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Websites www.reformation-today.org

The editor's personal website is <http://www.errollhulse.com>

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



These two toddlers are brothers in an Afrikaans-speaking home in South Africa. The future belongs to these little ones who will grow up in the nurture and teaching of the Bible.

Front cover picture – Grace Baptist Church, Halifax. The history of this church goes back to 1839. Formerly the members met in a stone building set upon a hill in Hebden Bridge and were known as Zion Baptist Church. During the 1950s the church declined. From 1960 to 1969 the work was kept from closure single-handedly by Miss Florrie Walton. Then under the leadership of Dick Eccles the work revived in the 1970s. It was for reasons of strategy that the church moved to Halifax seven years ago. They met in a hired building for three years before the new building was completed. This photo was taken four years ago. Since then the congregation has increased. The church is noted for its multiracial character. This year Luke Jenner became co-pastor with Peter Stead.

Editorial

What is sanctification?

The development of perfectionism teaching is described in the article ‘Positional Sanctification’. The Higher Life Movement swept over the English-speaking world in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. It is sometimes referred to as the Victorious Life Movement. Whatever the version the actual holiness involved is truncated and often reduced to no more than my present battle with sin. Progressive sanctification applies to every facet of daily life.

The apostle Paul makes it clear that this progressive sanctification is comprehensive and that it will eventually be made complete when Christ returns.

‘May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it’ (1 Thess 5:23-24).

The structure suggested is as follows:

Progressive Sanctification

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. The author | <i>The God of peace</i> |
| 2. The work | <i>sanctify you through and through</i> |
| 3. The extent | <i>may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved entire without blame</i> |
| 4. The conclusion | <i>at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ</i> |
| 5. The certainty | <i>The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it</i> |

Being justified by faith we have peace with God (Rom 5:1). Peace is the umbrella under which all the Spirit’s work proceeds. The work of sanctification is ‘through and through’ meaning all-pervasive. It permeates the mind. ‘We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ’ (2 Cor 10:5). When Paul says ‘your whole spirit, soul and body’ he is suggesting that there is no part that is not embraced by progressive

sanctification. A person cannot be spliced up into parts except for the purposes of analysis. To carry Paul's assurance forward, we can say that a believer's mind, heart (affections), will, conscience and body are all subject to holiness. That this work is not completed in this life is evident because the text says that perfection will only be reached when Christ returns. Sanctification can be a hard work but we are comforted to know that the end product is certain because our faithful God will bring this work to completion.

To the English Puritans doctrine (teaching - *didaskalia*) consists of correct theology which is processed through the mind into holy living. This is illustrated well in Paul's letter to Titus. He speaks of 'the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness' (1:1). He proceeds to describe the qualifications for elders. In these we see that holiness includes life in the home as well as exemplary behaviour in public: 'An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it' (1:6-9).

Titus is exhorted to apply sound teaching to various groupings in the assembly: older men (2:1), older women (2:3), young men (2:6). Slaves are addressed. Holiness in the lives of Christian slaves was obviously for the glory of God but also designed to win the owners: 'Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive' (2:9-10).

Sanctification then is comprehensive. It applies to all behaviour and is to be seen in all kinds of environment: the home, school, work-place and public assemblies.

Positional Sanctification

It is essential to grasp the difference between positional and progressive sanctification. In this article I will explain the doctrine and then compare that with the Holiness teaching which began with John Wesley and developed with Charles Finney. The perfectionist notions then spread widely to include about twenty 'Holiness' denominations.

Whenever we speak of sanctification we think of it as a process by which believers are gradually transformed in heart, mind, will and conduct. Many texts express clearly this gradual progressive work. For instance Paul exhorts us to purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Cor 7:1), and prays, 'May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess 5:23). Progress is seen in the exhortation of Jude, 'But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit' (Jude 20).

Prof John Murray in a most helpful exposition with the title 'Definitive Sanctification' observes that the most characteristic terms that refer to sanctification are used, not of progress, but of a once-for-all-definitive act.¹ Calling into union with Christ, regeneration, justification and adoption are acts of God effected once for all. These acts based on our union with Christ cannot be repeated. The idea of definitiveness is one which allows of no increase or improvement. You cannot be fifty per cent justified or fifty per cent adopted. You cannot be fifty per cent in Christ. Either you are set apart in him or you are not in him.

The basic meaning of 'to sanctify' means to set apart. A saint is one who has been set apart in Christ. There are about twenty references to 'saints' in the Old Testament and about eighty in the New.² These are explicit references to definitive sanctification, to a single event that has taken place. For instance the believers at Corinth are addressed as 'those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints' (1 Cor 1:2, NJKV). The *to be* is in italics. Literally translated the text reads 'to the ones having been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints'. Later in the same letter Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were washed, sanctified and justified (1 Cor 6:11). This demonstrates that conversion is a

stupendous event. Regeneration, definitive justification and sanctification take place in one act. When Paul refers to believers in Acts 20:32 and 26:18 he describes them as those 'having been sanctified'. The perfect passive participle used conveys the idea that something decisive has taken place which has ongoing effects.

The primary passage describing definitive sanctification in the New Testament is Romans 6:1 to 7:6. Having expounded the doctrine of justification by faith, the apostle Paul turns to the subject of sanctification. In so doing he demonstrates that union with Christ simultaneously effects both justification and sanctification. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer on account of union. That same union achieves new life. Positionally the believer has been placed into spiritual union with Christ. That is a definitive act. The ongoing result is a vital living union whereby the Christian possesses spiritual life and holiness. That is why it is utterly incongruous to suggest that a Christian should entertain the idea of sinning. We know that these great realities of justification and adoption are simultaneous; nevertheless if we are to think of a logical sequence (*ordo salutis*) then positional sanctification precedes justification and adoption because it would not be possible for the Father to justify the sinner unless he were first joined to Christ.

Positional sanctification is portrayed vividly in Ephesians 2:4: 'God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.' He has 'raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus' (Eph 2:6). The same reality is expressed in Colossians: 'Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God... For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God' (Col 3:1-3).

What is the difference between positional and definitive sanctification? Positional sanctification points to union with Christ whereas definitive sanctification points to the act of God the Father in the decisive act of placing the believer into union with Christ.

The expression positional sanctification is helpful because it stresses union with Christ in the present tense. In that sense the Christian is perfectly sanctified. A believer should always be alert by faith to the fact that he is seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph 1:20; Col 3:3). My personal preference is to stick to the term positional sanctification because that refers to my present position which cannot be improved upon. Definitive sanctification points back to when this took place initially.³

The Christian is perfect positionally but with regard to progressive sanctification he is subject to growth. His position is perfect but his state spiritually is subject to progress.⁴ Our sanctification in Christ is perfect. We cannot be more united to him. In the positional or definitive sense it may sound odd but we can claim to be perfectly sanctified. Of course in the progressive sense we are never perfectly sanctified in this life.

Practical implications of positional sanctification

Baptism is designed to portray the momentous implications of positional sanctification. First, baptism is a burial. It is a funeral. Second, it is a resurrection.

Positional sanctification points to the fact that the believer is placed into Christ, that is into his death, burial and resurrection (Rom 6:1-4). When a person dies he is cut off from his former world. You will not receive a letter from him. He will not telephone or email you. There is absolutely no communication. The apostle is saying that we must count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. This means we are to have no communication with the old sphere of sin - no letters, no telephone calls, and no! not even any thoughts about that past world of sin.

Death to the old sphere is like having a new owner. Slavery was widespread in apostolic times. Death to sin could be likened to a change of ownership. When a slave was bought on the market he left his former home and went to a different home to work for his new owner. We have been bought out of the slavery of our old master the devil and now we serve our new master who is Christ.

Every effort to draw us back to Satan the old master must be resisted.

Believer's baptism includes the idea of a funeral. The old unregenerate self is buried forever. I can never be what I was before when I served the devil and the world. Baptism is not only illustrative of a funeral, it also depicts a resurrection. It represents my new life. By union with Christ I have been raised from spiritual death. This can be illustrated by an event in the time of Elisha reported in 2 Kings 13:20-21.

‘Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they

saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones the man came to life and stood up on his feet.'

Having been raised from the dead that man stood up on his feet and then had to run for his life away from the Moabite raiders. They were coming fast. It was essential to escape from them. Imagine the amazement of those Israelites as they looked behind to see the man they had buried running after them!

Yet that is exactly what happens whenever a person is joined to Christ. God places him into union with Christ's death by which Christ's merit and righteousness are put to his account. He is raised spiritually. He is a new creature in Christ. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. He now has new legs to run away from sin and run to God's people where he belongs.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of coming to grips with what it means to be 'in Christ', that is to be positionally sanctified. We should note the following:

1. There can be no greater absurdity or contradiction than for one who lives in sin to claim to be a Christian.⁵ To accept a person who lives in sin as though he were a Christian is like propping up a corpse and declaring it to be alive.
2. If a person claims to be repentant then we should remember the words of John the Baptist who insisted that his hearers should produce fruit in keeping with repentance. It is dishonouring to Christ when people are baptised in spite of the fact that they show no credible evidence of a living faith or repentance from a sinful life.
3. Baptism should only proceed when the realities represented are indeed realities, namely a living union with Christ. There should be an experience of union with the Trinity – adoption by the Father, union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Note the Trinitarian wording used in baptism (Matt 28:19).
4. The grand design of Christianity is the destruction of sin and an end to lawlessness. A whole world of sin and lawlessness is buried and left behind when a person is joined to Christ. This union is portrayed in the burial and resurrection represented by baptism.
5. The fact that Christ is alive now and forever is the guarantee that all those joined to him now will live forever. In baptism the candidate is raised out of death to walk in newness of life, that is, eternal life.

