroon at the invitation of Pastor Samson Khama, mainly in the area surrounding Buea. From March 28 to April 14, 1995 Pastor Nico van der Walt was the editor's companion for a second visit.

Nico (for his testimony see RT 138), is pastor of Antipas Baptist Church, Vereeniging, Transvaal, South Africa. As his name suggests, Nico is of Afrikaner background. His family can be traced back for nine generations in South Africa. The fact that South Africa is 'new' made Nico's visit to Cameroon possible. In missionary terms the Afrikaners have a remarkable track record. This continues. Antipas Baptist Church is typical and supports, or partially supports, seven missionary

families including the family Sebastian Floor who labour in Northern Mozambique, isolated among 120,000 Kimwani people, all Muslim. Their objective is the translation of the Scriptures into the Mwani language. This is a work which requires specialised skills involving many years of linguistic preparation.

Our mission to Cameroon was twofold. First to minister at the *1995 Annual Southern Region Baptist Convention* and second to travel inland. There were about 1,100 attending the final sessions. The theological pressures there are similar to those we experience at home. The final service lasted 5¼ hours and was spiritually refreshing from first to last.

The second part of our mission was to accompany John Atembe, an indigenous church planter, into the mountain areas



Water supplies are carried home by John Atembe's sons from a well about 400 yards away.

of South West Province, a six hour journey from Douala. It requires a sturdy four wheel drive vehicle to negotiate the winding mountainous tracks. From Lewoh where John Atembe lives, about 25 assemblies can be reached but only by foot on mountain tracks. Lewoh is in the Lebialem district which is RC dominated. These house churches vary in distance from 10 to 60 kilometres away from the central church compound where John leads the work. The terrain means that many hours are needed for travel by foot.

The churches planted by John Atembe are called *Grace Churches*. When I asked him, 'Why the term Grace?' he referred to Ephesians 2:1-10 as the reason. Salvation is by grace alone.



Samson Khama, Jr (assistant) with Peter Ngonge (director), radio team at Buea. Nico and I made four 15 minute gospel recordings which were broadcast over Radio Cameroon which also reaches Nigeria. The effectiveness of this outreach is encouraging.

Albania

A report by Ian McNaughton

Albania has been a closed land since 1945. There, the Communist government under Enver Hoxha propagated an atheistic world view and 'gross darkness covered the people'. Now this extreme wickedness has been removed and the doors are open for gospel literature.

In 1993 an appeal was made at the Carey/Grace Conference for funds to print *Bone of Contention* by Sylvia Baker after I returned from a visit to that country. The approach of this book seemed ideally suited to challenge the theories universally propagated there in a way which would also present the gospel.

Funds have also come from other sources. When the project had raised around £2,000, John Rubens of *E P (Evangelical Press)* received a letter from a Pentecostal believer who had returned from a day trip to Albania burdened to see *Bone of Contention* translated into that language. 'Would *EP* consider this?' She was willing to donate £1,000 if they would! How wonderfully God has provided funds for this project.

Two years on the translation work have been completed and the manuscripts are now ready for printing. It is hoped to make a first print of around 10,000 copies.

We are grateful to all who helped to make this possible. The book will be distributed with the help of the *Albanian Evangelical Mission*. For further information contact Pastor Ian McNaughton, tel. UK 01203 332046

Malaysia

Dr Poh Boon Sing, who pastors the Sri Hartamas and Subang Jaya churches, has produced a 420 page hard cover book with the title *The Keys of the Kingdom – A Study of the Biblical Form of Church Government*. The publisher is *Good News Enterprise*, 106 Jalan BS 5/3, Taman Bukit Serdang, 43300 Seri Kembangan, Malaysia. Copies can be obtained by writing to this address and enclosing USA \$ 20.00 which includes postage.

It is interesting to see that Dr Poh makes a very clear distinction between full-

time pastors and overseeing elders. Some of the historical aspects are questionable and Presbyterians will complain that their system is not accurately depicted. It is always important to emphasise that no system works unless the leaders are spiritual. Furthermore reformation will always be limited by the constraints of those at present in office. There is a great deal in connectional denominations which is discouraging as well as in independent churches. We ought not to allow ourselves to become cynical on this account. Rather we ought to seek to be as biblical as possible and this Dr Poh has attempted to be.

