Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology

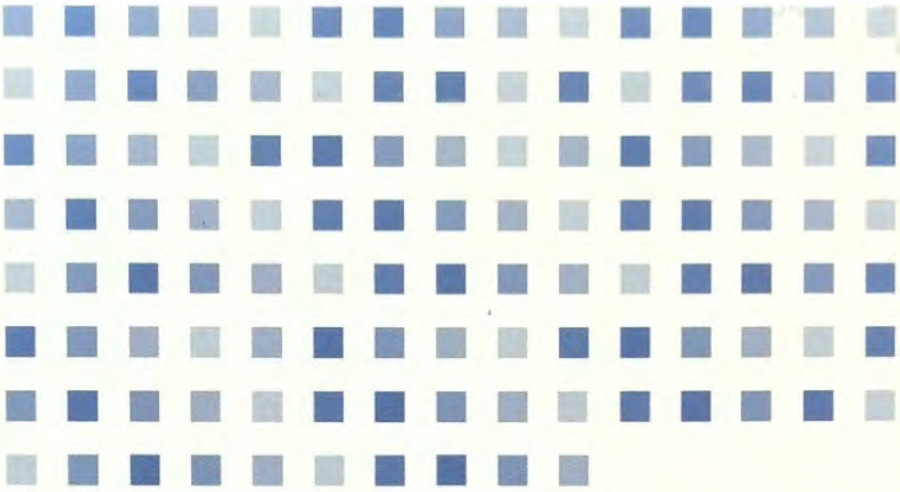


https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb

PayPal https://paypal.me/robbradshaw

A table of contents for the *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, new series,* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_irish-baptist-historical-society-journal_ns-01.php



Journal of the Irish Baptist Historical Society

Volume 25

2017

ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES IN IRELAND

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Founded 1968)

JOURNAL 2017

Volume Twenty-Five

Editor

Pastor John Gault

© Irish Baptist Historical Society

ISSN: 0075-0727

Published by

The Irish Baptist Historical Society

The Baptist Centre, 19 Hillsborough Road, Moira, BT67 0HG Northern Ireland

T: (028) 9261 9267 **E**: ibc@thebaptistcentre.org

W: http://www.irishbaptistcollege.net/irish-baptist-historical-society/

The Irish Baptist Historical Society

Membership of the Society is open
to persons interested in the history
of the Baptist Churches in Ireland.

The individual membership subscription is
£15.00 (€25.00)
and entitles to the Society's Journal,
published annually in May.

A husband/wife membership is also available at
£25.00 (€40.00)
including one copy of the Journal.

Overseas members' annual subscription is
US $30.00.

All subscriptions fall due on 1 January.

The cost of Journal to non-members is
£10.00 (€15.00) or US $17.00 per issue,
plus postage & packing

The Historical Society page on the College website
can be accessed using the following address:

http://www.irishbaptistcollege.net/?p=ibhs

Contents

Editorial 5

Biographical Notes 6

'Bold as a Lion'
- The Spirituality of Benjamin Keach 9

Thomas Delaune - The life and times
of Ireland's first Baptist martyr 31

Luther Nailed It! 49

Editorial

In 2017 the meetings of the Historical Society focussed our attention on three individuals, one very well known, one reasonably well known and one largely unknown, yet each of whom, through commitment to Jesus Christ and His gospel, made his own significant contribution to the progress of the gospel.

In March Pastor Austin Walker and in May Pastor Andy Compton gave the brief histories of Benjamin Keach and Thomas Delaune, who both lived through very difficult times for non-conformists in the mid to late 17th century and who both also demonstrated remarkable conviction and courage in the face of harsh and cruel opposition.

Keach got caught up in many controversies both inside and outside the church but in all circumstances his commitment to God's Truth was unwavering and he proved himself again and again to be as "bold as a lion".

Thomas Delaune, although being born into a different culture, followed a similar path to Keach in his spiritual development in coming to embrace baptist principles and the doctrines of grace. From a poor Roman Catholic background in Count Cork, Delaune came to faith in Christ as a teenager after which he moved to London where he became prominent in promoting and defending the dissenting cause which eventually resulted in his improisonment in Newgate Prison, in spite of which he remained unwavering in his convictions right up to his sad death in prison in 1685.

As part of the celebrations to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Luther's publication of his 95 Theses in October, Pastor Neil Watson told Luther's story. The combination of Luther's academic ability, his strength of character and his religious convictions equipped him to be the ideal person to challenge the abuses he discovered within Roman Catholicism. The evolution of Luther's dismay at the corruptions he discovered to his determination to challenge the church on these matters to his becoming the central figure in the reformation of religion can only be explained as being the work of God and the courage and commitment demonstrated by Luther, Keach and Delaune should inspire us in the proclamation and defence of the Truth to be "as bold as lions".

John Gault

About Our Contributors

Andy Compton BD

Andy studied at the Irish Baptist College, gaining a BD degree from Queen's University, Belfast in 2003 and has been pastoring the Midleton Evangelical Church since September of that year. During the intervening years, the Lord established a further church in Youghal, Co Cork. Through the patronage of Michael Haykin, Andy helped establish Munster Bible College and since January 2014 has served as the Chairman of the Board. Andy is married to Sharon and they have three children ... Ella, Harry and Luke.

Austin Walker BA BD

Born in north London in 1946, Austin became a Christian at the age of 15 and studied at the University of Aberystwyth, Wales. Following graduation from Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, he returned to the UK in 1971 and subsequently became pastor of Maidenbower Baptist Church in Crawley, Sussex where he still preaches the Word of God. From its inception the church was a confessional church, adopting The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith as an expression of what the members believe to be scriptural truth. One of his specific interests is historical theology, especially that of the Reformation and the English Particular Baptists. *'The Excellent Benjamin Keach'* was first published in 2004. In addition, *'God's Care for the Widow'* was published in 2010 and *'Caring for Widows'* (co-authored with Brian Croft) in 2015. Very happily married to Mai for forty-seven years, they have four married children and ten grandchildren.

Neil Watson BD MTh

Neil originates from Bangor and was converted when aged 18 whilst attending Rosemary Park Baptist Church. He was a student at Bangor Grammar School and went on to work in the Civil Service for a number of years prior to entering a course of study at the Irish Baptist College in 1990. He graduated with BD and MTh degrees, and also a PGCE, all through Queen's University. Neil has served in two pastorates: Bloomfield Baptist (1996-2006) and Antrim Baptist (2006-present). Married to Diane and with a daughter, Sophie, and son, Ben, Neil has a passionate but irrational attachment to Liverpool Football Club.



'Bold as a Lion':
The Spirituality of Benjamin Keach 1640 - 1704

Austin Walker

On 8-9 October 1664, three-hundred-and-fifty-two years ago, a young Christian man appeared before the Lord Chief Justice of England, at the Buckinghamshire Assizes in Aylesbury. The charge against him stated,

> *'Thou art here indicted by the Name of Benjamin Keach of the Parish of Winslow, in the county of Bucks: For that thou being a Seditious, Heretical, and Schismatical Person, evilly and maliciously disposed, and disaffected to his Majesty's Government, and the Government of the Church of England, dids't maliciously and wickedly, on the 1st day of May, in the 16th Year [1] of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord the King, write, print and publish, or cause to be written, printed and published one Seditious and Venomous Book, entitled, 'The Child's Instructor'; or 'A New and Easy Primmer'; wherein are contained, by way of Question and Answer, these Damnable Positions, contrary to the Book of Common Prayer, and the Liturgy of the Church of England.'* [2]

This kind of indictment is not surprising. A radical change in religious policy followed once Oliver Cromwell had died and Charles II had returned to England in 1660. The Act of Uniformity was passed. Power was returned to the Church of England and to her bishops and archbishops and it was not long before persecution began. The twenty-four year old Baptist preacher was feeling the gale force winds of a new prejudice on the part of both civil and religious authorities against Dissenters. In 1664 Keach found himself confronted by the zeal of religious authorities like Thomas Disney, his former rector in Stoke Hammond, where Keach had been born and baptised. It was Disney who initiated this particular persecution of Keach by informing the Archbishop of Canterbury of his illegal activities.[3] This zeal was equalled among the civil authorities, and the seizure of Keach's book meant he was summoned to



Sir Robert Hyde

appear before the most powerful judge in England, in the person of the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Robert Hyde. His alleged crime was that in his primer, written for children, he had breached the 1660 Act of Uniformity by teaching that infants ought not to be baptized and that laymen, like himself, were free to preach the gospel.

Keach was undoubtedly on the receiving end of rough justice. His plea of not guilty was in vain. The surviving assize report records browbeating and intimidating words by the Lord Chief Justice directed against Keach, even before the witnesses were sworn in and their evidence received. Keach was not permitted to speak in his defence. The jury existed merely to 'rubber stamp' the decision as to his guilt already made by Hyde. Pronouncing sentence, Hyde jailed Keach for two weeks. Bail was denied him and he was in addition subjected to the public shame and humiliation of being placed in the pillory twice for two hours, once in Aylesbury and then again a few days later in Winslow. Winslow was about twenty miles away, and the probable scene of his crimes and so the hangman there was instructed to publicly torch his primer. Before he was jailed Keach was fined twenty pounds and bound over to appear at the next assizes to renounce his doctrine.[4]

The treatment he received at the hands of the Lord Chief Justice was unjust, unnecessarily malicious, and brutal. The mixture of scorn, derision, and unsubstantiated allegations were all aimed at portraying the defendant in the worst possible light and establishing his alleged seditious and malicious intent. Despite his youth and inexperience, it is evident that Keach was not intimidated by the words and actions of the highest judge in England ... he was a man of courage even in the midst of punishment and persecution. Once in the pillory, much to the consternation of the jailor and the sheriff, Keach began to confess the Lord Jesus Christ before men because he wanted others to share his biblical convictions, and come to faith in Christ. The Baptist historian, Thomas Crosby, one of Keach's sons in law, records his confession.

> *'It is no new thing for the servants of the Lord to suffer, and to be made a gazing-stock: and you that are acquainted with the Scriptures, know that the way to the crown is by the cross. ... I do not speak out of prejudice to any person, but do sincerely desire, that the Lord would convert them and convince them of their errors, that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Good people, the concernment of souls is very great; so great, that Christ died for them: and truly a concernment for souls was that which moved me to write and publish those things, for which I now suffer, and for which I could suffer greater things than these. ... Oh! Did you but experience*

> *... the great love of God and the excellencies that are in him; it would make you more willing to go through any sufferings for his sake. And I do account this the greatest honour, that ever the Lord was pleas'd to confer upon me.'* [5]

This young Baptist preacher was clearly a man of strong conviction and unflinching courage, willing to stand his ground against the highest authorities in the land. What happened that October day in 1664 was not an isolated example of Christian courage. Such concern for the souls of men and women and such boldness characterised him throughout his life and he never shrank back from being willing to suffer for the sake of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A Brief Sketch of Keach's Life

Keach was baptized and brought up in the local Anglican Church in Stoke Hammond, in north Buckinghamshire.



Stoke Hammond Church

Around the age of fifteen he was converted to Christ through the ministry of Matthew Mead in the neighbouring parish of Great Brickhill.[6] Mead was only there for a short time before leaving for London eventually to become an Independent pastor in Stepney. Mead almost certainly held to Calvinistic theology at this time and practiced infant baptism. However, Keach had become convinced of believer's baptism, joined the General Baptists and became associated with the small market town of Winslow some seven or eight miles from his birthplace. General Baptists were Arminian in their theological sympathies. In 1660, when he was twenty, he married Jane Grove of Winslow. They had five children, three of whom survived Mary, Elias and Hannah. Hannah became a Quaker, much to the grief of her father. Elias went to Philadelphia and following his conversion to Christ in America he founded several Baptist churches in the Philadelphia area, before returning to pastor a church in London. He died a few years before his father in 1699.



Matthew Meade

Despite his youth Keach's preaching and teaching abilities were soon recognized among the General Baptists. However, as we have seen, he was soon in trouble with the authorities for these activities. These were dramatic days in England. The first decade of his life had been dominated by the civil wars. In 1649, when Keach was nine, Charles I was executed. As a teenager he was raised in the days of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. In 1660, however, when he was only twenty years old and still an inexperienced Christian a dark shadow was cast over the cause of Dissent. The death of Oliver Cromwell and the failure of his son, Richard, led to the return of Charles II. Eventually varying degrees of persecution became the common experience of many dissenting congregations and, in particular, of preachers who preached at these illegal conventicles.

The event we have already described was one of several persecutions he suffered in Buckinghamshire between 1660 and 1668, some of which certainly threatened his life. Keach became a marked man in Buckinghamshire, so in 1668 he decided to move to London. He came to Southwark, a large parish south of the river Thames, which was recognized as a hotbed of Dissent. Keach joined himself to a General Baptist congregation in Tooley Street, Southwark, and very shortly afterwards he succeeded William Rider as the pastor. Two years after he arrived in London his wife Jane died, leaving him with the responsibility of caring for a young family alone.

During these early years in London he came to change his theological convictions. This was undoubtedly due to his understanding of God's salvation and the covenant of grace. Whether this was due to his own study of the Bible, his contact with Hanserd Knollys (*ca.*1599-1691), a prominent London Particular Baptist, or a young widow, Susannah Partridge, is not clear. Susannah became his second wife; Knollys married them in April 1672.