6. The only credible evidence that we are partakers of the benefits of the death and resurrection of Christ is our death to sin and our walking in newness of life.
7. The church must withdraw from and disown hypocrites who profess to believe but who discredit and dishonour Christ by their sinful lives.
8. Those who live in union with Christ, who love him and serve him, and are determined to obey his precepts, can derive the greatest possible comfort from his promises that they will never perish, but enjoy his company and the company of the redeemed for ever on the new earth.

Positional sanctification and Holiness teachings

Diametrically opposite to positional sanctification is the notion that justification and sanctification are separate and come by two separate experiences. This is the idea that justification is by faith and later sanctification is received separately by faith, these being two separate gifts of God.

Justification and positional sanctification are the bedrock upon which progressive sanctification proceeds. Progressive sanctification involves self-discipline and is comprehensive in nature. It is a full-time business. Once a person is set apart in Christ the good work of the Holy Spirit begins and will go on throughout one's life. It is a gross over-simplification to think that victory over sin and perfection can take place in a single post-conversion experience. This shallowness is illustrated by the newly wed young convert whose besetting sin was a bad temper. He attended a Holiness meeting where the preacher promised perfect holiness to those who would stand up and then come to the front for prayer, which act would seal the reception of the gift. The young man had no doctrinal teaching and this sounded like a wonderful bargain. He hastened home to his wife with the glad news that he was perfectly sanctified. She too had little doctrinal knowledge and was so happy with the prospect of a perfect husband that she forgot that the dinner was in the oven. It was badly burned whereupon the 'perfectly sanctified' young husband lost his temper! The young couple looked at each other in dismay. Both realised that the experience had had a very short life-span!

B B Warfield points to the fact that we can trace 'entire instantaneous sanctification' back to John Wesley. Warfield suggests, 'There is no element

of his (perfectionist) teaching which afforded him greater satisfaction.’ John McClintock, a Methodist leader of that time, was triumphal in his boasting about perfectionist teaching: ‘We are the only church in history, from the apostles’ time until now, that has put forward as its very elemental thought, the holiness of the human soul, heart, mind and will.’ Another leader, Olin Curtis, wrote: ‘Wesley had almost the same epochal relation to the doctrinal emphasis upon holiness that Luther had to the doctrinal emphasis upon justification by faith, or that Athanasius had to the doctrinal emphasis upon the Deity of our Lord.’⁶

‘In the early 1740s Wesley spelt out this “full salvation” as freedom from self-will, evil thoughts, and even from temptation itself. He later conceded that the claim was “too strong”, yet he continued to insist: “Christian perfection implies deliverance from all sin.”’⁷

A widespread resurgence of perfectionist teaching took place in America during the 1830s and 1840s. The name most associated with this Holiness Movement was Charles Finney. Arminianism is the soil out of which Perfectionism as a system grows. Finney was as Pelagian in his views as it is possible to be and Pelagian soil is even more fertile as soil for perfectionist teaching to grow.⁸

Oberlin College in North Ohio developed into a famous institution from which perfectionist teachings emanated. Books on Perfectionism by Finney and his colleague Asa Mahan became very popular. A fortnightly magazine *The Oberlin Evangelist* with a circulation of 5000 propagated the doctrine of Perfectionism which taught, ‘There are two kinds of Christians, a lower kind who have received only justification, and a higher kind who have also received sanctification.’⁹

In his book *Views of Sanctification* Finney declared, ‘Entire and permanent sanctification is attainable in this life – It is self-evident that entire obedience to God’s law is possible on the ground of natural ability. To deny this is to deny that man is able to do as well as he can.’¹⁰

Finney denied the doctrine of original sin. He began his ministry in the Presbyterian denomination but soon took every opportunity to oppose the Reformed teaching. He spoke and wrote against the Calvinistic tenets of the Westminster Confession of Faith. He left Presbyterianism and joined the Congregationalists. According to Iain Murray his teachings on Perfectionism

were by no means original but were derived in considerable measure from Nathaniel William Taylor who was the foremost figure of the Yale Divinity School which was established in 1822. Taylor moved away from the Puritan view that insists on the bondage of the unregenerate man together with his immediate responsibility to repent and believe. Finney followed this trend and was determined 'to make regeneration so easy that men may not be discouraged from attempting to do it'.¹¹

Denial of original sin led Finney to reject the doctrine of the bondage of the will. According to Finney the source and reason for salvation is the will of man. This exaltation of man's will has led to the statement that I heard frequently in my early Christian experience: 'There is only one thing that our omnipotent God cannot do and that is to force the will of man.'

According to Finney the will of man can be the insuperable citadel so that sinfully wilful souls are beyond salvation. Warfield comments: 'We have thus reached the astonishing conclusion that men may be too sinful to be saved. They are saved, or they are not saved, according to their determination in sin. Moderately sinful souls can be saved, very sinful souls are beyond the possibilities of salvation.'¹² For Finney conversion was nothing more than the sinner's yielding to the truth and making his decision. The altar-call was to be used to induce this. Those pastors who did not employ the new measures and whose churches did not follow Finney's revivalist methods he regarded as failures.

Over the second half of the nineteenth century a landslide took place away from the old Calvinistic doctrines and practices. Gradually real heaven-sent revivals were replaced by man-made revivalistic movements. It became the custom in some parts of the USA to advertise revivals ahead of time as though they can come by human organisation. As this system has run its course it has become patently obvious that the huge number of decisions registered are in fact just that, decisions, not regeneration.

On the back of what historically speaking can be regarded as a spiritual tsunami came a wholly different view of sanctification, namely the view that by complete surrender a life of victorious holy living could be procured immediately. The first Holiness camp meeting took place in New Jersey, USA, in 1867. The movement sometimes referred to as the Higher Life Movement spread rapidly. The principal promoter of the Holiness Movement in Britain was a high-powered American Robert Pearsall Smith, a Quaker glass

manufacturer from Philadelphia who wrote a book with the title *Holiness through Faith* (1870). He spoke with great effect at Oxford and Brighton in 1874 and 1875. This paved the way for Britain's annual Keswick Convention which began in 1875. My copy of Ryle's *Holiness* (fourth edition published by EP and dated 1987) has a scintillating preface by J I Packer in which he points out that Ryle in his introduction laments the pervasive influence of the 'Pearsall Smiths'. This influence brought about the birth of the famous Keswick Movement. In recent times Keswick has retreated from Holiness Higher Life doctrine. According to J I Packer, Smith suddenly returned to the USA in 1875. 'This was explained as due to a collapse of health (though his son later wrote that he was under threat of exposure for his esoteric habit of bestowing holy kisses upon evangelical ladies, which, understandably, had occasioned some jealousies, if no more.'¹³

Anyone exploring this subject can surf the Internet and locate at least twenty 'Holiness' denominations. These include the Salvation Army and the Church of the Nazarene. Holiness teaching focuses on spiritual experience as the source of holiness. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is regarded as a second blessing after conversion and this is purported to deliver the believer from the desire to sin and take him or her to a higher plane. When this does not work then the solution is urged by way of a further crisis experience. We have to be careful not to be derogatory about spiritual experiences *per se* especially since the Bible recounts a wide diversity of them. However the fact is that the New Testament never commands, urges, prescribes, or even suggests a second special gift of sanctification experience after conversion.¹⁴

Positional sanctification means that once we are in Christ we must apply to ourselves all the disciplines of the Christian life and get on with the hard work of holy thinking and holy living. There are no easy short cuts or secret routes which lead to cloud nine. Holiness teachers are numerous and they vary in their emphases. They all confuse the texts about positional sanctification and interpret them, not as something already attained, but as something to be sought after, a higher life to be attained by spiritual experiences. The way to gain 'the experience' is to attend special meetings where altar-calls are made for those to come forward who are seeking 'entire sanctification'.

The apostle Paul rejects any idea of perfect holiness in this life. 'Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting

what is behind and straining toward what is ahead I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus' (Phil 3:12-14).

In this same passage Paul declares: 'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Phil 3:10-11). In Romans chapter eight and 1 Corinthians chapter fifteen Paul affirms his absolute certainty about the resurrection to come and about his own place in it. Why then does he say, 'and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead'? Discussing this question in his commentary on Philippians Moisés Silva suggests that the most common solution is to see in the expression *ei pōs katantēsō* (if somehow I may reach) not at all a note of 'uncertainty but rather humble expectation and modest self confidence' (Müller). For Paul the life of faith was a life of perseverance requiring discipline and watchfulness. He avoided presumptuousness and complacency.

Editor

¹ John Murray, *Collected Writings*, volume two, Banner of Truth, 1977, page 277.

² The Hebrew verb *qadosh* means to separate or to set apart. The New Testament verb *hagiazō* means to set apart, so the adjective *hagioi* (plural of *hagios*, separated) means, when used as a noun, separated ones, saints.

³ Union with Christ simultaneously achieves both justification and positional sanctification. Justification is forensic and has to do with law. Christ alone by his active and passive obedience has merited the justification of those joined to him by faith. Progressive sanctification is never to be regarded as contributing merit toward our justification. That Christians are holy people provides evidence that their faith is genuine.

⁴ In the case of senility or Alzheimer's disease intellectual faculties decline. We must resist over-idealising progressive sanctification. In many lives a peak is reached and then no further growth is evident. It is comforting to know that however steep decline may be through frailty the Holy Spirit has a firm grip on his people and will never ever leave or forsake them.

⁵ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on Romans*, Banner of Truth, page 202.

⁶ B B Warfield, *Perfectionism*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958, page 350.

⁷ Iain Murray, *Wesley and the Men Who Followed*, Banner of Truth, 2003, page 235.

⁸ Erroll Hulse, *Who Saves, God or Me?* Evangelical Press, 2008. In the chapter 'Arminianisms' I trace out the nature of Pelagianism and various forms of Arminianism.