There is good news from Malaysia inasmuch as the Reformed Baptists are missionary-minded and continue to work hard at church planting. New churches have been established with pastors in Penang in the North, Miri and Kuching in E Malaysia and Trincomalee in Sri Lanka. They are supported by the Malaysian Reformed Baptist Mission support fund. In March a new group in Malaka started Sunday services.

The steady growth of new churches is exciting. This is assisted by first generation graduate believers who have zeal and a strong sense of calling to overcome difficulties. Pastor Peter Kek continues to labour in Johor Bahru. After 5 years of meeting in 'borrowed' accommodation which is no longer available negotiations are underway for property on which to build permanent premises.

Namibia

Erroll and Lyn Hulse are due to exchange homes with Pastor and Mrs Joachim Rieck during June and July 1995. Joachim is pastor of the Eastside Baptist Church, Windhoek. He is due to preach in different churches in the UK and at the *Carey Family Conference* in Shropshire.

Pakistan

Recently a documentary on Pakistan was shown in the UK on BBC TV portraying the persecutions of Christians under the notorious blasphemy law. Two believers under the sentence of death escaped to Germany as refugees in hiding who can never return to their homes and live in fear of reprisals on their families.

As part of the programme the tyrannical power of the extreme fundamentalists was depicted. It was shown clearly that it is not only Christians who are threatened but also unorthodox Muslim groups. They too are threatened with death. Some of these groups are quite large. One may even constitute 25% of the population. It is evident that the authorities are terrified by death threats and thereby rendered fearful and unable and unwilling to legislate in such a way as to protect society.

It is increasingly clear that this tyranny, endemic in a number of countries especially Iran, Algeria, Egypt and Turkey, will only be terminated when enough people rise up to reject the power of the extremists. That was the case with atheistic Communism in which minorities held power and used that

power to tyrannise whole peoples. Fervent prayers should continue that nations in bondage should be liberated and given religious freedom. In some instances religious freedom is maintained in name but certainly not in practice.

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The Tyndale Fellowship is a fellowship of Christians engaged in biblical and theological research, affiliated to the UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship).

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Further details and application forms from Tyndale Fellowship Associate Members, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GP, UK (tel 0116 255 1700).

The Redeemer's Tears Wept Over Lost Souls¹

Erroll Hulse

Jesus was a man of sorrows (Is 53:3). He knew what it was to weep. He was intensely human and perfectly human. During his life he offered up prayers with loud cries and tears (Heb 5:7). At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus wept with deep emotion.² When Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem on the historic occasion of his triumphal entry in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-10, while vast crowds rejoiced in jubilation he was overcome with grief. Whereas no other person present was able, he could see the tragic irony of the situation. Here was the city called 'Peace' which before the end of a generation would be turned into a raging inferno of war. This in a special sense was his city and his temple. The scene from the Mount of Olives is beautiful today. We can well believe that with the prominence of the temple it was much more so then. With the eyes of omniscience he could see the impending suffering that would engulf the people of this city. He could not only see it but being a man of compassion he could feel the pain of it.

It is important that we capture the mood of that historic event, the triumphal entrance of the kingly Messiah to the city of peace. This is recorded by all four narrators, Matthew (21:1-11), Mark (11:1-11), Luke (19:28-44) and John (12:12-19). Zechariah tells why there was such exceeding great joy. The righteous King was bringing salvation. He rode on a donkey, the symbol of peace. He was bringing peace with God. He would proclaim and bring peace to the nations. He would bring salvation even to the very remotest parts of the earth. There was rejoicing over him.

He is gentle. He displays the tender, shepherdly, loving nature so markedly absent in worldly leaders.

