

Law and Gospel in the Light of Torah

An analysis of South African Lutheran and Reformed sermons in the
light of a Jewish understanding of Torah.



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Introduction

How can we live faithfully by/in the grace of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Father of Jesus Christ, without taking the escape route of "cheap grace" on the one hand nor falling into the legalistic treadmill of salvation by "works of the law" on the other?

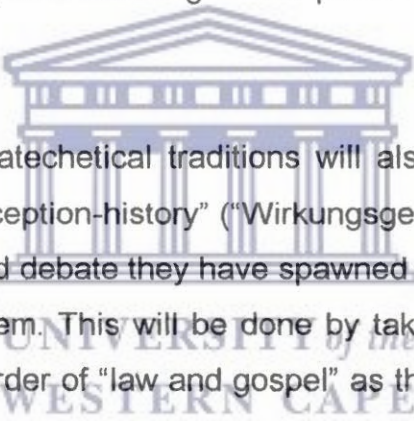
Taking the recent history and the present situation of South Africa as my context, I have found that with regard to their ethical stance the Lutheran Church has been accused of taking the "cheap grace" (anti-nomian) option and the Reformed Churches have often been criticised (especially by Lutherans, although recently also by some of their own theologians e.g. Johan Cilliers, 1994) for propagating the salvation by "works of the law" (semi-pelagian) option.

Both the above "accusations" need to be critically verified by an analysis of the two theologies and their functioning in South Africa. This analysis will be done by using sermons from both churches as its empirical basis. I have decided to use seven sermons from each tradition. The Lutheran ones were brought together by directly contacting my colleagues and asking them to help me in this project by sending their sermons (especially on Exodus 20, if possible) to me. The Reformed sermons used are taken from published sermon collections available in South Africa.

Before I begin with the actual analyses of the fourteen sermons in chapter 1, I will present both a motivation for and an overview of the method and criteria I used in the analysis. My main focus point in looking at these sermons will be the use or non-use of the "law and gospel" dialectic in them. This focus is lead by the assumption that preaching the Word of God in the traditions of the Reformers will be somehow informed by the "art of dividing law and gospel properly", a phrase that, in its prevalence among

prominent theologians from both traditions (Luther and Calvin for example), seems to epitomise the understanding of and dealing with the Word of God of the Reformation.

Once this analysis has been done and the use of particularly the "law" has been identified as an area of great unclarity leading to much "legalistic" preaching, the findings of the analysis will need to be compared to the theological traditions of the two churches. Here I will concentrate on the catechetical traditions i.e. the two catechisms of Martin Luther and the Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed tradition. Both these catechetical traditions are eminently suited for such a comparison with sermons because they have been used throughout their respective histories as a basis for preaching and teaching in the public worship services of these two churches.



Looking at these catechetical traditions will also have to include a brief venture into the "reception-history" ("Wirkungsgeschichte") of their teaching and the fairly heated debate they have spawned within the two churches as well as between them. This will be done by taking the Barth-Elert debate over the "correct" order of "law and gospel" as the "contextual" background and starting point of the study of these two traditions in chapter 2.

Once I have described the thrust of the two traditions regarding "law and gospel", showing them to be far more concomitant with each other than is usually acknowledged by theologians on both sides, I will present three new approaches to the biblical texts that are underlying this "law and gospel" dialectic in chapter 3. These are innovative Christian approaches that have arisen from attempts to understand and learn from a Jewish use of "Torah", by scholars that have been intensely involved in the Christian-Jewish theological dialogue in Germany for quite some time.

They will be presented for the purpose of clarifying a faithful way forward for both churches.

Listening carefully to a Jewish understanding of "Torah" as it is used in the context of God's people living a life of pilgrimage in the faith, both Reformed and Lutheran theologies could discover a biblical corrective with regard to their use of the "law" in preaching and teaching the Christian life in the South African context. Therefore in my conclusion I will present a practical suggestion for a joint venture of dialogue and learning for pastors in both churches as they listen to Jewish scholarship in their homiletical work.

What is the **context** in which I am doing this research? I do believe that it is important and informative for the study to state briefly, who I am and in which context I live and work. I am a white South African male trained in academic theology for the ministry in the Lutheran Church. I have obviously benefited from all the privileges that were reserved for whites in the "Old South Africa" e.g. I received a good education and have lived in fairly secure suburbs for most of my life. I am married and we have three children, for whom I hope to be able to provide a safe and nurturing family life and make an adequate education possible in this country. I have ministered in two congregations of a mainly white and middle-class and mostly German speaking Lutheran Church and in this ministry I have come to understand the particular set of problems and fears these people have in the "new South Africa".

