



# REFORMATION TODAY



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Andrew Swanson preaching at Euro Evangelism conference

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Front cover picture: Attendees of the Euro Evangelism conference in Vienna: see elsewhere in this issue.

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## Editorial: Focus on evangelism in Europe

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**WE READ IN ACTS 16:6-10 HOW UNDER THE direction of the Holy Spirit the gospel came to what we now call Europe. This continent has a rich history of gospel preaching and church growth. Looking at the spiritual state of Europe now we may be led to think that Europe is a lost cause for the gospel. Realising how the rich Christian heritage in many European countries has been relinquished we would deserve God's judgement. It is therefore all the more remarkable to see God's grace in keeping a witness for the gospel in many places even though this is often in the form of small churches.**

This became clearly evident during the recent Euro Evangelism conference in Vienna as the report shows. The closing address by Ryan King was especially powerful as he underlined Europe's plight and problems, but ended on a note of hope because our trust is in our gracious and all powerful Lord and Saviour.

During the conference I mentioned the vision of our founding editor, Erroll Hulse, for Europe. Shortly before he became ill in 2013, he told me that one of his great desires was to travel

around Europe and encourage lonely pastors and churches. Although our brother never saw his desire fulfilled, it is an amazing providence to see how his vision has now come to pass in the form of this conference. This is an answer to his many prayers for us all. He was therefore thrilled and encouraged to hear about the conference.

The opening expository article by Nico van der Walt on Hosea 4 fits very well with the theme of this issue. There is the serious message of what happens when God gives up a society. At the same time and even in those circumstances there is hope as God keeps a remnant and makes a new beginning.

The historical and biographical article by Ian Shaw (the first in a series of three) reminds us of the resurgence of the Reformed faith after the Second World War.

Our evangelism and gospel witness needs to be accompanied by a life of holiness and we are therefore rightly reminded about the biblical doctrine of sanctification in our doctrinal series by Mostyn Roberts.

*Kees van Kralingen*

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## **When God gives up a Society Some thoughts on Hosea 4**

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*by Nico van der Walt*

**I**N THE FIRST THREE CHAPTERS OF HOSEA WE READ ABOUT THE PROPHETIC ACTS THAT THE PROPHET HAD to carry out on the instructions of the Lord. His marriage to Gomer the prostitute sends out a strong message to this day. But from Chapter 4 onwards Hosea does some straight talking.

### **The formal charge (v1)**

God's charge against the people is not a vague reproach, but a formal indictment: 'Hear the word of the LORD... the LORD has a charge to bring'. And what is this charge? There is no 'faithfulness', no 'steadfast love' and no 'knowledge of God' (ESV) in the land.

'Faithfulness' suggests dependability, honesty and integrity. You cannot depend on the word and the loyalty of someone who is unfaithful. The people of Israel are unfaithful to the Lord as well as their neighbour; they do not keep their marriage vows; their business dealings are rife with fraud and corruption.

'Steadfast love' suggests benevolence, dedication and selflessness. But this community is characterised by envy and selfishness (2 Tim 3:3).

'Knowledge of God' suggests not only insight into that which he reveals about his character and will, but also love for him and serious intent to reflect it in one's lifestyle. But in this society God and his will are no longer significant factors. According to the rest of the prophecy this is the main charge against the people.

### **When God gives up on a society**

The question arises how people whose ancestors experienced so much goodness and deliverance from the hand of the Lord, can stray so far away from him? The Bible teaches that God progressively gives over to depravity a society which persists in its resistance against his Word and his law.

An outstanding pronouncement of Scripture in this regard is found in Romans 1, where it is stated three times that God gives over to their sins

those who persist in their depravity (Rom 1:24, 26, 28) – in this case ‘sexual impurity’, ‘shameful lusts’ and ‘a depraved mind’. But Hosea is more specific. Israel’s hardening, increasing sinfulness and eventual fall come to the fore in especially five areas.

Just keep in mind that we are not talking here about individuals – there are always exceptions – but rather of general trends in a society.

- Firstly, *moral depravity* abounds (v2). They break every commandment of God’s law. They cross boundary after boundary in their pursuit of sin. Bloodshed is a common occurrence.
- Secondly, they *ruin the environment* (v3). Exactly how this was done in Israel we do not know, but we can see clearly how it happens in modern times. In his unbridled selfishness and greed, man in his depravity shows no consideration for the dwelling-place that he received from God. But when people turn to Christ, everything changes. Rather than stripping their environment bare, they plant trees and build weirs in erosion-gullies.
- Thirdly, *the religious leadership becomes corrupt* (vv4-14). To the extent that the spiritual leaders of a nation stray, to that extent society degenerates. However, the converse is also true. To a sinful nation God gives unholy priests – the spiritual leaders that they deserve. As v9 aptly puts it, ‘like people, like priests’. The result is a downward spiral ending in a nosedive into depravity.
- Fourthly, *people lose their sense of fulfilment and contentment* (vv9b-10). This is how it works in life: the pursuit of God’s good gifts for unholy and selfish reasons always ends in frustration. As a result the pursuit is intensified until it becomes a mad rush to the precipice of immorality and meaninglessness. Sexual perversity degenerates from bad to worse; possessions become a burden; religion leaves you disillusioned.
- Fifthly, *ruin eventually sets in* (v19). History has demonstrated an irrefutable principle: the fall of a civilisation is invariably preceded by decadence that escalates out of hand. Precisely this is what would happen to Israel, very soon after Hosea’s prophecy. The Assyrians would come like a whirlwind and sweep them away.

### **Judah is warned (v15)**

The ten tribes of the northern kingdom, Israel, had crossed their Rubicon. For them there was no turning back any more. But in the two tribes of the southern

kingdom, Judah, the decay was not yet as bad. There was still a chance for them to reform and so avert a catastrophe. Hence the warning in verse 15.

Of special significance is the warning to stay away from Gilgal and Beth Aven. These are the places of worship that Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel, instituted many years before to prevent the people from going to the south to worship in Jerusalem. Both Hosea and Amos put it quite clearly that this wilful, man-made religion was the gravest of insults to the Lord.

The word of the Lord is therefore quite clear: immediately forsake all false and man-made religious practices. There can be no fellowship between light and darkness (2 Cor 6:14).

### **Encouragement in our situation**

It is impossible to miss the resemblance between circumstances in our country at the present time and those described by Hosea. In fact, the parallels are astounding. Just take, for instance, our moral nosedive over the last decade or two!

This gives rise to the inevitable question, Have we also crossed our Rubicon? Is it possible for us to turn around? If it depended on us, the prospects would be hopeless. But let us not underestimate God's mercy in Christ. There is hope yet!

During the well-known 18<sup>th</sup>-century revival in the British Isles the Lord used preachers like George Whitefield (1714-1770), John Wesley (1703-1791), and many others to change a morally bankrupt England within a few decades into a nation setting the spiritual tone in the world. They also became firm leaders in the missionary field. What should encourage us is the fact that the revival came in the midst of the most terrible decadence.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the era of the Puritans (1560-1662) and the Act of Toleration of 1689 – which put an end to the persecution of evangelical Christians – spiritual decay started in England.

As is so often the case, it started with the clergy and theologians. They no longer preached the gospel. They also warned against what was known as enthusiasm, a derogatory term used at the time for what was in reality the zeal of people filled with the Spirit.

<sup>1</sup>Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield - The life and times of the great evangelist of the eighteenth-century revival*, Vol.1 Introductory Chapter. Banner of Truth Trust, 1970.

Deism too started gaining ground with its teaching that the Bible is only a product of the human mind and that it is impossible to learn more about God than what we are able to gather from nature. Deism therefore only accepts an impersonal first cause of everything and teaches that the cosmos was originally wound up like an alarm clock and then left to its own devices. The deistic god does not involve himself with what goes on here on earth – he is a distant and unknown god. This of course eventually resulted in empty churches – coupled with shocking licentiousness.

In an effort to curb alcohol abuse, an embargo was placed on the import of liquor. So people started brewing their own concoctions, leading to the so-called gin craze and a gin shop (or shebeen) in every sixth house in London. Drunkenness reached epidemic proportions. Babies were conceived, born and raised in drunkenness.

The divide between the rich and the poor widened, with an alarming increase in impoverishment due to laziness and alcohol abuse. Large areas of London became slums – filthy and rife with indescribable human misery. Crime became part of everyday life. Overcrowded prisons became dark, suffocating cesspits. In an effort to stamp out crime, as many as 160 offences were declared punishable by death. London's two public gallows were almost daily surrounded by inquisitive crowds in sportive mood. Gangs carried on a reign of terror.

In the meantime a super-rich nobility was living in the lap of luxury, while perversity and immorality exceeded all propriety standards. A certain noble lady even jokingly suggested that the word 'not' be removed wherever it occurs in the Ten Commandments and transferred to the Catechism in order to bring the two documents in step with the spirit of the times.