⁹ B B Warfield, *Perfectionism*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958, page 67. This volume is a classic in which the author both describes the historical development of the Higher Life Movement and analyses the doctrine of Charles Finney and Asa Mahan.

¹⁰ Keith J Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney*, Evangelical Press, 1990, page 343.

¹¹ Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, Banner of Truth, 1994, pages 259-261.

¹² *Ibid* B B Warfield, p 61.

¹³ J I Packer, preface to *Holiness* by J C Ryle, Evangelical Press edition, 1987.

¹⁴ Erroll Hulse, *Crisis Experiences*, Carey Publications.

Reviews

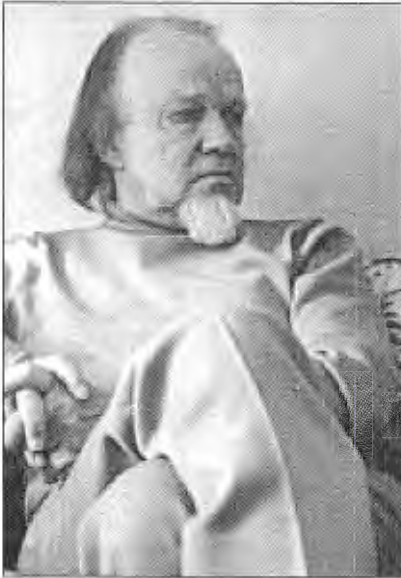
Francis Schaeffer: A Mind and Heart for God

Edited by Bruce A Little

108 pages paperback

P&R Publishing, 2010

ISBN: 978 1 59638 161 2



This recent book on Schaeffer is based on a series of talks given at a conference in 2008 held by the Russ Bush Center for Faith and Culture. If you are looking for a detailed biography of the life of Francis Schaeffer then you should look elsewhere but this is an excellent consideration of Schaeffer's ministry perspective, his approach to apologetics and his influence on Evangelicalism both past and present.

The 5 chapters of the book are edited editions of the papers given at the conference. The first chapter by Udo Middelmann describes the broad ministry perspective of Schaeffer and his particular desire to engage with culture, to bring out the underlying ideas behind religion, politics, art and culture and then give thoughtful effort to changing people's ideas on the basis of biblical truth.

Jerram Barrs then sets out Schaeffer's approach to apologetics and defends him from the accusation made by some critics that he believed people could be argued into heaven. Rather he highlights Schaeffer's heart to engage with people from where they were at, to deal honestly with people who were struggling with doubt and his confidence that God's revealed Word was able to stand up to the challenges of contemporary culture.

Ranald Macaulay considers how relevant Schaeffer's ministry approach is to the challenges of the 21st century. Schaeffer is seen as having a prophetic voice in predicting Western culture's intellectual and moral bankruptcy and seeing the effects of various trends within Evangelicalism in his lifetime. Whilst viewing the Church as having a vital role in redeeming culture he saw the Church as being powerless whilst

both retreating from culture (the 'pietist hangover') and over-engaging with certain aspects (the 'virus technique' in which there is the incorporation of consumerist values and marketing techniques in the Church). Macaulay sees Schaeffer's approach as key to contemporary reformation in the Church – conservatism in doctrine yet to being conversant with contemporary culture (there should be a prophetic confrontation with culture although he warns against the extremes of the emerging Church).

This theme is continued by Jerram Barrs in his chapter on Schaeffer's influence on Evangelicalism. Whilst Barrs believes he had more influence in North America than Europe he sees evangelical churches as generally retreating into their own subculture ('corner culture' with its own language and life) rather than become genuinely countercultural. However he sees more positive developments in recent years.

In the final chapter Dick Keyes seeks to apply Schaeffer's ministry perspective and ideas to the rising threat of sentimentality in both Western culture and the Church. Keyes characterises sentimentality as a movement which denies/evades the issue of evil and sin, includes self-referential emotion and involves emotional manipulation without the appropriate costly responses that following Christ involves. Keyes

says that the trend causes two problems – it undermines Christian integrity (people conclude that faith in Christ is only sentimental and scorn it) and it presents a challenge in evangelism as the sentimental person who is not a Christian will have built in filters and barriers to real Christian belief which will block him or her from taking Christ seriously.

In summary this is a very useful and thought-provoking book on what the contemporary Church can learn from Schaeffer's ministry approach particularly in respect to engaging with culture. *Roger Barden*

Foundations for the Faith: A step-by-step guide to the Gospel of John

Roger Ellsworth

348 pages paperback

Evangelical Press, 2009

ISBN: 978 0 85234 615 0

This new study guide to the Gospel of John divides the book into 52 chapters and, as the title suggests, aims to help Christians develop a firm foundation for their faith.

The purpose of the work is that the Gospel can be studied over the course of one year by a Sunday School or study group. Each chapter follows a similar format in which a key verse for memorisation is highlighted followed by a simple commentary which is split into 2-3 key points and includes quotes from other well-known commentators. Each chapter

is concluded by a 'Digging Deeper' section which includes 5-6 study questions and an activity (which is most often a crossword, word search or missing words puzzle).

The book is a helpful starting point for those who are new believers with its concise yet thought-provoking commentary and clear structure. In this respect it could be a good devotional book for individual study and help young Christians get into the discipline of regular private Bible study. However, it is best aimed at young people or a Sunday School if it is used with a group. In this type of setting, whilst the questions are a good starting point for making observations and interpreting a passage a disappointment is the lack of questions which challenge readers to apply the message to their own lives. A further weakness if used in a Sunday School is the lack of variety in regard to the activities at the end of each chapter. Consequently, a group leader or Sunday School teacher will find this an excellent foundation resource for their ministry but will often need to develop the study material to gain more benefit from it.

Roger Barden

**God's care for the widows -
Encouragement and wisdom for
those who grieve**

Austin Walker

124 pages paperback

DayOne, 2010

ISBN: 978-1-84625-199-3

In the ancient pagan world, becoming a widow was the fate most feared by a woman. To lose a protector and provider was regarded as the worst thing that could happen to you. The word 'widow' is probably derived from a root word that means 'forsaken', 'left empty', or 'desolate'.

Austin Walker shows that throughout the Bible God makes himself known as the one who defends, comforts and provides for the widow. He opens up the accounts of women, the widows Naomi, Orpah and Ruth, the widows of Zarephath and Nain, the Jerusalem widows described in Acts 6, Mary the mother of our Lord and the widows described in Acts chapter six. The passage giving instructions about the care of widows in 1 Timothy 5:3-4,8 is opened up.

This is a practical book which concludes by pointing readers to the glory to come. 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time' (1Peter 1:3-5). *Editor*

Anointing with Oil

Prayer, Healing and Anointing with Oil: the Message of James 5:13-18

Kees van Kralingen

Introduction

Faith healing is a much debated topic in the wider evangelical world today. We have to reject unbiblical views such as the idea proposed by the health and wealth gospel in which healing is seen as a right to be claimed by every Christian. According to this view the healing received is dependent only on our measure of faith. If we think we have to reject such views, does this leave room for a view on God's powerful and miraculous intervention in case of disease? Can we pray for healing and what can we expect God to do? I intend to show that a careful study of James 5:13-18 provides important and practical answers to these questions.¹

The letter of James

A key theme in the letter of James is the importance of dedicating our whole heart and life to the Lord. We are warned strongly against maintaining double standards or being double-minded (1:8; 4:8). James 4:8 says: 'Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.' James gives several examples. Faithful prayer is incompatible with doubt (1:2-11). Good deeds have to accompany faith which, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead (1:19-27; 2:14-26). Favouritism or, in other words, making a division between the rich and the poor is clearly forbidden (2:1-13). Our speech must not produce both praise and cursing (3:1-12; 4:11-12; 5:12). It is impossible to be a friend of this world and at the same time a friend of God (4:1-17). This also applies to how we use our money (5:1-6). We have to submit to the Lord unreservedly: in our planning for the future (4:13-17), in suffering (5:7-11), and in sickness (5:13-18).

In these latter verses prayer again is central: the word 'prayer' occurs in every verse in 5:13-18. Prayer is often a concluding theme in the New Testament letters (e.g. Eph 6:18-20; Phil 4:6-7). We will now study this part of the letter of James in connection with our subject.

In addition to prayer anointing with oil is mentioned in this passage. This aspect has received relatively little attention. Several popular commentaries quickly move through this part of Scripture in some cases without mentioning this point at all. This is probably due to a reaction against the Roman Catholic teaching on this subject seeing anointing with oil as a sacrament to be applied to dying people. We should, however, not let ourselves be robbed of this part of Scripture by the wrong use of it made by others!

James 5:13-18

Verse 13: 'Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.'

This text addresses two opposite situations: trouble and happiness. Trouble refers to all kind of difficulties and afflictions. James did already touch upon this in the beginning of the letter (1:2-11). This trouble includes but is not limited to suffering for the cause of the gospel (as in 2 Timothy 2:9, 4:5; see also James 5:7-11). James calls us to prayer in case of trouble. We should pray especially for perseverance as he has already emphasised in chapter 1. The second part of this verse tells us to sing praise to the Lord when we are happy and full of joy. The present tense of the verbs for praying and singing suggests that this should be a continuous feature characterising the lifestyle of believers.

Verse 14: 'Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.'

The Greek word for to be sick (*astheneō*) can refer to physical, mental or spiritual conditions. In this case the main emphasis is on (serious) physical illness. The same word is used in the Gospels for physical symptoms (Matt 10:8; 25:36,39; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; John 4:46; 5:3,7; 6:2; 11:1-6). If the word is used to denote a different (spiritual) meaning this is indicated by additional words (e.g. in Romans 14:1 'weak in the faith'). The connection with verses 15 and 16 also suggests physical problems as the words used for 'sick', 'healing' and 'raise' up indicate. The anointing with oil also points in this direction because the only other instance where anointing with oil is mentioned in the NT is in a case of a physical illness (Mark 6:13).