Unemployment is increasing drastically in the congregation I work in now and many have had personal experiences of the violence and crime which has taken on massive proportions in South Africa. To give an indication of the situation I mention a simple statistic that has made many of our members very anxious. Our "white" Lutheran Church in the whole of South

Africa is but a small minority of about 10 000 members. Of these alone 50 have been killed in armed robberies and more than 500 other violent robberies have been reported in the last five years. Of the 460 members in my congregation (Bellville) at least 20 families have been the victims of violent crime (including rape and indecent or violent assault of women and men) in the previous year.

One can hardly imagine, if this is the situation in such a small group of people, how devastating and frightening the overall situation in South Africa must be. I mention these things because this is the "real world" that I have to deal with daily in the congregation I serve. Of course the African population of South Africa has suffered and still suffers in greater numbers than the group of people I have mentioned. But that should just be an added reason not to ignore the violence-ridden situation that affects so many people across the whole spectrum of the South African population today.

It is in this context of violent crime and near complete lawlessness that the questions I have about the sermons are to be understood. They are certainly not politically or even ethically neutral. They are in a sense an attempt to find adequate theological formulations for the very practical questions I hear from congregants and ask myself. I would like to formulate some of these questions asked by my congregants as pointedly as possible: How can we still live, why should we still live in this country and what can our Christian contribution to its future be?

I am aware of the fact that this view does probably not deal adequately with the whole question of guilt and the important matter of restorative justice and reconciliation that is part of the larger context of the "New South Africa" and its ongoing conflicts. I do believe, however, that an intensive study of the homiletical categories of "law" and "gospel" in our context will deliver

some help in our quest for a just and reconciled life in South Africa. In my estimation this study will get much closer to the theological and ethical roots of our conflicts than would a merely socio-political or even ethical dealing with matters of justice, guilt and restoration.

The Church (particularly through its preaching) had a very large part to play in the establishment and legitimation of the Apartheid ideology and I believe it can have a part to play in finding justice and peace in the aftermath of Apartheid. In its widest sense the concept of “law” as it is used in the Lutheran and Reformed tradition (something that will have to be looked at carefully in this study) includes these concerns and radicalises them as the concerns of God for humanity.

Giving people “Torah” in a country that is plagued by “lawlessness” on the one hand and moralistic (legalistic and pious or humanistic and liberal) self-righteousness on the other, helping people to discern and distinguish “Torah” from legalism in both the pious and the faithless versions of self-interest, is a vital task of the church. In my opinion it is imperative for the church to include these concerns in its thinking about its three central ministries: preaching, teaching and spiritual direction (pastoral care and counselling).

In all these ministries it is my perception that the “church” (especially the Lutheran Churches) on the one hand has left people (both pastors and the parishioners) to their own devices with regard to **practical help and guidance in living faithful lives** and on the other hand the “church” (especially the Reformed Churches) has propagated a legalistic system of moral obligations, that have to be fulfilled for “salvation” (righteousness before God) to be attained.

1. Sermon Analysis

1.1 Motivation

The task I have set myself in this first chapter is to do “an empirical study of Reformed and Lutheran theologies as they have functioned in South Africa’s recent history”. This will be done *by analysing* sermons preached by pastors of the two churches in South African congregations.

I take sermons as my starting point because the sermon is the one place in the life of the church where the particular theology of the church is verbalised regularly in public. Theologically speaking, the proclamation is the place where the church becomes “transparent” and “accountable” (to the “priesthood of all the baptised” in the Lutheran tradition) in its specific theology. Sermon critique is thus not something done by inquisitive researchers trying to find fault with others’ sermons but an ongoing process in which all the hearers of the proclamation participate, taking place for the sake of the proclamation itself. When it is done in a written research project, as I propose to do it here, it becomes even more important to state clearly the reasons and motivations involved. Certainly an amount of inquisitiveness does play a role and even the personal opinion that there is something amiss with sermons in our two churches, but this alone does not suffice as a reason for critically analysing sermons preached by other “servants of the Word”. Two reasons are in the forefront of my attempts:

- We need to re-evaluate our work as preachers of the Gospel, self-critically analysing our sermons to determine whether they are what we purport them to be, the full proclamation of the “Word of God”.
- We need to assist our hearers (mainly our congregants) to become our critical “accountability testers”, our sounding board to reflect to us whether we are indeed “the voice of the good shepherd” as Luther puts it in his 1523 treatise “Daß eine christliche Versammlung oder

Gemeinde Recht oder Macht habe, alle Lehre zu beurteilen und Lehrer zu berufen, ein- und abzusetzen, Grund und Ursache aus der Schrift" (Hauptschriften,139).