But! As early as 1673 a prayer group was founded in London by a group of young men in response to a series of revival services by one Dr Anthony Horneck. They started praying for revival. This led to the start of a movement, The Societies, of which there were a hundred in London by 1730, with as many outside the city. Herein lay the roots of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century revival.

Then, suddenly in 1737 a voice echoed across England like a bell. A twenty-two-year-old preacher started preaching in London with power from on high. Soon there was not a church big enough to contain the crowds that flocked to hear him. George Whitefield became a burning torch to the glory of God, the truth of the Bible and the saving power of the gospel. He was soon joined

by the likes of John and Charles Wesley and several others. For the next half-century a wave of saving grace swept over the British Isles.

Dallimore ends his introductory chapter with this quotation: 'A religious revival burst forth ... which changed in a few years the whole temper of English society. The Church was restored to life and activity. Religion carried to the hearts of the people a fresh spirit of moral zeal, while it purified our literature and our manners. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education.'

Let us therefore not lose heart! Remember what history teaches us. Better still, remember Jesus Christ our King! His kingdom must and will come! His elect must and will be saved! He must and will be glorified!

Let us, one and all, do our duty – clearly spelled out in the Word! We are not ignorant! We have a High Priest in heaven! We have free access to the throne of mercy! The Holy Spirit abides in us!

*Nico van der Walt lives in South Africa and has been a pastor.*



*Dinu Moga from Romania preaching  
at the Euro Evangelism Conference*



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## I will not say the Day is done

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*by Ryan King*

**T**HE BOOK OF 2 SAMUEL TELLS IN ITS TENTH CHAPTER OF A GREAT ARMY ASSEMBLED BY THE AMMONITES made up of their own men and hired Syrian mercenaries. King David sends Joab and the mighty men of Israel to face the powerful enemy but the Israelite force finds itself outnumbered and surrounded by 33,000 warriors for hire.



*Ryan King preaching at the Euro Evangelism Conference*

The text from verse 9 reads, ‘When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Syrians. The rest of his men he put in the charge of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed them against the Ammonites. And he said, “If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what seems good to him.”’

## **Be of good courage**

Retreat is not an option, but it does not appear that the outcome of the battle will be good. Although their plight is great and the problems they face are seemingly insurmountable, they nevertheless commit themselves to fulfil their responsibilities, and entrust themselves to the sovereign Lord God.

‘So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. And when the Ammonites saw that the Syrians fled, they likewise fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.’

The good plan of God was that he make known his power on this occasion first in the relative weakness and vulnerability of his people and ultimately in their triumphant victory in which they overcame their dangerous situation and difficult obstacles.

On a more spiritual level there are, I believe, some genuine parallels between this passage and the situation in which we find ourselves in Europe. Outnumbered, surrounded, and poorly resourced, I want to call you today to be of good courage and to trust the Lord, who will certainly do what seems good to him.

## **Europe’s plight**

### *An urgent need*

The more I research the cities of Europe, the clearer it becomes to me that the European continent is the least evangelised in the world. Of course there are vast areas in Africa, Asia, and South America that have yet to be reached and there are tribes that have yet to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and have not received the Bible in their own language. Nevertheless their trajectory is a positive one. The churches are growing, reproducing and multiplying.

Evangelism is happening. The gospel is advancing, and in places where opposition is most fierce, faith is thriving. Ongoing discipleship, theological and practical Christian education and sound Bible teaching must indeed be improved, but significant strides are being taken to rectify this.

The same cannot be said of Europe, where it would seem that the trajectory has for some years been downward. Churches are dying.

Evangelism, if it happens at all, is too often characterised by a spirit of fear, not the Holy Spirit of power, love, and self-control. The gospel stays within the four walls of emptying church buildings, Christ-like courage fails and love for the lost grows cold. Discipleship is weak, sound theological and practical Christian education sparse, and Bible teaching is frequently fundamentally flawed.

I am not disparaging faithful gospel work or workers in places like Africa or anywhere for that matter – the whole world needs the gospel! Nor am I neglecting to take into consideration the problems with teaching and biblically consistent discipleship in the Global South. I do not wish to downplay the abiding need for gospel workers on other continents, nor to discourage those who intend to meet the urgent demand elsewhere from fulfilling their calling.

However, I am lamenting the disproportionate amount of attention given to almost everywhere else in the world but Europe. It troubles me that there are seemingly far more missionaries, Christians, and churches in Africa, South America, and Asia than in Europe and yet bizarrely, churches and missions organisations routinely invest most of their effort on these continents, marginalising and sometimes almost totally overlooking Europe. Why is Europe so neglected?

### *Ignorance*

I was once told that many people may not realise the comparatively dire situation of the European churches in comparison to those in other parts of the world. If indeed some people do think that Christianity in Europe is in a healthy state, the facts should disabuse them of this notion.

Huge swathes of Europe have a professedly ‘evangelical’ population of fewer than two or three percent. The percentage of that two percent who give evidence of being truly born again brings the number further down.

More people attend a Mormon Meeting House or Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses once a week across continental Europe than attend a professedly evangelical church on a Sunday morning. Post-Christian secularism and atheism is very, in some places overwhelmingly, strong. At least 25% of people in the European Union don’t profess belief in any god and don’t care if one exists.

It might be argued by some that the picture improves when particular countries are singled out for analysis. One individual sought to persuade

me that evangelicalism is very strong in several EU states, highlighting the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Estonia, Latvia, the Scandinavian countries and Iceland. To imply that evangelicals are strong in these countries is at best an overstatement, and the less charitable would not be wrong to say it is absurd. The vast majority of people in the United Kingdom are indifferent and apathetic toward the gospel, and many churches have watered down not only their methods but the very message that they ought to be proclaiming.

Germany is home to the atheist capital of Europe, Berlin. Switzerland is consumed with wealth and materialism and solid churches are few and far between.

Estonia is the most atheistic country in the world with only 16% saying religion of any kind plays an important role in their life.

As for Scandinavia, Sweden competes with Estonia - only 16.5% treat any religion with seriousness and even in the 'churches' that do exist, theological compromise abounds and the Word of God is not brought to bear on the moral and ethical lives of the people.

Iceland is seeing a resurgence in Paganism at the moment, links to Christianity are only cultural, and only now, in 2015, is the first Icelandic-speaking Baptist church being planted in Reykjavik. While there is no benefit in making the situation seem worse than it is, it is unhelpful to make it seem better. To administer medicine, we must first acknowledge the illness.

### *Fear*

On the other hand, it has been expressed to me that people are in fact very aware of the situation in Europe and have effectively given up on it for the more exotic and exciting pastures of the Global South. I am told that Europe is not productive, good ground for evangelism and gospel endeavour and that few are actually called to societies like ours when churches in other parts of the world are growing rapidly.

The fields of Europe, it is implied, are not white for harvest. It is feared that European culture has moved past Christianity and cannot be brought back, that Christian missions can no longer succeed and evangelism can no longer be effective in Europe.

We recognise now, if we did not at first, Europe's plight. At the spiritual level, Europe is in a very dark and dangerous place at a difficult time.

## **Europe's problems**

One flaw with the 'Why is Europe neglected by missionaries?' line of questioning is that it seems to look abroad for hope and help. I am convinced that in the long term, however, the effective re-evangelisation of Europe is going to have to be a largely indigenous movement, with the odd foreign missionary here and there. Looking at the majority of churches across the continent, though, a number of problems become evident.

### ***Legalism***

There is the problem of legalism, which I shall define in this case as the denial of Christian freedom to do things. This is not the theological legalism that requires works in order to be saved, but a practical legalism that emphasises external form and ritual instead of inner things of the heart.

Though such people might protest that they do not believe the fulfilment of their expectations makes people right with God, they nevertheless teach the commandments of men as though they were from God. This legalism can be found at both traditional and contemporary ends of the spectrum of church life.

The legalism that dismisses the appropriate use of multiple instruments in worship as 'worldly' is met by the legalism that insists using only a piano or organ is 'stuffy' and 'dead'. The legalism that requires men to wear a tie to church is met by the legalism that requires they wear a T-shirt instead.

This will do nothing to further the cause of Christ. Surely there is a link between this brand of legalism and Europe's long history of cultural and nominal Christianity. The painful reality is that whether it is the product of Rome or even the Reformation, much of Europe's religion has traditionally been more concerned with external ritual than with internal reality.

We cannot confuse cultural, external religiosity with true religion pleasing to God. Furthermore, this lends itself to promoting isolation and sectarianism among churches, a 'them and us' mentality which in turn creates an Elijah syndrome, the mindset of the prophet who thought he was the only one of his kind left when there were in fact many more.

### ***Libertinism***

There is the problem of libertinism. I use this word to describe the denial of Christian freedom to not do things. Perhaps this is seen most of all in

Charismatic or Charismatic-leaning churches, where an ‘anything goes’ approach to worship and spirituality rules.

