

REFORMATION TODAY



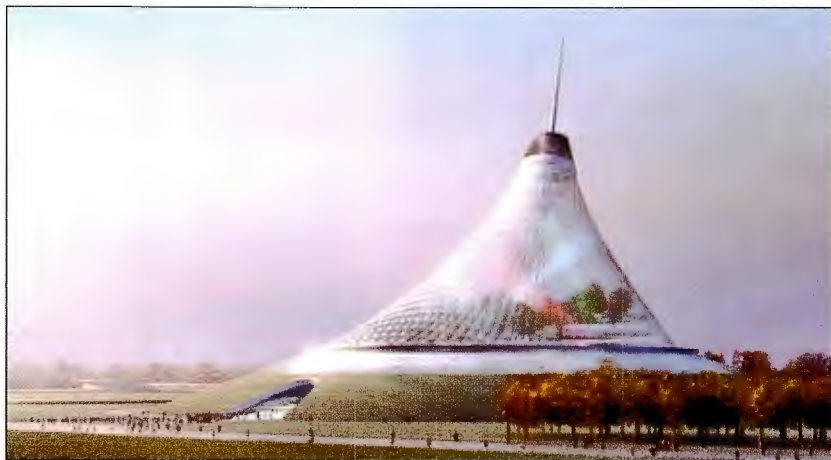
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Websites www.reformation-today.org
 The editor's personal website is <http://www.errollhulse.com>
<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



This map of what was formerly Yugoslavia shows the nations and the boundary lines that have emerged.



An amazing structure that required extraordinary engineering design has been erected in Istana the capital city of Kazakhstan. Inspired by President Nazarbayev the project was designed by British architect Sir Norman Foster. Heated to a warm temperature the massive internal space is occupied by large numbers who can escape the freezing conditions during winter and enjoy a wide variety of activities. For details of a conference in Kazakhstan see News.

Front cover picture – Simo Ralević.

Editorial

With revolutions taking place in the Arab world, how are we to pray? Guidance comes from 1 Timothy 2:1-5:

‘I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.’

Should we pray for democratic governments to be elected? If the Republic of Turkey is an example the answer is yes.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has just been elected for a third time. With great eloquence and passion he addressed all citizens of the Republic of Turkey (76 million) as brothers and sisters. In the most glowing terms he promised human rights and freedom of religion for everyone. That sounds wonderful but will it work? We can be cynical. If the new constitution which is now promised declares freedom for all there is hope. That worked in South

Africa. Let us pray it will work in Turkey.

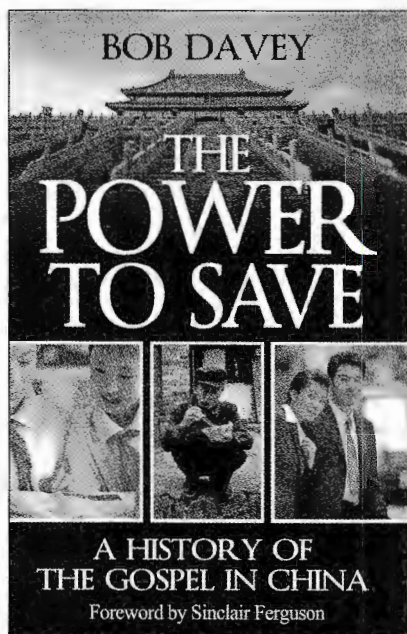
Other Middle East nations are more problematic.

In Syria demonstrations have reached proportions greater and more widespread than ever before. The regime is ruthless and hundreds have been shot and thousands imprisoned. Brutal suppression of peaceful protesters continues. The West is muted in its response. One reason for that is because when this regime collapses there is no one leader or party ready to restore order.

In Yemen there are many disparate tribal groups. Massive protests against the Yemeni regime have taken place. That nation seems to be on its way to becoming completely chaotic, a failed state which can soon become the base for dangerously aggressive Islamic groups.

China

How does the Chinese government view the revolutionary uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen? How can overwhelming numbers of protesters on the streets be overcome? The outcome in these countries has varied. In Tunisia and



The Power to Save – A History of the Gospel in China. Bob Davey traces the unconquerable power of the gospel through the years in that land. In his foreword Sinclair B Ferguson states 'This should be prescribed reading for Christians in the Western world.'

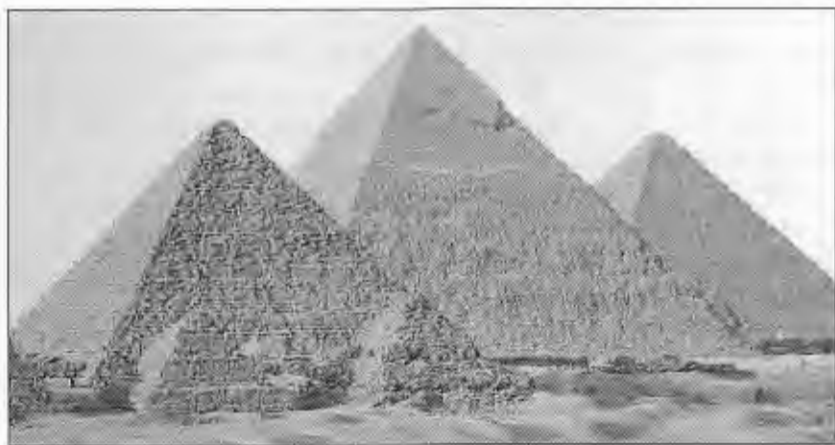
Egypt the result has been swift and conclusive, namely the termination of the one-party state and one party dictators and moves toward introducing a democratic form of government. In Libya the outcome is still uncertain. A civil war festers on. Where there are disparate tribes that think in a monolithic way democracy does not work. As a senior British politician aptly stated it, 'Arab States do not do democracy.' Christians are Trinitarian in their faith and think in terms of diversity and unity. Diversity

is hard work for those of a monolithic sacral mind.

In China there are worrying uprisings in the massive western province of Xinjiang where about eleven million Uyghur people live. The Uyghur people are Muslim. When the Uyghur people have contested for their rights they have been put down. Thousands have lost their lives or been imprisoned. Repression is ruthless as centralised policies are implemented.

Tony Lambert, the director for China Research for the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, translated an important Chinese Communist document which reveals amazing statistics about the growth of the churches in China and which unveils the thinking at the highest level of the Communist Party about the Church.

I will not go over this ground here but suggest the Chinese leaders are at a loss to understand the irresistible growth of the Christian Church. Their focus is through the lens of sociology and politics. They are unable to understand that this is the work of God the Holy Spirit who reveals the message of Jesus' atoning death, resurrection, ascension and reign in heaven. It is impossible to stop this message being spread. It cannot be monitored. It travels from person to person as they move around from place to place. The kingdom of God is within believers and nothing can



This year Hosni Mubarak stepped down as president of Egypt after ruling for thirty years. Very little media attention was directed to the fact that extreme Islamic groups took full advantage of the upheaval and attacked Christians and destroyed their church buildings. In all the Middle East upheavals Christian minorities are in grave peril as fanatical groups seize the opportunity to evict them. It is a sobering fact that the Baptists in Baghdad thrived under the rule of Saddam Hussein but subsequently Christians in Iraq have suffered what is tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

stop their living for Christ and sharing the good news of salvation. In the past every form of repression has been exerted to stop this. It is to no avail.

Now the five-year long campaign by the reigning Communist Party is increasing in intensity to close churches and even use 'mafia-type violence' to hinder and discourage church growth. The recorded incidents of persecution which include beatings, torture, arrests, harassment and demolition of church buildings rose during 2010. The government's stranglehold on information makes it impossible to ascertain the full measure of persecution. Not always but generally

Christians have multiplied in adversity. As the series on the history of the Church in China by Bob Davey has shown, persecution has not curtailed church growth in China. One of the principal lessons is that when all the western missionaries were expelled in 1949, far from collapsing the churches expanded and multiplied.

In April this year the independent 'Shouwang' church in Beijing was suddenly closed. 160 members who gathered outside were taken to the police station. This is a setback. We must pray for the conversion of those who exercise authority. Regeneration is through the sovereign power of our

Triune God. Transformed lives are God's testimony in this world. We must pray that respected leaders in China will be given the wisdom that Gamaliel exemplified when he warned the Jewish leaders with these words: 'Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God' (Acts 5:38-39).