1.2 Method of Analysis

How do I then propose to do the sermon analysis? I have come across various methods of sermon analysis and critique, and all of them have value for their specific purpose. In greater depth I have looked at

- the "Heidelberg method" established by Bohren and Jörns and A. Richter-Böhne, as it was used by Johan Cilliers in his book, *God vir Ons* (1994). This method consists of various analytical and synthetic steps. The sermon text is examined in "close reading", its various components (words, sentences and paragraphs) are analysed linguistically to make the surface structure visible. Then the relationships between the various components are looked at to determine the depth structure and motives of the sermons (1994,15).
- The Rhetorical Analysis of Manfred Josuttis, which he presented in his book, *Rhetorik und Theologie in der Predigtarbeit* (1985). Trying to overcome a fear among Christian preachers of using rhetorical methods in their preaching, Josuttis presents a helpful book on the various rhetorical aspects of preaching. What was most helpful to me were the separate chapters dealing with "Feindbilder, Selbstbilder, Idealbilder" in the sermon. The other chapters give practical and detailed instructions on how to make a sermon, "Predigteinfall, Predigtanfang, Predigtaufbau, Predigtschluß", that are however not directly relevant for my study here.
- Gerhard Bauer, principal of the "Praktisch-Theologisches Ausbildungsinstitut der Evangelischen Kirche in Berlin-Brandenburg",

has presented a set of "Thesen zur Predigtkritik", that were to be used by his students in their homiletical seminars in preparation for the ministry. These theses are an all encompassing help for an in depth and critical study of one's own sermon work, with a strong concentration on the truth-question. "Legitime Predigtkritik fragt nicht nach der wohlmeinenden subjektiven Absicht und nicht nach der 'objektiven' dogmatischen Richtigkeit der Predigtaussage, sondern nach der konkreten Wahrheit der vom Prediger übermittelten Botschaft." (1989,78). His search for concrete truth in sermons is informed by his understanding of preaching as "kein beliebiges, willkürliches - nur privat zu verantwortendes oder durch das 'Amt' ein für allemal pauschal legitimates - Reden, sondern beauftragtes Zeugnis in der Nachfolge Jesu" (1989,78). This way of defining preaching makes him include a critique of both the preacher and the hearers themselves, with regard to their lives vis-a-vis the proclamation (1989,80). This is indeed a very important aspect of sermon analysis, that merits further attention, especially in our "post-Christian" society, but it cannot form part of this study, as it would involve a different empirical approach to my questions.

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- Hans Werner Dannowski's work on "Probleme der Predigtanalyse" in the book, *Gemeinden erleben ihre Gottesdienste, Erfahrungsberichte* (1978) was done in the context of research into the experiences of worship participants in Germany by means of an extensive survey questionnaire given to all participants of 4 specific services held in accordance with the various models offered in the "Agende" of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany. Such a method obviously will bring to the fore a good sample of what the "hearers", the participants of worship "get out of" the services and what they want from the sermons, but it is to my mind not suited to a systematic-theological analysis of written sermons, as I intend to do it here. Nevertheless the

question of how the sermons might have influenced and struck the hearers was in my mind as I studied these sermons.