In this case James instructs his readers to call the elders. The NT uses different words for elders.² The word for elder used here (*presbuteros*) refers

to those having the spiritual oversight over the church. We can assume that James means the elders of a local church because of the limited travelling conditions in his days. A little later James also refers to confession of sins. This also points to the involvement of elders from the local church as they are likely to know about the specific situation and background of the sick person. The elders are to pray for the sick person, literally 'over him'. This suggests that the sick person is not able to move and is confined to bed. This phrase can also suggest that prayer is accompanied by the laying on of hands.

The elders are also said to anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord in addition to praying for him or her. What is the meaning and purpose of the anointing with oil? Several answers have been given; the first two are more practical whilst the third and fourth emphasise a more spiritual meaning:

1. The anointing with oil is a practical, medical treatment in addition to prayer. Oil was used in antiquity to soften and relieve the pain of wounds (as in Luke 10:34). This view assumes that the elders would come with both spiritual (prayer) and natural (medical) resources.
2. The anointing with oil has a pastoral function and purpose. It is a visible illustration of the Lord's care for us to stimulate our faith in him. An example may be the use of mud by Jesus to heal a blind man.
3. The action of anointing has a sacramental meaning. The grace of healing is imparted to the sick person through the physical action of the anointing with oil. This view has developed over the centuries into its current application by the Roman Catholic Church in case of dying people. Anointing with oil is supposed to remove any remnant of sin and to prepare for death (healing is only seen as a possibility).
4. The anointing with oil has a symbolic meaning. For this view we have to go back to the OT where oil was used to consecrate persons or other objects for God's use or service (e.g. as in Exodus 28:41). We find a similar way of speaking in the NT in connection with Christ as the Anointed (the Messiah; see Luke 4:18 (quoting Is 61:1); Acts 4:26; 10:38; Heb 1:9 (quoting Ps 45:7)). In a similar way believers are said to be anointed (or to have received an anointing); see 2 Cor 1:21-22; 1 John 2:27. If we now apply this to our text, we can say that

anointing with oil means that this person is the object of God's special care and thus should trust in the Lord and his mercy. The oil is a symbol of this renewed consecration.

The last mentioned explanation is the most likely one. The first, medical explanation is unlikely as oil was not generally used for any disease and this would fail to explain its more general prescription by James. Why should the elders of the church be called to provide medical treatment? Although anointing with oil may well serve a positive pastoral purpose (explanation 2) there is no clear physical connection between the application of oil and the specific medical condition (unlike in the examples of the Lord Jesus; see Mark 7:33; 8:23-26). The third explanation has to be dismissed because verse 15 tells us that the person is healed through 'the prayer offered in faith' but not through the grace of healing conveyed by the anointing with oil. The oil is not a sign of healing which has already taken place. Otherwise, why would prayer still be necessary? Although the words used for illness by James indicate serious illness, their meaning is certainly not limited to the condition of people on their deathbed. This sacramental view reads much more into the text than can be accounted for. The final explanation derives scriptural support from the wider meaning of oil to symbolise (renewed) consecration to the Lord. This explanation also answers the question why specifically elders are to apply the anointing with oil: they have a role of spiritual leadership. It has been argued that this view may not be consistent with the verb used by James for anointing (*aleiphō*). When the Septuagint or the New Testament refer to consecration they use in most cases the verb *chriō* instead of *aleiphō* as used by James. This argument is not decisive, however, for two reasons. There are exceptions to this rule: *aleiphō* is also used by the Septuagint in some cases where consecration is clearly in view (Ex 40:15 and Num 3:3). Secondly, the verb *chriō* is never used for the physical act of anointing. As James obviously meant the physical act, he could only have used *aleiphō*, which is always used for the physical act of anointing. The conclusion is that the anointing with oil is a physical act with a symbolic meaning.

This explanation is also appropriate when we consider the spiritual aspect of disease. In case of a serious illness it is very important that the believing patient looks to the Lord in faith trusting him for healing. In such circumstances it is easy to lose sight of our Lord. Physical discomfort does

not necessarily bring us closer to God but can seriously impair our spiritual life. Pain and side effects of treatment (e.g. in the case of chemotherapy) can cause significant discomfort hindering the exercise of faith. In that case assurance of God's care and attention and renewed consecration to the Lord are necessary. The Lord will use the prayer of others such as the elders of the church. The physical symbol of anointing with oil underlines this. The oil points to the Holy Spirit who can revive us both spiritually and physically. Healing involves the whole man.

This view of the meaning of the anointing with oil has another practical application. I am convinced that this means that anointing with oil does not have to be limited to what we call purely physical diseases. It can also be applied to psychological conditions such as serious forms of depression. In such conditions our spiritual life may be severely hindered. Especially in this kind of problem, it can be tremendously comforting and healing to be assured of God's special care and healing power visibly symbolised in the act of anointing with oil.

When we focus our hearts and thoughts again on the Lord we can only do so through our Lord Jesus Christ as he alone is the Way to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. The anointing with oil also points to the Holy Spirit who has been given to all believers and who lives in each one of God's children (2 Cor 1:21-22).

Verse 15: 'And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.'

We should notice that the anointing with oil is not the main subject of this passage. The emphasis is on prayer to which James now returns. James uses a different word for prayer in this verse indicating a strong desire or petition. The word translated by 'making well' can have both physical and spiritual meaning (*sōzō*, lit. 'to save'). The word is sometimes used with both meanings in the same situation. A good example is Matthew 9:21,22 where it is used in a physical, spiritual and again a physical sense, respectively. In this case the physical meaning is prominent (see also above). This is in agreement with the word used for a sick person which denotes a physical illness. James' statement that the sick person will be raised up further strengthens this interpretation.

James adds that if the sick person has sinned, he will be forgiven. This could be taken as evidence that ‘making well’ refers to a spiritual case. The fact that James mentions the matter of sin separately, preceded by a conditional ‘if’ shows that a physical problem is in view. But what about sin as the cause for the disease? This brings us to the issue of the relationship between the disease and sin. James clearly suggests the possibility of a spiritual dimension as part of the problem. The conditional ‘if’ shows that there may not always be a spiritual problem behind every disease. If sin is involved, however, James tells us that it must be dealt with.

There is not always a direct cause and effect relationship between sin and disease. The well-known example of John 9:2-3 is a case where our Lord denies such a direct relationship. In other cases such a relationship is clearly indicated as in John 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 11:30-32. Several examples in early biblical history indicate this relationship too (Gen 20:17 and Ex 15:26). Ultimately every disease finds its origin in the occurrence of sin in this world.

Does healing always occur?

James gives three very strong promises: ‘will make the sick person well’, ‘will raise him up’, and ‘he will be forgiven’. This raises the question if healing is always taking place following prayer (and anointing with oil). This question is much debated. Some argue that miraculous healing no longer occurs after the time of the apostles. There is no biblical evidence for such a view. How can we conclude that the Lord no longer performs miracles? Please, notice that this is a different question from asking whether miraculous healing is a *gift which the Holy Spirit still bestows on believers in the Church*. James does not address this question and addressing the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is beyond the scope of this article.

Another explanation is that what James promises will be realised at the resurrection of the dead. People holding this view point to 5:8,9 where James strengthens his message by emphasising that the coming of the Lord is near. The text of verses 13-18 does not contain any reference to the coming of the Lord and the practical and specific nature of the instructions of James tends to rule out this explanation.

Others argue that God will always give healing when we pray. In contrast, we observe that healing does not follow Paul’s strong prayers (2 Cor 12:7-

9). He receives grace to persevere with the thorn in his flesh. Paul encourages Timothy to take a little wine for a problem with his stomach (1 Tim 5:23). We read in 2 Timothy 4:20 that Paul had to leave Trophimus sick in Miletus. It seems unlikely that Paul did not pray for healing for these brethren.

Some people solve this problem by stating that receiving healing is dependent on faith. Is this what James is also saying when he mentions the prayer 'offered in faith'? This view is profoundly unbiblical, pastorally insensitive and has a devastating effect on the sufferer. In addition to the burden of the disease, he or she is accused of a lack of sufficient faith. But the way out is to say that here the faith of the elders is in view rather than the faith of the sick person. Is this the explanation of the addition 'offered in faith'? Is faith a means always guaranteeing healing? How can we explain this and do justice to all the Bible says about this issue?

For a response we go back to James. The key is in the words 'offered in faith', literally 'the prayer of faith'. Faith is always a matter of knowledge and trust. In faith we know God through our Lord Jesus Christ and we entrust ourselves to his grace. Our faith is in God who sovereignly accomplishes his will. He will achieve his gracious plans and also his plan for our life. Prayer in faith means that we trust in him whose will is supreme. This means that he can give healing but also withhold it. We have already seen the examples of Paul who was not healed even though he prayed intensely. This is why we pray in the name of the Lord (v. 14). The Lord says in John 14:14 'You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.' To ask in Jesus' name means that we recognise and acknowledge who he is and entrust ourselves to him and his will. This does not rule out that God can give us such faith that we are given the assurance that healing will follow. We need to understand that faith, healing and forgiveness are all God's *gracious gifts* to us. The prayer of faith comes from an undivided heart and focuses exclusively on the sovereign Lord who will achieve his purposes. When he withholds this blessing, he can give the grace to continue to consecrate our lives to him and to be dependent on him alone. We can trust him to achieve his purpose in our lives.

James adds that the sick person will be forgiven if he or she has sinned. God will restore the whole man; we become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). The Word of God has healing power both for soul and body as we read in Proverbs 4:20-22: 'My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my

words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.'

Verse 16: 'Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.'