Whatever the precise reasons were, Keach became a Particular Baptist. He became persuaded that the eternal covenant of grace was the basis of salvation, that each Person of the Trinity was directly involved in the salvation of sinners, with the Lord Jesus Christ being the only Mediator and Surety of this covenant. Armed now with a new perspective he could not have remained a General Baptist. His views of salvation were now decidedly Calvinistic. This is his own account of the change:

> *'Brethren, next unto the grace of God in my conversion, I have often said, I do look upon myself bound to admire the riches of God's love and goodness to me, in opening my eyes to see those Arminian errors, which when I was young, I had from some men of corrupt principles sucked in; nay, and when I was about 23 years old (1663), I wrote a little book for children, in which some of those errors were vindicated; which after my eyes were inlightened, and the book with alterations being again reprinted, I left out, and now do declare my dislike of the first impressions, and do disown what I there asserted: When I was a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, as the apostle*

speaks. And let me intreat you to study the nature of the covenant of grace; for until I had that opened to me, I was ignorant of the mysteries of the Gospel.' [7]

It is not clear whether the church meeting in Tooley Street, which he pastored, split or whether he was able to persuade them of his new convictions. From this group, however, the church began to grow, obtaining a license to build a meetinghouse in nearby Horselydown, at the time of the Indulgence granted by Charles II in 1672. For Keach the die was cast, his new understanding of the covenant of grace was decisive and for the remainder of his life he remained a firmly persuaded Calvinist, one of the many who signed the 1689 *Confession of Faith* at the Particular Baptist Assembly of that year. By this time he was one of the leading Particular Baptist pastors in London and through his increasing publications their most prominent mouthpiece.



Even as a young Christian Keach displayed clear evidence of ability to preach. Within three years or so of his conversion he was preaching among the General Baptists. In his early twenties he began writing and never stopped. During his life he produced over fifty works – allegorical and poetical, including an epic of over 60,000 words, called *The Divine Lover,* together with some 300 hymns. Polemical works also came from his pen dealing with such matters as the nature and subjects of baptism, the laying on of hands, the teachings of the Quakers, justification by faith, and published sermons on a wide range of subjects, including the covenant of grace and the perseverance of the saints. If the name of Keach is known it is usually associated with his promotion of congregational hymn singing and the controversy that ensued both in his own congregation and among the London Particular Baptists in the 1690s. Keach, however, deserves to be remembered for far more than his introduction of hymn singing into the regular services of worship. For example, it is a little-known fact that during his lifetime and after his death Keach was as well-known as John Bunyan as a writer of allegory and Keach's *War with the Devil* was a 'best seller' along with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.* [8]

For thirty-six years, Keach was the pastor of the largest Baptist congregation south of the Thames in Horselydown in Southwark, serving faithfully there until his death, in 1704, at the age of sixty-four. This congregation was subsequently served by one of Keach's sons-in-law, Benjamin Stinton, (from1704 until 1718), then the more famous Dr John Gill (from 1720 until 1771) and Dr John Rippon (from 1773 until 1836). By

1854 the Southwark congregation had moved its meetinghouse to New Park Street and called a certain young man by the name of Charles Haddon Spurgeon to be their minister. Spurgeon thought highly of his predecessor. Writing a short account of the history of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he described Keach as *'one of the most notable pastors of our church' ... 'one of the most useful preachers of his time'* whose teaching was *'sweetly spiritual, intensely scriptural and full of Christ'.* [9]

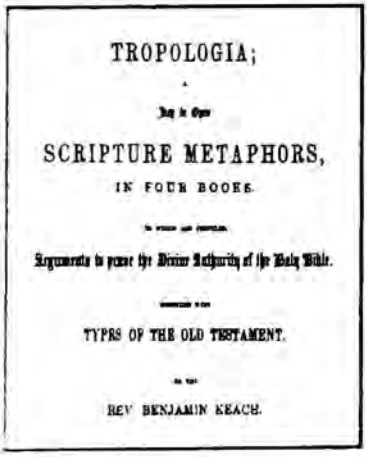


C H Spurgeon

Keach's Biblical Spirituality

Apart from a brief account of his character given by Thomas Crosby very little direct biographical material has survived the passage of time.[10] Personal letters of Keach are virtually non-existent and autobiographical references in sermons and other writings are extremely scarce. To discover the kind of man he was requires a reading of his works in order to gain an accurate picture of him and to determine, for example, the way he handled the Bible, how he preached, the importance he attached to prayer, to baptism and church membership, how he lived his life especially when he faced persecution, how he dealt with error and those who promoted it. In this way we also gain insights into the man himself during the entirety of his adult life and discover what were his aims and motives as he exercised his ministry first in Buckinghamshire and then in London.

It is from his own pen, however, that Keach, unintentionally, provides us with insights into one of the main features of his spirituality and that we also find out what it was that motivated him to live the Christian life and to faithfully use his particular gifts of preaching and writing.



TROPOLOGIA;

A

Key to Open

SCRIPTURE METAPHORS,

IN FOUR BOOKS.

Arguments to prove the Divine Authority of the Holy Bible.

TYPES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

By the

REV. BENJAMIN KEACH.

In 1681 Keach published a large volume called *Tropologia, A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors.*[11] As part of his treatment of Proverbs 28:1 and Micah 5:8, entitled *'Saints compared to lions'*, he makes the point that the saints of God are full of spiritual courage and are not dismayed by the threats of men.[12] Proverbs 28:1 reads, *'The wicked flee when no-one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion'.* The proverb depicts a bold man, a man who is sincere because he maintains a clear conscience before God and fears no man. Equipped with this clear conscience the valiant soldier of Christ possesses a well-

forged breastplate of Christian boldness. This is the kind of courage that characterised Moses and Aaron before an arrogant Pharoah, Elijah when he confronted wicked Ahab, Daniel and his three friends in hostile Babylon, the apostle Paul before the accusing Jews and the Roman authorities, Martin Luther defying the emperor and the Pope. This same kind of boldness characterised Benjamin Keach throughout his life and was clearly demonstrated on that October day in 1664 when he appeared before the Lord Chief Justice.

Our insight into Keach's spirituality is taken a step further in his exposition of Proverbs 28:1. Keach explains in what ways this courage must express itself in the life of a godly man. Fundamentally, he says, such a man will be valiant and courageous for the truth of the Word of God, for his cause and for his people. He lists seven ways in which this will be accomplished:

(i) by speaking for the truth when others speak against it;
(ii) by endeavouring to clear the truth from reproach and infamy;
(iii) by contending earnestly for the faith;
(iv) by visibly professing and publicly owning the truth;
(v) by suffering for the truth when called to do so;
(vi) by standing for the truth when others turn their backs on it and
(vii) by maintaining every truth, more especially that truth which was most opposed in the day in which they live. [13]

These features are clearly and repeatedly demonstrated in Keach's life and ministry. His unflinching stand for God's truth and its implications is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the man and his spirituality. He was a man of faithfulness and boldness.

He was Pre-eminently Biblical

David Daniell, in his recent book *The Bible in English,* convincingly argues that English Protestantism of the sixteenth century was biblical.[14] Keach's spirituality is distinctly biblical for Keach's feet were planted very firmly on Protestant ground. Whenever he spoke of the truth he meant biblical truth. He meant that the Bible was God's inspired Word, and *'that the Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving Knowledge, Faith and Obedience'.*[15]

Unless Keach's 'biblicism' is recognized our understanding of his spirituality will be distorted. In his sermons he often explained the pivotal function of the Bible in his life and ministry. Preaching on the rich man and Lazarus he affirmed that *'he that disowns the Bible to be of Divine authority must prove there is some other way to know the true way to heaven, and the true worship and will of God',* concluding,

> '... *what a mercy and blessing it is to have the holy Scriptures, or the sacred oracles, and what a loss and dismal judgment it would be should God take the ministration of the Gospel from us, or bring upon us a famine of the Word. The glory of England lies in this, it enjoys the light of God's word, it is a land of vision; but if God should take from it the Gospel, it would soon become a land of darkness.*'[16]

Keach was concerned for the souls of men and women and his adoption of Calvinistic theology only intensified that concern. He was committed to preaching and teaching the Bible and to developing a spiritual life moulded by those scriptural principles and examples. He worked and prayed for the conversion of sinners, for the establishing of his congregation in the truth, working the truth into every fibre of their being so that they possessed an ardent love for the Lord Jesus Christ in their affections.

He set out to accomplish this by preaching the Gospel and the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation within the context of the eternal covenant of grace. Among those sermons, which clearly display his grasp of the biblical teaching concerning salvation, are *The Everlasting Covenant*, sixteen sermons on John 10:27-28 and the doctrine of perseverance entitled *The Blessedness of Christ's Sheep,* and fourteen sermons from Isaiah 54:10, *A Display of Glorious Grace.*[17] Not wanting his hearers to be confused he warned them repeatedly against worldly attitudes and the prevailing doctrinal and practical errors of the day, including Socinianism, Arminianism and the new legalism associated with Baxter. Concerned to establish the next generation in the truth he wrote poetry and books for young people among them *War with the Devil* and *The Travels of True Godliness.* [18]

Most of his published sermons were preached first to his own congregation in Horselydown, Southwark and cover the whole range of biblical teaching. These and other works were published because others persuaded him to do so as a means of publicly stating and defending biblical truth.[19] He believed that the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* was an accurate summary of what the Bible taught. When he and his son Elias published a shortened version of the Confession in 1697 for their respective churches it was not because they were reducing the truth in any way. They wanted to ensure that their churches knew what they believed and that they could obtain it cheaply. Many in their congregations could not afford to purchase the full version of the *Confession*, which was then priced at 12*d*, and in addition the full version did not seem to be widely available at that time.[20] Keach, furthermore, conscious of his increasing years, was anxious to leave behind *'an account of holy doctrine and order and discipline'* for future generations. [21]

Keach passionately desired his hearers and readers to believe the truth of the gospel and be saved from their sins so we find Keach, as a free-offer preacher, urging sinners to come to Christ. The following is typical of his exhortations,

'Above all things fly to Jesus Christ, look up to him, and neglect not this Salvation one Hour, but throw down your Arms, fight against God no more, nor fence against the two-edged Sword of his Mouth; but as a poor, lost, and burdened Sinner, come to him, and thou shalt find rest unto thy soul.' [22]

At the same time Keach sought to cultivate in his converted hearers a sincere love for the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, he sometimes asked why pardoned sinners love Christ so dearly? It is, he replied, because they have been pardoned for their sin and because they have come to taste Christ's choice love for them. Therefore, he concludes, it is impossible for anyone to have a saving relish of the love of Christ and not love *him*. It is his great love that induces pardoned sinners to love him. This love, he urged, must be sincere and whole-hearted,

'Jesus Christ cannot endure that the heart of a professor should be divided, or that a man or woman should have one heart for sin and another for him; he must have the whole heart, or he will have none of it. ... Conscience may be for Christ and his ways, and the judgment may be much enlightened, when the will may be opposite, and the affections set chiefly upon sin, and the vanities of the world.' [23]

Keach was persuaded that a person who loved Christ in this manner would remain faithful to Christ especially in a time of trial.

A Willingness to Suffer for the Truth

As we have already seen Keach was willing to suffer for the truth even before he left his Arminian errors. Any unwillingness to suffer he regarded as timidity and as a compromise. He was a man who stood for the truth when others hesitated or turned away as is demonstrated in his reaction to the words of John Child. In the 1680s Keach was involved in helping Child whom he had known since his days in Buckinghamshire but, sadly, Child was not a very stable man and tragically he committed suicide, having become severely depressed and convinced that he had committed the unpardonable sin. Keach was one of several London pastors who had repeatedly tried to help him yet to no avail. Some time before Child became depressed he declared his sympathies for the Church of England and turned against his former dissenting friends, attacking them in writing. What alarmed Keach however more than anything else was that he had heard Child says words to this effect: *'I have seriously considered whether there be anything in religion worth suffering for'.* [24]

Such a statement contradicted everything that Keach believed and practiced. For over half his adult life, from the age of twenty until he was almost fifty, Keach endured persecution for holding fast to his convictions regarding God's truth. He did not pull back and continued to preach. Persecution was never continuous but came in waves. He referred to *'ten hot persecutions'*, the hottest of which was the last in the early

1680s.[25] It is very difficult, however, to detail the extent to which Keach personally suffered, especially once he had moved to London.

Persecution did not take him by surprise; rather he regarded it as normal for a Christian, especially for a Christian who was also a preacher of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless he regarded such religious persecution as utterly unlawful, even if men held *'grand errors ... none ought to impose upon the consciences of men in matters of religion'*.[26] He would not take up arms like some of the Fifth Monarchy men did, nor did he play an active role in the Monmouth rebellion. He preferred to wait on the providence of God for the removal of the threat of Roman Catholicism represented by successive Stuart monarchs, Charles II and James II.