Having looked at these varied approaches to sermon analysis and their "usefulness" to my purpose, how do I find the method that suits my quest best, without allowing the aim, which I am pursuing and its concomitant opinions to unduly influence my choice of method? "Critical theory" would deny the possibility of positively answering this question, i.e. it can always be argued that the method chosen makes the outcome agree with the choosers. Have we no choice but to "sin bravely" (Luther) in this regard, trusting that the analysis will bring enough material for thought and reflection to the fore to make the effort worthwhile? This is largely my line of argument but I do believe a point can be made for choosing a method of analysis that looks mainly at certain traditional theological concepts and how they are used. My research question hinges on the use of a particular set of traditional theological concepts, "law and gospel", which both have historically found their main expression in their differentiated use in preaching. In his essay "'Gesetz und Evangelium' - eine homiletische Kategorie?", Eberhard Hauschildt (1991,262ff) finds first that the "law and gospel" category has in the history of the Lutheran Church not formally been used as a tool to teach homiletics (this is astounding when one takes into account the prominence of these concepts in theological discourse) and then goes on to suggest a homiletic with "law and gospel" as a categorical model (1991,282). Furthermore, he proposes that "law and gospel" can be used as a criterion for sermon analysis, suggesting "Gesetz und Evangelium als lehr- und lernbares Kriterium der Predigtkritik" (1991,283).

In this analysis therefore I will use the theological concepts of "law and gospel" as criteria for "understanding" the sermons. Informed by the traditions that are being examined i.e. Lutheran and Reformed theologies, I

will present an understanding of the "law and gospel" dialectic from which I have formulated the specific questions or criteria for my analysis of the individual sermons. These will be listed shortly. The various theological concepts used will only briefly be defined here in terms of my "pre-research" understanding of them. These definitions will have to be refined and perhaps even corrected by both the empirical and the historical research. The questions and criteria used to analyse the sermons are as follows:

- 1) What is the sermon saying, doing in terms of its **thrust** and **structure**? What is the structure of the sermon? What is the message and function of the various parts of the sermon, in terms of their "law" and/or "gospel" weight for example, or is a dialectic approach used even in the structure?
- 2) Is a clear distinction made between "**law**" and "**gospel**" and how are the two related to one another? *Law* (using Luther's distinction classically stated in the *Heidelberg Disputation 1518, Thesis 23*) is language that reveals our being sinners and declares and effects God's judgement; *Gospel* is language that announces that God has delivered us in Christ and proclaims this to the hearers.

To find some more clarity on this important distinction I have kept Christian Möller's concept of "seelsorgliche Sprache" constantly in my mind as I analysed the sermons. In his book, "Seelsorglich Predigen", Möller asks: "Welche Sprache spricht ihr in Bezug auf die Menschen unter der Kanzel; Die Sprache der Rechtfertigung, die einen Menschen von seinen Werken noch einmal unterscheidet und ihn vor Gott mehr sein läßt als die Summe seiner Werke" (1983,121) oder die Sprache der von menschlichen Möglichkeiten ausgehenden Heiligung, die den Menschen festlegt und ihn mit seinen Werken identifiziert? (the last part of this question was formulated by myself as the legalistic other end of the spectrum of what Möller describes as "seelsorglich Predigen").

- 3) Are the "**three uses of the law**" distinguishable and/or confused with "gospel"? For the purposes of the initial sermon analysis the so-called

"three uses of the law" will be defined rather schematically following the traditional Lutheran division (based on Melancthon's "Loci praecipui theologici" of 1559 as quoted by Mildenberger 1982,192).

- The **first use** ("usus legis paedagogicus seu politicus") of the "law" is the one through which God keeps creation and human society in some semblance of order and justice.
- The **second use** (often called the "usus elencticus", although Melancthon does not use this description here) is the one through which God reveals sin, accuses and condemns us as unacceptable to God. This is classically the use that features in the dialectic of "law" and "gospel". (c.f. Question 2 above)
- The **third use** ("usus didacticus" or "usus legis in renatis") about which there is some controversy among Lutherans, is the use of the "law" which guides and teaches believers (i.e. people in which the "gospel" has already come to fruition) to "walk in the faith". In my "pre-research" opinion the prevalent use of the "law" in reformed theology as consequent to the "gospel" would be located here.

4) Rhetorical analysis: What direct or indirect **appeals** are being made? What implicit or explicit **expectations** are being expressed? Is the hearer called, expected or even manipulated to do or "believe" something, what and on what basis or authority? Using Christian Möller's categories again a question to be asked of the sermons is this: Do we preach legalistically because we are worried or annoyed by the moral or political and ethical deficits of our people or do we preach out of joy for the redeemed sinner and the possibilities for life that this redemption opens up?