The hosts of heaven knew well the significance of this symbolic entrance. The Lamb of God was bringing salvation to the world. I do not doubt that legions of angels were present. Although invisible, they lent it the same kind of joy that they demonstrated at his birth. A multitude of people gathered to welcome the Prince of peace. A spirit of great joy came upon them. They laid their garments in the way and cut down palm branches to wave and spread in his path. But their understanding was superficial. They rejoiced in all the miracles he had done but misunderstood his coming, thinking of it as political and as heralding liberation from the domination of the Roman Caesars. A few days later many of these same people would turn in bitterness against him and cry, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

Mingled with the crowd were true disciples some of whom were to become the first Christians. With loud voices the multitude cried out,

*Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*

The Pharisees were jealous. ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’ they demanded. He replied, ‘I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!’ If they had kept quiet the angels, who knew the significance of this event, would have broken out in praise and the very stones would have echoed and re-echoed their accolade.

As Jesus approached the city he began to weep. *Eklauo* in Greek denotes loud wailing which bursts out because of inward pain. As if watching a film of things to come he described the siege and the embankment built up by the Romans against those walls. In anguish he cried, ‘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 your children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God’s coming to you.’

We need to look closely at our Saviour’s words:

*If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace –
but now it is hidden from your eyes (Luke 19:42).*

This statement teaches that:

- i. There is a way of salvation which is peace.
- ii. There is a season in which we are to know this peace.
- iii. If the gospel of peace continues to be rejected, blindness sets in.

i. There is a way of salvation which is peace.

Our Lord’s tears tell us that we have to be saved through reconciliation with his Father. The gospel is good news to all men everywhere. This good news is that through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner will receive forgiveness, justification and eternal life. Many in Jerusalem would have heard our Lord’s great ‘I AM’ declarations such as, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die!’ The gospel finds all mankind by nature in a state of alienation toward God. Repentance removes and cures this disaffection but only if it is accompanied by faith in the Prince of peace. Why is faith in Jesus imperative? Answer: in him alone is found expiation of our sins. This state of affairs is portrayed clearly by Paul in Romans 3:25-26 – ‘God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.’ He loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Therefore he is our peace, having made peace by his sacrifice for us.

ii. There is a season in which we are to know this peace.

The incarnation of Jesus is unique. His brief ministry of three years was unique. There could hardly be a greater privilege than such a visitation by God himself. What did they do with him? They missed their time of opportunity! They rejected him and gave him over to be crucified! To hear the gospel preached is a privilege. There are times when communities are highly favoured with gospel ministry. There is nothing more valuable. As we study history we rejoice in those seasons of revival when the gospel has been powerfully preached and widely embraced. As we view the future our deepest concern is that every people group on earth should be blessed with the saving gospel of Christ.

iii. If the gospel of peace continues to be rejected, blindness sets in.

Proud rejection of him brought blindness to the Jews and made them reprobate. Romans chapter one tells us that reprobation takes place when God is provoked to the point where he gives people over to their sinful desires. Wrath is stored up against unrepentant individuals to be revealed on the day of wrath (Rom 2:5). There is a corporate factor to the accumulation of wrath. This is affirmed in the words of Jesus when he says, 'And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation' (Matt 23:35,36).

The accumulative guilt of the sins of Jerusalem eventuated in the destruction of the city with its people. Jesus refers to their children which he longed to gather as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. In every generation there are children to save, children who hopefully will not tread the way of unbelief and who will not become hardened in sin and unbelief. We must surely pray that the rising generation will be reached with the gospel of peace.

Having looked at the text in general, I will now concentrate on five foremost truths which are of the utmost relevance to us at this time.

1. Our Redeemer's tears underline the truth of human responsibility

Why was the coming judgment to be so awful? The answer is found in the lamentation of Jesus, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace.' You, *even you!* The leaders and people of Jerusalem were privileged above all other peoples. Here was the capital city. Theirs was the adoption as sons, theirs the divine glory, the patriarchs, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises which had now been fulfilled gloriously before their very eyes.

These pre-eminent privileges were accompanied with commensurate responsibility. Jesus complained that the people of Jerusalem had steadfastly resisted his efforts to

gather them as a hen gathers her chicks (Matt 23:37). Why this awesome coming judgment? Answer: Because they did not recognise the time of God's coming (Luke 19:44).