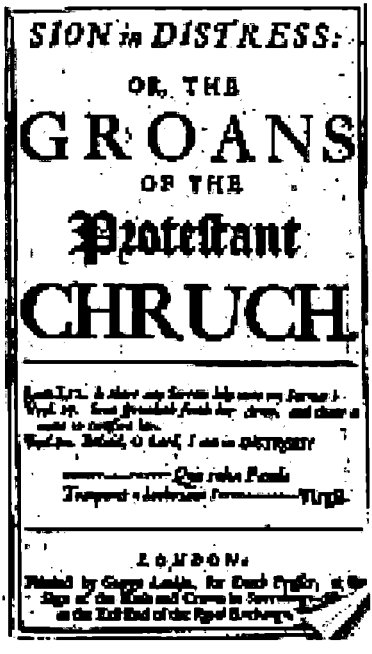


Fifth Monarchists gather to witness the execution of one of their leaders

He adopted a positive and biblical attitude towards persecution: it *'never does godly Christians any harm; they grow the more, not only in number but in goodness. It refines and purifies them, it purges and makes them white, they grow in faith, in patience.'*[27] Furthermore, he believed that persecution discriminated between the true and false believer and sifted out those who had compromised their position. As a young man Keach had separated from the national church where he had been baptized. In his churchmanship he had become a Baptist Dissenter. Returning to the fold of the Church of England, as John Child and others were advocating, was unthinkable for a man of his convictions; it would have been sinful timidity. Some of the following words may sound harsh but they also express his biblical realism as well as his sadness. They show a strong and bold man who accepted suffering and refused to compromise his conscience. Writing some years after persecution of Dissenters officially ceased he made the following observations.

> *'In our former days of liberty, what great numbers flocked to our assemblies, and made a profession of religion; but when that hot persecution arose, how*

did they fall off, and disown that people which once they seemed to cleave unto: The fan of persecution, fanned them away as chaff, and not only a multitude of professors, but also too many great preachers did basely betray the truth which they professed, and in their pulpits seemed a little before zealously to maintain, particularly that of separation from the national church. This way Christ took to discover the filthy and rotten hearts of some, and slavish fear and weakness of faith in others, who were left to a sinful compliance and conformity, building again that which they had destroyed, and destroying that which they had been a building; and, thus, it appears as chaff, cannot bear fanning, but is blown away; so chaffy professors cannot bear spiritual fanning, ie they cannot stand in an hour of temptation, but fall away. Alas! tho' we have now again multitudes that seem to cleave to our churches and to our assemblies, yet should Christ come with his fan upon us, you will soon see (it is to be feared) the former effects again.' [28]


SION in DISTRESS:
OR, THE
GROANS
OF THE
Protestant
CHRUCH

LONDON

Benjamin Keach possessed a tender and sensitive heart, one that genuinely grieved over the state of the nation and the persecution of those who refused to conform to the Act of Uniformity. At the same time, he was filled with a desire for the honour of God. Persecution was illegal but it did not make Keach impassive. Rather he poured out his soul in poetry, expressing his deep sorrows for the church. His second book he began while still living in Buckinghamshire. It was called *Sion in Distress: or, the Groans of the Protestant Church.*[29] A second and expanded version appeared in 1681 and a sequel, *Distressed Zion Relieved*, in 1689, once it became clear that toleration of Dissenters was to become a reality. He recorded her troubles in detail, in particular the hottest time in the 1680s. He spoke as a Christian and as a pastor expressing his own distressed heart as he saw the decline in true religion and the waywardness of his own nation of England. Reading these works it does not take much imagination on the part of the reader to envisage what must have been some of the content of Keach's public and private prayers during the middle years of his life from 1660 until 1689. The following sample taken from one of the prayers in *Sion in Distress* gives some indication of his passionate feelings expressed in prayer to God.

'Then hear O Lord, thou see'st my power is gone,
In thee I trust, besides thee there is none,
That can thy Sion from her Foes deliver;
O draw some flaming Arrows from thy Quiver,
To quell the pride of this oppressing Crew!
Thy mighty Arm alone can them subdue.
On Thee I fix an absolute Reliance,
Do Thou but help, I'le bid them all defiance.
Hear and consider, for thy Mercy's sake.' [30]

We have already described Keach as a Baptist Dissenter. Some regarded him as being too radical in his Baptist convictions. By affirming believer's baptism, however, he was persuaded that he was *'witnessing to a truth of Christ that lies as plain in the gospel as any one truth or positive precept of Christ whatsoever'.* [31] Baptists frequently suffered reproach for their practice and Keach was no exception, bearing it patiently and wisely. Even in the last year of his life he was falsely accused of immorality in connection with the baptism of women. To those who assailed the integrity of Baptists Keach protested and, with a slight note of sarcasm pointed out,

> *'... we provide comely Cloathes for the Administrer, both from Head to Foot; and our Men also that are baptized have Cloathes provided for them; and for the Women, Gowns and Petty-Coats are made on purpose, and they go into the water dressed more decently perhaps, than many Women came into Christian assemblies.'* [32]

Those who reproached them invariably linked Baptists with the Anabaptist excesses of the sixteenth century in Germany and these prejudices continued long into the seventeenth century and beyond. In his attempts to remove this reproach and blot on the integrity of Baptists he wrote a number of books against infant baptism and also engaged in public debate.[33] Keach did not subscribe to the notion of a national church that the Anglicans and men like the Presbyterian Richard Baxter wanted.[34] In addition, like other Puritan-Separatists who also became Baptists, Keach was firmly wedded to the conviction that entrance into church fellowship was through a profession of faith in Christ, the result of divine regeneration, followed by baptism by immersion (with, in his church, the laying on of hands). This was reinforced by a church covenant agreed to by all the members, together with the ongoing ordered and disciplined life of the entire church. He maintained that:

> *'... the Church of God under the Gospel dispensation is not national but congregational, it consisteth not of the natural seed of believers as such, but only of those who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, namely believers, or such who obtain that faith of Abraham, and walk in the steps of Abraham.'* [35]

Keach's greatest fear was that the practice of infant baptism undermined the purity of the church and tended to fill the church with moral men and women who looked as if they had saving grace but were in fact unregenerate. His deepest concern was to ensure that the professing members of the church of Christ had the image of God stamped on their souls, having had their hearts brought under the power of true godliness. His counsel to parents therefore was,

> *'As to your bringing your Children into the Visible Church, so as to be Members thereof, and to have right to the holy Sacraments, they must come in at the door of Regeneration, not by Generation; even at the same Door you came in at if you are true Members thereof: and O therefore pray for your Children, they are dear to you, bring them up in the Fear of God, command them to seek after the Knowledge of their Natural State, and to know and believe in Jesus Christ, and set them a good Example. I know not what better Counsel to give you concerning your Children.'* [36]

Ardent Defender of the Truth

One further aspect of Keach's spiritual boldness must be considered, namely his determination to defend the truth that was most opposed in his own day. In the 1690s that truth was, without doubt, justification by faith. Keach was also involved in the hymn singing controversy in the early 1690s and although that caused him great pain it is quite clear that his opposition to those he called *'law and works mongers'* is far more important. He believed that the very heart of the Gospel was at stake and that any compromise would effectively undo all the good of the Protestant Reformation and bring a return to Roman Catholic teaching. His strength of feeling and the urgency it produced in his preaching are clearly demonstrated in the following,

> *'And to you, sinners, if you would be found wheat in the day of Christ, then receive Christ's true doctrine, labour to distinguish between truth and error; beware of that strange and new scheme that darkens the free-grace of God, and tends to destroy the covenant of grace; remember to exalt Christ alone in your salvation. How do some turn the gospel of God's free grace into a law, by the performance of which, as the conditions of life and justification, tell thee, thy salvation doth depend. See what subtle opposers (of the clearest gospel) are risen up amongst us, and labour to avoid them; though their tongues should seem to be tipped with silver, yet their doctrine is copper.'* [37]

Chief among the silver-tipped tongues was the famous Richard Baxter. Although he died in 1691 the controversy did not die with him and his views continued to be advocated by Dr Daniel Williams and Samuel Clarke in particular. This controversy focused on the nature of a believer's righteousness. It became known as the

Neonomian (or 'new law') controversy, and arose out of Baxter's teaching that obedience to a new law brought in by Christ - an obedience that took the form of saving faith and holy living - was the basis of one's personal saving righteousness.

Keach had been aware of Baxter's teaching in 1683 some years before the controversy erupted in 1690.[38] He consistently and constantly opposed this 'obedience-to-new-law' teaching. He stood for the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith based on the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer as it had been recovered by the Reformers, and been expressed in the seventeenth century confessions of faith, notably *The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Savoy Declaration* and *The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*. Keach had signed the latter just prior to the outbreak of the Neonomian controversy. He had come to regard Martin Luther and John Owen as the greatest lights in the church of the previous two hundred years. The principal reason for this was their grasp of the importance of justification by faith alone.

Keach was not the only one to speak out against Baxter but he feared that if he and others did not expose this error it represented a very real threat to the future of the Gospel in England. He pointed out that the new doctrine, making faith, repentance and sanctification our justifying righteousness was 'much like Bellarmine,' the sixteenth century Roman Catholic theologian and exponent of the decrees of the Council of Trent.[39] The new doctrine confused justification with sanctification, imputed righteousness with infused righteousness. Keach regarded Baxter's views as essentially another gospel and constantly warned his hearers and readers against those who insisted Christ had merited a milder law of sincere faith and obedience for us, and that such was our righteousness.

Keach was more balanced in his teaching, unlike Baxter. He maintained the biblical doctrine but avoided the pitfalls of Antinomianism on the one hand and High Calvinism on the other. He clearly asserted the place of the law of God in promoting biblical holiness and denied eternal justification, a doctrine that some Particular Baptists espoused very soon after Keach's death. In our day, when the doctrine of justification by faith is under attack, Keach's defence of the biblical doctrine of justification and, in particular, the way he protected his congregation from false teaching, stands as a faithful example to be imitated by those who share his biblical convictions.

Keach was outspoken in his opposition to Baxterianism. References are found repeatedly throughout all his sermons from this period of his life. The lion's roar can be heard as the indignant preacher protests,

'Oh! What a dishonour indeed would it be to a king, that bids you to the marriage feast of his Son, should any of you bring something of your own, and set it upon his table, in the midst of his dainties! How would he frown upon you, should you do this and say, Who brought this hither? Am I not able to entertain you with my own, but you must bring your paltry stuff? Let those who are tainted with the errors of Arminianism and Baxterianism, think of this, who strive to mix the King's wine with their muddy water, or mix their polluted works with God's free grace. How doth he loathe their notions of free will, and their own righteousness!' [40]

This is the measure of the spiritual boldness of Benjamin Keach. Although the Neonomian controversy drew from him some of his strongest and most passionate statements he defended the truth and exposed error throughout his life. In the 1670s he wrote against Quakerism and also defended what he believed to be a biblical teaching - the practice of the laying on of hands on believers. Especially during the period of persecution he opposed the Roman Catholic Church and in keeping with his Puritan contemporaries identified the Pope as the Antichrist. In the 1690s he asserted what he was persuaded was the divine warrant for singing hymns in the corporate worship of the church, over against those who insisted that it was a human invention. In addition, he promoted the observance of the Lord's Day as being a divine command as opposed to the seventh day, a view espoused by several London Baptist churches, and also exposed the teaching of some who denied the immortality of the soul.

No one should conclude that Keach revelled in controversy. He engaged in it because he believed it was his duty to speak for the truth and maintain it even if that involved him in suffering for his faith. On other occasions it led to disagreement with other Christians and in such circumstances Keach did his utmost to uphold unity in truth and love and to promote peace urging,

'... speak well of all your brethren who hold the head, or are sound in the faith, in respect of all fundamental principles, though not in every thing of your opinion in some points of religion: for peace among ourselves ought not to be restrained only to members of that church we belong unto, but to all the saints, let them be Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists. I do not mean that it is your duty to hold church-communion with all; no, that cannot be, unless all were of one judgment in all the essentials of church-constitution: for mutual love is not to be the rule of our church-communion and fellowship, but the word of Christ.' [41]

This desire for peace is also a measure of Keach's spirituality.

Keach's Motivations for Boldness

It has been shown that Keach remained a bold man throughout his life and ministry, earnestly contending for the faith. Keach made this a matter of conscience before God. Nevertheless the question remains how did he maintain this bold spirit for nearly fifty years from his conversion around the age of fifteen in 1655 and his death in July 1704? What was the driving force? Was it principally a matter of temperament and an earnest spirit? Or did he draw his motivations from elsewhere?

Keach was certainly aware of weaknesses in his own temperament.[42] There were occasions when his zeal and outspokenness overtook him. He possessed a quick temper and the evidence suggests that during the hymn singing controversy his conduct was not always above reproach. Yet it was also recognized that Keach was quick to acknowledge his faults and this appears to have been the case in this particular instance.

It was painful for Keach to see men and women who had long been part of the church now in such strong disagreement with him over the introduction of singing into the corporate worship that they withdrew, disrupting the unity of the church at Horselydown. Some of them had shared in the responsibilities of leadership, others been converted to Christ as a result of his preaching. Before 1689 they had stood together during persecution. Keach had married a number of them and buried some of their young children who died in infancy. Yet in Keach's eyes their decision to withdraw was schismatic, something he regarded as a great evil. The matter could not be resolved within the church, a number of books and pamphlets were published by each side and at times a war of words prevailed, especially between Keach and Isaac Marlow and their respective supporters. It became such an issue that the 1692 National Assembly of Particular Baptist churches tried to resolve the matter.