The Power to Save is the title of Bob Davey's book which has the explanatory sub-title: *A History of the Gospel in China*. It is a 356-page paperback published by Evangelical Press. Bob Davey began his work on the history of the gospel in China in 2007 with an article in RT 220 on the subject of Robert Morrison the pioneer missionary to China. Subsequent articles have covered the years up to 1998. Today the potential for the Chinese Church to play a major role on the world stage of missions is greater than ever. As we in Europe cherish the annals of our history – the Reformers and Puritans and subsequent periods of evangelical awakenings – so in the future there will be millions of Chinese who will value this history of how they have emerged through the last two hundred years to become a mighty spiritual army

The history of the gospel in China from the tiniest beginning in 1807 until the present is packed with encouragement. The outstanding feature is the fulfillment of Christ's words: 'I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.' As this valuable book shows, the work has developed stage by stage. Extraordinary perseverance and patience were exemplified by the pioneers. Sometimes, as in the case of the Boxer Rebellion, the supreme sacrifice was made. Vigorous and protracted persecution has not succeeded in stopping the multiplication of believers. In fact persecution in the case of China has had the opposite effect intended by those opposed to the gospel. Despite all opposition, and in answer to the prayers of many generations, God is at work. The authoress Faith Cook was born of missionary parents in China. She writes, 'In 1951 the Communist government expelled my missionary parents from the Chinese town where they were working. Only ten trembling believers remained. Would they stand in the face of relentless persecution? Today there are hundreds of Christians in that place.' The work of God in China encourages us to pray for such 'mighty acts' even here in the UK and in Europe. See suggestions in the short article Concert of Prayer.

Stupendous Certainties to Come

An exposition of Isaiah 25:6-8

To what extent will the finished work of the Messiah impact the world? Isaiah unfolds that as he concludes the four famous Servant passages (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). Chapter 54 tells of the message going to the nations and chapter 55 presents the universal invitations of the gospel. William Carey was inspired by the words, 'Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back' (Isa 54:2). For fuller descriptions of the worldwide impact of the gospel we must survey the four Victor's Songs (Isa 59:21; 61:1-3; 61:10-62:7 and 63ff). Isaiah describes the international ministry of the Messiah in several passages before we reach the series of Songs just referred to, namely, Isaiah 2:1-4, chapter 11, 19:23-25; 26:1-6 and 35:1-10.

Here I will open up Isaiah 25:6-8

Verse 6 *On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.*

Verse 7 *On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;*

Verse 8 *he will swallow up death for ever – The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.*

The LORD has spoken.

The mountain referred to is Mount Zion, the mountain upon which the city of Jerusalem is built. Those who visit Jerusalem have probably stood on the Mount of Olives that looks toward the walled city of Jerusalem. There stands in prominence the Dome of the Rock which is an Islamic mosque built on the site of where the temple of the LORD used to stand. Even today that scene

is impressive. It does not have the grandeur that it had in our Lord's day but it is the city over which he wept.

There are three promises in these verses, one promise to each verse.

The first promise

Verse 6 *On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.*

We must note the reference to the mountain of God.

Both verses six and seven begin with the words, 'On this mountain'.

What is this mountain?

1. This is the mountain where Abraham was tested about his willingness to offer up his only son Isaac. That mountain was called Mount Moriah (Gen 22:2; 2 Ch 3:1).
2. This mountain was where David established the city of Jerusalem.
3. This mountain became the symbol of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, 'the city of our God, his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King' (Ps 48:1,2).
4. This mountain is the symbol of all Christ-centred worship. 'He has set his foundation on the holy mountain; the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God' (Ps 87:1,2).
5. This mountain is the place to which Messiah Jesus came and it is at this mountain where he was crucified, at Golgotha or Calvary, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.
6. This mountain is where Pentecost day came to be, and became an historical event of momentous importance.

7. This mountain became the epicentre from which God's blessing will go to all the ends of the earth. When we read the book of Acts we observe the steady advance of the gospel. Ripples went out from Jerusalem as the centre. Antioch became a centre and then Ephesus and eventually Rome. Now our geography is global and we live in a time when we are involved in taking the gospel to the furthestmost points of the earth, for instance to the 4,000 inhabited islands of Indonesia. That nation has a population of about 220 million which is the fourth largest population in the world.
8. This mountain is the symbol of the Lord's work. 'In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths"' (Micah 4:1,2).
9. This mountain is the symbol of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Now it is on this mountain that the Sovereign LORD, as expressed in point nine above, will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines (25:6).

This banquet represents that great final feast prepared by God for all his people. It is to that feast that we are invited by the gospel (Isa 55:1-3; Luke 14:15-24). With that invitation is given the assurance, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' This means that in the Son of God the Father has provided all we need (1 Cor 1:30 and 2 Cor 5:21). It is spoken of as the feast where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will sit down.

We get a foretaste of this great banquet when we sit down at the Lord's Table to partake of the bread and the wine. There is no richer spiritual food than that set before us on the communion table. Here indeed is the bread of life and here indeed is wine that represents what nothing else can do, namely, the cleansing away of all our sins. These emblems lead on to a feast by which as believers we enjoy all that pertains to the new earth and heavens in union

with the Messiah. 'I will come in and eat with him, and he with me' (Rev 3:20).

The second promise:

Verse 7 On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations.

This description of the spiritual darkness that covers the nations is similar to Isaiah 60:2. 'See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.'

When Jesus died in our place on Calvary he defeated Satan. The devil was bound in this defeat so that he can no longer deceive the nations. Yet we still see the widespread dominion of Satan on the earth. However in this promise there is the certainty that deliverance will be given.

The shroud in the text I take to be a reference to a funeral shroud which was used to wrap a dead body. The corpse was taken to the burial place wrapped in a shroud. This is a picture of nations that are wrapped up in a funeral shroud of gospel ignorance. The sheet referred to, 'the sheet that covers all nations', is like a sheet that shuts out the light of the gospel. This sheet is like the veil referred to by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:15-16, 'Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.' The light of the gospel must shine for the shroud of death to be removed. This is how the prophets envisaged the salvation of the world. 'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned' (Isa 9:2). 'I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth' (Isa 49:6; cf. Luke 1:79; John 8:12).

Verse seven is a magnificent promise of a great time of deliverance on the earth when 'all the nations of the world will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down to him' (Ps 22:27). When darkness is dispelled by the light of the gospel peace will be proclaimed to the nations. Then the Messiah's rule 'will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth' (Zech 9:10). Then the Scripture will be

fulfilled which declares, 'My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense (prayer) and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations' (Mal 1:11, see also Gen 12:3; 49:10; Psalm 67:2; 72:17b; 86:9; 102:15).

The third promise

Verse 8 *He will swallow up death for ever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.*

This third promise in our text leaps forward to the time of the great universal resurrection day. Jesus will come again and every eye will see him. He will raise the dead. He will swallow up death for ever. This soon coming reality is eloquently declared for us in 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 which says, 'For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.'

There are many formidable enemies in the form of false religions and atheistic philosophies that have to be conquered by Christ. He will put these enemies under his feet (Ps 110:1). When he has achieved victory he will come again to conquer the final enemy which is the greatest enemy, namely, that appalling enemy of death (1 Cor 15:25-26). How awesome will be that omnipotent power exercised to raise our bodies from their graves! How long will it take? 'In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye!' Omnipotence and infinite omniscience will combine to achieve this awesome universal miracle. We should examine the theory of evolution in the light of this reality. Can God create elephants and giraffe and whales, chameleons and spiders and bees, swallows and pelicans? Why fiddle about for millions of years when the design needs to be perfect immediately? If these creatures and a myriad of others need to be perfect and all relate to each other in inter-dependence the work is best done spontaneously just as Genesis chapters one and two describe.

The text concludes with one more promise of comfort.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.

This is a reference to the sufferings of the Lord's people. There is reference here to the disgrace and humiliation suffered by them for his name's sake. Many have been tortured and many martyred for his name. That humiliation will be removed. They will be fully vindicated. 'He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun' (Ps 37:6). No one was more disgraced and humiliated than our Lord himself. He humbled himself even to the death of the Cross but God has exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth (Phil 2:6-11).

The best commentary upon the promise *The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces* is found in Revelation chapter seven. It pictures a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language is before the throne. They worship the Lamb that was slain for them. They are described as those who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. They are comforted:

*Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat upon them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb at the centre of the
throne will be their shepherd;
He will lead them to springs of living water.
And God will wipe away every tear
from their eyes.*

The three promises of Isaiah 25:6-8 conclude with this affirmation:

The LORD has spoken!

The prospects are immense, the banquet, liberated nations, the resurrection of the body! The God of all the earth has spoken these promises. Therefore we can be sure that they will be fulfilled. In that we rejoice and worship our Triune God and work on (1 Cor 15:58).

Simo Ralević and his Ministry



Simo Ralević was born the eldest son of a poor hill farmer in 1940 in a very cold stone house high up on the hills overlooking the town of Peć and the fertile plains of Kosovo. Above the house rose forested slopes of the mountain range dividing Montenegro from Serbia. During his boyhood he experienced famine and scarcity of clothing.