5) What, if any, **guidance** for living in the “**real world**” does the sermon give? (C.Möller’s “Paraklese als Weisung an das Nächstliegende” (1983,102) and his “exorzistische Dimension von Predigt und Seelsorge”.) Here my search is for concrete and practical guidance (even advice) for the hearers with which they can truly live faithfully in their daily lives. The term “real world” is one that has somehow become part of the discourse in my congregation, denoting the world, the set of problems and worries, that the congregants have to deal with everyday. This question is already informed by my reading about the use of Torah in Jewish theology and the “halachic” method of guidance (“Weisung”) that grows out of that.

Schematically represented, what I am looking for in these sermons can be shown like this:



Each of these relationships are complex and dynamic, at least in the traditional way they are used in both Lutheran and Reformed theology. I am analysing these South African sermons to establish whether this dynamism can still be found in them and how it functions here.

The work I propose to do can clearly be discerned as an exercise in practical theology but it is also eminently systematic, particularly in the “tools” it uses. I believe that this is a helpful way of doing theology today, taking us beyond the compartmentalisation of the various disciplines in theology. Practical theology, the way I would like to do it here, is well

described by Manfred Seitz: "sie setzt beim vorhandenen Tatsächlichen, sie setzt also empirisch ein - natürlich das geschichtliche Gewordensein der Dinge und die gegenwärtigen geistigen Bedingungen mitbedenkend. Sie konfrontiert das Tatsächliche dann mit den Lehrgehalten der biblischen und systematischen Theologie, und sie entwirft daraufhin eine neue, zeitgerechtere und - wenn es gut geht - verbesserte Praxis." (Seitz 1975,280) The movement is thus one from praxis to theory and then back to a more informed and responsible praxis.

1.3 Analysis of 7 Sermons from the Lutheran Tradition in South Africa

Since there are very few published sermons available from the Lutheran churches in South Africa, I wrote a letter to all 32 of my Lutheran colleagues (serving in the UELCSA at the time) asking for sermons, but I received only a small sample of sermons held in South African congregations. However, I do think that some value can be found even in the analysis of only these seven sermons, as they do deliver up a surprising constancy in their homiletic and theological use of the "law". Within each analysis the numerals refer to the questions or criteria listed above and the letters under 1) are used to divide the sermons into some kind of structure. This is not necessarily the structure the authors of the sermons intended, but the structure that arose from my analysis. I do not mention the names of the authors of these sermons here, because these are not published sermons; some were even sent to me in hand written form.

Sermon 1. Text: Exodus 20,1-17

Liebe Gemeinde!

A

Am vergangenen Sonntag gab es eine scharfe Predigt. Wer in der Predigt überlegt hat, wer nun angegriffen wird, wer verurteilt wird, hat falsch überlegt. Denn in der Predigt war nur einer gemeint: DU! Bei Jesus Christus kann man nicht Zuschauer sein, und die Worte verteilen: Die für dich, die für den. Wenn Christus spricht, spricht er immer auch mit dir! Da kommt keiner herum.

Heute hören wir als Predigttext die Gebote. Wieder besteht die Gefahr, daß man dabei gleich an andere denkt, die sie übertreten haben, und damit das Wort Gottes an einen selbst verpasst.

Die Gebote haben mit dir zu tun; und die Gebote haben mit deinem Nachbarn zu tun. Damit wird deutlich: DU stehst in der GEMEINDE. Keines von beiden kann ignoriert werden.

Nun wollen wir uns den Geboten zuwenden.

B

1. Das Fundament: ICH BIN

"Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott, der ich dich aus Ägyptenland geführt habe."

Dieses ist der entscheidendste Satz der Gebote. Denn hätte Gott nicht zuerst gehandelt, so gäbe es kein Gottesvolk. Hätte Gott nicht den ersten Schritt getan, so würden wir Menschen nie einen Schritt zu ihm tun können.

Dieser erste Satz ist eine Liebeserklärung Gottes. Er sagt damit: Ich bin für dich da! Ich bin nicht da, um dich zu richten und dir das Leben schwer zu machen, sondern ich bin da, dir das Leben möglich zu machen! Weil ich dein Gott bin, dein Erlöser, darum kannst du leben! ICH BIN; darum darfst du sein!