A few weeks after this Assembly had met Keach published a public apology for his own conduct including some harsh expressions, uncharitable and unsavoury censures, reflections and reproaches.[43] These referred to what he had put in print during the exchanges for and against congregational singing, principally with Isaac Marlow. Human weaknesses and sinfulness had got the better of Keach on this occasion but he was not a proud man and was willing to listen and submit to others, especially his brethren in the Assembly.

Keach was essentially a humble man, well aware of his limitations. He was neither self-serving nor self-promoting but rather devoted to serving Christ and promoting his ways.

> *'And when we do thus, even everything our Lord requires of us, we are not to think that we deserve anything of Jesus Christ, but say, we are thine, Lord, our*

lives are thine, our time is thine, our talents are thine, our service is thine, and we, when we have done all, see cause to be ashamed we have done it no better; we deserve to be blamed rather than commended, much less not think that we deserve wages, or thanks from Jesus Christ for what we have done.' [44]

Keach's drive was never simply due to his natural temperament. Rather he was driven by biblical and gospel motives in his boldness. The Bible was crucial in his spirituality whether it defined his duties or the motives behind those duties. In his exposition of Proverbs 28:1 he asks what is it that animates and emboldens a man to stand up for Christ and his ways. There are essentially five motivations. Such men, he suggests ...

◊ Know the truth and are persuaded that it is God's truth and that it stands as the supreme authority.

◊ Know they are engaged in a good and righteous cause and remain sincere by maintaining a good conscience. By way of contrast the hypocrite will not stay the course but lose his courage.

◊ Know that God is present with them. A Christian draws fresh courage when he knows he has an Almighty and terrible God to take his part. They are motivated by such promises as *'Fear not, you worm Jacob, ... I will help you ...'* Isaiah 41:14 and *'So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; What can man do to me?'* Hebrews 13:6.

◊ Know that they will overcome at last. They possess faith and are assured of victory because they are more than conquerors.

◊ Know that they will have an exceeding great reward. They are motivated by such promises as Revelation 2:10, *'Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.'*

By reading through Keach's sermons and other writings, by piecing together his life from the sources that are available and, by listening to the little that others have said of him the impression is gained he was bold because he sought to be the very man that he was describing as being *'as bold as a lion'*. He was driven to act the way he did by these biblical motives.

Above all he was a sincere man seeking to maintain a good conscience before God and man. Like all good preachers his sermons contain searching application and encouragement. Let all of us who profess the name of Christ receive his closing words about being as bold as lions and let each one of us examine our own courage and our own sincerity before God.

'Let Saints show themselves bold and courageous in the cause and interest of God, and their souls. A fearful timorous spirit becomes not a Christian. Have you a good cause? Have you a good call? Have you a good conscience? Have you a good captain? What then do you fear? In the strength of the Lord, be a Bold as a Lion; and in order thereunto, get the truth into your affections, see that you have received the truth in the love of it: and be sure you approve yourselves to be sincere; for it is sincerity that emboldens a Christian, and makes him valiant.' [45]



Notes

1 Calculated from the death of Charles I, so discounting the Commonwealth period.

2 Benjamin Stinton, *The Tryall of Mr Benja: Keach, who was prosecuted for Wrighting against Infant Baptism &c with an Account of ye Punishment inflicted upon him for ye same: Anno 1664.* In *A Repository of Divers Historical Matters Relating to the English Antipaedobaptists, Collected from Original Papers of Faithful Extracts,* No 21 pp93-104 (Angus Library, Oxford, Anno 1712).

3 Disney's letter dated 26 May 1664, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1663-1664,* 116, Public Record Office, The National Archives, Kew, London, SP28/98

4 Stinton, *The Tryall of Mr Benja: Keach*

5 Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London, 1738-1740). Vol 2 pp205-207
A facsimile copy has been recently published by The Baptist Standard Bearer Inc, Arkansas, n d

6 Keach makes only one reference to the man who was 'the blessed Instrument of my Conversion'. This was in *A Counter-Antidote to purge out the Malignant Effects of a Late Counterfeit, prepared by Mr Gyles Shute, an Unskillful Person in Polemical Cures* (London, 1694), p3
[Gyles Shute was a member of Matthew Mead's Stepney congregation. Shute's name appears in the Stepney Meeting Church Book (1644-1894). See the entries in Mead's own handwriting for 13 April 1684 and 17 February 1683. These records are held by Tower Hamlets Local History and Archive Library, 277 Bancroft Road, London E1 4DQ.

7 Benjamin Keach, *'Blessedness of Christ's Sheep', A Golden Mine Opened,* or *The Glory of God's Rich Grace Displayed in the Mediator to Believers: and His Direful Wrath against Impenitent Sinners containing the Substance of near Forty Sermons upon several Subjects* (London, 1694), pp314-315

8 Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp590-672

9 CH Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work,* (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), pp18,25,26.

10 Crosby, *History, Vol* 4 pp304-309

11 Benjamin Keach, *Tropologia, A Key to Open Scripture* Metaphors, (London, 1681). Thomas Delaune was responsible for Book 1 on sacred philology. This section was partly translated and partly compiled from Solomon Glassius, *Philologiae Sacrae, qua totius sacrosanctae Veteris et Novi Testamenti Scripturae,* (Jena, 1623). The remaining Books were Keach's own work on the metaphors, allegories and similitudes of the Old and New Testaments. Quotations used in this lecture will be from the twentieth century reprint of *Tropologia,* Keach, *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972) and abbreviated to *Types and Metaphors.*

12 Keach, *Types and Metaphors, pp*766-767

13 Keach, *Types and Metaphors, pp*766-767

14 David Daniell, *The Bible in English: its History and Influence,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p132

15 A Confession of Faith put forth by the elders and brethren of many congregations of Christians, baptized upon profession of faith, in London and the country, (London, 1677), Chapter one. This is commonly known as the 1689 Confession, or the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith. Keach was among the signatories of this Confession of Faith at the Particular Baptist Assembly that met in 1689.

16 Keach, *'The rich man and Lazarus': Exposition of the Parables, Series Two,* (Grand Rapids: Kregel 1991), pp408,413. This was originally published by Keach as *Gospel Mysteries Unveil'd,* or *exposition of all the parables and many express similitudes* (London, 1701). Future references will refer to the Kregel edition, *Parables One/Two.*

17 Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant: a sweet cordial for a drooping* soul, or, *The excellent nature of the Covenant of Grace opened: in a sermon preached January the 29th at the funeral of Mr Henry Forty. An elegy upon death &c,* (London, 1693)
'The Blessedness of Christ's Sheep', or 'No Falling from a State of True Grace', *A Golden Mine Opened* The fourteen sermons on perseverance form a part of this volume.
The Display of Glorious Grace: or the Covenant of Peace, Opened: in Fourteen sermons lately preached in which the errors of the present day, about reconciliation and justification, are detected. (London, 1698)

18 Keach, *War with the Devil: or, the Young Man's Conflict with the Powers of Darkness: in a Dialogue discovering the Corruption and Vanity of Youth, the horrible Nature of Sin, and Deplorable Condition of Fallen Man. With an appendix containing a Dialogue between an Old Apostate and a Young Professor,* (London, 1673), and *The Travels of True Godliness, from the Beginning of the World to this Present Day, n an apt and pleasant Allegory: shewing the Trouble, Oppositions, Reproaches and Persecutions he hath met with in every age; together with the Danger he seems to be in at present, by Vice, Papists and other grand Enemies also where he make his final Abode.* (London, 1683)

19 See, for example, Keach, *'The Epistle Dedicatory', The Marrow of True Justification, or Justification without Works,* (London, 1692)

20 Keach, *The Articles of the Faith of the congregation of Horseley-down [Back Street], as asserted this 10th of the 6th month, 1697,* (London, 1697). See also Elias Keach, *The glory and ornament of a true, gospel-constituted church, being a brief display of the discipline of the church at Tallow-Chandlers Hall,* (London, 1697), p iv

21 Keach, *'Epistle', The Articles of the Faith,* p iii

22 Keach, *'The Great Salvation', A Golden Mine Opened,* p490

23 Keach, *'Christ a bridegroom', Types and Metaphors,* p327

24 Keach, *'A trumpet blown in Zion', A Golden Mine Opened,* p48

25 Keach, *'The sower', Parables One,* p140

26 Keach, *'The tares of the field', Parables One,* p219

27 Keach, *'Saints compared to palm-trees', Types and Metaphors,* p755

28 Keach, *'A trumpet blown in Zion', A Golden Mine Opened,* p19

29 This was published in 1666. No copies have survived.

30 Keach, *Sion in Distress,* or, *the Groans of the Protestant Church,* (London, 1681), pp36ff

31 Keach, *'Blessedness of Christ's Sheep', A Golden Mine Opened,* pp315

32 Keach, *Light broke forth in Wales, expelling darkness,* or, *the Englishman's Love to the Ancient Britains being an answer to a book, intituled Children's Baptism from Heaven; published in the Welsh Tongue, by Mr James Owen,* (London, 1696), p261

33 Among the most important were *Gold Refin'd,* or, *Baptism in its Primitive Purity* (London, 1692); *The Rector Rectified and Corrected: or Infant-Baptism unlawful,* (London 1692); *The ax laid to the root,* or, *One more blow at the foundation of infant baptism, and church membership,* (London, 1693); *Light broke forth in Wales, expelling darkness,* or, *the Englishman's Love to the Ancient Britains.* (London, 1696)

34 Baxter rejected the notion of liberty of conscience as a basis for social and religious stability. He did not believe in freedom for any religion but freedom for the true, namely, the Protestant religion that was to be maintained by the power of the civil magistrate. See Carl R Truman, *'Richard Baxter on Christian Unity: A Chapter in the Enlightening of English Reformed Orthodoxy', Westminster Theological Journal,* 61 (1999), pp57-58

35 Keach, *'Christ the door of the sheep', Parables Two, p*432

36 Keach, *Light broke forth in Wales, expelling darkness,* p124

37 Keach, *'The Fan in his Hand', Parables One,* p52

38 Keach, *The Travels of True Godliness,* (London, 1817), pp103-112.

39 Keach, *A Medium betwixt two Extremes. Wherein it is proved that the whole First Adam was condemned, and the whole Second Adam justified,* (London, 1698), pp37-38

40 Keach, *'The marriage supper', Parables Two,* p151

41 Keach, *'Fire, salt and peace', Parables One, p*300

42 Crosby, *History,* Vol 4 p307

43 Keach, *To all the Baptized Churches and faithful Brethren in England and Wales, Christian Salutations,* (London, 1692)

44 Keach, *'The unprofitable servants', Parables Two,* p431

45 Keach, *'Saints compared to lions', Types and Metaphors,* p767

◈ ◈ ◈



Thomas Delaune (d 1685) The life and times of Ireland's first Baptist martyr

Andy Compton

The execution of Charles 1 in 1649 was a huge shock to the western world with repercussions still felt today. At the time, the regicide created immediate divisions throughout England, Scotland and Wales but it did unite the divergent groups in Southern Ireland for a short time. Most Protestants and Roman Catholics favoured royalism and rejected Cromwell's English Republicanism. Taking the initiative, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Marquis of Ormonde, forged an alliance of Irish Protestants and Catholics against England's new parliamentary rule. This, together with the news that Charles II was planning to land in Ireland from exile in Holland, increased the case for a Cromwellian invasion of the country. Cromwell arrived in Dublin on 15 August 1649, committing more than 30,000 soldiers to the island for the next decade. Drogheda, Wexford and Waterford fell and even with the bloody set-back of 2500 dead English soldiers in Clonmel, Ireland was quickly subjected to the new English Republican rule. *(Gribben, pp100-101)*

During these *'troublesome times'* some of the English soldiers and New Model Army (NMA) chaplains started independent churches in southern Ireland. *(Fowkes and others. Cork Baptist Church Minute Book (CBCMB))*. This was part of a Cromwellian policy to establish Gospel churches in Irish society by Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Independents and Baptists of the NMA and administration. In 1653 there were Baptist churches in Dublin (where there were two churches and Rev Thomas Patient is recorded as being paid from Irish revenue), Cork, Waterford, Galway, Limerick, Kilkenny, Clonmel, Kerry and Carrickfergus. *(CBCMB)*

Cork Baptist Church: its roots and an early convert

Cork Baptist Church was started by Major Edward Riggs who settled in Cork in 1651 as Commissioner of the Peace and MP for Bandon. Riggs was a fervent Baptist and as there was no local Baptist church he commenced Sunday worship meetings on his Riggsdale estate. These Baptist services became well attended with Riggs concerned for the preaching of the Gospel and the protection of those who converted from Roman Catholicism to Biblical Christianity and baptistic ecclesiology. *(CBCMB)*

There is one example of Riggs' protection of those leaving Catholic Orders. Mrs Woods, a long-standing original member of the church, was formally a nun *'under vows of chastity'. (CBCMB)* She ran away from her convent because of the shock of being propositioned by the priest who was hearing her confession. Riggs provided her with shelter and protection which led to her conversion and eventual marriage to Riggs' schoolmaster, Mr Woods. Mrs Woods was a member of Cork Baptist Church for around sixty years. *(CBCMB)*

After the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 many of the leading Irish dissenters conformed. For example, Edward Worth who founded the Cork Association (which facilitated the ordination of Presbyterian ministers) abandoned his Presbyterianism, becoming the Church of Ireland Bishop of Killaloe in 1661. He brought a lot of his Presbyterian flock with him. *(Gribben, pp112-114)* But Riggs held fast to his Baptist identity even in those troublesome times resulting in troubles of his own. In 1684 he was indicted for high treason along with thirty-four other protestants by an *'inveterate ... furious and inhumane'* Major Lawless. *(Smith, p191)* Lawless gave no other reason for his case against Riggs except *'he had a good estate in England and that if he could not live quietly in Ireland he would go thither'. (Smith, p191)* The jury, with a Catholic foreman Colonel John Barret, acquitted Riggs and the other thirty-four. A deeply embittered Lawless died a week later. *(Smith, p191)* Riggs' acceptance by the Cork establishment was formalised in 1691. He was declared a freeman of Cork city at the age of seventy-four. He died in his ninetieth year in 1707.