At the age of thirteen he served as apprentice to a tinsmith in Peć and this lasted four years. However his wages were so meagre that he could see no future for himself in Yugoslavia. So he decided to escape across the border to Trieste and from Italy perhaps emigrate to Australia or some other western country. After living in a refugee camp for six months where he learned to speak English and Italian, he became disillusioned about his prospects of a new life in the West and decided to return to Yugoslavia.

On arrival at the border he was arrested and put in prison on suspicion of being a spy. He was placed in a tiny cell in solitary confinement. He was beaten black and blue and put on starvation rations and suffered freezing temperatures throughout his six-month sentence. It was during this period

of suffering that he experienced a vivid and never to be forgotten dream. In it he believed he saw the face of Jesus saying to him, 'Simo, Simo, pull down the old house and build a new one!' The dream had a profound effect on him so much so that he prayed fervently, 'Lord, please send someone to me who can explain the meaning of my dream!'

Upon his release from prison in 1962 he was drafted into the Yugoslav army to do his national service. In the barracks where he lived he met a young soldier whose demeanour and manner of life instantly attracted him. It transpired that he was a Christian and he explained the gospel of God's redeeming grace to Simo who eagerly drank in every word. He described to his new-found friend the mysterious and vivid dream which he had experienced in prison and asked him if he could explain it. Opening the Bible to John chapter three he told Simo the meaning of the new birth through which old things pass away and all things become new. Straight-away Simo had the answer he had been seeking for!

When he was discharged from the army Simo did not return home to Peć. This was because he managed to find a job in the town of Stremška Mitrovica where he had served in the army. He also joined a small Baptist church where he began to enjoy Christian fellowship for the first time. It was here in 1964 that he met two visitors from Britain. Julian Mouton was a tall young South African who was working with the Banner of Truth in London. Colonel Thomson whose life story was described in RT 141 and 142 was the second. Julian, observing that Simo could speak English, gave him a Banner of Truth book, *Ecclesiastes* by Charles Bridges. This was the first time that Simo had seen such a book. The *Ecclesiastes* commentary proved to be the first of many Banner of Truth books read by Simo who became a voracious reader of reformed books.

Colonel Thomson, who had mastered German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Polish, had retired from a distinguished career with the Foreign Office. He had been instrumental in retrieving valuable records used in the Nuremburg trial of Nazi leaders. Until his death in 1967 he devoted his life to ministry to pastors and churches in Eastern Europe. He trained Roger Weil in this work. Indeed Roger became a devoted worker

who made regular visits to Eastern Europe with the purpose of encouraging pastors there. In 1965 Colonel Thomson and Roger travelled by train to meet Simo and his young wife Mary whom he had married earlier that year. Simo had felt the call to return to Peć in the words of Jesus to the demon-possessed man at Gadara, 'Go home to your own people and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.' So began a friendship and fellowship in the gospel with Roger that has lasted ever since.

Simo met Mary while studying for the full-time ministry at a small Bible School in northern Yugoslavia. At the end of the second year he was expelled. The reason was that he believed and preached the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. This was anathema to the college tutors who were strongly Arminian! Simo had come to his understanding of this truth through reading one of Spurgeon's sermons in the six-volume set of New Park Street Sermons published by the Banner of Truth. The Banner books have been formative in Simo's theological development. In fact these books were meat and drink to Simo and instructors in his powerful preaching ministry which began in the late 1960s and continues unabated until today, touching all parts of the seven nations that have emerged from the former Yugoslavia.

John Marshall, a minister of the gospel and trustee of the Banner of Truth, took a special interest in encouraging pastors in the then restricted countries of Eastern Europe dominated by Communist regimes. He included Simo in his invitations to the annual Banner of Truth Conference at Leicester. John Marshall persuaded Simo to attend in the late 1970s and formed a close friendship with him. He invited Simo to preach in his church after the conferences. John Marshall and his family also visited Peć several times to encourage him in his ever increasing itinerant preaching and literature ministry.

When civil war broke out in Kosovo, Peć was severely affected and large parts were burned to the ground by both sides in the conflict. When the war reached the suburb where Simo lived he and his family fled to Serbia on a truck. Simo had only his Bible and one volume of Spurgeon's sermons. He

also managed to retrieve his writings on electronic disks. The warehouse storing 250,000 items of literature was destroyed by fire. His home and church were spared. Ironically the church is now occupied by Albanian Christians. In fleeing from Peć, Simo and his family settled in a town in Serbia. Amazingly the opposition to his ministry there was so intense, worse than anything experienced by the Muslims in Kosovo that he was compelled to move yet again this time to the town of Arandjelovac. Here Simo has succeeded in re-establishing a very extensive literature ministry. The materials are nearly all sermonic and all posted materials are free of charge. Simo regularly receives letters from people who testify that they have been saved through the literature they have received. All seven countries that formerly made up Yugoslavia have been impacted. The diversity of peoples can be appreciated as we look briefly at these nations.

Simo's Ministry

SERBIA (7.7 million), capital Belgrade (1.1 million). The Serbian Orthodox Church represents about half of the population and is intolerant of Evangelicals. In fact Evangelicals are regarded as a sect like the JW's. Simo has been enabled to extend his preaching and literature ministry widely in Serbia. He estimates that there are ten churches which he has opened. All these are the outcome of his preaching, visitation and literature work. Simo is also involved with Slovakian, Hungarian and Romanian Baptist churches in Serbia.

KOSOVO (2 million), capital Pristina (183,000). Kosovo is officially a province of Serbia but this is contested and there is tension between Albania and Serbia. Kosovo is occupied by NATO forces and is administered by the UN. Kosovo is 88% Albanian (nearly all Muslim) and 7% Serb. The evangelical constituency is very small but is growing. Kosovo has one of the weakest economies in Europe. Simo recounts how Albanian believers bought his church building and house in Peć. When Simo visited them they told him that his literature had been the means of their coming to saving faith. These were writings in the Albanian language. Simo has printed the first New Testament and twenty-two books in Albanian. These have been and continue to be distributed all over

Kosovo and Albania. For a number of years Albania boasted about being an atheist nation and fiercely opposed the gospel. When that nation of about three million became open Simo was the first Serbian preacher to tour the country. He took five boxes of tracts and books. Subsequently large quantities of books have been posted into Albania. Today there are over thirty churches in Kosovo and many more than that in Albania.

MONTENEGRO (625,000), capital Podgorica (144,000), was recognised as a state as early as 1077. This nation is closely allied to Serbia. The official language is Ijekavian, a dialect of Serbian. A beautiful coastline hosts Europe's fastest growing tourist industry. The Orthodox Church claims 71% of the population. This denomination is split into two groupings. These dominate the religious scene. *Operation World* tells of 35 Brethren, 50 Pentecostal and 35 Reformation Church members. Simo knows of one reformed Baptist Church. He has baptised converts in the Adriatic Sea. Others came to Peć to be baptised.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (3.7 million), capital Sarajevo (396,000). Bosnian is the official language. WWII saw hundreds of thousands of Serbs exterminated by Croat and Bosnian Nazi collaborators. The break-up of Yugoslavia led to a Croat-Muslim alliance in support of independence in March 1992 which was immediately militarily contested by the Serb minority. The subsequent three-sided war among Serbians, Croats and Bosnians resulted in immense damage and loss of life. Multitudes were displaced. The war ended in 1995 with no winner. Extraordinarily in spite of the chaos the very small number of evangelical believers has increased. The two million Muslim majority form one of the least evangelised communities in Europe. Even so it is reckoned that about 500 have embraced Christ. *Operation World* mentions that there are 360 Baptists in Bosnia. Simo has a ministry in this country and has been active in supplying literature to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CROATIA (4.4 million), capital Zagreb (687,000). The official language is Croatian which is close to Serbian but which is written in Latin rather than in Cyrillic script. Freedom of religion is allowed in a secular state. The Roman Catholic majority (87% of the population) means that they have a favoured status. Only about 15% of Catholics attend mass, a high

proportion in Europe. Baptists number 2,100. Evangelicals form only 0.4% of the population. Simo has strong links with Croatia. He writes, 'It is an open mission field! In Dalmatia I have organised several mission stations. Five of them are now churches. I have travelled all over Croatia preaching the gospel. My wife is Croatian. Last year I ministered in several churches in Croatia. My daughter Rut is married to a Croat from the north of Croatia. I have evangelised in several churches over there with some good fruit. A brother who was saved through my literature is pastor of a Reformed church in the north of Croatia. I also have a sister in Croatia with seven children. Her husband was killed in an accident. They are all believers. There is a brother who studied in John MacArthur's school in USA. After finishing he opened a theological academy near where my daughter lives. This brother is the fruit of my ministry.'

SLOVENIA (2 million), capital Ljubljana (260,000). The official languages are Slovene, Hungarian and Italian. This is the most prosperous and best organised nation of the former Yugoslavia. In 2008 Slovenia became a member of the EU. There is freedom of religion. Roman Catholics form 44% of the population but secularism is on the increase. There are very few evangelical believers in Slovenia. Simo's brother has planted a church in Slovenia and some of Simo's writings have been translated and published in Slovenian.