The philosophy behind this lack of order is a belief that the Scriptures are not genuinely sufficient so we can do as we want and should do what feels right, even to the violation of scriptural principles of decency and order. I do not address those who have an exegetically open but cautious approach to the spiritual gifts, or even those who theoretically allow for their continuation, but rather those who are theologically and methodologically unhinged, lacking biblical principle and propriety.

Beyond the theological libertinism of the charismatic movement is a practical, everyday libertinism. Europe’s churches are filled with people who have a form of godliness but deny its power and live life with a disorderly, wrongheaded and sinful-hearted permissiveness. Drunkenness, dishonesty, sexual immorality, profane speech, and otherwise generally foolish behaviour is characteristic of many people in Europe’s churches and there is not sufficiently robust teaching and compassionate discipline to challenge it in many cases. The grace of God is profanely abused to accept, and even to encourage, sinful behaviour.

### *Illiteracy*

There is the problem of illiteracy. Illiteracy denies Christians the freedom to think things. A number of pastors from across the continent have expressed that there is not any real grasp of theology or biblical things beyond the surface level, and opportunities for accessible, biblically robust education (either formal or informal) are not enough to meet the need or the demand.

In some circles there is a tendency toward anti-intellectualism and a scepticism toward religious academia. On the other end of the spectrum, there are those for whom academic theological education is somewhat of an idol. One pastor I contacted was adamant: ‘We do not evangelise,’ he wrote. ‘We think that evangelisation is an evil invention of 19<sup>th</sup>-century American church culture with which the rest of the world has been ever since infected.’ Thinking that somehow there had been a serious miscommunication and that he did not understand my question, I approached him on the subject again but received no reply. When asked what the foremost need of his country and its churches was, he replied simply, ‘Academic theological education’.

Between these extremes, in the balanced middle ground, are those with the general recognition that leaders – be they pastors or evangelists – are

needed in Europe's churches and that they need to be trained and prepared for ministry in some way or another, whether that involves a seminary or monthly training days like those run by the Grace Baptist Partnership and Euro Evangelism.

A pastor in Toulon, France, wrote to me that one third of French churches have French pastors, one third are led by foreign missionaries, and another third have no one to lead them at all. 'Instilling vision and equipping believers for ministry seems crucial to me,' he says. I agree. Although he speaks for France, this is not a French problem. This is a continental problem.

### *Liberalism*

There is the problem of liberalism. Liberalism is the denial of Christian freedom to think and do things under the authority of Scripture. A pastor in Germany wrote to me that 'In the churches and the pastoral training centres, the Bible is no longer considered to be God's Word. The contents of the Bible are watered down and are preached without belief or not at all. The German churches must again put God at the centre and acknowledge the Bible again as the Word of God.' Sadly, the same can be said for many European countries, particularly those in Western Europe.

I was also told that the average German Christian does not experience a preacher who carefully exegetes a passage in his sermon, unpacks the text, leads to Christ and then applies it to a variety of people in and around the church (the church, the believer, the non-believer, society, and so forth).

The average German Christian reportedly has no model for carefully thinking through the implications of the gospel and the excellencies of Christ for his own life, let alone how to speak powerfully into his neighbour's.

This neglect of God's Word leaves Europe's churches without a firm footing. Instead of standing on the changeless truth of Christ, many of Europe's churches are being swept away by the changing tides of culture.

Instead of being satisfied with the Kingdom of the Saviour, they foolishly build castles of sand. Those who can rightly sing, 'On Christ the solid rock I stand' will be steadfast and immovable because theirs is an unshakeable Kingdom, but the churches who exalt culture over Christ, experience over exposition and pragmatism over principle will dissolve and are dissolving with the waves of time and change.

## *Laziness*

There are churches that seem to have overcome the aforementioned problems, and yet they are not blameless. Even in those churches where God's Word is believed and faithfully taught, there is the ever-present matter of laziness, particularly demonstrated in the failure of Christians to freely and faithfully preach the gospel. I say to these people, the wonderful good news summed up in the Apostle's words, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' is God's power to the salvation of everyone who believes.

If you believe in Jesus Christ, you have experienced this power in your own life and have the ability by the Holy Spirit to set it to work in the lives of other people. Why leave it unused? Man is perishing in the chains of sin and death and you possess that which alone can free him, but you stay home.

There are people all around you, where you live, where you work, where you go to church, that are headed for an eternity separated from right relationship with God in Hell. Will you ignore them simply because you are afraid, or because you doubt that they will listen to you, or because you are busy? Honestly, are you really so busy that you cannot be God's instrument in saving a life?

Of course, fear makes it easy to be lazy: after all, the book of Proverbs tells us of a lazy man who wouldn't leave his house because he thought there might be a lion in the streets. A recurring theme in my conversations with Baptist pastors across Europe is the common perception that they and the congregations that they lead belong to a cult or some-such bizarre religious fringe movement.

They are in good company: in the 1800s a senior Lutheran clergyman in Germany decried Johann Gerhard Oncken ('the Father of Continental Baptists') and his congregation as 'a fanatical Anabaptist sect'. Oncken and his church would ultimately be responsible for constituting at least 280 Baptist churches in Germany, also establishing a further 1,222 'preaching stations' and starting 771 Sunday Schools in Germany alone, plus directly planting over 170 churches in Scandinavia and the Slavic states, to say nothing of German-speakers all across Europe who were inspired and enabled through Oncken's ministry to evangelise and seek to begin churches where they were.

Far from this undeterred mindset, too many Christian workers in Europe act as though they are paralysed by similar societal perceptions, and to avoid being labelled a 'cult' or 'sect' do nothing to raise their profile.



My finding is that there are many churches that want to see people saved and want to grow and be strong – in theory. They are however, unwilling to do what is necessary to bring the gospel to the people around them.

Far too often they are enslaved to cultural sensibilities that seemingly either do not apply to or at least do not deter sales people, charity representatives, politicians and cult groups, making it easier for falsehood to grow, prosper, and thrive. They are unwilling to take risks and reach people locally, nationally, and globally with the saving message of Jesus.

### **Europe's potential**

These are some of Europe's problems but I believe that these problems also reveal Europe's potential. There is immense potential, potential that in fact is created by the continent's plight and problems. Potential to meet obstacles and overcome them, to face challenges and deal with them, to live out the magnificent victory of the risen Christ through all the triumphs and tragedies of life and ministry.

In a context of legalism there is the potential to proclaim the genuine freedom we have in Christ, to lay aside preferences while holding fast to principles, and to strive toward biblical balance in church life.

In a context of libertinism there is the potential to submit to the Lordship of Christ, to strive for the holiness without which we will not see God, and to say, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.'

In a context of illiteracy there is the potential to follow in the footsteps of men like Oncken, who flooded the continent with Bibles, tracts, good Christian literature, and other biblical resources. In a context of liberalism there is the potential to once again stand, open the Bible, and say with conviction and Holy Spirit power, 'Thus says the Lord.'

In a context of laziness there is the potential to put our hand to the plough and break up the hard spiritual ground of Europe, to go out and scatter the precious seed of the Word of God, to reap a harvest of repentant, believing souls. And if we have ploughed, and if we have sown, then it is promised that we shall indeed reap, if we do not give up.

### **God's power**

#### *The hope of Europe*

I believe we are on the verge of seeing great things in many parts of the continent, some of which were hardly touched by the Reformation and have never seen an 'Evangelical Revival' or 'Great Awakening'.

Perhaps people may think I am overly hopeful. I have no reason to be, humanly speaking. We are not, in and of ourselves, the hope of Europe, much less the world, but Jesus, working through his people, is! We have a Saviour who is greater than any situation. We have a Lord who can override all the statistics the experts throw at us.

My hope is not you. My hope is not me. My hope is not in any mere man. My hope is not Grace Baptist Partnership, Euro Evangelism, or any earthly movement. My hope is Jesus Christ.

### *The Day was not done*

Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate the forbidden fruit. No sooner had they fallen into sin, than God promised a future salvation: the woman's offspring would crush the serpent's head. The Day was not done.

Abraham and Sarah couldn't have children but God made a promise and gave them a son in old age through whom a blessing would come to all the world. The Day was not done.

Joseph was cast into a pit, sold into slavery, falsely accused of attempted rape by his master's wife, imprisoned, and forgotten. God made him second to the king of Egypt and reconciled him to his family, but their descendants were enslaved for 400 years, lost a sense of their unique purpose and identity, and were worshipping the gods of their masters. An infant Hebrew boy doomed to die was saved, raised as one of Pharaoh's own family, became a well-esteemed official in the land, became a fugitive in his forties, and returned to lead his people out of slavery to the Promised Land in his eighties. Before he died, he told of a greater prophet, in many ways like himself, who would come to the people and they would listen to him. The Day was not done.

Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah were overthrown by Babylon. In the book of Lamentations, an afflicted man who experienced the horror of Jerusalem's siege, and the slaughter and exile of its people believed that all his hope had perished, even from the Lord, but he remembered that the steadfast love of the Lord never, never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning and his faithfulness is great! The Day was not done.

Another, much greater man of affliction would embody this steadfast love when he hung on a cross bleeding out and choking his life away. He

prayed, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!’ and died, but then three days later rose again. The Day was not done.

*I will not say the Day is done*

The Day is still not done. In fact, it might be asked in some places – has the Day even begun?

It has been said that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. I see many stars in Europe. In the darkness of Europe, I see the light of the gospel. I will not say the Day is done! In the death of the continent’s religiosity, I see the life of Christian regeneration. I will not say the Day is done! Among those who have lost hope, I find some who have taken heart. I will not say the Day is done! For all those who are bowled over by wickedness and broken down by weariness, there are others who are boasting in Christ’s righteousness and bearing up by God’s faithfulness. I will not say the Day is done!

And above all these stars is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever, the power and wisdom of God, our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

One of England’s great literary giants, J R R Tolkien, poetically exclaimed:

*Though here at journey’s end I lie  
in darkness buried deep,  
beyond all towers strong and high,  
beyond all mountains steep,  
above all shadows rides the Sun  
and Stars for ever dwell:  
I will not say the Day is done,  
nor bid the Stars farewell.*

May God grant us grace to see the potential in our problems and to trust his power in our plight. I will not say the Day is done!

*Ryan King is Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Wood Green, UK.*

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## Euro Evangelism Conference, Vienna

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by Kees van Kralingen

**T**HE AIM OF THE ORGANISERS OF THIS CONFERENCE WAS TO BRING TOGETHER AS MANY MEN AS POSSIBLE TO stimulate one another in the task of evangelism in Europe. Another aim was to create an opportunity for mutual encouragement and networking as many men are serving in lonely situations. This conference took place in Vienna on 22-24 September with eighty people from about 15-20 different countries ranging from the UK to Ukraine and many in between.

Barry King opened the conference with an exposition of Philippians 1:1-2. Paul's opening statement in this letter shows his spiritual priorities. These are 1) *gospel humility* (Paul not doing everything himself but acknowledging the work of young Timothy so that together they are servants of Christ Jesus); 2) *gospel unity* (he writes to all the saints as diverse as they are and whilst there is the threat of disunity, see 4:2; and 3) *gospel clarity* (grace and peace refer to the essential elements of gospel truth). In a second address Barry spoke about the need for partnership in the work of the gospel based on Philippians 4:10-20.

Peter Schild is a young evangelist in Frankfurt, Germany, sent out by the church in Wetzlar. In his address, Peter pictured the life and ministry of J G Oncken in Hamburg, Germany, in the 19th century, who was instrumental in proclaiming the gospel in many European countries and in planting many churches. Peter emphasised the lessons we can learn from Oncken's life and ministry such as trust in God's sovereignty, the importance of prayer, love for the lost, sound doctrine, good literature, networking, a church-based approach to the work, and sacrificial living in total dependence on the Lord Jesus.

Andrew Swanson who has been ministering in North Cyprus for thirty years preached from John 10:16 showing how God's plan of redeeming lost sinners, whether Jew or Gentile, goes on as this is the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. Andrew also gave a moving testimony of his work in North Cyprus over these years. The Lord has blessed his ministry but in totally unexpected ways. Fruit among the Turkish Cypriots has been limited, but God has done wonderful things in the ministry to the student population. Many of these students come from African countries and can take the gospel and the fruits of the teaching back to their home countries upon their return. God's thoughts and ways are so different from ours as his supreme concern is for his own glory. Any progress in the work can only be attributed to his grace.



*Barry King interviewing Arben Celanji (from Albania) and Steve Missios (originally from Greece; now in Austria) at the Euro Evangelism Conference*

Hicham el Mostain, pastor of a church in Carcassonne, France, presented a most practically useful and stimulating paper on how to bring the message of the gospel to Muslims. Dinu Moga from Romania spoke about the authority and reliability of Scripture, illustrating this from the words Christ spoke to Satan at his temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-

11): 'It is written'. This expression shows the essential connection between the Old Testament and Christ. Reading the whole Bible as God's revelation is essential (see also Rom 15:4).

Kees van Kralingen (editor of *Reformation Today*) spoke about evangelism as the task for every local church. Kees also preached from Acts 4:23-31 on the prayer of the church in Jerusalem following the warnings to the apostles to no longer speak in the name of the Lord Jesus. This event emphasises the power of prayer to our sovereign Lord in difficult circumstances.

Ryan King, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Wood Green, London, UK, presented the final conference address. Ryan has done a lot of research on the position of the Christian Church and of biblically faithful gospel witness in Europe. He spoke about Europe's plight, Europe's problems and Europe's potential. His address was both a deeply penetrating analysis and also a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness. See full text of his address elsewhere in this issue.

During the conference we prayed for all countries in Europe, remembering specifically people known to us who are serving the Lord in them. Remembering that we need to turn these lessons into practice, several brethren took the opportunity to reach out to a group of refugees in a nearby park in Vienna. The conference has also been tremendous in building the network and in establishing mutual contacts for further cooperation. Most important of all, we realised with profound gratitude for his unmerited grace that the Lord has been with us. This conference will be repeated next year, the Lord willing. We also expressed our sincere thanks to Nigel and Pat von Sachsenburg for the tremendous amount of work they did for the organisation of this conference and for generating such a wonderful atmosphere of warm hospitality.

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# Slaves to Righteousness, not to Sin

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by *Mostyn Roberts*

## Union with Christ and Definitive Sanctification

### Union with Christ

In *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* John Murray states that the union of believers with Christ

is not simply a step in the application of redemption ... in its broader aspects it underlies every step of the application of redemption. Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also in its once-for-all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

As Robert Letham says, ‘Union with Christ is not one aspect of the process of salvation but is the overall context in which all aspects are to be seen.’<sup>2</sup>

There would therefore be a good case for dealing with it at the outset of any series on the Doctrines of Grace. We introduce it here, however, as we come to look at sanctification, the point at which union with Christ becomes an experiential reality for the Christian.

Union with Christ, sometimes called the ‘mystical’ union, is portrayed in Scripture by many images: he is the vine, we are the branches (John 15:5); he is the Head, we are the body (Eph 1:22, 23); he is the bridegroom, we are the bride (Eph 5:29-33); he is the cornerstone, we are the living stones built on him (Eph 2:20-21; 1 Peter 2:4-6); along with the human race we are in Adam, with the church we are in Christ (1 Cor 15:22).

Peter even says we become ‘partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4). We must not however think of union with Christ as being ‘made God’, or

<sup>1</sup> *Banner of Truth*, 1979 reprint, p 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Union with Christ*, P&R 2011, p 89.

merging with the Infinite so that we are absorbed into the being of God; nor is it, on the other hand, merely a union of sympathy or interest or agreement between two people. Peter ‘says that we participate in God’s nature, not God’s being. He has chosen the term “nature” because it indicates growth, development and character. The expression “being”, by contrast, points to God’s essence and substance. We can never participate in God’s essence for we are and remain human beings who have been created by God. What Peter discloses is that we share God’s holiness which we experience through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.’<sup>3</sup>

Participating in the divine nature is the gracious provision of God, not man’s attainment; it is holiness in contrast to the corruption of the world, not ‘becoming God’; the starting point, not the goal and final attainment, of spiritual life. It is a union which is vital in that our life comes from him (John 15:5). It is to be restored to our destiny of sharing in the divine glory, in which one day we shall enjoy ‘the perfect and full communion, which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgement’.<sup>4</sup> It is this for which Christ prays for his people in that most wonderful of all prayers (John 17:20-24).

It is possible to identify three stages in our union with Christ:

1. In *eternity*, we are united with Christ in election: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world’ (Eph 1:3,4).
2. In *history*, we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection. It is because the people of God ‘were in Christ when he gave his life a ransom and redeemed them by his blood that salvation has been secured for them; they are represented as united to Christ in his death, resurrection and exaltation to heaven (Rom 6:2-11; Eph 2:4-6; Col 3:3,4)’.<sup>5</sup>
3. In *personal appropriation*, in Christ we are born again, created anew (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). At this stage Christ begins to put

<sup>3</sup> Simon Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude* (Evangelical Press, 1987) p 371.

<sup>4</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism, Answer 90.

<sup>5</sup> John Murray, *ibid*, p 162.

his people in possession of all the blessings he has purchased for them. We must not think of this as merely an individual experience. The ‘whole church is in him and is born out of him as the Head’.<sup>6</sup>

We are vitally united to Christ in regeneration (Eph 2:5 ‘made alive’; 1 Peter 1:4 ‘born again’). We are justified in him (1 Cor 1:30), the imputation of Christ’s righteousness being that aspect of union that supplies the ground for our justification. We are definitively sanctified in Christ through having been crucified and raised with him (Rom 6:3f, see further below). We continue to live by faith ‘in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me’ (Gal 2:20). We are raised with him and are seated in heavenly places with him (Eph 2:5,6) and one day we shall be raised bodily in that same union, he being the first fruits, we the full harvest (1 Cor 15:23).