Riggs' third wife, Ann, whom he married in 1677 was forty years younger than him. She bore seven children ... and was faithful to the Baptist cause in Cork throughout her life. When Riggs died in 1707, together with the two townlands she owned in Co Tipperary, *(downsurvey.tcd.ie)* he bequeathed Ann an income of twelve-hundred pounds per annum. This enabled her to fund the building of a Baptist Meeting House on Mill Street (now Liberty Street), a manse and fifty pounds per annum stipend for a pastor *'for-ever'*. Ann died in 1740 and was buried with Edward in the family vault situated in the Ballinhassig Church of Ireland which is now derelict. *(Ann Riggs Bible)*

This was the circumstance of Thomas Delaune's formative years. He was probably born between 1635-45. His childhood home was on a farm at Brinny, a townland north-east of Bandon and adjacent to the Riggsdale estate. The Delaune family were



Kilcrea Friary where Deloune received his early education

'very poor', Catholic tenant farmers of Edward Riggs. *(Crosby, p366)* Thomas's parents had plans for their son to become a priest, so they sent him to Kilcrea Friary run by the Franciscan Order for his education. The Friary can be seen today and is about nine miles west of Cork city. Thomas Crosby states that Riggs had supported and paid for Delaune's education at Kilcrea *(Crosby, p367)* but, according to Ann Riggs, this was not the case. *(CBCMB)* Despite Crosby receiving a letter recounting Delaune's education from Rev Ebenezzer Gibbons (Cork Baptist Pastor) Crosby recorded that Riggs had supported Delaune's Franciscan education. Ann Riggs held that her husband's aversion to Roman Catholic doctrine could not countenance this. Countering Crosby, Ann put on record that Riggs had persuaded Thomas's parents to take him out of the Friary so that he would receive a classical education by Riggs' schoolmaster, Mr Woods. Through the patronage of Riggs, the care and influence of Woods and a Mr Francis Bampfield (a fellow Baptist, business partner and friend of Riggs) Delaune came to saving faith. He was baptised in one of the Riggsdale fish ponds at the front of the main house. By around the age of sixteen Delaune was employed as the clerk of a pilchard fishery in Kinsale which Riggs owned in partnership with Bampfield. *(CBCMB)*

Delaune's move from Ireland to England

After some years, Delaune moved to London because he suffered abuse amongst his neighbours due to his conversion and baptistic convictions. On his arrival in England Delaune befriended the Baptist pastor Edward Hutchinson and married his daughter, Hanna. Hutchinson pastored the Clough-Keating Baptist Church in Ormonde (Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary) which was established after 1653. *(Crosby, p366)*

We cannot be certain when Delaune moved to London but it was, as Delaune described, the *'perilous and menacing times'* of the late 1600s. *(Delaune: The Present State ... (Preface))* After the death of Cromwell in 1658 huge political and ecclesiastical changes came into effect. 1660 marked the Restoration of the Monarchy with Charles II crowned as king and a new 'Cavalier' parliament was convened with a strong royalist and Anglican presence. Its resolve was to restore



The 1662 Act of Uniformity

'An Act for the Uniformity of Public Prayers and Administration of Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies, and for establishing the Form of making, ordaining and consecrating Bishops, Priests and Deacons in the Church of England.'

Church of England dominance in Britain and Ireland. This was exercised through the Clarendon Code, a set of legislative acts passed when Charles II's closest adviser was Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon. The 1661 Corporation Act declared all civil servants had to swear allegiance to the parliament, the King and the Church of England. The 1662 Act of Uniformity made the Church of England Book of Common Prayer compulsory for public worship. The screw tightened further in 1664 with the Conventicle Act which stopped religious assemblies of more than five people except if organised by the Church of England. The 1665 Five Mile Act prohibited non-conforming ministers (there were about 2000 expelled from the Church of England) from coming within five miles of the parish they had been ejected from. *(Needham, p303)* Within this political maelstrom it was becoming extremely difficult to live as a dissenter or Baptist in Britain and Ireland. According to Daniel Defoe up to eight-thousand dissenters were executed or died in prison during Charles II's reign. Yet, in 1672 as Charles II adopted absolute power, he gave more than three-thousand five-hundred licences for nonconformist preachers. *(Needham, p315)*



Hanserd Knollys



William Kiffen



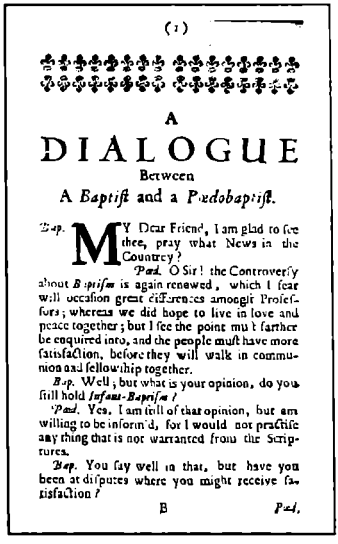
Benjamin Keach

During his time in London, and thanks to his classical education, Delaune was able set up and run a small Grammar School as well as doing some printing. He embraced Particular Baptist convictions and befriended the London Baptist pastors Hanserd Knollys (c1598-1691), William Kiffen (1616-1701) and Benjamin Keach (1640-1704). Delaune established himself as a Biblical Scholar, translator, published author and occasional preacher. His writings dealt with the subjects of baptism, covenant theology, church government and the case for the dissenting church. Delaune's most famous publication is *A Plea for the Non-Conformist* but there are also other notable works. Delaune argued the case for believer's baptism amongst peers who were Presbyterians, Independents, Episcopalians and Baptists all striving for chief orthodoxy on the administration of church polity.

Some Writings by Delaune

The Preface to Hutchinson's 'Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism'

Delaune wrote the preface to Edward Hutchinson's *Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism* (his response to Richard Baxter's case for paedobaptism). Baxter as a leading Puritan founded a fresh approach to reformed pastoral care through his time at Kidderminster Parish Church in Worcestershire. He also ministered in the NMA in Ireland as a Presbyterian nonconformist. Baxter's *'massive independence of thought'* exposed a rather loose approach to Reformed orthodoxy which was highlighted by his peers. *(Needham, pp267-269)*


(1)

A

DIALOGUE

Between

A *Baptist* and a *Paedobaptist*.

Bap. MY Dear Friend, I am glad to see thee, pray what News in the Country?

Paed. O Sir! the Controversy about *Baptism* is again renewed, which I fear will occasion great differences amongst Professors; whereas we did hope to live in love and peace together; but I see the point must farther be enquired into, and the people must have more satisfaction, before they will walk in communion and fellowship together.

Bap. Well; but what is your opinion, do you still hold *Infant-Baptism*?

Paed. Yes, I am still of that opinion, but am willing to be inform'd, for I would not practise any thing that is not warranted from the Scriptures.

Bap. You say well in that, but have you been at disputes where you might receive satisfaction?

Concerning Baxter, Delaune suggests:

> *'A man may preach and write of the most seraphick verities, and yet know but in part; Mr Baxter is to be honoured as far as he has laid himself out to preach the Gospel, and improve his Talent for the Conversion of souls in this evil day; But when he forgets himself, and instead of promoting practical holyness, fills the nation with notions as uncertain as they are numberless, puzzling such as arrive not to the subtility of his distinction, creating more doubts then ever he'll be able to resolve, making Christianity a mere riddle which no man understands but he, and liable to as many forms and interpretations as his wavering mind; Then I humbly conceive he may be very safely left.' (Hutchinson, Preface by TD)*

'A thing may be clear to one man that would fain impose it, but it may be doubtful on him on whom it is imposed, which no man can help - must he therefore be persecuted? ... if the point be clear in Scripture what needs any article of faith to impose it? ... Certainly, that man is defective in charity, that thinks all dissenters are either maliciously or wilfully blind.' (The Present State... , p205)

Delaune or his supporter comments on the imposition of force by the Church of England and State concerning religious conscience:

'Arguments are good inducements, but force has no countenance in the Gospel ... force may make one blind but never to see clearer; it may make a hypocrite but no true convert.' (The Present State... , p206)

The digression concludes with an affirmation of the separation of church and state followed by some deference:

'... we should have no religious communion with atheists, infidels, papists, idolaters, prophane, ill livers, hereticks, we shouldn't persecute them but allow the temporal laws to deal with them if they break their laws ... I beg the readers pardon for this little digression which my zeal for the union of protestants forced me to insert.'

'Compulsion of Conscience Condemned'

In 1683 Delaune authored *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned.* He presented dissenters as model citizens to king and country and drew the reader's attention to Charles II's own opinion on dissenters:

'To evidence (further) the lenity of his Majesty, I shall quote a memorable passage in his Declaration from Breda, dated April 14, 1660. "We do declare a liberty to tender consciences; and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that we shall be ready to consent to such an Act of Parliament, as upon mature deliberation shall be offered to us for the full granting that indulgence."' (Compulsion... , p3)

So, Delaune's reason for writing *Compulsion of Conscience* was to encourage Charles II and his court to follow through on his Breda statement rolling back the Clarendon Code and other legislative acts that were now criminalising the dissenters. He spoke up for them:

'... the sad consequences of prosecuting quiet and peaceable dissenters upon the Penal Laws, as having a direct tendency to weaken the Protestant

interest, for whose ruin that common enemy greedily gapes ... How much it destroys trade and ruins thousands of families ... What a Scandal it is to the Protestant Reformation when we quarrel and persecute each other.' (Compulsion... , p45)

'A Plea for the Non-Conformists'

The great strength of Delaune's dissenting polemic is its combination of respect for authority, with a self-deprecating manner fused with his reasoned rebuke of those hostile to any law-abiding dissenting opinion. Delaune's dissenting polemic was best expressed in his most famous writing, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists.* It was written in response to Dr Benjamin Calamy's (1642-86) sermon, *Discourse about a Doubting Conscience* otherwise known as *Scrupulous Conscience*, published in 1683. *Scrupulous Conscience* was defined by Calamy as those with:

'... an erroneous conscience when the mind is unduly swayed by fear and judges that something is wrong that is in fact lawful.'

Their scruples were described as:

'... small things upsetting more ignorant Christians but results in undermining ministers, the church of England resulting in Quakerism or worse!' (Scrupulous... , p11)

Calamy, a graduate of Cambridge gaining a DD (Doctor of Divinity) in 1680, was part of the royalist establishment and he had friends in high places. One such friend was his patron and parishioner, *'the hanging judge'* and Chief Justice of the King's Bench, George Jeffreys to whom Calamy dedicated *Scrupulous Conscience.* Jeffrey's role, as a judge, was to enforce royal policy. He had a reputation for harshness against rebellion including dissent epitomised in his bloody justice for dissenters involved in the Monmouth rebellion. Unfortunately, for Delaune, the judge at his trial was to be the same Judge Jeffreys. *(Gordon)*

Calamy expressed frustration with dissenting Christians unhappy with Anglican practice and its legal claim to the nation's Christian worship, describing them as:

'... ungovernable with such wayward skittish consciences that they ought to be well-bridled and restrained.' (Compulsion... , p4)

'... uptight, timerous ... like fearful women who wander in the dark who see nothing to affright them yet fancy many things which make them tremble every step they take.' (Compulsion... , p7)

A Plea for the Non-Conformists was written in 1683. Throughout it, Delaune responds almost point by point to *Scrupulous Conscience*. He attacked the Church of England, accusing it of altering the Lord's Prayer, forcing people to use liturgy which contradicted Christ's teachings and making congregants sing the Lord's Prayer which had no basis in Scripture. Calamy challenged those *'who scruple at conformity' (Plea... , p2)* to listen to the Ministers of the Church of England and consider their opinions and guidance on worship and the idea of a lawful church. Delaune accepts this challenge noting that the opinions of Anglican Ministers were very broad. From the start, Delaune also wanted to put on record that Calamy was not aiming to entrap him or *'take advantage upon him for his dissatisfaction to the religion by law established.' (Plea... , p3)*

Calamy stated that dissenters had no good reason for not worshipping at the Church of England because the things that offended them (such as kneeling at communion, the sign of the cross during baptism, keeping holy days and using liturgy) were not prohibited in the Bible. Delaune, however, referred to these practices as Catholic traditions added to the Bible as a reason for not conforming to Anglican worship practice. *(Plea... , p6)* Delaune then accused the Anglican Church of hypocrisy. He asks how they can accuse the Catholic Church of *'superstitions and abominations'* whilst they also bow and kneel at images and consecrated elements themselves? *(Plea... . p8)*