MACEDONIA (2 million), capital Skopje (507,000). Macedonian is the official language. The Macedonian Orthodox Church which embraces 64% of the population is the dominant religious body. 1,000 churches are largely empty. The country is turning secular. Evangelicals are miniscule in number making up 0.2% of the population. However this minority is active, united and increasing. Albanian Muslims represent 25% of the population and are unevangelised. There is political tension between Greece and Macedonia over territorial claims. Simo has worked in Macedonia and continues to do so. He reports, 'I have planted a few churches in Macedonia. These originated through the printed word and preaching. There are several Methodist and Pentecostal Churches in Macedonia. I supply them with my literature. Pastors there use my books as a help for preaching. I preach in several Methodist churches in Macedonia.'

Roger Weil

The Gospel in China – 1976-1998

by Bob Davey

In 1949 there had been at most 1 million Protestant believers in China. Fifty years later in 1999 there were estimated to be around 90 million Protestant believers in China, mainly due to the phenomenal growth of the illegal ‘underground’ house churches that by then numbered 80 million. This was the result of one of the mightiest outpourings of the Holy Spirit in the whole history of the Church. The revival continues to this day.

The deaths of Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in 1976 brought to an end the Cultural Revolution and Maoist Thought. In multitudes disillusionment had set in. Harsh reality and bitter experience had overtaken and destroyed idealism. It was a time of opportunity for the gospel. The revival, already in evidence in the house church movement, spread rapidly and this accelerated even more after the notorious massacre of students in Tienanmen Square in June 1989. Both the house church movement and the re-formed TSPM Church benefited.

People's Republic of China 1976-1998

Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997), who had been purged during the Cultural Revolution, re-emerged as leader of the moderate pragmatists. By 1978 he was the defacto leader of China, and remained so until his death. The Third Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party's Eleventh National Party Congress, held in December 1978, is considered a major turning point in modern Chinese history. Deng affirmed reforms based on uniting the nation behind a programme of the ‘Four Modernisations’ of industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defence. The goal was that of bringing China into the community of advanced industrial nations by the start of the new millennium. In future, economic progress was to be put above the Maoist goals of class struggle and permanent revolution. From 1978 tourists were allowed into China under carefully controlled supervision.

By 1982, in less than fifty years, the population had doubled to over 1 billion, so the change in policy was timely and essential. A policy of one child per family, with some tragic social consequences, had already been adopted in 1979. From 1986 China's ‘open-door policy’ has led to inward foreign investment and technical knowledge. This encouraged some development of a market economy and a private sector. It was to be ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’. In 1989 stock markets opened in Shanghai and Shenzhen.

In May 1989 student demonstrators camped for weeks in Tiananmen Square in Beijing to demand the posthumous rehabilitation of the former moderate CCP general secretary Hu Yaobang. They also wanted a crackdown on corruption within the Communist Party and a government engagement towards democracy. Already Communism was showing signs of collapsing in Eastern Europe and the USSR. The Chinese leadership feared the same for China. Troops were sent in on the evening of 3 June. Many hundreds (some estimate thousands) of students and Beijing citizens were killed. Many students were arrested nationwide in the aftermath. International outrage led to sanctions.

After the Tiananmen Square incident Deng Xiaoping retired from public view but kept overall control. Power passed to Jiang Zemin as general secretary of the Communist Party. The economy continued to grow at an impressive rate, but at the cost of many social problems and tensions. In 1997 Hong Kong reverted to Chinese control as also did Macau in 1999.

Re-opening of churches after the Cultural Revolution

The more liberal policies of Deng Xiaoping undid Mao's extremist policies, including those of outright persecution of believers. In January 1979 the Religious Affairs Bureau resumed its work of government control of all religion. In April 1979 the first TSPM church was re-opened in Ningbo. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement was reconstituted in March 1980 and the China Christian Council (CCC) became a recognised religious body in October 1980. The leadership of both the TSPM and the CCC was entrusted to the liberal theologian and communist Bishop Ding Guangxun. The remit of the CCC was to handle the Church organisation, theological education and delegations to go overseas. The leadership of the CCC remained firmly in the hands of convinced Communists who vigorously opposed the expansion of Christianity in China. They opened as few TSPM churches as they could get away with. The CCC in due course took its seat as a member of the World Council of Churches.

In March 1982 a new, but ambiguous, religious policy statement of the Communist Party emerged. It was 'Document 19'. 'The State protects legitimate religious activities,' that is to say, the TSPM and CCC. Thus, the activities of house churches who would not register were regarded as illegal, as was open evangelism conducted outside the limit of a registered TSPM building. Yet there was an acknowledgement that it is 'fruitless and extremely harmful to use simple coercion in dealing with people's ideological and spiritual questions'. This policy document is a rejection of Mao Zedong's extremist religious policy. Yet, 'all the patriotic religious organisations should

obey the leadership of the Party and the government.' 'We must strengthen the organs of government controlling religious affairs.' Nothing had changed fundamentally. The target was the suppression of the emerging unregistered house churches. Arrests could be made on the grounds of 'illegal criminal activity' and for 'being unpatriotic'.

The fundamental dilemma for both the State and the TSPM was that, for ideological reasons, they could not tolerate what they could not control. The TSPM did not hesitate to call upon the police and the Public Security Bureau to enforce its decrees.

'A mass of believers'

Between 1978-1980 thousands of Christians, who had been arrested in the 1950s, were released and allowed back into secular occupation. These were those who had opposed the TSPM or had been caught up in the 1957-1958 Anti-Rightist Campaign. It can hardly be over-emphasised what good the testimony and example of these thousands of released Christian sufferers had on the emerging house church movement. Many of these Christians were older pastors and leaders, and had been well trained in theology before 1949. They were ready and willing to take teaching and leadership roles among the growing community of young believers and itinerant evangelists.

In 1980 the Chinese press grudgingly admitted that there was 'a mass of believers' in China. They recognised an unprecedented upsurge of Christian belief in China, especially among the youth. Not a few Party members had been affected.

In Zhejiang province the remarkable revival in Wenzhou continued unabated. In one mountainous region of 10,000, one in three was Christian, meeting in fifteen places. The services lasted four hours. In some communes the majority of the members were Christian. In one commune production teams were named 'Jesus Team No. 1, Jesus Team No.2' and so on. Leslie Lyall noted that 'In some rural areas, over 90% of the population are Christian – a totally unprecedented statistic in the history of the Church in China one semi-official estimate is that in Zhejiang alone there may be as many as five million Christians.'

In Jiangsu province it was the same story. Shanghai had one million believers. Four thousand house groups held special Christmas services in 1982. This was in addition to those held in the open churches. In Nanjing, Suzhou and elsewhere there was rapid growth. An old pastor said, 'The fire of the gospel has been lit and it is going to keep on burning like a prairie fire.'

In Guangdong province, in a small town near Guangzhou, a church of a hundred members actually baptised three hundred, three times its own membership! In Shantou, where the Church had suffered severely in 1966, the membership had nearly doubled, of whom most of the additions were young people. Two hundred students met regularly for Bible study at one university.

What about inland? It was discovered, almost by accident, that the revival was not confined to the coast. In Henan province, made up mostly of farmers, it emerged that astounding numbers were turning to Christ. Said one pastor, 'It is God who is mightily at work today! We are doing nothing.' What impressed people was the godliness and the Bible knowledge of the young Christians, in spite of all the handicaps of lack of Bibles and good Christian literature. 3000 baptisms *every day of the year* had been taking place in Henan province! Just think of Robert Morrison and his colleagues with their ten converts in twenty-seven years, at the time of the beginnings of the gospel in China.

Likewise revival was reported in the six provinces bordering on Henan. These were Anhui, Hubei, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Hebei and the northern coastal province of Shandong. Growth in Jiangxi was said to be 'astounding' and in Shandong 'tremendous'. In the martyr province of Shanxi, so bruised by the Boxers in 1900, the number of recent conversions were 'innumerable'. In contrast in Beijing there were very few Christians. In the south-west, among the minority tribes, Christians among the Miao and the Lisu were said to number 100,000 and their religion was officially described as 'Christian'. All the other provinces had experienced some growth as well, even if not as spectacular as that of the revival centres. The vast majority of these converts remained outside the TSPM. The house churches boomed.

The house church networks

The largest house church networks that developed were in Henan and Anhui provinces.

The most extensive network of all was the Fangcheng Fellowship in Fangcheng County, Henan. This viewed itself as a church and its founders were Gao Yongjiu and Li Tianen.

The second largest network was the Tanghe Fellowship in Henan (also known as the China Gospel Fellowship or China Evangelical Fellowship). This viewed itself as a loose-knit fellowship and its founders were Xing Liaoyuan, Feng Jianguo and Shen Xianfeng.