Durch dieses Fundament wird auch deutlich, was Gott mit den Geboten bezweckte. Er hat den Menschen geschaffen, gut geschaffen. Aber er weiß auch, was die Gefahren für den Menschen sind. Er weiß, was dem Menschen gut ist, und woran er zugrunde geht. In dem Sinne vergleiche ich die Gebote gerne mit dem roten Feld auf dem Tachometer eines Autos: Bei etwa 7000 Umdrehungen des Motors pro Minute beginnt das rote Feld, bei einigen früher, bei anderen später. Das haben die Produzenten nicht dahingemalt, damit das Auto etwas Farbenfroher ist. Auch nicht, weil sie einem damit den Spaß verderben wollen, mal richtig Gas zu geben. Nein, es ist da, weil der Motor nicht dazu gemacht ist, schneller zu drehen.

Ebenso sind die Gebote nicht da, weil Gott Spaß an Geboten hat, oder um uns den Spaß zu verderben, sondern weil unser Schöpfer weiß, was geht und was nicht geht. Dieses ist zwar nicht der einzige Sinn der Gebote, aber es ist ein sehr wichtiger Sinn. Weil Gott uns liebt, will er uns das Leben möglich machen.

C

2. Die gefährliche Grenze: Du sollst (nicht)...

Sechs Tage sollst du arbeiten, den siebten sollst du ruhen. Wenn du aber ständig arbeitest, wenn du nicht zur Ruhe kommst, dann wirst du zugrunde gehen! Sogar Gott hat sich eine Ruhepause gegönnt. Du bist doch nicht mehr als Gott!

Du sollst nicht Ehebrechen. Denn du bist nicht dazu gemacht, deine Treue vielen Menschen zu versprechen. Du gehst daran zugrunde, wenn du dich nicht EINEM Menschen anvertrauen kannst. Und manchmal Frage ich mich, ob Gott dieses Gebot nicht vielleicht auch gegeben hat, weil er wußte, daß der Mensch durch ständigen Ehebruch Aids bekommen kann.

Du sollst nicht falsch Zeugnis geben: Mit meinen Worten kann ich einem Menschen das Leben schön machen, oder ich kann es ihm zur Hölle machen. Wer über seinen Nächsten Unwahrheiten oder Halbwahrheiten verbreitet, wird vor Gott schuldig!

Du sollst nicht begehren. Weil du, wenn du begehrt, ein unglücklicher Mensch wirst. "Das Gras an der anderen Seite ist immer grüner" lautet das Sprichwort. Und wer zur anderen Seite hinüberschielte, der wird mit dem, was er hat, unzufrieden! Ich habe gemerkt, daß dieses Gebot "du sollst nicht begehren deines Nächsten Haus" auch auf die Gemeinde zutrifft. Wenn ich zu anderen Gemeinden hinüberschiele, nicht um von ihnen zu lernen, sondern weil ich meine, daß sie besser sind, dann werde ich mit meiner eigenen Gemeinde immer unzufriedener, werde ich ein Meckerpott in meiner eigenen Gemeinde, sodaß meine Gemeinde tatsächlich schlechter wird!

Wer die Gebote nicht hält, macht sich selbst und anderen das Leben schwer. Wer diese rote Linie, diese Grenze die Gott gesetzt hat, übertritt, muß damit rechnen, daß er daran zugrunde geht - und andere vielleicht mit ihm!

D

3. Die evangelische Entdeckung: SONDERN ...

Paulus hat gesagt, das Gesetz sei Zuchtmeister auf Christus hin. Es zeigt uns, daß wir nicht in Gottes Gegenwart treten können, weil wir ständig wieder schuldig werden. Es zeigt uns, daß wir Christus nötig haben, der am Kreuz die Strafe für unser Vergehen bezahlt hat.

Die Frage ist nun: Was für eine Bedeutung hat das Gesetz für den Christen, bei dem der Fluch des Gesetzes durch Christus aufgehoben wurde? Paulus sagt in Römer 13:8 - Seid niemand etwas schuldig, außer, daß ihr euch untereinander liebt; denn wer den andern liebt, der hat das Gesetz erfüllt. ...

So ist nun die Liebe des Gesetzes Erfüllung.

Kein Mensch kann sagen, die Gebote hätten nichts mit ihm zu tun. Und kein Christ kann sagen, die Gebote hätten nichts mit seinem Verhältnis zum Nachbarn zu tun. Luther hat diesen Aspekt der Gebote entdeckt und in einmaliger Weise zum Ausdruck gebracht. Im kleinen Katechismus gibt er Erklärungen zu den Geboten. Was ist das? Wir sollen Gott fürchten und lieben ... beginnt jede Erklärung. Damit macht er deutlich, daß jedes Gebot mich vor Gott stellt. Und dann folgt das SONDERN.