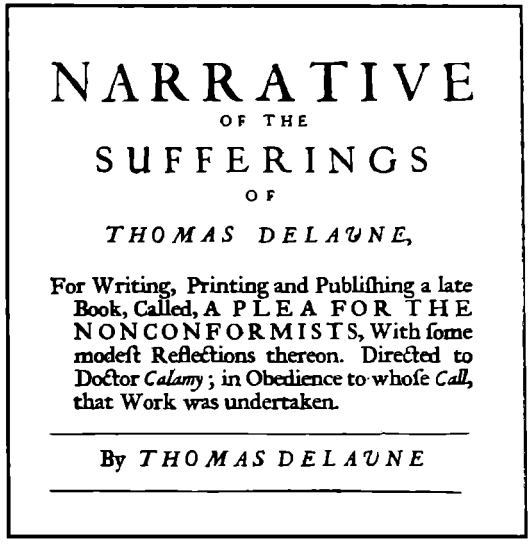
Calamy objected that dissenters were separating over *'little things'* calling them pharisaical, obsessed with being careful to avoid and abstain, with consciences starting where there is no need. He accused dissenters of *'running out of churches at the sight of a surplice as if they had been scared by the apparition of a ghost.'* Delaune responded by asking *'aren't they consecrated and dedicated to holy uses?'* Rather than *'little things'*, isn't the surplice, the sign of the cross and kneeling all necessary to Church of England worship and are they not being enforced? These were rules applied *'with all severity imaginable and by excommunication of any dissenters thereby knocking the fly on the neighbours' head with a hatchett'. (Plea... , p10)*

Calamy also argued that there was no need to separate from the Church of England over its rites and ceremonies as if they were Catholic traditions because these Anglican *'little things'* were in the Early Church before the establishment of Roman Catholicism. Delaune countered that Early Church practice without Scriptural authority was no reason to accept the present rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. The Early Church did have *'gross errors and heresies'* that always ought to be rejected. Delaune then attacked Calamy's understanding of the *'little things'* of Anglican tradition stating that they were actually founded in Roman Catholicism rather than in the Early Church and he listed the offensive Anglican *'little things'* as: altars, kneeling or bowing at altars, surplices, confirmation, the sign of the cross at baptism,

baptising infants to make them Christians, liturgies, festivals, garments, consecration of churches, organs, priests, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday fasts and vigils.

There was also a stern element to *Scrupulous Conscience.* As well as seeking to win the argument against the dissenters Calamy charged them as *'guilty of disobedience to lawful authority, sedition, faction, tumult. riot, plotting'.* It would be these types of charges found in Calamy's sermon that Delaune would face for authoring *A Plea for the Non-Conformists.*

Prison Writings


NARRATIVE
OF THE
SUFFERINGS
OF
THOMAS DELAUNE,
For Writing, Printing and Publiſhing a late Book, Called, A PLEA FOR THE NONCONFORMISTS, With ſome modeſt Reflections thereon. Directed to Doctor *Calamy*; in Obedience to whoſe *Call*, that Work was undertaken.
By THOMAS DELAUNE

On 29 November 1683, just before *A Plea...* was finished at the press, Delaune was arrested and put into gaol. During his imprisonment, Delaune wrote *A Narrative of the Tryal and Sufferings of Thomas Delaune,* describing his imprisonment, trial and futile attempts to persuade Calamy to help him gain his freedom. Before being sent to Newgate, Delaune records his first night in gaol *'where a hard bench was my bed and two bricks my pillows'. (A Narrative... , p56)* On 13 December Delaune was charged before Judge Jeffreys with undermining the peace of England, putting *'the king into the greatest hate and contempt of his subjects'*, planning *'sedition and rebellion'* and criticising the Book of Common Prayer. *'By force and arms'* the charge, continued Delaune, *'unlawfully, seditiously, and maliciously did write, print and publish ... a certain false, seditious and scandalous libel of and concerning ... the king and the Book of Common Prayer.' (A Narrative... , p62)* On 17 December Delaune pled not guilty saying that he was only responding to the public challenge made by Calamy in *Scrupulous Conscience* to make a case against the sermon's call for all dissenters to enter the Church of England. Delaune stated *'... since public challenges are made to be answered, to punish me for obeying a guide of the church is hard, very hard'. (A Narrative... , p63)* On 18 December, a common jury found Delaune guilty. He was fined one hundred marks, his books were to be burnt at the Royal Exchange and he would remain in prison until the fine was paid. He was *'to find good security for his good behaviour for one whole year afterwards'. (A Plea... , p64)* By the end of January 1684, when it was clear that Delaune could not pay the fine, he was sent to Newgate prison with his wife Hanna and two small

children where he expressed frustration with Calamy in *A Narrative...* . He accused Calamy of cowardice, hiding in the shadow of his Anglican patron, Judge Jeffreys. Delaune noted that the apostle Paul would not have shielded *'his writings, or preachings, under the terrible patronage'* of state power. *(A Narrative... , pp64-65)* He pleaded with Calamy that he had not used *'force and arms against'* him, *'but pen, ink and a few papers'. (A Narrative... , pp64-65)*

Suffering and Martyrdom

Like thousands of other dissenters, Delaune remained in prison with his family simply for publishing his case for the dissenting church. With no means of income, poor prison conditions and lack of food Delaune witnessed the death of his wife and two small children before he passed away, all within fifteen months in 1685. Charles II also died in the same year. Benjamin Calamy died in 1686 apparently due to the strain of seeing a dissenting friend suffer the same fate as Delaune under the same *'hanging judge'* Jeffreys ... and Jeffreys himself discovered the horror of an incarcerated demise in 1689 in the Tower of London.

By the 1750s twenty editions of *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* had been published. The writer and fellow dissenter Daniel Defoe wrote a moving preface in the 1720 edition. He recommended *A Plea* ... with these words:

> *'If any man ask what we can say why the dissenters differ from the Church of England and what they can plead for it; I can recommend no better reply than this.'*

Defoe also noted:

> *'The treatment that this reverent and learned brother met with will forever stand as a monument of the cruelty of those times ... We cannot refrain saying that such a champion, of such a cause, deserved better usage. And it was very hard that such a man, such a Christian, such a scholar and, on such an occasion, should starve in a dungeon; and that the whole body of Dissenters in England, whose cause he died for defending, should not raise him 66£ 13s 4d to save his life.'*

Defoe's lament is certainly an embarrassment to the dissenting community of Britain and Ireland but, according to Delaune himself, there had been early attempts to pay for his release by dissenting freemen of London which appear to have been blocked by the authorities.

> *'Some friends of mine, freemen of this city, went afterwards to be my bail, but they were told you were not at home. They made thereupon an application to Sir William Turner who referred them to you ...' (A Narrative... , p3)*

Conclusion

The story of Thomas Delaune raises some key questions to Irish Baptists and the wider Church in the circumstances of today:

1 Are we fully supportive of those in the work and suffering of Gospel ministry?

Defoe's Preface to the 1706 edition of *'A Plea ...'* is salutary reading. He does ask a painful question. Why wasn't Delaune rescued by the London Particular Baptists? There may be a logical reason as to the abandonment of the Delaunes' sitting on a shelf somewhere. But, whilst Defoe's question remains unanswered, it reminds us that we should make every effort to love our labourers well, assisting especially if we know they are in isolation and need.

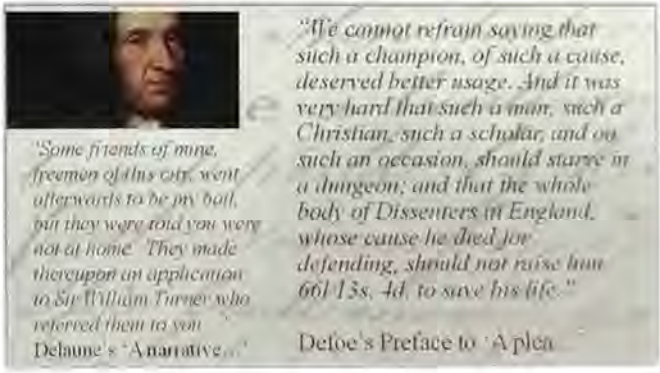
2 In evangelism and mission are we restricting the Gospel to our own cultural model?

It is very natural for us to relate well to those with whom we are most comfortable in terms of class, race and tradition. Major Riggs reminds us in his reaching out to young Thomas Delaune that we ought to be reaching outside of our cultural boxes ... at least from time to time.

3 Is the mess of our times crushing our vision for the growth of God's Kingdom?

As we see the mass confusion across the Church and the world coupled with the unbelievers' incredulity towards Christian ethics and theology today, we are inclined to want to take cover. Yet, Delaune and Mrs Woods and many more found Christ in the maelstrom of seventeenth century Ireland because the English and converted Irish communicated the Gospel regardless. Perhaps we need a fresh confidence in Christ and His Gospel, to speak up, regardless, again.

As Christians who may experience relatively mild pressures from the State today we should read Delaune's *Plea...* , remember his obscure background and ask God for the same courage and resolve he and many others were given.



Bibliography

Bickley, Augustus Charles
Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Vol 14 Delaune

Calamy, Benjamin (1642-86)
A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience preached at the church of St Mary Aldermanbury, London / London: Printed for Rowland Reynolds, 1683.

Crosby, Thomas (1685-1750)
The History of the English Baptists, Vol 2, Published by the author, London, 1739 (1979)

Delaune, Thomas (d 1685)
Truth Defended, or *A triple answer to the late triumvirates opposition in their three pamphlets viz Mr Baxter's review, Mr Wills his censure, Mr Whiston's postscript to his essay, &c. With Mr Hutchinson's letter to Mr Baxter a little before his death. And a postscript in answer to Mr William Walker's modest plea or infant baptism.* Printed for the author, and to be sold by Francis Smith at the Elephant and Castle near the Royal Exchange, 1677.

Delaune, Thomas (d 1685)
The Present State of London with Memorials comprehending a full and succinct account of the Ancient and Modern State thereof. London: printed by George Larkin, for Enoch Prosser and John How, at the Rose and Crown, and Seven Stars, in Sweetings-Alley, near the Royal Exchange in Cornhill, 1681.

Delaune, Thomas (d 1685)
Angliae Metropolis or *The Present State of London with Memorials comprehending a full and succinct account of the Ancient and Modern State thereof.* London: printed by George Larkin, for John Harris, at the Harrow in the Poulerey, and Thomas Hawkins, George Yard, Lumbard Street, 1690.
https://play.google.com/books/reader
id=ZZNmAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP9

Delaune, Thomas (d 1685)
Compulsion of Conscience Condemned wherein is plainly demonstrated how inconsistent it is with Scripture, the fundamental laws of England and common equity &c. 1683

Delaune, Thomas (d 1685)
A Plea for the Non-Conformists giving the true state of the dissenters case and how far the Conformists separation from the Church of Rome, for their Popish superstitions and traditions introduced into the service of God, justifies the Non-Conformists separation from them for the same: in a letter to Dr Benjamin Calamy, upon his sermon, called, *'Scrupulous Conscience'*, inviting hereto: to which is added, A parallel scheme of the pagan, papal and Christian rites and ceremonies: with a narrative of the sufferings underwent for writing, printing and publishing hereof. London, np: printed for the author 1683; repr, np, 1704.

Delaune, Thomas (d 1685)
A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune
London: Printed for the author, 1683; repr, np, 1704

Durso, Keith E
No Armor for the Back: Baptist Prison Writings, 1600s-1700s, Mercer University Press, Macon Georgia and The Baptist History and Heritage Society, Atlanta Georgia. 2007

Fowke, Joseph (and others)
The Cork Baptist Church Minute book 1653-1875.

Gordon, Alexander
Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1900 Vol 8 B Calamy

Gribben, Crawford
The Irish Puritans: James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church, Evangelical Press, Darlington and Auburn, 2003

Haykin, Michael
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
www.oxforddnb.com/index/7/101007451/

Hutchinson, Edward
A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism, Preface by Thomas Delaune, 1676

Keach, Benjamin
Tropolgia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors in Four Books to which are prefixed arguments to prove the divine authority of the Holy Bible together with types of the Old Testament, Ireland: Printed at the Bonmahon Industrial Printing School. Pub William Hill Collingridge, City Press, 1 Long Lane, London, 1858
https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=oyVMAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PR1

Needham, Nick
2000 years of Christ's Power Vol 4, The Age of Religious Conflict 16th-18th Century, Christian Focus, Glasgow, 2016

Riggs, Ann
Ann Riggs Bible (Cork Baptist Church)

Smith, Charles
The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork, Vo. 2, Dublin 1750

Stephen, Leslie (Ed)
Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Vol 8 Burton – Cantwell, 1886, Elder Smith & Co, London

www.downsurvey.tcd.ie
The Down Survey of Ireland: Mapping a Century of change

Tyler Bryant, Ruth
George Jeffreys, First Baron Jeffreys of Wem, Donald E Wilkes Jr Collection: Chief Justice George Jeffreys. University of Georgia School of Law.

◈ ◈ ◈



Luther Nailed It!

Neil Watson

There are three Latin words inscribed at the top of the famous Reformation Wall in Geneva ... 'Post Tenebras Lux' - After Darkness, Light. *(See also Page 79)*

In the centuries preceding the Reformation, the Christian Church had experienced a slow, steady decline into doctrinal, spiritual and moral darkness. The Medieval Church was corrupt; it was the low point in the history of the Church and her Popes.