If there is sin, it must be confessed and repented of. In this context this applies to specific and known sins which may or may not have a relationship to the disease (see above). Dealing with sin is essential as it disturbs our relationship with the Lord.

We observe that the church is commanded to pray too 'so that you may be healed'. It is not clear if this refers to a different situation from the one in verse 14-15 in which the elders are asked to pray. The word used in this verse for healing refers to healing of a physical problem. In view of other examples (e.g. in Acts) it seems likely that the church should always be involved in prayer. The prayer of a righteous man is a kind of petition. The righteous man is a believer saved by grace; he is not a super-holy person. His prayer is powerful and effective. This is a strong statement but does not necessarily mean an absolute guarantee for the outcome we may wish or envisage (see discussion above). That is why James refers to God who gives this power in prayer. He uses the example of Eliah in verses 17-18. He was a man just like us. What makes the difference? It is God to whom we pray.

Healing and medical treatment

What is the relationship between healing as a gift of God and the use of medical treatment? Are prayer and the use of medicine two different and mutually exclusive approaches? We can answer these questions using what we have learned from the teaching in the letter of James.

God is our Creator and rules over everything in the universe and hence also over our health and the means of maintaining or restoring it. He can heal directly and without natural means, or by blessing medical treatment. The latter is also a gracious gift of God. This means that we always need the Lord; we are always totally dependent on him. We should use the medical means which God has provided whilst we pray for his blessing on it. Healing, no matter how it has come about, is always God's gracious gift which we have not deserved.

Conclusions

The emphasis is on prayer and on the God who graciously gives power in prayer, faith, healing and forgiveness. We submit ourselves to the Lord who will fulfil his purposes. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

Anointing with oil is a physical act with a symbolic meaning: it refers to renewed consecration and dedication to the Lord in the middle of disease and depression and points to the Holy Spirit who alone can restore us physically and spiritually.

Healing is always God's gracious gift to us. He can do this without natural means and/or through the blessing of medical treatment. God will ultimately give complete healing of body and soul. If we have sinned, we should confess our sins and repent. God will graciously forgive us. He wants us to trust him in all circumstances, in good and bad days, in disease and health.

Practical aspects of anointing a sick person with oil

In our church the procedure is as follows (in the following the pastor is regarded as one of the elders):

I assume that the case of the sick person is already known and that the church is already praying for him/her.

- The sick person requests the elders to come for prayer and for anointing with oil. In serious cases the request can be submitted by another member of the family or household.
- The elders consider the request and appoint two of them to deal with the request.
- The elders make an initial visit to the sick person to understand the situation and the background to the request. If pastoral visits have already occurred, this step may not be necessary or can be limited to a short visit. During this initial visit the following subjects can be raised:
 - What is the nature of the illness; what is the prospect?
 - Why is the sick person requesting the anointing with oil? What are his/her motives? This is important as there may be misunderstanding about the meaning of this action. The meaning of prayer and the anointing with oil can be explained further if necessary.

- Are there any specific problems or sins which must be dealt with?
- Explanation of the practical aspects of the anointing with oil.
- Address questions which may arise.
- The elders report back to the other elders; they take the decision if the sick person will receive the anointing with oil. If so, this will be briefly announced to the church so that the members can also pray.
- The two elders visit the sick person to pray and to anoint him/her with oil. In case of a woman patient, the elders should be accompanied by a woman (usually the wives of the elders).
- The prayer and anointing with oil is carried out as follows:
 - One of the elders opens with a brief prayer.
 - One of the elders reads James 5:13-18 and explains it (if this has already been done, another appropriate part of Scripture can be used).
 - The elders in turn pray for the sick person (this can be done with laying on of hands). Other believers present may also pray if they wish.
 - One of the elders applies a little oil on a tissue to the forehead of the sick person and whilst mentioning that this is done in the name of the Lord so that the brother or sister (mention his/her name) will be healed and will experience the healing power of the Holy Spirit in body, soul and spirit.³
 - One of the elders closes with prayer and thanksgiving expressing that we all put our hope and trust in the Lord who alone can give healing and giving thanks for his grace to us.
- Obviously, further pastoral care should be continued after the event.

¹ I have made use of several commentaries on the letter of James. I found the commentary by Douglas Moo especially helpful: Douglas J Moo, *The Letter of James*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester/Grand Rapids: Apollos/Eerdmans, 2000).

² See RT 229 (May-June 2009), p.11.

³ Some people have suggested that the oil should be applied to the affected part of the body. I strongly disagree with this view. This is highly undesirable as anyone can imagine to what kind of embarrassing situations this may give rise! Moreover, this approach reflects a mistaken sacramental view in which the oil is supposed to exert some effect itself.

Napoleon – friend or foe?

PART 2



Robert Haldane

A New Day for the Gospel in France in the Nineteenth Century

Frederick Hodgson

State of the Protestant Church of France in 1816

French Protestants enthusiastically welcomed their considerably increased freedom gained by Napoleon's religious policy. However, the character of the Church was very different from that of the church in the wilderness or that of the mid-sixteenth century. The cold breath of rationalism had created spiritual death for the most part with one or two exceptions. Samuel Vincent, a contemporary pastor wrote, 'The ministers preached, the people listened, the consistories met, the worship followed its prescribed order. Apart from that, nobody felt an interest in them, nobody cared, and religion was outside of everyone's life.' Samuel Vincent himself adopted and encouraged liberal theology, despite remaining in the French Reformed Church. He published theological magazines *Mélanges de religion, de morale et de critique sacrée* (Compendium of religion, ethics and sacred criticism), *Religion et Christianisme* (Religion and Christianity) and propagated views of Kant and Schleiermacher. He was an example of the theological movement that caused the deep freeze in France.

German philosophy had deeply penetrated the churches in France and the Protestant theological colleges in Geneva and Montauban had embraced these ideas.

Geneva in 1916

France had annexed Geneva and its surrounding territories in 1798, but at the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) it was extended to cover fifteen Savoyard and six French parishes and admitted to the Swiss Confederation. Sadly over the centuries Christianity had decayed in Geneva and it was no longer the bastion of Evangelicalism that it had been in the sixteenth century during the time of Farel, Calvin and Beza.

A major theologian in undermining Reformed theology was Jean Alphonse Turretin (1671-1737), son of the Calvinist Francis Turretin. He was received into the 'Venerable Company of Pastors' in 1693 and became pastor of the Italian congregation of Geneva. In 1697 he became Professor of Church History and in 1705 Professor of Theology. For the remainder of his life he advocated liberal views and it was through his instrumentality that the rule obliging ministers to subscribe to the Helvetic Consensus was abolished in 1706. This consensus was actually denounced in 1725. Turretin even went as far as laying aside the doctrine of the Trinity whilst Professor of Theology. The unbelief continued during that century. Professor Vernet tolerated Arian views amongst his students in 1777. Generally the pastors of Geneva did not own up to their unbelieving views and kept them secret but enquiring, penetrating minds were aware of their apostasy. Philosopher Jean- Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), a hero of many who took part in the French Revolution and whose monument stands prominently in Geneva wrote, 'It is asked of the ministers of the Church of Geneva, if Jesus Christ be God. They dare not answer. It is asked, if he were a mere man. They are embarrassed, and will not say they think so. A philosopher, with a glance of the eye, penetrates their character. He sees them to be Arians, Socinians, Deists; he proclaims it, and thinks he does them honour. They are alarmed, terrified; they come together, they discuss, they are in agitation, they know not to which of the saints they should turn, and, after earnest consultations, deliberations, conferences, all vanishes in amphigore (an incomprehensible rigmarole); and they neither say, yes nor no...' It is often true that apostate teachers are not apparent in what they say, but rather in what they do not say.

Geneva, however, was not totally without light. In 1741 Count Zinzendorf had visited Geneva and planted a community of Moravians there. Ami Bost (1790-1874) was born in Geneva and educated by the Moravians. He read Theology in Geneva. He was ordained in 1814 but broke with the National Church of Geneva

in 1819 and worked as a missionary in France for the *Continental Church Society* of London concentrating his efforts in Alsace until 1822 and after opposition moved on to Germany and Switzerland, serving as a pastor in both countries.

In 1810 he and other young men, starved of spiritual nourishment, started a society for mutual spiritual edification and met in the house of Ami Bost's father. This society, made up of those who believed in the deity of Jesus Christ, was known as *La Société des Amis*. Initially a leader of the group was Henri Empeytaz (1790-1853) but he was expelled as a student for holding unauthorised religious meetings. In 1813 he became chaplain for the wealthy Russian Juliana Krudener (1764-1824), born in Riga. After travelling around Europe to find better health, she returned to Riga in 1804 and was converted through the testimony of her shoemaker who was an ardent disciple of the Moravian Brethren. She subsequently adopted the common view held at the time in Europe that Napoleon was Antichrist and became interested in prophecy. In 1809 she founded a colony to wait for the coming of the Lord. She was never still and continued to travel around Europe, eventually visiting Geneva in 1813 still 'holding views which were indistinct, flickering, and in some respects visionary'. When she departed with Empeytaz, *La Société des Amis* was weakened. It was to lose another leader.

After ordination Ami Bost had gone to work as suffragan pastor at Moutiers Grand Val in the Swiss Canton of Berne. The society's members had limited understanding but was still frowned upon by the Arian clergy and it ceased to exist in 1814. Some of the former members of the society were later encouraged by the appearance and preaching of a Welsh mechanic called Richard Wilcox. This man was a pious Calvinistic Methodist but he left Geneva in 1816. His work was not without fruit.