### **Sanctification**

Sanctification is the process whereby God makes his people holy. In justification, by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, he removes the guilt of their sin and accepts them in his Son. In sanctification he breaks first the dominion of sin and then progressively weakens (but never completely eradicates in this life) the power of sin. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (following the Westminster) defines sanctification in this way:

‘Those who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having had a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, are then further sanctified in a very real and personal way. Because of the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, and by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed. The different lusts of the body of sin are increasingly weakened and mortified [put to death], and Christ’s people are increasingly quickened [made alive] and strengthened in all saving graces, to practise all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord’.<sup>7</sup>

Two aspects of this process of being made holy are distinguished,

<sup>6</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, Banner of Truth 1984 reprint, p 449.

<sup>7</sup> 1689 Baptist Confession, 13.1.



reflecting the fact that the New Testament speaks of Christians as both *already sanctified* and also as *being progressively sanctified*. The first is called 'definitive' sanctification<sup>8</sup> whereby we are said to be sanctified at a point in time, namely the moment of conversion, the same 'moment' as our justification and adoption. Paul for example says to the Corinthians, 'But you were washed, you were sanctified' (1 Cor 6:11). The second is called 'progressive' sanctification, the fight of the Christian life, and this will be left to a future issue.

Definitive sanctification can be looked at helpfully as being consecrated to God, in the way that vessels, animals and people were dedicated to God in the Old Testament (Ex 19:1-6,14,22; 22:31). This is holiness as being 'set apart' for God. In this sense sanctification is a past event, though with present significance, for every believer. It is this that Hebrews seems to have in mind when it speaks of our having 'been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (Heb 10:10).

Definitive sanctification can however be most helpfully studied from Paul's argument in Romans 6.

### **Slaves to righteousness, not to sin – definitive sanctification<sup>9</sup>**

#### **A glorious truth and a false inference**

Believers appreciated Paul's preaching. The emphasis on God's grace thrilled them. He spoke of the grace of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the free gift of grace and the reign of grace. He preached of the abundance of grace and of grace abounding. Christians rejoiced in the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ and their share in that victory. Paul insisted that sin just could not win. The reign of sin through death is over. Where sin abounds, grace super-abounds; where sin does its worst, grace is at its best. All sin can do, it seems, is give grace more opportunities to shine and add more lustre to its crown.

Some believers therefore took the step of saying, 'If this is so – why not continue in sin that grace may abound'? This seems like one small step

<sup>8</sup> See John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, (Banner of Truth, 1977), Vol 2, pp 277-93.

<sup>9</sup> From here on this article first appeared in the *Banner of Truth* magazine, issue 509, Feb 2006.

in logic but it is actually a giant leap in spiritual significance – and a disastrous one.

You cannot do that, cries out Paul. You cannot. Don't even think that I could be taken to mean that. Yes, we have the victory in Christ, and grace will reign, but it will reign *through righteousness* to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. You are forgetting, or misunderstanding, a crucial fact about your new life in Christ. It is, and must be, and cannot be anything else but, a life of righteousness.

In Romans 6 Paul takes up this false inference from his preaching of grace. He takes us back to the roots of our new life. 'You cannot continue to sin', he says, 'because of what you are in Christ.' He states a basic principle then explains it. The principle is that we who *died to sin* cannot *live in* it. If we continue in sin we are living a fundamental contradiction – a contradiction between what we are and how we are behaving. We are dead to sin; we cannot therefore live in sin. It is simple. But how does this come about?

The most important truth a Christian can understand in making progress in the spiritual life is his union with Christ. This is where Paul takes us as he unfolds the logic behind his statement that we are dead to sin. We are dead to sin because of Christ's death and our share in it. We are alive to righteousness because of Christ's resurrection and our share in it. Because of Christ's death and resurrection and our part in them we have a new Master. Sin is no longer our master. God is. The Christian life is the process of working that out. It makes continuing in sin impossible.

### **Begin at the Beginning**

To understand this, we go back to the beginning of our Christian life. What happened then? We were baptised. Baptised in water? Yes, but it is doubtful if Paul means that here. We were baptised by the Holy Spirit into Christ. Our union with Christ is one of the things symbolised by water baptism, but the Spirit baptism is the real thing. Paul's main point is that at the outset of our Christian life we were united with Christ. In particular we were united with him in his death and resurrection. We were 'baptised into his death', indeed 'buried with him by baptism into death' (Rom 6:3,4). More than that, we were united with him in his resurrection, for the baptism into death was 'in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father, we too might walk in newness of

life' (v4). This clearly means that resurrection is a present, spiritual reality even if in verse 5 Paul points to our share in a future (bodily) resurrection. But the emphasis throughout this passage is on the believer's present life. When we became Christians, we were plunged into the experience of union with Christ. We have a part, we have property, in his death and resurrection.

### *The Death and Resurrection of Christ*

This is not of course the first time in this letter that Paul has mentioned the death and resurrection of Christ. Our justification is based on the propitiation of Christ's sacrifice made effective for salvation through his being raised: he 'was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (4:25). But this has to do with the *guilt* of sin. In chapter six Paul is saying something else. In the death and resurrection of Christ, the believer is also done with the *dominion* of sin. The mastery, not just the guilt, of sin is a thing of the past. Being a slave to sin, along with condemnation for sin, is history for the believer. The death Christ died he died to sin once for all and being raised from the dead he will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. In thinking of sanctification, as with justification, we begin with the work, back there in history, of our Saviour. His death ended sin's mastery; his resurrection ended death's dominion. Death no longer 'lords it' over him and as a consequence of our union with him sin and death will no longer 'lord it' over us. (vv 9,14).

We must immediately see that there is a huge difference between the death of Christ to sin and anything that could be true of us. His was the vicarious death of the innocent Lamb of God for us. Our death is deserved. We were dead in sin before becoming dead to sin. He never was. This is possibly one reason why Paul in v5 uses the phrase 'united with him in a death [and] resurrection *like* his' – one can hardly identify them totally – 'likeness' keeps the distance.

So we look to that unique death of the sinless Saviour that was for us, and to his resurrection that also was for us. In that death and resurrection sin's dominion was ended because a sinless One died taking the penalty for sin, condemnation was lifted and righteousness restored. Death's sting was drawn and death becomes the door to eternal life. Satan's power was broken, he having nothing with which to charge God's people. Sin, death and Satan are paper tigers, because of what Christ did.

So Christ took sin's condemnation but in addition we are also free from sin's mastery because as well as Christ dying for us, we died in him. But how do we understand that?

*Our death and resurrection with Christ*

'We know that our old self was crucified with him,' writes Paul (v6). Paul would hardly have used the word 'crucified' had he not intended to teach that 'back there' we died in Christ. 'Now if we have died in Christ', he says, referring almost certainly to the same truth (v8). It is a fact of history. What however is meant by our 'old self' or more literally our 'old man'? Reference back to chapter five is again helpful. There Paul outlines the grand theme of the Two Men in whom our Fall and Redemption have taken place, so that as Thomas Goodwin said, 'In God's eyes there are two men, Adam and Christ, and these two men have all others hanging at their girdle strings.' We are in Adam until we are in Christ. Being in Adam means that he, as it were, pulls our strings. 'Our old man' is us in Adam. He dominates, which is to say that sin is our master. As long as our 'old man' is in control, sin is in the driving seat. I am a slave to sin.

The old man who died in Christ was therefore 'me' in Adam. 'Me' as the slave of sin. Paul goes on to say in v6 that our old man was crucified with him 'in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing' (or 'rendered powerless') so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin'. The body of sin is not the same as the 'old man'. It is the servant of the old man. It is the body conditioned and controlled by sin and the purpose of the crucifixion of the old man is that the body (including the mind, of course) may not be so controlled and conditioned, that truly and really (not only notionally) the believer might be free from sin and free for God.

The key to sanctification, however, is to realise that while the fight against sin in the 'body' (my real life on earth) will be lifelong, I myself as a member of Adam's helpless and sinful race, am 'dead'. 'Crucified' means just that. It was once for all and complete. Instead of being alive in Adam (and therefore dead in sin, not to it) I am now dead to sin and alive in Christ. I am a new person. The 'I' is no longer 'I' in Adam but in Christ. There is only one such 'I'. There is not and can never be two 'men' that are I, an old man and a new man. The old man is crucified and that means dead. Forever. I rose, but in Christ, leaving the old man firmly in the grave.