So deceitful is the fallen human mind that it will blame God for everything. "I am lost because you destined me to be lost. It is all your fault, God!" "Not so!" is the reply. "You are responsible!" This responsibility is expressed poignantly in Proverbs chapter one, 'If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called, and since you ignored all my advice, I in turn will laugh at your disaster.'

The purposes of God in the world are fulfilled by two principles working side by side: human responsibility and divine sovereignty. The ark of God was returned by the Philistines carried on a cart to which two cows were yoked. The book of Samuel tells us that the two cows went straight forward to their destination. According to Scripture divine sovereignty and human responsibility are the two principles at work in the history of humankind. These twin principles, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, are never in conflict.

2. Our Redeemer's tears tell of God's love for all mankind

Jesus said of these reprobate Jews, 'How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens, but you were not willing.' Every effort had been expended on seeking to win them.

Fundamental to the gospel is the love of God for all mankind. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' This love is expressed in the riches of God's kindness, tolerance and patience, kindness intended to lead to repentance (Rom 2:4). God wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). 'He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance' (2 Peter 3:9).

3. Our Redeemer's tears show that common grace is a reality

It was a reprobate Jerusalem over which Jesus wept. We know this since he called the teachers of the law and the Pharisees 'sons of hell' (Matt 23:15). He described them as unwilling to enter the way of life themselves but they went further and deliberately impeded those who did look for salvation (verse 13). They were blinded and could not discern between basic issues such as the altar and what is placed on that altar as a gift (verse 17). While concerned with frivolous matters such as the tithing of mint, they were guilty of neglecting the great issues of justice, mercy and faithfulness. These leaders were hypocrites who used religion to exalt their own self-importance.

On the outside they appeared holy. They drew attention to themselves with adornments such as tassels, but on the inside they were full of greed, self-indulgence and wickedness (vv 5 and 25). Their hypocrisy was highlighted by the fact that outwardly they appeared beautiful. They were like whitewashed tombs on the outside but on the inside they were full of lust and wickedness (v 28). True religion which is acceptable is to look after orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27), but these leaders of Jerusalem added to the burdens of the poor and were not willing to lift a finger to assist the burdened (v 4).

Common grace is seen in the fact that Jesus contended with the lost of Jerusalem. This fact is confirmed in the words of Stephen, 'You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?' (Acts 7:51-2). 'My Spirit will not strive with man forever' (Gen 6:3). When the Son of God is trampled underfoot severe punishment is inevitable (Heb 10:26-31).

We experience grief just as Jesus did. We experience the sorrow of seeing sinners destroy themselves by unbelief and impenitence. We love them just as Jesus loves them. We seek their salvation just as Jesus does. We know that God's justice will be vindicated in the damnation of sinners, but we also know that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. 'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?' declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?' (Ez 18:23).

4. Our Redeemer's tears confirm the truth of the total depravity of man

The example of Jerusalem confirms the biblical truth that man is at enmity toward God. We see from this example that faithful preaching even by the best preacher in the world will not ensure the conversion of the hearers. The Jerusalem Jews were exceedingly religious but extremely callous and cruel. At one point when they took up stones to stone him Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' (John 10:31). He summed up the tragic impasse when he said, 'If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father' (John 15:24). Jerusalem was uniquely privileged by the ministry of Jesus.

When we speak of total depravity we mean that every faculty in fallen man is sinful, including his will. 'You will not come to me,' said Jesus. In spite of the clarity of his teaching and the impressive nature of his miracles which demonstrated his deity they still would not come to him. He was willing to save all of them. They were unwilling to come to him and trust him. They had to be made willing to come. God is sovereign in his grace and comes to those who are lost and dead in sin. He quickens them to life. Salvation is by grace alone.

5. Our Redeemer's tears confirm the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God

At Pentecost Peter described the sovereignty of the Father when he said, 'This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to a cross.' Our Father's purpose was not frustrated by the Jews but rather advanced by them.