The decline could be summed up in one word – 'sacerdotalism'. This is the view that salvation from sin is accomplished through the administration of the priesthood and the sacraments of the Church.

Martin Luther was not the first person to realise that things were wrong. Others before him had begun to see the light. In the providence of God, however, it was Luther who lit the touch paper that ignited the Protestant Reformation.

It is important to acknowledge that the Reformers did not set out to start a revolution; the Reformation was not an organised revolt against the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers saw their work as calling the Church back to her New Testament roots. They were not trying to create something new; they were not attempting to form but to reform. It has been said that it all happened by accident, but our understanding of God's providence teaches us something very different and much more wonderful.

At the age of 34, a German monk nailed a notice to the church bulletin board in a small town. Within a short period of time, many people in Germany were talking about the gospel. Why and how did a church notice board change the Church and the world?

Firstly, it is important to look at three critical events which shaped Martin Luther and made him into the person who nailed his bulletin to the board.

◊ The Lighning Bolt 1505

Martin Luther was born in 1483. His father Hans Luder (local dialect) was a peasant who became a miner and through time became a manager of six mines. His dream for his son Martin was that he would become a wealthy lawyer. Luther was twenty-two when he was walking home after visiting his parents and he was caught up in a sudden and ferocious thunderstorm. A lightning bolt struck the ground nearby and knocked him to the ground. In Medieval times, a thunderstorm or a lightning bolt was perceived as a message from God. Luther received the message as he understood it loud and clear. He cried out *"Help me St Anne, I will become a monk"*. St Anne was the mother of Mary and the patron saint of miners.

Martin presented himself at an Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, a place known for its rigorous and demanding spirituality. Through time he was ordained to the priesthood and he made a vow to be the best monk that he could be. He gave himself fully to the daily schedule of rigorous spiritual disciplines. Luther claimed, *"If ever a monk could have reached heaven through monkery, then it was I."* He got up early in the morning and prayed at different times throughout the day, he engaged in self-flagellation, he studied God's word meticulously and he went to confession each day. His Father Confessor was exasperated with Luther's lengthy confessions; it would take the other monks a few minutes to confess their sins of the previous day ... Luther would take up to three hours. During these years Luther was driven by a passion for real and lasting forgiveness of sins. But as he studied God's word and gave himself to prayer and confession, all he could sense was guilt and it drove him to despair.

◊ Visit to Rome 1510

Luther was one of two monks from Erfurt who were chosen to go to Rome on a pilgrimage. They set out on foot and it took them several months to get there and when Luther arrived in Rome he was bitterly disappointed by the corruption within the priesthood. The priests would celebrate numerous masses in a short space of time, receiving fees for doing so, and the sexual behaviour of priests was abominable in Luther's eyes ... they had prostitutes, both female and male.

Luther visited the Sacred Steps which Jesus had allegedly walked up at his trial; the steps had been recovered during the Crusades and brought to Rome. He climbed up each step on his hands and knees, saying the Lord's prayer on each step. Climbing the Sacred Steps, however, could not remove his fear, doubt and guilt.

◊ The Tower Experience 1515

When Luther returned from his visit to Rome, he was called from Erfurt to Wittenberg by Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony. Frederick wanted to turn Wittenberg into a spiritual, intellectual and cultural centre in that region of eastern Germany. He invited Luther and others to come and teach at the University of Wittenberg. Frederick also wanted to establish a huge reliquary there. His vision was a place that would house lots of RC relics, for example, a piece of straw from the manger, hair from the beard of Jesus, a branch from the burning bush, a piece of the cross etc. Up to this point, Rome and Jerusalem had the biggest reliquaries, but Frederick wanted Wittenberg to be a rival and, through time, he amassed over 19,000 relics which represented a staggering 1,902,202 years of time reduction in purgatory.



Wittenberg in 1536

Luther arrived in Wittenberg as Professor of Bible and began a lengthy series of lectures in the Psalms and Romans. He was a master linguist and a very gifted Bible interpreter. He recognised that in Medieval times the Bible had become a waxed nose because the academics looked for the mystical and allegorical sense of meaning in a text.

But Luther began to look for the 'sensus literalis' (the literal sense of scripture). He came to believe that a Bible text must be interpreted according to how it was written (eg the Psalms should be interpreted according to the rules of poetry; the book of Genesis should be interpreted according to the rules of historical narrative).

In his Tower Experience, he was lecturing to students on the book of Romans and came to chapter 1 verse 17:

> *'For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed - a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith'.'*

He saw this verse as the thematic statement of the book. The phrase *'righteousness of God'* terrified and haunted him because no matter how hard he tried, he could never satisfy God's righteousness. Then, as he studied the remainder of v17 he began to see that in the gospel there is a righteousness which God makes available to the person who has faith.

The Latin word 'justificare' means 'to make'. It was taken from the Roman legal system ... in Medieval theology it was a righteousness which God gives as the result of good works and especially through observing the sacraments of the Church. Salvation is therefore 'ex opera operato' - through the working of the work. For example, it was believed that through the working of the work of baptism, a person is placed into a state of grace. Grace is perceived as quantitative, something poured into the soul at baptism and through life it can be increased or diminished in its amount.

Sanctification, therefore, must occur first before justification can take place. Sanctification comes through the process of the sacraments, beginning at baptism. In order to be made just before God, we first need to be sanctified to the point that we can exhibit in our lives a righteousness which is acceptable to God. But, no matter how hard Luther tried, he could never attain such sanctifiying grace, therefore he could never be justified. This filled his heart with chronic fear.

Luther, however, in his studies was studying the Greek New Testament, not the traditional Latin version. The Greek word 'diakosune' means to regard, to count, to reckon or to declare as righteous. This was the moment of awakening for Luther. God in his grace regards as righteous those who do not have any righteousness of their own. Luther studied Augustine's writings on Romans and realised that the righteousness mentioned in Romans chapter 1 is the righteousness which God was making available as a free gift to sinners who trusted the Saviour by faith. Luther referred to it as an 'alien righteousness', something which is outside us. He claimed, *'the doors of paradise swung open and I walked through'*. Luther was born again and it was his new found understanding of the liberating gospel of faith in Christ which explains his refusal to back down in the years to come. It was these three experiences which were the crucial experiences which made the man who nailed the theses to the bulletin board.

Around this time Pope Julius II, known as the Warrior Pope, wanted to build a new cathedral in Rome to rival the Parthenon ... it would house the bones of St Peter and St Paul. But Julius died when the foundations were being laid. He was succeeded by Pope Leo X who depleted the Church's treasury and brought the Church close to bankruptcy. The building of the new cathedral was halted and the weeds began to spring up around the foundations.

At the same time, in Germany, there was a young and ambitious prince called Prince Albert of Brandenburg. According to church law he was too young to become a

bishop but he had already purchased two bishoprics, such was the corruption within the church. The process of buying church offices was called Simony, named after Simon Magus who tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit from Peter in Acts ch 8. Bishops were only allowed one bishopric at a time but the ambitious Albert wanted to become the most powerful cleric in Germany. When a third bishopric came up for grabs, the Bishopric of Mainz, Albert entered negotiations with Pope Leo. The Pope wanted 12,000 gold duckets ... Albert offered 7000 ... they compromised at 10,000, one thousand for each of the ten commandments.

Albert borrowed the money from bankers in Germany. The Pope sweetened the deal by giving Albert the authority to oversee the sale of papal indulgences in areas of Germany where it was politically permissible to do so. The Pope would receive half of the proceeds of the sale of indulgences to help build St Peter's in Rome and the other half would go the bankers in Germany to pay Albert's loan.

What were papal indulgences? The Church taught that he Pope was the successor to the apostle Peter and, as such, possessed the keys of the kingdom. Pope Leo therefore had the power of the keys mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 16:19. One of these keys unlocked the most important treasury in the Christian Church, 'the treasury of merit' which contained all of the merits earned by Jesus and also the merits earned by Mary and Joseph, the Apostles and the Christian saints down through church history.

If a person dies with mortal or venial sin, they go to purgatory to be purged of their sin. People who lack merit, and that is just about everyone, must find a way to diminish their time spent in purgatory. Only a very small number of people in history have enough merit.

There are three types of merit:

- ☐ Condign merit – merit that is so virtuous that it imposes on God an obligation to reward it. For example, the merit of Jesus, Mary, Peter.
- ☐ Congruous merit – not just as high or as good as condign merit but sufficient enough to make it fitting for God to reward it. For example, through the sacrament of penance.
- ☐ Supererogatory merit – meritorious works that go above and beyond the call of duty, like martyrdom. Such people have earned more merit than they need, so the surplus merit is deposited into the treasury of merit which can then be used and distributed by the Pope at his discretion.

A papal indulgence is essentially a grant from the Pope in which so much merit is taken out of the treasury and applied to the person without merit. Some things needed to take place, however, for a person to gain a transfer of indulgences into

their spiritual bank account ... like the sacrament of penance which Luther took very seriously. Penance included confession, through which a person could receive absolution from the priest. The person would then be required to do certain works of congruous merit, for example say so many 'Hail Mary's or 'Our Father's or give alms out of true and genuine repentance.

According to the Canon Law of the Church, indulgences were not intended to be viewed as a crass selling of forgiveness. One simply could not purchase time out of purgatory but the Pope was using indulgences to finance the building of St Peter's in Rome and the way indulgences were sold in Germany became the catalyst for Luther's actions in 1517.

The Pope authorised the sale of indulgences in various parts of Germany through his papal representative Johannes Tetzel. Frederick the Wise prohibited their sale in Saxony but, just across the border, Tetzel was selling indulgences and people from Luther's town, Wittenberg in Saxony, were making the short trip to see Tetzel.



Johannes Tetzel

Tetzel would enter a town with great pageantry. A cross emblazoned with the insignia of the Pope was carried at the front of the procession and a papal bull (a decree or certificate) would be carried on an embroidered gold velvet cushion. Tetzel would preach to the people and tug hard on their heart strings. Referring to their loved ones in purgatory, he would say: *"Can you hear their cries? Can you hear them pleading with you to buy indulgences?"* Then he would round it off with his catchy jingle: *"every time a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs"*. The peasants would empty their pockets and their purses and purchase indulgences for themselves and their loved ones in purgatory.

Luther was incensed because he believed Tetzel had overstepped the mark. He was furious at this commercial practice of selling indulgences without a true spirit of repentance. Luther was a good Catholic who had a high view of the Church and, even though he saw its corruption, he wanted to be an obedient and dutiful son of the Church. He was not having a go at the sacrament of penance or even the concept of indulgences. It was the insensitive way in which Tetzel was selling them that so infuriated him.

So Luther compiled 95 theses about the sale of indulgences. It is important to note that he did not write about 'justification by faith'; it was all about Tetzel's misrepresentation of the doctrine of penance and the Pope's role in the sale of

indulgences. He wrote them in Latin, the language of his fellow university scholars, not in the German language of the people.



On All Hallows Eve at around noon, 31 Oct 1517, Luther walked to the Wittenburg Castle Church and nailed the theses to the church door. This was not an act of vandalism ... it was something that happened regularly. The church door served as the local notice board so his actions were the equivalent of tweeting a tweet today. His intention was very simple – he wanted the faculty of the University to read the Latin theses and have a debate with him behind closed doors ... but he didn't get his wish. Some students from the University read the theses and without Luther's knowledge or permission, and thanks to Mr Gutenburg's amazing new invention, printed off many copies. Within a short space of time, people in different parts of Germany were reading and talking about them. An accident or the providence of God?

Here is a flavour of Luther's famous theses:



'Out of love for the truth and from desire to elucidate it, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and ordinary lecturer therein at Wittenberg, intends to defend the following statements and to dispute on them in that place. He asks, therefore, that those who cannot be present and dispute with him orally shall do so in their absence by letter. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen'.

1 Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying, 'Repent ye, etc' intended that the whole life of his believers on earth should be a constant penance.

2 And the word 'penance' neither can, nor may, be understood as referring to the Sacrament of Penance, that is, to confession and atonement as exercised under the priest's ministry.

3 Nevertheless He does not think of inward penance only: rather is inward penance worthless unless it produces various outward mortifications of the flesh.

4 Therefore mortification continues as long as hatred of oneself continues, that is to say, true inward penance lasts until entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

27 They preach vanity who say that the soul flies out of Purgatory as soon as the money thrown into the chest rattles.

32 On the way to eternal damnation are they and their teachers, who believe that they are sure of their salvation through indulgences

36 Every Christian who feels sincere repentance and woe on account of his sins, has perfect remission of pain and guilt even without letters of indulgence.

37 Every true Christian, be he still alive or already dead, partakes in all benefits of Christ and of the Church given him by God, even without letters of indulgence.

47 Christians should be taught that the buying of indulgences is optional and not commanded. The right and true treasure of the Church is the most Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.
82 Why does not the Pope deliver all souls at the same time out of Purgatory for the sake of most holy love and on account of the bitterest distress of those souls - this being the most imperative of all motives, - while he saves an infinite number of souls for the sake of that most miserable thing money, to be spent on St Peter's Minster - this being the very slightest of motives?

89 If the Pope seeks by his pardon the salvation of souls, rather than money, why does he annul letters of indulgence granted long ago and declare them out of force though they are still in force?