The Local Church (also known as the Shouters) consisted of the Little Flock fellowships that gravitated to the teachings of Witness Lee (Li Changshou). They were strong in Henan and also in the south-eastern coastal provinces. The Born-Again Movement (also known as Way of Life Church, Full Gospel Church, or the Weepers) was another large network. They emphasised the importance of discipling converts. Their founder was Xu Yongze.

In Anhui, one of the provinces hardest hit by flood and famine, house church networks flourished in Fengyang County, Fuyang Prefecture, Mengcheng County and Huoqiu County. Over 3 million are today associated with the house churches of Anhui alone. In 1949, there were about 50,000 Christians in the whole of Anhui province.

In addition networks were developing in major cities in the coastal provinces, where there had been long association with the missionary works of the past. The most notable of these were in Fuqing County, Fujian province and Wenzhou and its environs in Zhejiang province. The latter prospered under the leadership of Miao Zhitong and Zhen Datong.

Around 1978 the sect of the True Jesus Church, though completely disbanded by 1966, was re-established in seventeen provinces almost single-handedly by the remarkable Wang Yuansong. After 1979 the sect mushroomed.

Rise of the itinerant evangelists

In the latter years of the Cultural Revolution and early post-Mao years of 1974-1982 China saw the rise of itinerant evangelists. 1981 was a turning point for the Fangcheng fellowship. 'This was when the church moved from being underground to open meetings in full view of the police,' says Wu Baixin, a Henan intellectual. The emerging house church networks had developed a pattern of evangelism. They would train young Christians and send them out in pairs. These were told to evangelise everyone. They were not to pass anyone on the street, or in their journey, without sharing the gospel. Tracts were given out in public places. The police were very surprised to see these bold, dedicated young men and women. It was something new. Inevitably some of these young evangelists were arrested, beaten, jailed and tortured. This prospect did not dampen their zeal. A graphic account of the bravery and persecution of some of these young evangelists was sent in a long letter to Christians overseas from Fangcheng County, Henan province, dated 6 May 1982. This is reproduced in full from Tony Lambert's book *China's Christian Millions*.

ALL WHO LIVE GODLY LIVES IN CHRIST JESUS WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION

Dear brothers and sisters,

On behalf of the brothers and sisters in Henan I send greetings to the members of the Body overseas! Today the church in Henan is being greatly blessed by the Lord and the number of those saved increases daily. The gospel of God is flourishing. All this is done not without your prayers and contributions.

Wherever there is revival, there are also trials. The revival in Henan has flourished in such a situation. If Jesus had not been crucified, nobody today could be saved – if there were no testing by fire, then true faith would not be revealed. Suffering is the means for promoting spiritual life and the ingredient for revival of the Church.

Dearly beloved, most recently the cause of the gospel in Fangcheng County, Henan, has been greatly promoted. A dozen young Christians have been imprisoned, beaten and bound, and this is the cause. They have regarded suffering for Christ as more precious than the treasure of Egypt. They started preaching the gospel in the poorest, most desolate regions. One day they went to Yangce Commune in Miyang County. No-one seemed to listen so they prayed and were greatly inspired by God. They split into groups and went preaching in many different places. As soon as they started to preach, the power of God came down. They preached with tears streaming down, so that passers-by and street-vendors, both Christians and non-Christians, stopped to listen. Even the fortune-tellers were moved by the Holy Spirit to burst out crying. Many people forgot their food, forgot their work or even forgot to return home. Even by evening people had not dispersed. They preached until they were exhausted but still the crowd would not let them leave. When the shops and factories closed, their employees also came to listen.

However, then Satan made his move. The authorities suddenly dragged them away one by one, binding them with ropes and beating them with electric stun-truncheons. They also kicked them in the face with their leather shoes, beating them unconscious. But when they came to, they continued to pray, sing and preach to the bystanders. One girl who was only fourteen was beaten senseless. But when she came to and saw that many people were sympathetic, she started to preach again. Her words were few and spoken in a low voice but the street-acrobats and actors could not refrain from crying out, repenting and believing in Jesus. As they were being bound and beaten, many people noticed a strange expression on their faces. Amazed, they saw that they were smiling. Their spirit and appearance was so lively and gracious that the crowd asked why they, themselves, did not feel ashamed? They were so young, so where did this power come from? Their example caused many people to believe in Jesus.

When the Christians in that area saw them bound and forced to kneel on the ground for more than three days without food or water, beaten with sticks until their faces were covered with blood, and their hands made black by the ropes, but still singing, praying and praising the Lord – then they too, wished to share their persecution. So the flame of the gospel has spread throughout Yangce Commune. There had never been revival here before, but through this persecution the seeds of life have been truly planted. May everyone who hears of this give thanks and praise for the revival of the Church here.

Dearly beloved, in men's eyes this was an unfortunate happening, but for Christians it was like a rich banquet. This lesson cannot be learned from books, and this sweetness is rarely tasted by men. This rich spiritual life cannot be had in a comfortable environment. Where there is no cross, there is no victory. If the spices are not refined to become oil, the fragrance of the perfume cannot flow forth. If the grapes are not crushed in the vat, they cannot become wine. Dearly beloved, these saints who went down in the fiery furnace, far from being harmed have been glorified. Their spirits have been filled with power to preach the gospel with far greater authority and to enjoy a far more abundant spiritual life. Satan was unable finally to force them to give up their faith, so they were released.

The Christian workers in Fangcheng, Sheqi and Miyang counties have all been emboldened to preach the gospel. Those who were not imprisoned felt ashamed and saw the marks of the Lord Jesus upon their bodies. They also desired to suffer that the Lord's name be glorified. Dearly beloved, the Lord wishes to add to the number being saved working through us. Let us seize the opportunity to work for Him as there are many souls still unsaved. There are many lambs wandering on the mountains without anyone to seek and to find them. May the Lord Jesus place a burden to preach the gospel on every Christian's heart. May He give a spirit of prayer to every Christian so they will become a prayer-warrior. May our brethren overseas strive to meet the need for Christian literature which is so lacking within China, as God has given you the perfect environment to do this. May God grant you to be faithful unto death until He comes. The Lord is coming soon. Lord Jesus, I desire you to come! May the Lord give us hearts to pray for each other until that day. Emmanuel!

From the weak brethren in Fangcheng, Henan.
6 May 1982

In 1983 and 1984 there were major crackdowns on the house churches. These crackdowns started in Henan and Anhui provinces and spread nationwide. This was as a result of a nationwide 'anti-spiritual pollution' campaign. These persecutions continued until mid 1984. Many house church Christians were

arrested, fined, given long-term prison sentences and some even executed by the authorities.

Continual growth

The explosion in evangelistic activity in the 1980s among the house churches was to reap a great harvest in the 1990s. Even when there was tighter control by the authorities after 1989 and marked increase in repression of nonconformist Christian activity, ways and means for effective evangelism were found by prayerful and determined Christians and churches. The emergence of the mobile phone and the internet was of assistance, in spite of determined censorship and official control of these media. After the Tiananmen Square incident, urban churches noticed a new development. Thousands of students, previously uninterested in religion, were coming to church or openly wanting to discuss the Christian faith. This added a new dimension to the revival. The gospel was now reaching the new intelligentsia, the university students, a phenomenon last seen in the revival during and after World War II.

Reaching the intelligentsia with the gospel was a step forward in the maturing of the revival church in China and progress in its reach into all levels of society. Behind the staggering increase in numbers enquiring and joining both the official Church and the house church, was a hunger for Bibles and Bible teaching. The Protestant Church in China today is almost completely evangelical. Personal repentance toward God and belief in the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour is the normal experience for professing believers. The cost of discipleship in terms of persecution is faced.

Such rapid growth in the churches brought its own problems. Lack of Bibles and Christian literature as well as the growth of cults added to the problem of adequate discipling so many new Christians. Nonconformity was illegal and the house-church movement was regarded as a cult by the authorities. We shall see how these problems were addressed in our next article.

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The Theology of B B Warfield

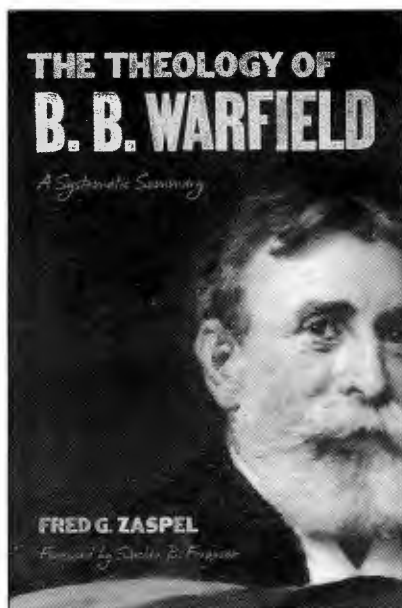
A review article

The Theology of B B Warfield. *A Systematic Summary*, Fred Zaspel, 624 pages, Crossway, 2010.