While Jesus experienced deep sorrow and tears over lost Jerusalem we must not for one moment think that he was not sovereign or that he did not have control over all these events. He knew exactly what was to happen and he warned his disciples often about his impending decease and his resurrection on the third day. We should take note of the fact that in the week leading up to his death he was in complete command of events and especially so with regard to his enemies. We see this in the cursing of the fig tree, the symbol of Judaism. That system was fruitless. It was now withered and discarded. The cleansing of the temple belonged to that last week and that was accomplished with such authority that no one dared stand in the way. The parable of the tenants was part of Jesus' teaching in that last week: a graphic depiction of the downfall of Jerusalem. Note the words: *Those wretches who kill the Son will be brought to a wretched end and the vineyard given to others. The kingdom will be taken from them and given to those who will produce its fruit.* The chief priests and Pharisees who heard this knew he was talking of them. Throughout, Jesus was in sovereign control.

The kind of anguish experienced by Christ was the frustration and sorrow of pain and humiliation. What he suffered in his soul was as intense as was the pain suffered in his body. He endured the cross (physical torment) and scorned the shame (spiritual torment – Heb 12:2). He felt acutely the shame of rejection at the hands of those he came to save. We suffer similarly in seeing the gospel of salvation slighted and rejected. His discouragement is expressed in the words of Isaiah 49, 'I have laboured to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain.' But he is comforted with the response of Jahweh, 'I will make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.' Romans 11 declares that there will always be a Jewish remnant that believes as well as a fulness gathered in due course.

We see the sovereignty of God in judgment in the fulfilling to the letter of our Lord's prophecies in the Olivet discourse and in the details given as he wept over Jerusalem.

Cities have been destroyed. Think of Dresden, Germany, in 1945. During the first century after Rome and Alexandria, Antioch on the Orontes with 500,000 was the third largest city during the time of the Roman Empire. In the sixth century there was a catastrophic fire and two major earthquakes in which 360,000 perished. Invasion by the Persians followed. They sacked the city and took away the survivors as slaves. Those who remained suffered in a terrible plague and by the time the Arabs arrived in AD 637 Antioch was not much more than a frontier fortress. Today it is a poverty

stricken town of about 35,000. We simply do not know why Antioch should suffer like that but we are told plainly why Jerusalem was destroyed.

A national rebellion against Rome began in AD 66 and culminated in the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70. Josephus, himself a Jew, is regarded by the Jews as a traitor because he sided with the victors and was engaged during the siege to plead with the Jews to surrender for their own survival. In his complete works, Josephus devotes a number of chapters to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. These are vivid descriptions which do not hide the horror of that saga. Those who had not died in the famine caused by the siege perished by the sword. The city and temple were burned and demolished. The suffering that came upon Jerusalem was exacerbated by the fierce resistance of the Jews which served to increase the Roman soldiers' frustration, anger and revenge.

According to the historian Tacitus, 600,000 Jews were killed or died of starvation during the Roman siege and conquest of Jerusalem. According to the prophecy of our Lord, Jerusalem was utterly destroyed and left a desolate wilderness. Josephus' descriptions endorse our Lord's words, 'For then will be great distress unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equalled again' (Matt 24:22).

The sequence, often overlooked, is that later Christians were allowed to return to the ruins of Jerusalem but Jews who had survived were forbidden by the Romans to do so.

We give no room to the concept that we may despise or persecute Jews today. Rather we are to pray for them that they should come to believe and trust in their Messiah and ours and so fulfil the words, 'Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."'

Notes

1. I have chosen to use the same title that John Howe (1630-1705) used for his 67 page exposition, *Works*, vol 2 p 324. Three volumes published by Soli Deo Gloria in 1990. I have followed his headings more or less for the first part of my exposition.
2. B B Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, chapter on 'The emotional life of our Lord', Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950, pp 93ff.
3. For the love of God to all men, see Bob Sheehan, RT 145.
4. For exposition on common grace see Prof John Murray, *Collected Works*, Banner of Truth, vol 2, pp 93ff.