94 Christians should be exhorted to endeavour to follow Christ their Head through Cross, Death and Hell ...

95 And thus hope with confidence to enter Heaven through many miseries, rather than in false security.

The theses are all about the Pope and the sale of indulgences. Luther was very much on a journey and his views on purgatory are unclear. It would be another ten years or so before he rejected the doctrine of purgatory, but one thing is very clear in his mind ... the papal sale of indulgences through Tetzel was wrong!

Luther wrote an exposition of each thesis and sent a copy to Prince Albert but Tetzel did the same from his very different perspective and complained bitterly about Luther. Prince Albert sent Luther's copy to the Pope who thought initially that it was just the work of a drunken German monk who would get over it in the morning. Luther, however, didn't get over it and very quickly the debate grew as more and more people

took an interest and got involved. In 1518 Tetzel wrote his own theses but the following year he took ill and died. When Luther heard that Tetzel was gravely ill and on his deathbed he wrote to comfort him and bade him *"not to be troubled, for the matter did not begin on his account, but the child had quite a different father"*. Luther seemed to blame Pope Leo more than Tetzel.

What did the students in Wittenberg do to Tetzel's theses? They burned them! Things were heating up and what happened over the next few years was pivotal in the recovery of the gospel. There was nothing in the 95 theses about justification by faith which was the firestorm of the Reformation ... but that would soon change.

Luther would be called to four meetings between 1518 and 1521 and the final meeting would be Luther's most famous public moment.

The first meeting was in Heidelburg in April 1518. It was not to discuss the theses but to debate theological and philosophical differences between Dominican and Augustinian monks. In those debates we can see important developments in Luther's theology. He came to see that the Church had forgotten the theology of the cross (Augustinian emphasis) in favour of a theology of glory (Dominican emphasis).



Martin Bucer

Luther was brilliant in these debates and one young Dominican monk was deeply impressed with Luther's intellectual ability and grasp of theology. The young monk was Martin Bucer and some years later he would have great influence on another young priest ... John Calvin.

The second important meeting was later in 1518 in Augsburg. Cardinal Cajetan was the leading Catholic theologian of the 16th century. Luther was promised safe passage to Augsburg but his friends were suspicious and warned him not to go. Luther, however, wanted to debate these things. He had four interviews with the Cardinal about indulgences and the treasury of merit. Cardinal Cajetan insisted that Luther repent of his sin, recant his teaching and promise never to teach these things again. Cajetan was very able and made Luther out to be opposed to the Church Councils of the past and to the teaching of the Popes. When Luther refused to recant, Cajetan was furious. Luther managed to escape safely from Augsburg and return to Wittenburg.

The third significant meeting was in Leipzig in 1519. Luther went up against John Eck, the leading Catholic theologian in Germany. Eck brought up the teaching of John Hus who had been famously burned at the stake a century earlier for claiming



John Hus



Papal Bull - 'Exsurge Domine'

that the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible authority for the Church. Eck charged Luther with similar error because Luther had been saying that Popes can make mistakes, as can Church Councils. It was this undermining of the Papacy and the Church Councils that gave Luther the nickname 'the German Hus'.

The fourth, final and most famous showdown was in 1521 at the Diet of Worms. Pope Leo had issued a papal bull charging Luther with being a heretic. The papal bull was called 'Exsurge Domine' – 'Rise Up O Lord!' (Rise up O Lord, there is a wild boar loose in your vineyard. Rise up St Peter, rise up St Paul ...)

Luther's writings were publicly burned at St Peter's in Rome. It took three months for the papal bull to arrive at Wittenburg. Luther burned it ... there was no turning back.

Luther was tried by an Imperial Council overseen by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in April 1521. Three months earlier a papal bull had been issued excommunicating Luther from the Church. Again, Luther was promised safe passage to Worms, his friends didn't believe it and warned him not to travel but he went because he believed he could give a reasoned defence to both Church and State.

> *'If there are as many devils in Worms as there are orange tiles on the roofs, I am going'.*

When he arrived in Worms, peasants were lining the streets cheering in his support. He had gained a lot of popularity in the previous four years since the publication his 95 theses.

When Luther entered the great hall, he was greeted by the Holy Roman Emperor and many Church representatives, but he wasn't given the opportunity to debate. There was a table filled with his books and pamphlets. He was ordered to recant his

teaching. Luther mumbled inaudibly and was told to speak up. Being under immense pressure, he then asked for time to think things over and that evening, alone in his cell, he wrote a prayer which has been described as Luther's own private Gethsemane:

> *'O God, Almighty God everlasting! How dreadful is the world! Behold how its mouth opens to swallow me up, and how small is my faith in Thee.*
>
> *Oh the weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan! If I am to depend upon any strength of this world - all is over.*
>
> *The knell is struck ... sentence is gone forth ... O God! O God! O Thou, my God, help me against the wisdom of this world. Do this, I beseech Thee; Thou shouldst do this ... by Thy own mighty power ... the work is not mine, but Thine. I have no business here ... I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world! I would gladly pass my days in happiness and peace. But the cause is Thine ... and it is righteous and everlasting! O Lord help me! O faithful and unchangeable God, I lean not upon man. It were vain! Whatever is of man is tottering, whatever proceeds from him must fail. My God! my God, dost thou not hear? My God! art Thou no longer living? Nay, Thou canst not die ... Thou dost but hide Thyself. Thou hast chosen me for this work. I know it! Therefore, O God, accomplish Thine own will! Forsake me not, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, my defence, my buckler and my stronghold.*
>
> *Lord - where art Thou? My God, where art Thou? ... Come, I pray Thee, I am ready ... Behold me prepared to lay down my life for Thy truth ... suffering like a lamb. For the cause is holy. It is Thine own! ... I will not let Thee go! No, nor yet for all eternity ... and though the world should be thronged with devils - and this body, which is the work of Thine hands, should be cast forth, trodden under foot, cut in pieces, consumed to ashes, my soul is Thine. Yes, I have Thine own word to assure me of it. My soul belongs to Thee and will abide with Thee forever! ... Amen! O God send help! ... Amen!'*

The next day he was ordered again to recant.

He responded with the famous words,

> *'Unless I am convinced by sacred scripture or by evident reason, I cannot recant for my conscience is held captive by the Word of God and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me.'*

Here is the watershed moment of the Reformation. The audience exploded in anger and fury, some wanted to lynch him but as he left the Great Hall a fake kidnapping

was staged by friends of Frederick the Wise and he was safely taken to live in Wartburg Castle where he continued to translate the Bible in the disguise of a knight called Sir Jorge.

Luther would go on to live for another twenty-five years writing, teaching, composing hymns and music ... and establishing the Lutheran Church in Germany. He was quite simply the seminal figure of the Protestant Reformation.

What are some of the lessons we can learn from Luther?

1 It is important to be aware of Luther and what he did.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that over half of Protestants in the United States cannot identify Luther as the one who started the Reformation. It is odd that Jews, atheists and Mormons are more familiar with Luther than Protestants. Only 30% of white Protestant evangelicals correctly identify Protestantism as the faith that believes in justification by faith alone.

One person allegedly asked their pastor if Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door before or after his *'I have a dream'* speech in Washington.



Luther Monument in Lutherstadt, Wittenberg

2 The Reformation was a mighty act of God.

Stephen J Wellum writes:

> *'Beyond question, the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century changed Christianity forever. The Reformation was not perfect, but it was a mighty reviving movement of the Spirit of God which purified the church and called people back to the fundamentals of the gospel.'*

God raised up this man for the right time. In 1939 Winston Churchill was a very imperfect man with a list of political failings behind him but he was the right man at the right moment. Neville Chamberlain was the wrong man for the job, Churchill in the providence of God was the right man.

In 1967 at the 450th Anniversary, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones spoke in Westminster Chapel on Luther and his legacy. Lloyd-Jones claimed that one man was enabled by God to stand against the whole Church; no-one else could have done it, every other man would have been crushed. Dry as dust theologians and scholars never lead to Reformations ... they lack this volcanic, living, experiential element of Luther.

God's timing and preparation for the Reformation through men like Wycliffe and Hus decades earlier, the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg, the rediscovery of Greek culture at the Renaissance and the publication of Erasmus' Greek New Testament in 1516, are all highly significant.

Karl Barth made the famous observation that Luther, when he posted the theses on the church door, was like a blind man who climbed the stairs in a bell tower, lost his footing and began to fall. He reached out to grab something to save his life and what he reached and grabbed was the bell rope. As the bell chimed everyone in the town was awakened. What seemed so accidental was the amazing providence of God.

3 The best of men are men at best.

Luther was a genius, full of scrupulous honesty and integrity, a man of great courage and bravery. Lloyd-Jones described Luther as *'a volcano, a great mountain, a mountain on fire'*. As a volcano, he erupted many good things, but he also erupted a lot of dross. Luther was a fallible man with feet of clay. For example, his views on baptismal regeneration or the eucharist would leave many Protestants feeling uncomfortable. Luther claimed that he did not learn his theology at a single stroke ... he believed that God led him on like a blindfolded horse.

It is important to mention Luther's appalling attitude to the Jews. Luther is often charged with being anti-Semitic. His writings on the Jews cannot be justified but, sadly, his writings are still read and supported by the far-right in Germany to this day.

4 We must never compromise the message of the gospel.

Is the Roman Catholic gospel merely a different version of the gospel or is it a different gospel altogether? Was the Reformation a mistake, a trivial misunderstanding over a misplaced emphasis? Or was it an all-important movement that was worth dying for?

For Luther and the Reformers, justification by faith alone in Christ alone was, and should forever remain, the article upon which the Christian Church stands or falls. This is no small matter.

Dr Michael Reeves writes,

> *'Five hundred years later, the Roman Catholic Church has still not been reformed. For all the warm ecumenical language used by so many Protestants and Roman Catholics, Rome still repudiates justification by faith alone. It feels it can do so because Scripture is not regarded as the supreme authority to which popes, councils, and doctrine must conform. And because Scripture is so relegated, biblical literacy is not encouraged, and thus millions of poor Roman Catholics are still kept from the light of God's Word.*
>
> *Outside Roman Catholicism, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is routinely shied away from as insignificant, wrongheaded, or perplexing. Some new perspectives on what the Apostle Paul meant by justification, especially when they have tended to shift the emphasis away from any need for personal conversion, have, as much as anything, confused people, leaving the article that Luther said cannot be given up or compromised as just that—given up or compromised.*
>
> *Now is not a time to be shy about justification or the supreme authority of the Scriptures that proclaim it. Justification by faith alone is no relic of the history books; it remains today as the only message of ultimate liberation, the message with the deepest power to make humans unfurl and flourish. It gives assurance before our holy God and turns sinners who attempt to buy God off into saints who love and fear Him.*
>
> *And, Oh, what opportunities we have today for spreading this good news! Five hundred years ago, Gutenberg's recent invention of the printing press meant that the light of the gospel could spread at a speed never before witnessed. Tyndale's Bibles and Luther's tracts could go out by the thousands. Today, digital technology has given us another Gutenberg moment, and the same message can now be spread at speeds Luther could never have imagined.*
>
> *Both the needs and the opportunities are as great as they were five hundred years ago ... in fact, they are greater. Let us then take courage from the faithfulness of the Reformers and hold the same wonderful gospel high, for it has lost none of its glory or its power to dispel our darkness.'*

Luther should have the last word,

> *'So when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this – I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also.'*

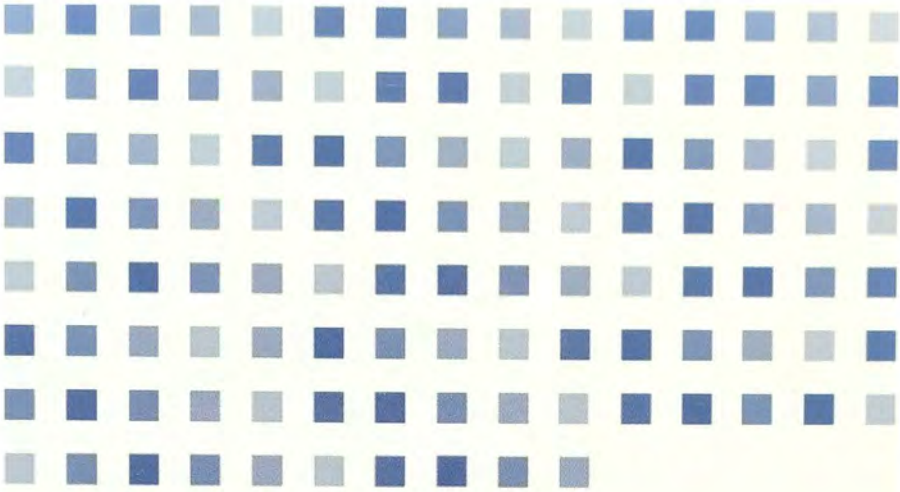


(above) The Reformation Wall in Geneva ...
... the words 'Post Tenebras Lux' are engraved in the upper part of the memorial, on either side of the central characters.

(below) The four central, 5m tall statues in detail ...
l to r Theodore Beza; John Calvin; William Farel; John Knox



◈ ◈ ◈



ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST CURCHES IN IRELAND

The Baptist Centre, 19 Hillsborough Road,
Moira, Co Down, BT67 0HG

T: +44 (0)28 9261 9267 E: abc@thebaptistcentre.org
W: www.baptistsinireland.org