This is because as surely as I have been crucified with him I have been raised with him, united with him in the likeness of both his death and

resurrection (v5). The word ‘likeness’ is used because, as well as Christ’s death being unique (as mentioned above), Christ’s death and resurrection were physical, whereas ours (at this point at least) are spiritual. The deaths and resurrections are not identical, though in them we are identified with those of Christ. The union between them is intimate and real; it is not a fiction; it is an act of God that creates it; and its result is that we are no longer slaves to sin. Sin shall not be your master. I shall fight till my dying day against sin in my ‘members’ but the master is dead; sin shall not lord it over me.

Stuart Olyott uses the illustration of a slave who, in a foreign country where he is a prisoner, is treated terribly by his master. The king of his own country sets out to liberate him. How does he do it? Uniquely amongst liberations, he kills the slave. The slave is of course now unable to serve his old master. He is out of his power. Death ends the tyranny of sin. Of course, the king brings him to life again – to serve him, a far better master.

### **Entering into the experience of our union with Christ**

There comes a time when I must appropriate for myself what happened in Christ ‘back there’. I must make union with Christ a present experience. This comes at conversion. This is where Paul takes us when he exhorts the Roman Christians to remember that at the beginning of their Christian lives they were baptised into the death and resurrection of Christ. This baptism is not my decision; I am passive; it is the work of God submerging me into his dear Son in the effectiveness of his saving work. Its conscious expression however is my repentance and faith. I relinquish my hold on sin and grasp Christ. I now *am* dead to sin in my present experience. I now *am* alive to God and to righteousness. As Paul says elsewhere, ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come’ (2 Cor 5:17).

But what does this mean in practice?

#### *Living it out: (1) Reckoning*

‘So you also must consider (or ‘reckon’) yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus’ (v1). This means simply – believe God’s Word. What he tells you, is true. You really are dead to sin and alive to God. ‘Reckon’ or ‘consider’ does not mean that by some ‘power of positive thinking’ you make yourself dead and alive. It presupposes that you are

already dead and alive by virtue of your union with Christ but you need to appropriate that truth in faith if you are to live it out. When sin beckons you to obey its demands, remember – it is no longer your master. You are dead to it. When God calls you to obey his commands, remember – you are alive to him; obedience is the most natural thing in the world.

Remember: ‘reckoning’ is an activity of the mind. You will only grow in grace as you understand doctrine and apply it to your life.

*Living it out: (2) Dead to sin*

‘Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions’ (v12). Sin, the old tyrant, will do all he can to bring us again under his power. He will shout commands at you and put immense pressure on you. You must resist. Tell yourself that he is not your master. He has no rights over you. If you obey, it is either because you want to, which is an act of betrayal to your new master and of base ingratitude considering what he has done to liberate you; or it is because you are not reckoning on the truth of what your union with Christ means. You need to read again Romans 6!

You must also do all you can to avoid meeting this old master. If certain places or people, certain TV programmes or books, the internet or magazines, tempt you to sin, avoid them. Do not underestimate the power of the ‘old man’. ‘Be always putting sin to death’ (Rom 8:13). But the strength of your position remember is what you *are* in Christ. The old man is dead. That is real; it can never change.

*Living it out: (3) Alive to God*

Saying ‘no’ to the old master is not enough. You must say ‘yes’ to your new Master. ‘Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness’ (v13). Paul expands on this in verses 15 ff. ‘But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness’ (vv17,18). God is your Master, you are his slave, a slave to righteousness, and your obedience is not a resentful submission but your joy and delight. This now is your life, to follow Christ whose whole purpose was to do

the will of his Father (John 4:34). Grace now reigns in *your* life through righteousness unto eternal life through Christ. 'For sin shall have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace' (v14).

One thing however you can never say is, 'Well, now I am under grace, so not under law, therefore I can sin.' That is as wrongheaded as saying, 'Let us sin so that grace will abound.' The believer wants to obey, and that means loving God's law which, though it no longer condemns him, is still binding on him and directs his paths. 'O how I love your law!' (Ps 119:97) is his testimony.

### *Conclusion*

'Sin shall not be your master' therefore. There is a battle with sin until your dying day but it is *because* you have been set free from sin's mastery that you have that struggle; fighting is not defeat. And even when you know defeat too often, this is so that you may know just how evil is your heart, how powerful your foes, how welcome will be the day when it is over and how dependent you are on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to help you and on his righteousness, not yours, for your acceptance with God.

There has – reckon on it – been a definitive break with the dominion of sin. Of this Paul speaks elsewhere when he says of believers that they are already 'sanctified' (1 Cor 1:2; 6:11); and Peter writes: 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness' (1 Peter 2:24). This is no sideline in Christian doctrine but the very foundation of the believer's separation to God, his 'definitive' sanctification at the root of his 'progressive' sanctification. It is the beginning of a long struggle but a struggle with a glorious outcome, for 'now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life' (Rom 6:22).

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## A Leicester Awakening

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by Ian Shaw

**T**HE EVENTS AND PEOPLE WE KNOW ABOUT AND REMEMBER FROM OUR NATIONAL HISTORIES SAY MUCH ABOUT HOW we see ourselves today – or wish to be seen. At the time of writing people in Western Europe are much taken with the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and more generally with the events of the First World War a century later. Christians should not seek immunity from this, and much good writing has endeavoured to provide a corrective to our forgetfulness. For example, it is interesting that the title of the first book from the pen of Iain Murray was *The Forgotten Spurgeon*. Michael Haykin has sought to restore to the light of day the lives and work of the evangelical Calvinists within the British Baptist community in the period bridging the 18th and 19th centuries.

Nearer to our own times, Paul Brown's *Ernest Kevan* had the partly incidental benefit of showing how the seeds of a later renewal of a stronger biblical Christianity were sown in a neglected period of the church's twentieth-century history. No doubt similar examples could be given for countries round the world. One appreciative welcome for Kevan's ministry could be found in Leicester, where Leslie Land, the minister at Melbourne Hall between 1947 and 1961, secured his presence in the pulpit most years. In this slightly roundabout way we have met the central figure in this story – W Leslie Land (1903-1986). Tracing his life is like a jigsaw puzzle with many missing pieces. 'William Leslie Land, born 20 January 1903 at Wirksworth; son of Samuel Land, retired Draper and Outfitter. Educated at the Grammar School, Wirksworth. Admitted 1 March 1921.' So reads the Christ's College, Cambridge, Admissions Book.<sup>1</sup> He rose to become Head of Seaford College, an independent school in Sussex, before gradually coming to terms with a call to the ministry. His long correspondence and friendship with Martyn Lloyd-Jones<sup>2</sup> played a central role in his leaving his position and moving, via

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<sup>1</sup> An appreciation of his life can be seen in the Introduction to Leslie Land, 2014 *The Appearing of Jesus* (Ed. Ian Shaw), available as an e-book on most platforms, including Amazon, iTunes and ipdbooks.

<sup>2</sup> For the previously untold story of this friendship see the article by Ian Shaw in the *Banner of Truth Magazine* January 2014.



a scholarship to Mansfield College (Oxford) and a short ministry on the south coast of England, to Melbourne Hall in the East Midlands city of Leicester in 1947. There he commenced a ministry of fourteen years that was to prove more far-reaching than any period in that church since F B Meyer became its first minister late in the 19th century.

The first three years saw what seems to have been an almost immediate blessing through an influx of new members and baptisms. By way of just one illustration, 99 people were baptised by him in the three years from October 1947<sup>3</sup>, and 111 joined the church. Christians, ministers included, travelled from all over the city and county to attend his weekly Bible School. Leslie Land avoided labels, but his gentle, impeccably courteous, yet penetrating expositions laid the foundations of a Reformed evangelicalism which was to influence many beyond his own congregation. We will look closely at the first three years of his ministry in this and two following articles, along

with occasional illustrations from later years of his time in Leicester – what characterised it, its consequences, and the approach he took to preaching.<sup>4</sup>

## The Times and the Church

1947 – in some ways so recent, in others so distant. The Second World War had its ever-present reminders. A Forces' 'Welcome Home' meeting took place in the September shortly following his arrival. There is a note of the British and Foreign Bible Society<sup>5</sup> calling for German Bibles. In the following month he has a note about a letter he had given the church for funds for bombed churches and the



*Page of the Melbourne Hall Church magazine with sermon by Leslie Land*

<sup>3</sup> In his letter to the church on leaving in 1961 he said, 'God has sought and saved many souls (I must have baptised several hundred).'

<sup>4</sup> The sources for this are bound copies of the substantial monthly church magazine, plus correspondence, audiotape transcripts, and other archival sources. I cite details of dates and sources only where the context calls for them.

<sup>5</sup> Now simply The Bible Society.

result was to that date £243 (a substantial sum). There was also a note in the December issue of the church magazine about a planned plaque for those from the church who died during the war and a provisional list of twelve names is given. When the plaque was unveiled he preached on, 'What causes wars?' 'War has its origin in the human soul.' Leaders of some fanatical party may be an immediate cause but they 'are like an eruption on the crust of a diseased world'.