The Threat of the Quakers

Michael Haykin

As we study the reasons which constrained the formulation of the 1689 *Confession of Faith* we discover that one consideration was the threat posed by the Quakers. The Quaker movement had started in the late 1640s when George Fox (1624-1691), a shoemaker and part-time shepherd, began to win converts to a perspective on the Christian faith which rejected much of orthodox Puritan theology. Fox and the early Quakers proclaimed the possibility of salvation for all humanity, and urged men and women to turn to the light within them to find salvation. We 'call all men to look to the Light within their own consciences,' wrote Samuel Fisher (1605-1665), a General Baptist turned Quaker, 'by the leadings of that Light... they may come to God, and work out their Salvation.' This emphasis on the light within, which the Quakers variously called the indwelling Christ or Spirit, often led them to elevate it above the Scriptures.

For the Puritans, including the Calvinistic Baptists, the nature of the Spirit's work in the authors of Scripture was unique and definitely a thing of the past. The Spirit was now *illuminating* that which he had inspired and their experiences of the Spirit were to be tried by the Scriptures. As Richard Baxter (1615-1691), a moderate Puritan author, declared:

We must not try the Scriptures by our most spiritual apprehensions, but our apprehensions by the Scriptures: that is, we must prefer the Spirit's inspiring the Apostles to indite the Scriptures before the Spirit's illuminating of us to understand them, or before any present inspirations, the former being the more perfect; because Christ gave the Apostles the Spirit to deliver us infallibly his own commands, and to indite a rule for following ages: but he giveth us the Spirit to understand and use that rule aright. This trying the Spirit by the Scriptures is not a setting of the Scriptures above the Spirit himself; but it is only a trying of the Spirit by the Spirit; that is, the Spirit's operations in themselves and his revelations to any pretenders now, by the

Spirit's operations in the Apostles and by their revelations recorded for our use.

With the Quakers, though, there was a deep conviction that the Spirit was speaking in them as he had spoken in the Apostles. In practice, this often led to an elevation of their experience of the indwelling Spirit over the Scriptures. Thus, when some Baptists in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire became Quakers and declared that the 'light in their consciences was the rule they desire to walk by', not the Scriptures, they were simply expressing what was implicit in the entire Quaker movement.

This desire to live by what they regarded as the dictates of the indwelling Spirit rather than by the written Word sometimes led the early Quakers into quite bizarre patterns of behaviour. Probably the oddest has to have been the practice of 'going naked as a sign'! One Quaker who appears to have been something of an 'expert' in this type of behaviour was Solomon Eccles (ca 1618-1683). When he first went naked in 1659 he asserted that he did so because by 'the same spirit [which moved Isaiah and Ezekiel] hath the Lord raised me up, to go as a Sign to this dark Generation'. While the practice of 'going naked as a sign' was a relatively infrequent occurrence after 1662 – though Eccles was still engaged in it as late as 1669 – the phenomenon well illustrates the tendency inherent in Quakerism to exalt the Spirit at the expense of the Word.

Isaac Penington the Younger (1616-1679) is one early Quaker author who well illustrates this tendency to make the indwelling Spirit rather than the Scriptures the touchstone and final authority for thought and practice. Converted to Quakerism in 1658 after hearing George Fox preach the previous year, Penington became an important figure in the movement. In the words of J W Frost, Penington 'remains a prime example of the intellectual sophistication of the second generation of Quaker converts'. In a letter that he wrote a fellow Quaker by the name of Nathanael Stonar in 1670, Penington told his correspondent that one of the main differences between themselves and other 'professors' was 'concerning the rule'. While the latter asserted that the Scriptures were the rule by which men and women ought to direct their lives and thinking, Penington was convinced that the indwelling Spirit of life is

'nearer and more powerful, than the words, or outward relations concerning those things in the Scriptures.' As Penington noted:

The Lord, in the gospel state, hath promised to be present with his people; not as a wayfaring man, for a night, but to *dwell in them and walk in them* . Yea, if they be tempted and in danger of erring, they shall hear a voice behind them, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.' Will they not grant this to be a rule, as well as the Scriptures? Nay, is not this a more full direction to the heart, in that state, than it can pick to itself out of the Scriptures? ... the Spirit, which gave forth the words, is greater than the words; therefore we cannot but prize him himself and set him higher in our heart and thoughts, than the words which testify of him, though they also are very sweet and precious to our taste.