B B Warfield (1851-1921) made profession of faith aged sixteen. Gifted with a brilliant intellect he studied theology in Edinburgh, Heidelberg and Princeton seminary where he was taught among others by Charles Hodge. He studied further in Germany at Leipzig. Finally he settled at Princeton where he remained for the rest of his career as a professor of theology. He was happily married. His wife suffered ill-health and for much of her life was an invalid.

Prodigious in his output of relevant high quality writing Warfield can be compared with Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Owen, Richard Baxter, Thomas Manton and Jonathan Edwards whose 24 volumes, are published by Yale University Press and cost an average of \$110 dollars each!

Warfield's writings extend to ten large volumes of posthumously selected and edited articles known as the Oxford edition plus two volumes of additional essays edited by John E Meeter. Warfield is well-known for his books *Counterfeit Miracles* and



Perfectionism. He also wrote a major work on the textual criticism of the New Testament which went through nine editions. Three volumes of sermons have been published and several commentaries.

The Theology of B B Warfield by Fred Zaspel is a six-hundred page commentary on Warfield's theology arranged along the lines of a traditional systematic theology text. This format gives the reader a reliable guide to Warfield's overall thought. It is helpful to know what ground Warfield covered over the course of his career.

Zaspel surveys each section of theology in a manner which accurately reflects the attention given to those themes by Warfield. The ground covered is as follows: Apologetics and the theological enterprise including a discussion of the right of systematic theology (pp. 63-108), the inspiration and authority of the Bible (111-175), the person and work of Christ (213-324), the person and work of the Holy Spirit (327-366), anthropology and the doctrine of sin (369-409), the doctrine of salvation (413-510), the doctrine of the Church (513-500), and eschatology (533-545). The section of apologetics is fascinating for those who identify themselves either as Reformed evidentialists or presuppositionalists. The chapter on the Holy Spirit is especially relevant today because Warfield maintained clear reasons for cessationism.

Zaspel concludes with a number of reflections upon Warfield's character, his career, his contribution to the Church as well as his limitations, (549-576).

B B Warfield lived through the time of theological declension when liberalism, emanating especially out of Germany, was most virulent. Subsequently liberalism has devastated whole denominations including the once mighty Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa where the following doctrines are openly questioned or denied by Afrikaans-speaking theologians.

- The inerrancy of Scripture
- The virgin birth of Jesus Christ
- Our sinful nature and total depravity
- Jesus' death as our penal substitution
- The factual resurrection of Christ
- Jesus' exclusivity as the only possible means of salvation
- The conscious eternal torments of hell
- The recognition that Satan and demons are real and at work in the world.

In all the above areas B B Warfield was a powerful expositor and defender of the faith. His teaching on 2 Timothy 3:16, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work,' has been like the rock of Gibraltar. Because the Word is breathed out of the mouth of God it is perfect and infallible.

I will refer now to four areas where B B Warfield was a master theologian.

The Inerrancy of Scripture

'Warfield acknowledges the jeers of the critics against the claim that inspiration applies only to the

autographs “which no living man has ever seen”, but he is unmoved by this complaint. First, he argues that on no other ground could a doctrine of inspiration be maintained. The Bible as we have it is, simply, the original plus the errors that have crept into the text since. However striking has been the degree of providence in the preservation of the text, no one would advocate the inspiration of the copies. And if we cannot advocate the inspiration either of the autographs because they do not exist or of the copies because they are obviously not inspired, then we are left without any doctrine of inspiration whatever, and the biblical teaching is evacuated of all meaning. By the nature of the case, the discussion of inspiration concerns the autographs.

‘Moreover, Warfield had firm confidence in God’s providential preservation of the biblical text. Having produced early in his career (1886) the first American textbook on New Testament textual criticism, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, he established himself as an authority in textual issues and maintained that the relatively few variants that have crept in are virtually all without determinative theological significance, and almost all are easily discernible by means of critical examination; that is for all practical purposes the original is recoverable’ (p. 171).

The Trinity

‘Warfield emphasises that the doctrine of the Trinity is purely revealed truth. It is a truth of God that is neither discovered nor discoverable by natural reason. Nor is it provable by human reason. Nor are there any analogies to it in nature or even in man himself, who is created in God’s image. “In His trinitarian mode of being, God is unique; and, as there is nothing in the universe like Him in this respect, so there is nothing which can help us to comprehend Him.” This truth we know solely on the grounds of divine self-disclosure’ (p. 182).

Perfectionism and the Doctrine of Sanctification

The most complete analysis of perfectionist and higher life teachings ever published came from Warfield’s pen, 1,000 pages in all. One half of this concerns Ritschlian (Liberal) perfectionism which is so far away from biblical realities that Evangelicals today do not bother with it. The other half is Warfield’s classic work in which he traces out the Oberlin teaching of perfectionism, the teaching of Asa Mahan, the theology of Charles Finney, the ‘Higher Life Movement’, the ‘Fellowship Movement’ and the ‘Victorious Life Movement’.

‘The leading features of the Oberlin perfectionism are these: first, “the

immediate attainment of entire sanctification by a special act of faith directed to this end"; second, that there are accordingly "two kinds of Christians, a lower kind who had received only justification, and a higher kind who had received also sanctification", and third, a fluctuating scale by which a Christian's "perfection" is measured' (p. 467).

Warfield goes on to show in a sermon on I Thessalonians 5:23-24 that sanctification involves not just a single act of faith or one experience but the whole of life in its every detail all the time, in other words a lifestyle comprehensively governed by Scripture.

Eschatology

Warfield argues that 'Christ is not merely striving against evil but "progressively overcoming" evil throughout this age. With the dawn of Christianity and the mighty forces within it, "a regeneration of society" has begun, and this age is not simply that of the Church militant but also that of the triumphing Church. The teaching of the apostle Paul in Romans 11 looks ahead to the ingathering of the "fullness of the Gentiles" (v. 25) and of "all Israel" (v. 26). So pervasive will this gospel conquest be that it will be as "life from the dead" (v.15), which Warfield characterises as "the universal Christianization of this

world", by which he means "at least the nominal conversion of the Gentiles and the real salvation of all the Jews". As such, this is the fulfilment of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth even as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10). It follows then that this age is characterised as "these last days" (Heb 1:2) and "the end of the ages" (1 Cor 10:11 cf. Acts 2:17; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18), leading up to "the end" at Christ's return' (1 Cor 15:24).

Zaspel devotes twelve pages to Warfield's prevarications with evolution and ten pages to his views of baptism. It is amazing that a theologian of such brilliance could not see that baptism is exclusively for conscious, repentant, believing disciples (Matt 28:16-20), and not babies. Zaspel omits the Ten Commandments and the Christian Sabbath which Warfield expounded robustly (cf. *Selected Writings*, Meeter, vol 1. p. 308 ff).

I have been helped by reading Kim Riddlebarger's review in which he declares: 'Zaspel has done what seems impossible to accomplish—he not only has mastered Warfield's massive body of published work that he has also given us. Zaspel has also given us the one thing Warfield did not leave behind, a systematic compendium of his theology.' *Editor*

Bible Translations in the 20th Century

Dr Brian Talbot has written an excellent short history of the King James Version Bible. It will be published later this year in the Evangelical Review of Theology, Vol.35 No.4 October 2011 and is obtainable from Paternoster Periodicals

<http://www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/evangelical-review-of-theology> Editorial Enquiries – tc@worldangelicals.org

Here with the permission of the author and journal editor we publish the concluding section which describes the proliferation of Bible translations in English in the 20th century.

In the twentieth century an increasing number of Bible translations took a share of the market for Bibles. A minority of more progressive British Christians were attracted, for example, to the translations of individual scholars such as R F Weymouth (1903) or James Moffat (1913), or after the Second World War to the version produced by J B Philips and most recently Eugene Peterson's *The Message* (2002). However, these versions were never seriously considered for use in churches. The most significant of the numerous new translations included the Revised Standard Version, first published in the USA in 1952. It was widely accepted in the UK, as well as in the USA, because its language

echoed the KJV and was also suitable for public reading, though it received strong criticism from many Conservative Evangelicals. By 1990 more than fifty-five million copies of this version had been sold. The Good News Bible (1976), written in more contemporary English and a simplified vocabulary, has proved particularly popular in the wider Christian community and in schools in the United Kingdom, but the New International Version (1978) is the one that has attracted the greatest support from Evangelicals, and now tops the best seller list of English-language Bibles. However, especially in the USA, there has been some scholarly evangelical support, together with strong popular sales figures for a revised

KJV, *The New King James Version* (1982), although some scholars have questioned whether it is accurate to call it a further revision of the KJV, rather than a new translation. Where does this leave the KJV in the twenty-first century? It is likely that support for the 1611 version will decline gradually for the foreseeable future as there are a significant number of older churchgoers in particular who are fiercely loyal to the version with which they grew up, but the vast majority of younger people will prefer newer translations.