A young hard working military sergeant Felix Neff who had studied assiduously as a child was under severe conviction of sin. He had been given a book written by Wilcox called *Honey from the Rock*. Neff was drawn to the words, 'If you knew Jesus Christ, you would not for all the world wish to do a single good work without Him. If you already know Him, you know that He is the Rock of salvation, infinitely above any righteousness of our own. This Rock will follow you everywhere. From this Rock flows the honey of grace, which alone can satisfy you. Would you go to Jesus? Renounce all ideas of your own goodness, taking with you nothing but your misery and sin. ... Would you know all the horrors of sin? Do not be content to examine its extent in yourself. Go to Jesus on the cross; behold in His sufferings the malignity of sin and tremble. Let the Spirit of God guide you in the study of the Bible. It is a mine wherein the most precious treasure is hid, even the knowledge of Christ.' Written on the margin of the book were the words, 'Felix Neff has found peace here on these two pages.' Neff subsequently

wrote, 'Helped in the *vinages* in the day, and in the evening peasants assembled to receive instruction. I spoke of evangelical simplicity in opposition to barren theology. The whole of this Canton seems preparing for a great revival; at least, if one may judge by the agitation of Satan. I have held thirteen prayer meetings in seven different villages, and they have been attended by half the population of the place. I visit all the pious Christians in their own houses and those who are as yet but inquiring.' Neff laboured 'Brainerd-like' for fewer than four years in Alpine villages before he died of exhaustion.

Meanwhile in 1816 Empeytaz caused a stir among the students in Geneva by publishing a pamphlet, 'Considerations on the Divinity of Jesus Christ'. Sadly the students, with the exception of Henri Pyte and M. Guers, were so angered by this pamphlet that they complained to the Venerable Company. Interestingly the outraged students chose Merle d'Aubigné as the president of their number when they petitioned the pastors.

Montauban in 1816

The intrigues and activities of the Jesuits had resulted in the suppression of the Theological Academy of Montauban in 1661, some years before the Revocation of the Treaty of Nantes under the reign of Louis XIV. However, Napoleon restored the college in 1808-1810. His motives were political and had the aim of limiting the power of the priests. He had been well received by the Protestants when he returned from fighting the English army led by Sir John Moore during the Peninsular campaign in Spain and was favourably disposed towards them. Furthermore in order to offset the influence of the Pope it was politic to show favour to the Protestants. However, he did not want a revival of Calvinistic preaching and he appointed a distinguished soldier and engineer in the army as its principal. This man had previously been trained for the ministry at Geneva and was a Socinian. Many of the students at the college had enrolled because they wanted to evade conscription. When conscription stopped about one hundred students left the college.

About half of the inhabitants of the city of Montauban, located in the south of France, belonged to the Reformed Church. The darkness in the south of the country was not quite as black as in the rest of the country. A major reason for this was the hard work of M. Gachon, an amiable, humble and useful Moravian pastor. The Moravians stressed the need for love and in particular the love of Christ. They were not powerful preachers and were rather timid, but blessing from God accompanied their work. One man who was converted by their preaching was M. Bonnard, professor of Hebrew at Montauban. M. Marziels, a minister converted through the ministry of M. Gachon, spoke of M. Bonnard as being 'one faithful

witness to the testimony of Jesus, who, so far as it was in his power, firmly opposed the Socinianism of the other professors'. M. Bonnard attracted the attention of M. Pictet, Napoleon's Superintendent of the French Protestant Churches. M. Pictet used threats and inducements for the silencing of M. Bonnard, but all to no avail.

The Dean of the Faculty at Montauban was a distinguished scientist called Daniel Encontre. He had moved from Montpellier in 1814, where he had been President of the Faculty of Sciences. After La Place he was considered to be the most distinguished mathematician in France. Although a believer, Daniel Encontre was not a Calvinist and had Pelagian or semi-Pelagian tendencies. It would be incorrect to say that these were the only believers around Montauban at the time of the restoration of the monarchy (Louis XVIII) in 1815. One noteworthy believer was M. de Rapin, a rich but godly man. His château was at La Garde, five or six miles from Montauban. Even during the Revolution, when it was a crime to possess a Bible, he maintained his Christian witness in an uncompromising way, avoiding meddling in politics and escaping the guillotine. Thirty miles away in Toulouse the pastor and professor M. Chabrand 'shone like a light burning in a dark place'.

General spiritual ignorance in France in 1816

In addition to the Protestant theological colleges in France being in a bad way, the population was biblically illiterate. Subsequent to the goddess of reason being enthroned in Notre Dame Cathedral, the observance of the Lord's Day was formally abolished and work on it became compulsory. Every private library was raided and all religious books were destroyed. Any Bible that was found was burned. Surviving works of the old reformers were buried in the ground. Eventually although the storm passed and people were allowed to worship freely after 1795, there were few pastors to teach the people as some had died, others had left their pastorates for secular employment and others had turned from their previous profession of faith and became infidels or embraced Socinian ideas. The pastors of Paris had fallen in this way. In 1802 a deputation from the London Missionary Society 'diligently searched the shops of Paris, but in vain, for a single copy of the Scriptures'. The lack of Bibles was not just the consequence of secular opposition. Round about 1817 all the consistories in the whole of France were asked to cooperate with the printing of the Bible in French and not one replied to the request. When eventually money from England was made available for the printing of 10,000 Bibles in Toulouse even the President of the Consistory mounted opposition because he disapproved of a Bible without notes.

Bright spots in the darkness in 1816

Although the churches in France were in a bad way, there were one or two places where light shone. In addition to the struggling believers in Geneva and some light in Montauban a movement of the Spirit was taking place in Alsace. Here the great pastor Jean-Frédéric Oberlin (1740-1826) presided over a committee representing Lutheran interests. This man had immense gifts and the Lord prospered his ministry. In 1767 he became pastor in the remote valley of Ban-de-la-Roche. 'During his sixty-nine years there the entire life of the valley was transformed and lifted from degradation to prosperity, both material and spiritual.' He practised medicine among them, founded a loan and savings bank, introduced cotton manufacture, helped the people build better roads and brought in modern agricultural methods, establishing asylums for orphans. He preached in French and German.

Robert Haldane and the revival in Geneva in 1817

Towards the close of the previous century God raised up two remarkable brothers in Scotland who were mightily used by him in preaching the gospel, building churches and training young pastors among other things. The brothers had been born into a rich family, and had both worked at sea before conversion to Christ. They had both exhibited bravery and leadership skills in their naval careers. Robert served in the Royal Navy and James in the Merchant Navy. Robert Haldane turned his eye towards the continent of Europe after the defeat of Napoleon and travelled to France in the summer of 1816. His strategy as a missionary is worthy of attention. When he arrived in Paris, he knew no other believer but met an American Embassy official called Mr Hillhouse. This man had travelled around parts of France including Montauban and had visited Geneva and enquired about the pastors in various places. He shared his information with Robert Haldane and mentioned that he had heard of two individuals in Geneva, M. Moulinié an elderly pastor and a young minister M. Galland who were not Arian or Socinian. Haldane immediately set out for Geneva and found the kindly M. Moulinié who appeared to agree with all that he was told about the gospel. Haldane then set off to search for M. Galland who had gone to Berne. Haldane spent eight days with M. Galland who came to him from ten o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night to discuss the content of the gospel. After Haldane returned to Geneva M. Galland shared what he learnt with another pastor and they agreed that Haldane had taught the true gospel.

He returned to Geneva with his wife in October 1816. Initially he made no further progress with evangelising Geneva and was on the point of leaving Geneva when he was introduced to a Divinity student who was going to guide him to view a

model of the mountains around Geneva. He found the student ignorant of the gospel, but willing to listen. The following day the student brought a friend to meet Haldane and the two of them were questioned about their hope of salvation. These biblically ignorant Divinity students had been taught much more about Greek philosophers than the Bible, but being convinced of their ignorance of the Bible they clearly indicated that they desired more information.

Hearing of a young Genevan-born minister Louis Gaussen, ordained as pastor at Satigny in 1816, five or six miles from Geneva, Haldane proceeded to visit him and found that he had already ‘submitted himself to the great doctrines of the Word of God’. Gaussen had succeeded J E Cellerier and under the influence of Cellerier and Haldane he became an ardent champion of Reformed theology in Switzerland. In 1817 he and Cellerier republished a new French edition of the Second Helvetic Confession, asserting that a church must have a declaration of faith. He had much opposition from the Venerable Company of Pastors but with his friend Merle d’Aubigné (converted through the ministry of Robert Haldane and Galland he founded the Evangelical Society to distribute Bibles and tracts and interest the public in missionary works among the heathen. The Evangelical Society decided to form a school to teach Christian doctrine but when the Consistory heard of this it deposed the three friends from the ministry in 1831. However in 1834, Gaussen was appointed as Professor of Systematic Theology at a newly established evangelical theological school in Geneva, He wrote most helpfully of the inspiration of Scripture. His book, *Theopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* was published in Paris in 1840, translated into English and published in London in 1841 (see www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/book_theopneustia.html) C H Spurgeon commended his writings, ‘Gaussen charms us as he proclaims the divine veracity of the Scripture. His testimony is clear as a bell.’

The ministry of Haldane among the students in Geneva was a focus of a revival that spread to other locations in Europe. Haldane was the human instrument used by God as more than twenty students gathered regularly in his own hired hotel room to listen attentively to his exposition of Paul’s letter to the Romans. Haldane spoke in English and his words were translated into French by either M. Rieu, M. James or Frédéric Monod (His more well known brother Adolphe was not converted in Geneva, but his story will be told in the next article in this series). In his biography of the Haldane brothers Alexander Haldane, the nephew of Robert Haldane wrote, ‘Possessing no European reputation; his theology drawn from the pure fountains of inspired truth rather than from the admired repositories of scholastic lore; incapable of conducting discussions without the aid of an interpreter; his foreign manners exhibiting none of that brilliant vivacity and

external warmth most fitted to captivate his youthful disciples; even his powdered hair still retaining the queue universally worn in his younger days, and his somewhat antiquated costume rendering his personal appearance, in the esteem of the gay Frenchmen, dignified and grave, rather than attractive; everything to the eye of man conspired against his bold attack on the strong-holds of Genevan heresy.' Frédéric Monod described the significance of Haldane's ministry as it impacted upon young ministers and students, 'I cannot forbear again naming, with adoring thanksgiving, Galland, Gaussen, Gonthier, Guers, James, Malan, Merle, Pyt, Rieu, and others who escape my memory. The name of Robert Haldane stands inseparably connected with the dawn of the revival of the gospel on the continent of Europe.'