Penington here affirmed that the Quakers esteemed the Scriptures as 'sweet and precious', but he was equally adamant that the indwelling Spirit was to be regarded as the supreme authority when it came to direction for Christian living and thinking.

The Quakers especially preyed on Baptist congregations, shattering many of them in the process of winning converts. While the General Baptists were more susceptible to the views of the Quakers, the Particular Baptists were by no means immune. For instance, a member of the Petty France Particular Baptist Church, sister Hattam, was, after being admonished, excommunicated in October of 1676 for joining the Quakers. Another good example is Luke Howard, who was instrumental in persuading Samuel Fisher to become a Quaker. Howard had been baptised by William Kiffin in either 1643 or 1644, but subsequently went over to the Quakers. In the West Country, several leading Quakers had been Baptists prior to their change of mind. Thomas Budd, known once as a 'Baptist teacher', opened up his property for large Quaker gatherings. William Ames, who had been a Baptist minister in Somerset, became a Quaker while serving as a soldier in Ireland. Jasper Batt (d 1702), who preached at George Fox's funeral, had also once been a Baptist. To help minimise such Calvinistic Baptist losses to the Quakers, it was clear that a more comprehensive statement on the nature of the authority of Scripture was needed than the various remarks found here and there in the *First London Confession*.

The Church in Israel



Grace and Truth church service in the CWI premises. Every part of the building is used – a constant reminder of the urgent need for more space.

Baruch Maoz

The Church in Israel is growing in the midst of turmoil and many dangers. As Christians of a firm Calvinistic persuasion, this should be a matter of the greatest interest to us because we have learnt to rejoice in the wonderful faithfulness of God.

The Church is eternally solid even when his people fail to trust and obey him. God has promised in his Word that a day will come when Israel will be aroused from its awful sleep and be turned to the Saviour. He has also promised that the coming of that day will herald such a world-wide blessing that it can be compared only with the resurrection.

Confusion

Some 43 Hebrew-speaking congregations and 5-6 Russian-speaking congregations now meet in Israel for the worship of God according to the gospel, adding up to somewhere around 5,000 Hebrew-speaking believers and their families and perhaps another few hundred Russian speakers.

There is a flurry of activity among the Jewish Christians: two publishing houses, two very busy conferences, a national evangelistic committee, three

institutes for theological and biblical education, a pro-life movement, a drug-abusers' rehabilitation centre, 23 magazines, a national inter-congregational conference and various local inter-church fellowships.

Challenges

Two important and related challenges face the fledgling Church among the Jews in Israel today.

The first is a lack of confessional background resulting in low standards of pastoral competency, biblical and doctrinal instruction and church organisation.

Churches are ruled more than they are pastored, often by gifted, strong-willed individuals who have risen to their positions by the strength of their personality rather than by virtue of their godliness, doctrinal coherency and pastoral gifts. Consequently there is very little co-operation between the churches and very little clarity as to what constitutes the faith of the gospel. 'Leaders', as they prefer to call themselves, are generally unwilling to consult with and learn from each other. Relations between many are strained, leading to competition instead of mutual strengthening.

The greater majority of those who preach do not read books and consider it spiritually unprofitable to consult commentaries or to conduct systematic studies of the Bible or of theology. They prefer to come to their pulpits in expectation of the Spirit's leading. As a result, doctrinal and expository preaching is scarcer than water in a hot Negev sandstorm. There are groups where the deity of Christ is never mentioned and where the doctrine of the Trinity is more of an embarrassment than a cause for Christians' worship and amazement.

The second challenge issues from the first: a lack of identity in terms of theology and practice. What is a Jewish Christian? In what practical sense is he still Jewish? In what sense is he Christian? How does he relate to the Mosaic Law and to rabbinical traditions? Should he circumcise his sons – fast on the Day of Atonement – keep Hanukka? How does he relate to his non-Jewish fellow religionists?