National fears lingered. Reflecting his constant interest in science and the Christian faith (he had studied Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics for the Natural Sciences Tripos at Cambridge), he spoke often of the possibility of atomic warfare. Illustrating how a New Testament minister will be both biblical and contemporary, he writes in October 1947, two years after Hiroshima, on *The Mighty Atom*. Asking why people were fearful he suggests, 'It is not the *atom* they really fear. It is not science. It is these things in the hand of *man* they fear ... Our silent fears and misgivings are a striking testimony to the verdict of God's Word about Man<sup>6</sup>: That he is away from his Lord and Maker.' 'There is something of the awful nemesis of Romans 1 about it all ... What it may mean in *our* day if God gives up men to go their own way we can only faintly imagine.'

But he never simply bemoans. He speaks of 'the design of the atom. So complex – and yet so perfect'. He speaks of the atom as a kind of microcosm of the universe in its perfection and design. Yet the scientist has found a way of breaking up the atom and 'letting loose those vast stores of energy in wild confusion. The order, the harmony is destroyed and the very matter is disintegrated and lost,' and adds, 'What a picture of the plight of man!' Returning to the theme a year later, his stance is always that 'man out of his own resources can find no hiding place from the tragic and inexorable consequences of his sin and shame' such that through atomic fission even 'the material universe is crying out ... "No place to hide".' He concludes how in the gospel 'there *is* a place to hide, there is one Hiding Place for man', and that 'The Saviour's Cross is the nucleus and the centre of a new creation'.

What kind of church did Leslie Land arrive at with his wife Kathryn and their young son Peter in May 1947? Big names had held tenure in the pulpit – F B Meyer had been the first minister. W Y Fullerton<sup>7</sup> and Benjamin Gibbon

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<sup>6</sup> In the universal habit of the time Land uses 'man' to refer to humankind in general.

<sup>7</sup> Fullerton (1857-1932) is perhaps best known today for his hymn 'I Cannot Tell ...' He was influenced by Spurgeon in his younger days and wrote extensively. A select list of his publications can be seen in the brief Wikipedia entry ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Young\\_Fullerton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Young_Fullerton)).

had followed. But all was not well. By the end of Gibbon's long ministry that immediately preceded that of Leslie Land it had become, in the memory of someone there at the time of his arrival, a rather 'social church'. Freemasonry was influential in the church on his arrival.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, even the ministry of F B Meyer was different in tone from that of Leslie Land. Meyer had distanced himself from Spurgeon in the 'Downgrade Controversy'.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding his



*Leslie Land taking a meeting at a Leicester factory  
(used by permission)*

appreciation of Spurgeon, Fullerton's preaching was less fitted to ground his hearers in the Word of God. For example, one of his sermons, preached on an early November Sunday, opens, 'Yesterday morning I cast about me to see what subject I should speak upon this evening, and as I thought, fresh gusts of wind carried the leaves against my window. As I

looked at the fallen leaves, there would come to me one word from God's own book that could not be got rid of, and so persistent was it, that I saw no escape; it came again and again, "We all do fade as a leaf."'

### **Leslie Land, the person<sup>10</sup>**

The person, the ministry, the preaching – all are intertwined. His reading was extensive, though he never wore his knowledge on his sleeve. A scan of the Church magazine includes Hudson Taylor, Thomas Huxley, Emil Brunner, John Ruskin, Francis Dixon, David Tryon, J Oswald Sanders, Oswald Chambers, Ole Hallesby, Charles Spurgeon and three extended extracts from Alan Stibbs. The frequent recommendations of good books, including in years

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<sup>8</sup> He shared details of this with a small group of young people from the church, including the author, shortly after he left in 1961.

<sup>9</sup> Holman (2007) has written an illuminating, if perhaps unduly appreciative, account of Meyer's life, which demonstrates his desire to be fully involved in the broad church of nonconformity.

<sup>10</sup> Land's life calls for a fuller biographical treatment. This article is generally limited to those aspects of his person that were manifest and significant in the opening years of his ministry. Further information can be found in *The Appearing of Jesus*.

to come the latest publications of the infant *Banner of Truth Trust*, tucked away in the pages of his monthly magazine and on the church bookstall, and the string of good preachers occupying his pulpit whenever he was away, were alike testimony to his quiet determination.

Over the years readers would also come across Charles Spurgeon's *Precepts for Ministerial Students*, J I Packer on *The Plan of God*, an extract from J C Ryle on *Defective Evangelism*, Alan Stubbs on *Parenthood* and Brownlow North's *Six Rules for Young Christians* in the pages of the church's monthly magazine. I have little doubt that it was his own action that lay behind a note in the magazine in March 1960 to the effect that 'in answer to a special request' the Leicestershire County Library had added to its stock Jonathan Edwards' *Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, John Owen's *The Glory of Christ*, Isaac Watts' *The World to Come*, and *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford*. One of his final acts was to invite Dr J Packer to address a flourishing network of lay preachers in the church only days before he concluded his ministry.

A quite wonderful book of interviews with eminent scientists is called *Passionate Minds*.<sup>11</sup> Leslie Land exemplified a Christian version of that blend. His handling of Evolution has continuing value today. Writing in 1949 on *The Christian and the Theory of Evolution*<sup>12</sup> he helpfully resets the discussion, such that the question becomes, 'How can we account for the world and life, leaving God and His creative acts out of the reckoning?' He is not an obscurantist, and speaks 'as a Christian who can claim to have studied the Natural Sciences'. He assumes 'that changes and modifications may and do take place in the structures of plants and other living organisms no-one would wish to deny' and he seems quite happy to call this 'evolution' (though he insists that this is typically a process of simplification, not growing complexity). 'If by "Evolution" you mean *this* process that is going on inside, as it were, the family circles of the different kinds of created life, then we agree there *is* such a process; the fossils prove it.' He also warns that the Bible is not a textbook of science 'and should never be misused as such'. 'But it has a knack of saying profound things in a very simple way.'

Yet he saves the main force of his response for where he started – the assumptions and premises involved. 'The Evolutionary Hypothesis in its full implications has no God in it (and what is worse no gospel). It has a false

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<sup>11</sup> Wolpert L and Richards A 1997. *Passionate Minds: the Inner World of Scientists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>12</sup> He had corresponded some time previously with Lloyd-Jones regarding B B Warfield's treatment of the age of the world, and had thought about this issue for some years.

gospel and a false light in it. It leads man to suppose that his feet are on an evolutionary ladder, that he is climbing higher and higher, and getting better and better. Such an outlook ... can only lead men to disillusionment and despair.’ He closes by applying the gospel from Romans 1.

Speaking a few weeks later on the Christian and this present world he says of humanity, ‘His conquest of nature, his mastery of science and technology have seemed to bring a wild dream near to the point of realisation. But – Hiroshima! Something has gone wrong ... It is the story of Babel all over again ... Whenever men set themselves to build Utopias, the result always turns out to be a hell.’ He pointedly says of The Church, ‘She has compromised her position, offering men her services as an advisor and abettor in this God-shy, Christ-rejecting enterprise.’

There is a weaving together of light and darkness in his thought. Speaking on *Moses my servant is dead: now therefore arise, go over this Jordan* he says, ‘Yes – God’s servants pass on ... Lament and sorrow? No! “Arise – go over this Jordan, thou and all this people.” The darker the hour, the grander, more clarion-like the call.’ Referring to the uncertainties of possible war<sup>13</sup>, and applying his thought as he often did to young people, he says:

‘I don’t know what all you young folk are going to do in life ... *Here* is something certain! Something tough, but glorious and triumphant. Something to bite on – something to build on – a call to young Joshuas – a call to the service of the King of Kings the Lord of Lords – a call to leadership for Christ and his kingdom. It is a call to war ... The days are grievous, but I believe we are on the eve of great things for God. Yes, amid the confused scene, there is a people waiting to cross over into God’s kingdom.’<sup>14</sup>

## Darkness and light

Indeed, by nature Leslie Land was a ‘glass half-empty’ person who sometimes succumbed to the pressures his own work regime caused. It is known that he went through at least two lengthy periods when he had to stand back from his ministry due to anxiety and perhaps depression. On one such occasion in March 1957 Lloyd-Jones sent a long letter to him. ‘I cannot tell you how sorry I was to hear from one of your members who happened to be visiting

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<sup>13</sup> The Korean War broke out in June 1950.

<sup>14</sup> In quoting his words I retain the exact way in which he spoke and wrote, without correcting what may seem very occasional infelicities or inconsistencies.