An example of this occurred at the wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton on Friday 29 April 2011. Despite the passionate commitment to the KJV by William's father Prince Charles, this couple chose the Bible readings from the New Revised Standard Version (1989), a recent revision of the RSV text. If younger churchgoers increasingly select more recent Bible translations, how will the KJV be viewed in the wider culture of the English-speaking world? It is most probable that it will be lauded most for its literary excellence. Ann Wroe in a recent article waxed eloquent about the majestic sound of hearing it read

in public for the first time. 'The effect was extraordinary: as if I had suddenly found, in the house of language I had loved and explored all my life, a hidden central chamber whose pillars and vaulting, rhythm and strength had given shape to everything around them. The King James now breathes venerability.'

Another equally commendatory article appeared in the British tabloid newspaper *Metro*, in the approach to the 400th anniversary of the publication of the KJV, by journalist Graeme Green, in which he from a secular perspective viewed the significance of the KJV. He wrote: 'The tome, which first went on sale on 2 May, 1611, took previous English language versions and created a definitive Bible that became the most influential book ever written, a cornerstone of British society, permeating everything from art and literature to politics and morality, here and around the world.' Of this we can be certain, the KJV has a secure place both in British history and in the culture and religious heritage of the English-speaking world.

African Pastors' Conference

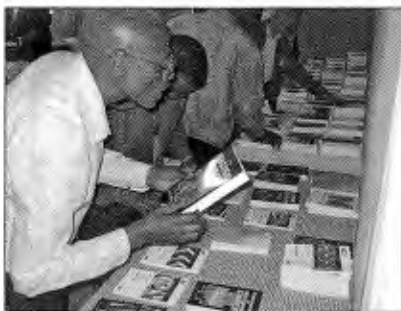
Zimbabwe Bulawayo

The APC in Bulawayo from 14-16 June involved very careful planning. The difficulty of transporting the books, 43 boxes in all, as well as refreshments was acute. At the border there was a four hour delay, despite having already obtained a rebate of duty on the books. Pastor Steggles' original letter of request was missing, and the network was down! Prayer was the only resort. Suddenly, in answer to prayer, access was granted with no duty being demanded.

Douglas Marikanda of the Christian Leadership Resources Centre organised the conference and 143 attended, which made this the largest APC so far. The hospitality of City Presbyterian Church was generous and helpful with everyone pulling together to cope with the numbers, 43 more than the maximum number anticipated.

The pastors acquired many books - we must now pray they will read them and be transformed in their thinking and ministries by them. Nearly all the pastors were from Bulawayo. These men are noted for their patience and perseverance in times of tribulation. Only the gospel and Christians being salt and light will bring radical change to Zimbabwe - we must pray earnestly to that end.

One witness commented as follows: 'The conference was a huge success - the teaching and preaching of the speakers on 'The Church of Christ' was superb. Michael Bwembya (the main preacher from Zambia) related well to the pastors and was very thorough in his teaching.



Choosing books at Berberton

Pastor Irving Steggles was brilliant and straight with Biblical truth as always, even when many there may have disagreed with him. He teaches in a fatherly, courageous way and the men love him and greatly respect him. Craig Jones, on the faculty of the Theological College of Zimbabwe, spoke on preaching. He is a well prepared and dramatic teacher (his laptop visuals were well received). Pastor John Stambolie, the pastor of City Presbyterian Church, has been blessed with a calm, authoritative and humble manner. This gave much security to the conference. He tied many loose ends together as he preached through Luke 9 in the closing sermon. The teaching styles were very different but complementary. Variety added interest. The sessions were all outstanding and very relevant to the needs of the pastors attending.'

South Africa and Swaziland

Port Alfred

During May about twenty-two pastors and trainee pastors attended an APC at Port Alfred which is on the coast about

half-way between Port Elizabeth and East London. Isaac Mackashinyi and Irving Steggle were the preachers. The theme was the 'Doctrine of the Church'. Michael Ntozini and Boyce Saleni organised this APC. The aim is always to inspire pastors to be biblically and doctrinally faithful, expositors of the Word and faithful in pastoral care.

The Baptist Pastor of the nearby township supported the conference with his members. The church building is on the side of a hill with a very good view over all the shacks - he said on Sunday morning you can see the people walking from their shacks up the hill to the church.

Manzini and Barberton

Pastor Choolwe Mwetwa of Zambia was the visiting preacher for three APCs. He was greatly enabled in his preaching and much appreciated at the now well-established conference at the Phumula Conference Centre just outside Barberton. Ninety plus attended. This included students from the Back to the Bible College. Pastor Irving Steggle spoke three times on 'Church Unity'.

Karl Peterson reports that a very encouraging beginning has been made in the large township of Kabokweni near Nelspruit. Thirty-four attended. Pastor Choolwe's powerful preaching was inspiring. Choolwe was also the main preacher at the second APC in Manzini, Swaziland. Pastor Irving Steggle spoke there on 'Revival'. Many books were sold at these conferences.

Future APCs

We are thankful for the APCs reported above and for the eight successful APCs in January described in RT 240. We pray now for those coming soon.



A happy pastor!

An APC in Limpopo province is planned for September. It is hoped that there will be an APC in November in Botswana.

The townships in the area around Bushbuckridge north of Nelspruit present a great need. Karl Peterson is planning a one day APC in Bushbuckridge in late August.

There are still provinces in South Africa where conferences have not yet been held and where pastors are longing for training - Northern Cape and North West cover geographically vast areas of the country which are also spiritual deserts. We have contacts in these areas and much prayer is needed that we will be able to meet the needs of pastors there. Please pray that we will be able to organise an APC in the Cape Town area later in the year.

There is a possibility of organising APCs in Tanzania, Namibia and Zambia - we have had requests from pastors in all three countries. We get many 'Macedonian calls' from countries further north.

The number of books needed is increasing. Our financial resources are stretched. Donations can be gift aided. Cheques should be made out to African Pastors' Conferences and addressed to Mrs Rachel Rothwell, 4 Hall Close, Bramhope, LS16 9JQ. UK

News



From left to right: Slava Viazovski; Graham Heaps; Pastor Alexandr (pastor of Kostanay Baptist Church), Stuart Olyott and Sergei Babenko.

Kazakhstan

First EP conference in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is the 9th largest country in the world, its territory is equal to that of Western Europe, yet its population is only a little over 16 million people. It borders with Russia to the north and China to the south. It is the land of Genghis Khan and the Great Silk Road. It has vast areas of lakes and uninhabited plains. Fertile areas provide Russia with much of its grain. It took nearly 24 hours to get there, flying overnight from Frankfurt to the capital Astana and then onto Kostanay, some 400 miles to the north-east of the capital. It was here that the first Evangelical Press pastors' conference was held.

The Kazak people were very friendly and welcoming with little feeling of being in an ex-Communist state. However, when I asked one of the local people the biggest problem they had, he said corruption which pervaded every level of society. So many of the local roads were horrendous and had not had any maintenance work on them since the fall of communism. Many of the old systems continue, such as centrally supplied hot water. The whole hot water supply was shut down for maintenance during the time of our visit.

A pastor in a town 25 miles away kindly invited us for a meal and a hot shower the day we arrived, but that was the only hot water we had the whole time of our visit.

The conference was held in the Baptist Church of Kostanay, which had been founded back in 1908 by Russian Christians expelled from Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine. In 1937 virtually all the Christians in the town were imprisoned under the Stalin regime. The town is largely Russian Orthodox, with about 10% of the population following Islam. We noticed a number of new and elaborate mosques being built in the city.

About 60 pastors from the Kostanay region attended the two-day conference, plus some wives and other church workers. Some men had travelled 400 miles to be at the conference. The conference was organised locally by Sergei Babenko, who together with Slava Viazovski, manager of EP's Russian work in Belarus, provided translation for the speakers.

John Rubens opened the conference, welcoming those attending and giving a little of the history of EP's work in the Russian language. Slava Viazovski preached the opening address on the grace of God as seen in 2 Samuel chapter 7. Then over the next two days, Stuart Olyott gave three sessions on 'Preaching better'. He preached his first session based on 1 Corinthians 15, then went on to show the importance and the practice of preaching from Scripture. His final session was suggestions and helps for our preaching.

The other main speaker was Graham Heaps from Dewsbury who spoke on 'Marriage and family life for the pastor', 'Depression in Christian service' and 'Perseverance of the saints'. These subjects had been particularly requested by the Kazak pastors. Very lively questions and discussion followed each session.