The testimony of Frédéric's fellow student Merle d'Aubigné, historian of the Reformation in Europe, is instructive: 'I heard of him first as an English or Scotch gentleman who spoke much about the Bible, which seemed a very strange thing to me and the other students, to whom it was a closed book. I afterwards met Mr Haldane at a private house, along with some other friends, and heard him read from an English Bible a chapter from Romans, about the natural corruption of man, a doctrine of which I had never before heard. In fact, I was quite astonished to hear of men being corrupt by nature. I remember saying to Mr Haldane, "Now I see that doctrine in the Bible." "Yes," replied that good man, "but do you see it in your heart?" That was a simple question but it came home to my conscience. It was the sword of the Spirit; and from that time I saw that my heart was corrupted, and knew from the Word of God that I can be saved by grace alone.'

A particular trophy of the revival was César Malan who was a young ordained minister when he sought out Robert Haldane one evening in private after hearing about his Calvinistic doctrines from Louis Gaussen. He was impressed by what he heard and was doubly so after Haldane visited Malan to give him money for a charity that Malan operated. To his amazement Haldane gave Malan exactly the sum of money that was required to pay a baker's bill that had been depressing Malan.

God had been working in Malan's mind before the arrival of Haldane and Malan had preached 'orthodox' truth in a country church, but without any power. His soul had not been 'fully awakened' but after he had been 'led to peace' through the ministry of Haldane he preached with great power and unction, boldly proclaiming the truths once proclaimed by Calvin in Geneva. The ecclesiastical authorities were offended and he was forbidden to preach on original sin, election and related doctrines. The result was that Malan was expelled from the pulpit. 'On one celebrated occasion he addressed the distinguished Arian and Socinian Company in the Church of St Pierre, the ancient oratory of Calvin. But when he preached

with lips touched with evangelic fire, from a heart burning with love to Christ, all the enmity of the natural man rose up in arms against the faithful witness of a dishonoured Saviour...Malan descended from the pulpit unrecognised, an avoided and rejected man...He walked in his robes from the ancient temple of Calvin to his own house, dejected and overwhelmed, about to hide himself in his secret chamber. But, on entering his door, the "majestic form" and benignant countenance of Robert Haldane met his eye, and his sinking spirits were revived, as by a cordial, when his hand was grasped and the words were heard, "Thank God! The gospel has once more been preached in Geneva!" He went on to preach in many parts of Switzerland and made preaching tours to Germany, France, the Netherlands and Britain.

Robert Haldane and his wife left Geneva in June 1817. The brief period spent in Geneva had enormous influence on the theological students in the city and resulted in great benefits for the French Church and elsewhere. The unbelieving pastors of Geneva in their anger made life as difficult as they could for the young students who had been converted. M. Chenevière, the Professor of Divinity was 'stung to the quick, by the results produced through the labours of a foreigner, who, with the Bible in his hand, had been enabled in the Lord's strength to trample down the pride of an infidel philosophy, and to recall attention to the written Word of God'. Some years later Chenevière wrote an article attacking Robert Haldane to which he replied by describing the way he gave an exposition of Paul's letter to the Romans and its suitability to the students who were in darkness regarding the gospel and the knowledge of God. In the meantime Chenevière had been further discomfited by the visit to Geneva of Henry Drummond who arrived the week that Haldane left.

Pictet (the government official for Protestant Churches) and Chenevière met Drummond and demanded of him to explain if he were going to teach the same doctrines that Haldane taught. Drummond asked Chenevière what these doctrines were and upon this Chenevière left him in a rage. Drummond displayed manly courage and brilliant talent in the view of Gausson but it was regretted that his talents were 'not always guided by equal stability of purpose, consistency of scriptural doctrine, and right judgement in things pertaining to the kingdom of God'. Drummond was important in Geneva in that he encouraged the ejected ministers to form themselves into a church and break with the Arian Consistory. In 1817, just three months after Haldane left Geneva, the Lord's Supper was administered for the first time outside the jurisdiction of the Arian Church of Geneva. The latter continued to persecute the Evangelicals and in 1831 (as mentioned earlier) Gausson was deposed, as he along with d'Aubigné and Galland became the founders of the new Evangelical School of Theology.

After his departure from Geneva Haldane spent two years at Montauban. The events here were less dramatic in the sense that although there was a steady stream of conversions among the students, these students were not of the same academic quality as those of Geneva. Furthermore the opposition to the gospel was not as intense and the spiritual darkness was not quite as black.

A key person at Montauban was the brilliant but dying Daniel Encontre. Haldane respected him to the extent that rather than approaching the students directly he gave Encontre a copy of Luther's letter to Erasmus on justification by faith and requested that Encontre distribute it among the students. Initially he refused but took the tract home and gave it his careful consideration, becoming convinced that Luther was correct. He then gave it to his students announcing that they should give it their serious attention. Encontre's support of Haldane and that of his successor, M. Bonnard, allowed Haldane's influence on the students to increase. Bonnard and his friend Pastor Marzials were themselves strengthened by his ministry and rejoiced in its fruits in Montauban. In 1842 Marzials wrote a letter to Robert Haldane's nephew. He described the significance of Haldane's work in Montauban: 'The great majority of pastors are approaching nearer and nearer to the orthodoxy of our fathers, and many of them are truly examples of zeal for the house of God. I am often touched even to tears in seeing pastors, at whose ordination I did not wish to take part, preach Christ, and Christ crucified, with liberty of heart, full of force and blessings. I tell you these things, dear Sir, because it is most certainly the fruit of the good seed sown here and elsewhere by your venerable uncle.'

Robert Haldane was a convinced Baptist, but his emphasis was always upon the doctrines of grace and during his time in France he refused to major on any doctrines that drew attention away from these.

Conclusion

The revivals among the students in Geneva and Montauban and the subsequent preaching of those converted suggested that France should have experienced a great transformation from the secularism that had gripped it from the time of the Revolution. There were indeed significant revivals in France well into the century, but the majority of Frenchmen did not embrace the gospel and this remained the case during the twentieth century. The next article on France covers this period and explores reasons given for the limited progress of the gospel

Readers who would like to refer to the detailed footnote source references for this article please e-mail me at frederick.hodgson@gmail.com

Haiti

I visited Haïti last November/December, a few weeks before the earthquake struck the capital, Port-au-Prince. I returned there in June to help the students on our course and the literature outreach started just over a year ago.

As expected, I found much change, with so many collapsed buildings and huge piles of rubble everywhere. Tents occupy nearly every available space, even to the central reservation on the road out of the city. Many people live in tents, still frightened to go inside the remaining buildings when these are still up. International aid is very slow to come. The infrastructure of the country is in a shambles, generating much discontent. But life tries to go on as usual in the midst of this chaos. Unfortunately individualism shows up everywhere.

I was able to meet up with most of the students that are active on the *Cours de formation continue* preachers' training course. Most have lost their home, but they do not complain about their situation. One of them, Jean David, lives with his wife and 6 children in a tiny tent with his widowed sister and her 4 children in the next tent. Thankfully, I was able to pass some gifts from believers in France directly to some of the men.

As the postal system, already very poor, is now totally non-existent, I took a laptop with me. All the elements for the course are on the computer, available to students for their work. In the goodness of the Lord, despite many buildings around being reduced to rubble, the Emmaus



'Tent houses' by a main street

bookshop is still standing and in operation. I was there for 3 afternoons, and saw a constant stream of people come in to buy books. We are preparing another large consignment of books to send there as the sales since January have been very encouraging. There is a great need for good biblical literature.

I had many opportunities to preach, often from morning till dusk. Religion is rampant (the national lottery is called 'the everlasting Father'!). Preaching fully based on the Word surprises people, and this creates an opportunity to hold their attention. May the Lord touch hearts. In December, I preached in a large church in particular and felt much liberty. Apparently one gentleman was touched by the Word, but he was not there this time, having died in the earthquake. We need to keep the vision of the power of the Word for whoever hears. *Jean-Claude Souillot*

Evangelical Press

EP Books has entered a new chapter in its history, with a merger with US-based Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service

(CVBBS). The new entity will be called *Grace Distribution Inc.*, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the production, sale and distribution of Christian Books across the US and Canada.

Grace Distribution will also have a worldwide outreach into Africa, Russia and Eastern European countries in English, French and Russian languages.

The new organisation will be made up of CVBBS managing retail activities, and EP Books managing trade and distribution sales.

Graham Hilton, chief executive of EP Books, said, 'It has taken us two years to reach this significant milestone in developing our presence in the US. Our desire is to honour the Lord as we seek to expand the sales and distribution of quality Christian books. It is a delight to join forces in this work with CVBBS, who have already shown unprecedented skills in improving our customer service. This has been achieved under the direction of Todd Jennings, the owner of CVBBS, and the other members of his team; and I am delighted that he has taken up the role of chief executive of *Grace Distribution*'.

Strength in depth

Mr Jennings said, 'Having a publisher, distributor and retailer under the same roof is positive and gives the new organisation strength in depth as we look to future developments. Having the ability to reach more of the world with the gospel gives us an invaluable opportunity.'

EP Books is the US distributor for Evangelical Press, Carey Publications, Bryntirion Press, Grace Publications, Wakeman Publications and ET



Graham Hilton and Todd Jennings

Perspectives. CVBBS has a dedicated bookstore and warehouse facility operating from its premises in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and is a key web retailer of Christian books from a wide variety of Reformed publishers.