These are no minor issues. They relate directly to the sufficiency of Christ's work and to his claim to be the promised Messiah, to the authority of human traditions over the work of God, to the unity of the body of Christ and to the

relationship between the Jewish Christians and their own people. In many cases they also mark the borderline between a truly biblical faith and heresy. What will become of the Jewish Christian Church in Israel?

The greater majority of missionaries working in Israel today are overtly charismatic and few have theological education. Many come from unstable church backgrounds. As a result the influences flooding Israel are those which Reformed Christians would rightly deem to be most harmful. The so-called 'Toronto blessing' has spread like wildfire into some of the most prominent churches. A crass Arminianism that calls upon people simply to believe that Jesus is the Messiah is the most popular form of evangelism. A large number adhere to the Rabbinic tradition in spite of its radical departures from and contradictions of the Word of God. New churches form simply because one individual believes that it is time that he led a congregation. Confused congregants are to be found everywhere, many so deeply affected as to be beyond human repair. We are in a desperate plight.

Much of the present situation can be attributed to a conscious determination on the part of Reformed Christians not to be involved in Jewish evangelism. There is probably no area of evangelism which Calvinist Christians have more studiously avoided for the whole of the last half century. For fear lest they be associated with shallow Arminianism or rabid Dispensationalism, Reformed Christians have forsaken the field and left it to the best that those of other views of the faith can offer.

Christian Witness to Israel

CWI has been the major exception. For over 90 years it has laboured in Israel by various means to promote a biblical view of evangelism and make its own unique contribution to the needs of the developing Church. First in medical assistance and colportage, then majoring in medical aid and personal witness, now through its publishing programme, CWI has sought to raise a clear, biblically-based voice in the emerging chaos.

For 20 years now CWI has been involved in the production of Christian literature in Hebrew. Books (*The Mystery of Providence*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Knowing God*, *Now that I am a Christian*, *How to Study the Scriptures*, and others), 2 magazines (1 for children and youth, the other for adults), Sabbath School material, a *Children's Story Bible*, evangelistic literature and now an illustrated full Hebrew *Bible for Children* have been some of our productions.

At present our schedule has had to be curtailed following staff reductions, but we are hoping to be able to pick up gradually.

CWI has also worked very closely with Grace and Truth, a Reformed congregation of which I am pastor, made available to serve the Church while also being on the staff of CWI. This church is not governed by nor officially related to CWI. The two bodies share the same premises and often use each other's staff. They are constantly engaged in shared evangelistic endeavours.

Grace and Truth was founded 19 years ago squarely based on a Calvinistic confession. It presently has a congregation of 180, who meet for regular worship and the study of God's Word on the CWI premises. On weekdays the church meets in various house groups.

As pastor I am supported by an elder and by an elder-in-training. The diaconal committee consists of five, four of whom are immigrants from the former Soviet Union and the fifth an Arab. Warm relations are maintained with Arab congregations and mutual gatherings for worship and fellowship are held at least twice each year.

The church is actively engaged in evangelism, especially through its evangelist and his wife, both immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Door to door evangelism, tracting, newspaper advertising – even broadcasting in Russian from Moscow – have all served to promote the cause of the gospel. God has seen fit to bless this effort. The congregation has grown so much that the hall on the CWI premises, meant to cater for up to 60, is far too small for the people, as well as removed from where most of them live.

As well as preaching the gospel and promoting the spiritual growth of its own congregants, Grace and Truth has sought to be a positive influence in the Israeli church scene. A daughter church was established in a nearby city and support is given to a similar small fellowship that has begun in Jerusalem. God be thanked: there is much work to do, and many opportunities in which to do good.

Our hope and prayer is that Reformed Christians will get behind either the important work of CWI or that of the church, and that we will see substantially more Calvinistic involvement in Jewish evangelism. We have a great need for those wonderful distinctives that are of the very essence of biblical Christianity. We also need the encouragement of our fellow believers. Please pray for us!

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