Slava had been able to bring about 20 kgs of Russian literature with him from Belarus, and the whole lot was sold in just a few minutes. What tremendous hunger there was for Christian books and what a need to try and find a way of getting books into that country. Every pastor who attended was given a copy of Stuart Olyott's book 'Ministering like the Master' in Russian.

On Sunday we had the opportunity of preaching in the churches and we came away overjoyed at the privilege of being able to serve our brethren in Kazakhstan and thrilled to see God at work in that country. Will there be another conference? We hope so but travel is expensive and it will depend on support being available in the future.

John Rubens

Concert of Prayer

‘At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD’ (Gen 4:26). Why this observation so early in the Biblical record. First, because when God’s people call earnestly together on the name of the LORD that is very significant in heaven. The angels observe this intercession. Most important the LORD responds to this intercession. Second, men were driven to this united intercession because they were threatened with a tide of wickedness. This is expressed in the hatred and defiance of Lamech (Gen 4:23-24). To that must be added the discouragement of the murder of Abel by Cain. Third, concern for the future of God’s cause on earth drove them to intercession. This was the first concert of prayer.

Jonathan Bayes described a concert of prayer for revival in Leeds in the last issue. To that was added guidelines in the form of ten reasons why churches should unite in a concert of prayer. The encouragement derived from that first concert led to a second on 11th of June. This time there was simultaneously a satellite meeting at Whitby, 11.00am to 1.00 pm. The earnestness of intercession and the unity enjoyed by those who gathered has inspired further action. This time it was decided to organise seven satellite meetings spread across

Yorkshire: Ripon, Halifax, Mirfield, Leeds, Whitby, Hull and Sheffield to take place from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm on 17 September. Then later on 5th November a further central united concert is to gather in Leeds.

Motivation is vital. There are books to inspire us. One such is *Preparing Your Church for Revival* by T M Moore published by Christian Focus, (110 page paperback). Another is *Reformation Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* by Carl R Trueman also published by Christian Focus, (125 page paperback). When we pray we have all the advantages of previous revivals to build on. Carl Trueman concentrates on the 16th Reformation. The author reminds us while Martin Luther is remembered for his heroic recovery of justification by faith alone he was essentially cross-centred (1 Cor 2:1-5). We must always be focused on what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. A third book that can inspire us to prayer is *Taking Hold of God – Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer*. This is a book of expositions on prayer edited by Joel R Beeke and Brian G Najapfour. Chapter eleven is titled *Puritan Prayers for World Mission*. In it Joel Beeke cites Jonathan Edwards book calling for a concert of extraordinary prayer. Edwards focused on ‘the

promises of God that all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14), all nations would serve the Messiah (Ps 72:11, 17), all nations would come to the Lord (Is 2:2; Jer 3:17), true religion would prevail throughout the world (Pss 22:27; 65:5,8; 67:7; 98:3; 113:3; Isa 11:9; 54:1,4; Mal 1:11), idols and idolatrous nations would perish from the earth (Isa 60:12; Jer 10:11,15), and the full number of Jews and Gentiles would be saved (Rom 11:12,25). In typical Puritan fashion Edwards urged believers to turn these promises into prayers' (Page 214). But are not the references cited above descriptions of the world to come - not this earth? No! There are present day examples of extraordinary gospel expansion. For instance there is a city of 120,000 in the Far East. Seven years ago a church was planted which has grown to fill a building which seats 1,800. This last Christmas season saw 10,000 people gather at that venue. There are numerous other churches in that city where the proportion of genuine believers has increased to about thirty percent of the whole.

There is deep concern that the UK is under divine judgement and is being by-passed while other nations experience spiritual awakenings. Conrad Pomeroy who is a Reformed Baptist pastor in Dundee, Scotland, begins an article in the Banner of Truth magazine (Issue 574) as follows, 'So brothers, which of you can speak of conversions in your

church?' Conrad then draws attention to the overall national reality of many shrinking churches. Larger churches with much activity mask this reality. They are added to mostly by the already converted but not by those converted out of the world. 'Those who belong to larger churches may not feel the urgency of the situation - there is comfort in numbers, and the list of weekly activities conveys a sense of "business as usual".'

Conrad points to the manner in which some respond to the spiritual drought. Visitors from the outside are very rare. 'Some churches resort to mere methods and tactics - "transform your style of worship, bring in more music, cut back on the preaching, soften the lighting (and the message!)", and shelve church discipline".' A further consideration is that the spiritual bankruptcy of secularised Britain is not reflected by the immigrant communities where there are conversions. Black Pentecostal churches in London and other cities are noted for their growth and vitality.

Those struggling in church plants and those persevering in shrinking churches are generally those who most appreciate the meaning of the text above: 'At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD' (Gen 4:27). It is time to seek our God *in earnest*. Will future historians note that it was when we began to call on the LORD that the spiritual tide began to turn?

Have we Forgotten the Jews?

Editor

In 1958 the Banner of Truth published T V Moore's commentary on Zechariah. Included by the publishers is a twelve-page appendix on Zechariah chapters 12-14. This states: 'Moore, while avoiding the extravagant literalism of some modern writers who would exclude the Christian Church altogether from these chapters, regards this portion of Scripture as containing evidence of a future spiritual work among the Jews as a people. Zechariah traces, he says, "the historic course of the covenant people down to the time when the unbelieving Jewish element was to be eliminated, and onward to the period when it should be restored". The great spiritual blessing promised in chapters 10-14, is "contemplated mainly as now containing the penitent Jews"; and "the great revival of the future" pictured in chapter 13:1-6, which "will restore the Jews to the church from which they had for so long been separated by unbelief". '

T V Moore points out that the powerful revival described in Zechariah 12:10 to 13:6 is to be applied first to the Jews and that its primary reference is not to Pentecost which was followed in AD 70 by judgment on Jerusalem and Judah and the Diaspora of the Jews. The description is of a future time when, 'I am going to make Jerusalem a cup



New Synagogue in Berlin.

that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.'

It is important to remember that when we read the Old Testament Scriptures we must ask the question, What did these promises mean to the people to whom they were addressed? The promise of the New Covenant which we as Gentiles enjoy was made specifically to the people of Israel and to the people of Judah. It was made not with a tiny remnant but to

that people as a body. It is reasoned that the new covenant applies to those 'in Jacob who repent of their sins' (Isa 59:20). Left to their initiative they will never repent. But God takes the initiative which is expressed by Paul in Romans 11:26-27:

'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant *with them* when I take away *their sins*.' (italics mine)

Some will argue that the Jews no longer exist as an entity. But they do exist as the attempt to annihilate them during the Second World War shows. They do exist in numbers all over the world as well as in their ancient land. The context in which the promise of a new covenant was made calls for careful examination. It reads as follows.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because

they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

This is what the LORD says:

He who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar — the LORD Almighty is his name: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me."

This is what the LORD says:

"Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the LORD (Jer 31:31-37).

A long passage of time might lead to our forgetting the Jews.

Hosea reminds us of this when he writes:

'For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days' (Hos 3:4-5).

The prophet Zephaniah concludes his prophecy with these promises to the Jews:

“Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your punishment; he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.” On that day they will say to Jerusalem, “Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”

“I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you. At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honour and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,” says the LORD (Zeph 3:14-20).

These promises are echoed as Micah concludes his prophecy as follows:

‘Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight

to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago’ (Micah 7:18-20).

In his exposition of The New Testament Church from the birth of Christ to Revelation, Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635 - 1711)¹ provides an eight page commentary on Romans 11. He then expounds 2 Corinthians 3, Matthew 23:39-39 and Isaiah 61:1-4.²

In the 17th and 18th centuries the likelihood of the Jews returning to the land of Canaan was extremely remote. Yet à Brakel while denying all dispensational notions of rebuilding the temple points to passages which describe the return of the Jews to their land, namely Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Amos 9:14-15; and Ezekiel 37:21-26 which reads as follows:

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offences,

for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

‘My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there for ever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant.’

Wilhelmus à Brakel points to the third Messianic Victor’s Song in Isaiah. ‘For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendour in the LORD’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married’ (Isa 62:1-4).

Fully aware of different views à Brakel answers as follows:

Evasive argument: all the texts quoted above speak of the glorious state of the Church of the NT, and all these expressions are to be understood as referring to spiritual matters, rather than the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to Canaan.

Answer: This is being asserted, but has not been proven. With every text we have shown emphatically that they speak of Israel and what would befall them according to soul and body.

à Brakel concludes by observing the immutability of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed. ‘Consider that God, in spite of all their sins and stiffneckedness, does not break his promise nor will he permit any of the good words he has spoken to them to fall to the earth.’ He warns us not to despise the Jewish nation.

‘You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either’ (Rom 11:18-21).

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1. What John Owen was to the English Puritans à Brakel was to the Dutch Puritans.
 2. Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, vol. 4, pp. 506ff.

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