EP's best-selling title, *Ultimate Questions*, is available in 59 languages and has more than 16 million copies in print.

EP runs pastors' conferences in West Africa, Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Belarus, in addition to a French language correspondence course for pastors and 15 French language radio programs a week.

Siberia

Sergey travels long distances in Siberia in his work of evangelism and church planting. His ministry includes preaching in several churches. The importance of perseverance is illustrated by the example of a small church in a remote town called Lesogorsk. In 1990 the gospel was preached there. Obstacles were formidable. In spite of that a small church was planted. But in 2002 it broke up which was very discouraging. However this disappointment was made the subject of earnest prayer. An answer came in

2009 when some repented of the sin they themselves name as apostasy. The group have gathered together again for the worship of God. Sergey has visited them and provided teaching and also many good books and sermons on DVD. This instance at Lesogorsk reminds us that we must never give up.

A spokesman from Wales

When Karol Wojtyla [Pope John Paul II] visited the UK in May and June 1982 there was a meeting in Trafalgar Square at which David Samuel, David Wright and Pastor Geoff Thomas of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, spoke. Probably there were more pigeons in Trafalgar Square that day than listeners. So what is the point? Well, once a modest event like that hits the press then people to the ends of the earth will know about it. Thanks to the monthly paper *Evangelical Times* (August 2010) we do know about it. But why bother about something we cannot change? The answer to that is that we need to be well informed on the mind-set of a vast number of Roman Catholics. There is widespread disillusionment about the child-molestation scandals at present. That subject is escalating and not diminishing. Minds are much more open to question tradition. Our aim always is to persuade Roman Catholics to read the Bible for themselves and to be free from the shackles of human tradition and man-made doctrines. So what does our spokesman from Wales suggest? He has compiled a list of the man-made superstitions that have been added to the Bible.

- Relics of saints are to be worshipped (788)
- Priests are not allowed to marry (1079)
- Indulgences may be bought to shorten time in purgatory (1190)

- Communion bread and wine become the physical body and blood of Christ when the priest pronounces the words *Hoc est corpus meum* ('This is my body') (1215)
- Sins must be confessed to a Roman priest (1215)
- The wafer (the presumed body of Christ) must be adored (1220)
- *Ave Maria* ('Hail Mary!') is a prayer for all the faithful (1508)
- Tradition is of equal authority to written Scripture (1545)
- The *Apocrypha* is part of the Bible (1546)
- The virgin Mary was conceived without sin (1854)
- The Pope is infallible in his official pronouncements (1870)
- Mary is Redeemer along with Christ (1922)
- Mary was taken to heaven without dying (AD 1950).

It is incredible that the Holy Spirit should take 1000 years before changing the marriage laws for elders (see 1 Timothy 3:2, 'the overseer must be the husband of one wife'). Then why should the Holy Spirit take 1200 years before altering radically the way we celebrate the Lord's Supper? and why so long as 1500 years before drastically changing the basis of our faith from Scripture alone to Scripture plus tradition? It seems obvious that this was deemed necessary in order to accommodate and endorse the human superstitions and inventions listed above.

If the spokesman from Wales, namely Pastor Geoff Thomas, ventures out again I reckon we should join him however lonely he may be and whatever the weather conditions.

The Prosperity Gospel

More than 70% of South Africans claim to be Christian. And that's pretty much a standard statistic for most southern African countries. Churches are common in rural, southern Africa. I can think of three within a 10-minute walk from my house. The average church attendance in our area seems to be between 10-50 adults.

However, the predominant kind of Christianity in the rural areas is the prosperity gospel which is advertised with posters with distorted Bible verses. An example is 'Jesus came on earth so that whoever believes in him should cease to be poor, but be forever wealthy- John 3:16.

Because of apartheid in South Africa, this country has the greatest gap between the rich and poor. The unregenerate mind is always attracted to money more than the beauty of God in Christ, but those natural desires are especially pronounced in a context of poverty.

Furthermore, most of the churches in the villages do not follow a confession of faith or doctrinal statement. A pastor may use salvation terminology only to comment later about how Christians should have a standard of living similar to that of a king. Ultimately then, the real draw card for church attendance is healing from poverty, AIDS, and a hard life, not freedom from sin's guilt. In an ironic sense, the rewritten verse in the attached photo was useful, because it

clearly stated what is often left implicit.

Add to this recipe a church membership that is not encumbered with church discipline, and you have a pretty good description of the average African indigenous church: prosperity gospel, no written doctrinal standards, and a lack of church discipline. If this is Christianity, then rural southern Africa is largely converted.

I have no patience with the prosperity non-gospel. The prosperity gospel encourages affections for Jesus because of money; Jesus' Gospel encourages affections for Jesus because of his perfections and our sinfulness.

Here's a list of further problems with the prosperity gospel.

1. It is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It urges sinners to commit idolatry.
3. It denies God's sovereign purposes for pain as revealed in Scripture.
4. It ignores Biblical teaching on wealth.
5. It discourages logical thought about the Bible, a work ethic, sickness, economics, and politics.
6. It inoculates people from hearing the truth because they think they already know Gospel.
7. It has never been accepted in the Christian church until the 1980's.
8. It contradicts the lives of the many godly, but poor, believers in the Bible and history.

Seth Myers

African Pastors' Conferences

As a preface for this update I quote Psalm 124.

If the LORD had not been on our side – let Israel say – if the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive. – Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

As a South African I recall the remarkable deliverance for all the races of South Africa in 1994. In answer to the earnest prayer of God's people there was a deliverance from revenge. Groups well-equipped and very capable of killing each other on a large scale (as has taken place in many parts of Africa) instead were led to a peaceable solution of living together in harmony. That deliverance must never be forgotten. It provides freedom for the gospel. The report which follows can hang on one text: 'See, I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut' (Rev 3:8).

An entire nation can be transformed when pastors across that nation preach the gospel powerfully and when the Holy Spirit is at work to apply biblical teaching to all areas of life. An example of is Mozambique. The annual conference in Nampula is outstanding for expository preaching and the provision of Reformed books in Portuguese. These are now read in all parts of the country. About 70 pastors attended the first conference in

Nampula in 2000. This year the number was 250.

Is it possible that the whole of South Africa can be influenced by the ministry exercised through the African Pastors' Conferences? The basics are stressed: the authority and infallible nature of the Bible; a firm grasp of the cardinal doctrines of Christian orthodoxy; the value of the historic confessions of faith; the primacy of expository preaching; a love of Church history as a testimony of what the Holy Spirit has achieved so far; and a hearty rejection of false gospels like the prosperity gospel which defames the name of Christ. There was one APC in 2005. Now there are twelve. Two more are planned including one in Soweto which is the best known township in South Africa. Soweto has a population of one million. That statistic is often challenged. It is reckoned that there are many more than that because of so many illegal immigrants and unregistered people. It is impossible to make an accurate estimate. The Chris Hani-Baragwaneth Hospital in Soweto is reckoned to be the largest hospital in the world.

The only two provinces where we are yet to have an APC are North West Cape and Northern Cape.

Sadly only a small minority of white churches make concerted efforts in outreach beyond their own environments. Huge rural areas are neglected. There are thousands of

churches in the rural areas and in the black townships. The provision of the best available books published by Banner of Truth, Evangelical Press, IVP, DayOne and Christian Focus is becoming a reality in some of these areas for the first time.

Forthcoming APCs

- 23-25 Sept. **Limpopo** at tribal meeting place 30K West of Polokwane.
- 16-18 Nov. **George** in the Cape.
- 1-3 Dec. (4th APC) **Orapa**, Botswana.
- 4-5 Jan (5th APC). **Port Elizabeth**.
- 7-9 Jan Durban, First Youth Conference, Kwazulu Natal.
- 10-12 Jan (6th APC) **Hillcrest**, Kwazulu Natal.
- 14 Jan (4th APC) **Mseleni**, Kwazulu.
- 17-18 Jan First APC IN **SOWETO** near Johannesburg.
- 20 Jan Second in South Coast Kwazulu Natal.
- 21-22 Jan (3rd APC) **Newcastle**, Kwazulu Natal.
- 24 Jan (4th APC) **Welkom**, Free State.
- 26-28 Jan (5th APC) **Ora et Labora**, Pretoria.
- Further forthcoming APCs in which some dates have yet to be decided are **Barberton** (5th APC). **Manzini**, Swaziland (2nd APC). **Bulawayo**, Zimbabwe (5th APC). **Livingstone** Zambia, August 2010. **Tanzania** Correspondence continues to explore for an open door.

Matters for thanksgiving

The provision of organisers on the ground as well as teams of practical supporters is very encouraging. Do we



The kind of vehicle we need

have opposition? Yes, but very little. How do we deal with it? Simple. Which sermon do you wish to criticise? What books do you deem as deficient? When it comes down to detail our basis is biblical. It is a matter of where the critic stands in relation to the Word of God. We are always grateful for the provision of a warehouse and a website manager. Funding has only just kept abreast with the needs. We encourage self-support on the ground while APC bear the costs of the books and the preachers who mostly come from and fly in from Zambia. Cheques for this work to be made out to African Pastors' Conferences and posted to the editor. For address see back inside cover.

Matters for prayer

The growth so far and the challenge represented by the APCs point to the future need of a full-time leader who can oversee these events. As the conferences develop and grow more attention has to be given to the books that are chosen to be on display. A major need is to have our own APC vehicle. The costs of hire are high. We could share a vehicle with a church or a farmer or a business magnate sympathetic to our cause. As the work expands so do the needs. We need to pray for future leaders not only in the Church but in politics especially since self-serving and corruption are endemic. *Editor*

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