London that you were not well. I gather that it is entirely due to over-work, and, knowing you, I am not at all surprised.<sup>15</sup>

Scholarly he may have been, but he was a natural communicator. A note in the summer of 1948 about the Sunday School anniversary records how ‘Mr Land, having riveted the attention of the children (not to mention adults) by a variety of objects, sights and sounds, led our thoughts, faithfully and very ably, to Christ and his gracious salvation’.<sup>16</sup>

His deep seriousness was leavened with a delightful dry humour. There are numerous examples of this in his *The Appearing of Jesus*, and on a very rare occasion when Leicester City Football Club reached the FA Cup Final, while speaking on giving one’s imagination to the message, he says, ‘I listened in not long ago to the Cup Final at Wembley. At one point in the game I realised I had yielded my imagination to the commentator’s story and I was living in it. Believe me or not, I almost scored a goal for Leicester City!’ But it is an early message to the centenary meetings of the once well-known temperance movement ‘The Band of Hope’, in October 1947 and given here at some length, that shows perfectly how he used humour to serve the cause of the gospel, drawing hearers into the humour and then challenging them.

He tells how when invited, ‘I did my best to decline this invitation and honour conferred on me tonight. I have never signed the “Pledge”! I told him so – but the more I protested the more convinced he seemed to become that the Centenary should be celebrated at Melbourne Hall, myself being the preacher. Let me say here – if signing a pledge helps you, or *would* help you to live a better life, then in God’s name sign it, my friend.’ But he immediately adds, ‘I am one of those who needs something more than a pledge of my own undertaking. The message I bring you tonight concerns that “something more”.’ This message shows his distance from the traditions of the past and how he sees the gospel.<sup>17</sup> He introduces the advertising slogan, ‘Beer is best’ and proceeds:

‘You may think I am going to tear ... that slogan ... to shreds – going to expound a few scientific principles – going to recite some physiological consequences, economic consequences – going to add a few harrowing anecdotes and then go away fondly hoping I have made you all total abstainers. I am not going to do anything of the

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<sup>15</sup> Lloyd-Jones’ remarkably helpful letter is printed in full in Murray, *D Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Letters 1919-1981*. (Banner of Truth 1994)

<sup>16</sup> The note may have been by J C Wilcox, the magazine editor and frequent contributor, a grammar school teacher, and without doubt within Leslie Land’s most valued core of supporters.

<sup>17</sup> F B Meyer had been a strong supporter of the temperance movement.

kind. We will let the slogan stand; for it well placards a certain level or kind of life about which I want to speak plainly tonight.

‘I am not concerned merely with the “alcoholic” – the poor man or woman in the grip of that awful disease – I am not concerned only with men and women who, otherwise gifted and talented, are sapping and destroying their mental powers and prospects with this accursed habit – I am not thinking only of broken, ruined homes and marriages, or of the crime of cultivating acres for brewing purposes when nations, women and children are perishing for want of wheat and bread. No, I am thinking rather of a level of life which is the best that multitudes of our fellow men and women know – a life roofed in by *this* world – a life which misses the goal and purpose for which Almighty God created men – a life which ends, like the book of Genesis, “in a coffin in Egypt”.’

Leslie Land was eminently a person of prayer. One of the early magazines carries a piece by Francis Dixon of Bournemouth on *The Power of a Praying Church*, and in January 1949, speaking on his New Year wishes, Land has a New Year Resolution – ‘to pray more in the New Year’. He goes on to urge:

‘It isn’t fervour or emotional stress or any spectacular chrisism we need to make a prayer meeting real and effective. We haven’t come to persuade God concerning something which he is very reluctant to do; we haven’t come together to show each other up or to “get one in” at someone; we haven’t come to get our own way done in heaven. We have come solely and simply because we want *God’s* way done on earth’.

He is always ready to be straight with his hearers. ‘Heaven save us from *long* prayers and from long embarrassing silences ... Oh that we could be rid of the idea that to take part in a prayer meeting you have to deliver a sermon or evangelical dissertation, or recite the main points of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.’ His response is, ‘The prayer meeting ... is the Christian’s workshop where things are *done* by God and for God ... Let us be natural, then, in prayer and very simple. The *Supernatural* is with God.’

Speaking in June 1950 on Revival, and in the context of a Baptist Union call for ‘advance’, he says that their need is for power, and for that we need to ‘wait for the promise of the Father’ rather than proceed by ‘clever organisation’ or ‘lots of conferences and conventions’. ‘It is so much easier to *organise* than to *agonise*. We will do anything rather than *pray* ... The plain truth is we just do not like praying; we find it hard and uninteresting.’ A friend recalls an

occasion around 1960 when Land succeeded in inviting Lloyd-Jones to speak at Melbourne Hall, probably to the Bible School. ‘Leslie Land came into the pulpit, with the Doctor behind him, and he hadn’t got his gown, he’d got an ordinary suit on. I’d never seen him with a suit on before, but I do remember this, he just came into the pulpit, said, “Let us pray,” and I can remember, it was an inspiring prayer. So much so...he...gripped the whole meeting.’

His public prayer was indeed notable. The same friend again recalls, ‘I can remember his prayers, they were so natural and unaffected, they were unministerial prayers.’<sup>18</sup> The prayer that closed his series of studies on *The Appearing of Jesus* is a case in point:

‘We thank you, Lord, for saving us. We thank you for warning us, and telling us what to expect. Now come to our hearts afresh. May we be found among those who love your appearing and are ever on our Father’s business.

‘Send us out with a holy desire to live more for the things that matter, and to expend less thought and energy on the things that are rapidly passing away.

‘So shed abroad your love in our hearts that we might be able to breathe this prayer, and dare to say, “Even so come, Lord Jesus. Come and cleanse us. Come and sanctify us. Come and make us whole, that we might be ready for you to come.” For Jesus’ sake.’

### **Bibliographic Note**

For readers unfamiliar with Leslie Land, this note gives the main sources that are available. On the life of Leslie Land see the appreciation in the Introduction to Leslie Land, 2014 *The Appearing of Jesus* (Ed. Ian Shaw), available as a paperback or e-book on most platforms, including Amazon, iTunes and ipdbooks. For the previously untold story of his friendship with Martyn Lloyd-Jones see the article by the author in the *Banner of Truth Magazine* January 2014, and a scattering of letters in Iain Murray’s selection of Lloyd-Jones’ correspondence.

For aspects of the background of the Church in England at this time see some of the main biographies of figures such as John Stott and J I Packer. Paul Brown’s life of Ernest Kevan, who frequently occupied the pulpit at

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Bassett, the present minister of Melbourne Hall, recalls his conversion through hearing Leslie Land at Westminster Chapel, and recalls to this day Leslie Land’s ‘quite remarkable’ prayer and the message on being born again.



Melbourne Hall, is also valuable in this connection. Leicester is in the East Midlands of England. The most valuable account of evangelical Calvinism in the East Midlands in an earlier period has been written by Michael Haykin. A hunt on Amazon will be necessary to find this sadly out of print book. Holman has written an illuminating, if perhaps unduly appreciative, account of the life of F B Meyer, the first minister of Melbourne Hall, which demonstrates his desire to be fully involved in the broad church of nonconformity. The reference to Iain Murray's early book is to Murray I 1966 *The Forgotten Spurgeon*. London: Banner of Truth Trust.

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*Dr Ian Shaw is a member of York Evangelical Church, UK, and a Professor of Sociology.*

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## African Pastors' Conferences News

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**YORK EVANGELICAL CHURCH HAVE SET A FINE EXAMPLE IN THEIR PROACTIVE SPONSORSHIP OF THE conference in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi; that and the other three conferences in Malawi in August were well attended and we saw the impact of God's Word on the theme of 'Being right with God and becoming more like Christ'**

We are now in the middle of the September run of conferences within South Africa, the first two of which in the northern province of Limpopo were disappointing in terms of attendance but encouraging in terms of interest. God works his wonders in a mysterious way: the Hammanskraal Conference was cancelled at the last moment and we organised a conference in Daveyton, a sprawling township to the north east of Johannesburg. There was much enthusiasm among the 22 pastors who attended, with good sale of books and a desire for follow-up – we have hit a vein of fertile soil by God's providence. The Soweto Conference started on 23 September.

Our major challenge is the lack of a conference manager, just one of the effects being that the main speaker has to take all sessions – 40 over a two-week period. Michael Bwembya, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Livingstone, was given much grace to rise to the challenge, inspiring many pastors to change their ways. Dr Grave Singogo, our intended interim manager, was not able to come and we need the earnest prayers of God's people for a substitute to cover until the end of March at least.

Upcoming conferences are as follows:

October – East London, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and one other. Speaker Pastor Rafael Banda from Mazabuka, Zambia.

November – Kwa Mashu, Empangeni and Mseleni in Kwa Zulu Natal and, DV, Lesotho. Speaker Pastor Rod Wilton, North Carolina, USA.

January – Estcourt, Hillcrest, Pietermaritzburg and Newcastle.

Please pray for manpower, funding and the transformation of pastors and churches as we run with this year's main theme of 'Christ Building His Church in Africa Today'.

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Further details about individual conferences are available from Phil Roberts (phil@tentmaker) or Frederick Hodgson (frederick.hodgson@gmail.com)

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