Du sollst nicht ehebrechen. Ein Mann der keine andere Frau ansieht oder begehrt, übertritt das Gebot nicht. Aber das heißt noch lange nicht, daß er es einhält. Wenn er sich nämlich nicht um seine Frau kümmert, sie liebt und ehrt, geht seine Ehe dennoch in die Brüche, und hat er Schuld daran. Darum sagt Luther: ein jeglicher soll sein Gemahl lieben und ehren!

Und wer über seinen Nächsten keine Unwahrheit sagt, hat das achte Gebot zwar nicht übertreten, aber dennoch nicht unbedingt eingehalten. Denn auch mit Wahrheiten kann ich einem anderen das Leben zerstören. Darum sagt Luther: Wir sollen Gott fürchten und lieben, daß wir unsern Nächsten nicht fälschlich belügen, verraten, afterreden oder bösen Leumund machen, SONDERN sollen ihn entschuldigen, Gutes von ihm reden und alles zum besten kehren.

E

So hat ein Christ mit den Geboten umzugehen: Daß dem Nächsten dadurch das Leben besser gemacht wird!

Ich habe gesagt, wie das begehren meinem Nächsten und mir das Leben und Haus verderben kann. Luther sagt: Nicht nur nicht begehren, SONDERN dem anderen helfen, daß er das Seine behalten und verbessern kann. (So müssen wir auch mit den Gliedern anderer Gemeinden umgehen: Ihnen helfen, daß sie in ihrer Gemeinde bessere Gemeindeglieder werden!)

Beim Feiertagsgebot hat Luther dann eine ganz neue, christliche Komponente mit eingebracht: Entscheidend ist nun nicht mehr das Ruhen an sich, sondern das Ruhen UNTER GOTTES WORT! Am Sonntag geht es nicht darum, daß wir nicht arbeiten brauchen, sondern darum, daß wir Zeit haben, mal in Ruhe Gottes Wort zu hören, in Ruhe miteinander in der Gemeinde zu verkehren.

Bedenkt man dieses alles, so kann man auch als Christ sagen: Herr, ich danke dir für die Gebote. Denn sie helfen mir, daß ich mein Leben nicht verschwende, unnötig zerstöre. Sie helfen mir einen guten Weg zu finden.

Aber mehr noch möchte ich dir danken für das erste Gebot: Daß du mir zeigst, daß ich ohne dich nicht leben kann, und daß du ohne mich nicht leben willst. Ich danke dir, mein Herr!

Amen

1) This sermon has the following structure:

A: Introducing the sermon the preacher reminds the hearers of the previous sermon which was "scharf" (sharp / aggressively pointed) and this was indeed intended to convey clearly: "You are meant!" Don't think of others, that the text or sermon might be criticising - you are the one it addresses. The opening thrust is clearly a direct and personal one to the hearer. This is then applied to the commandments, that are also directly meant "for you" and for "your neighbour". The hearer is placed in the community and emphasis is given to the idea that the individual and the community are to be seen together, i.e. neither should be neglected or ignored.

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B: The foundational "I AM" introduces part 1 of the sermon. Here the focus is on the Giver of the commandments as one who loves and cares for those he created - the commandments are given as guidance, because God knows what works ("geht") and what doesn't make life possible ("geht nicht"). This could be understood as the "**first use**" of the "law", given by the Creator to regulate and structure society.

C: This second part now introduces the commandments as denoting a "dangerous limit" by the "You shall not" phrase each time. Going through each commandment in turn the preacher shows how "dangerous", how destructive it is to "break" the commandments. Such a person "macht sich und anderen das Leben schwer". This is a warning to those who go

against these commandments, that they will perish (“zugrunde gehen”) and possibly others with them. Still the main thrust can be understood as the **“first use”** of the “law”, denoting clearly what God expects of all humans to make life liveable on earth.

D: Now the “evangelic” discovery is brought into play: The “sondern” introduces Paul’s theology that the “Gesetz ist Zuchtmeister auf Christus hin” and the cross is the punishment for our trespasses that Jesus has paid for. A question is asked about the significance of the “Law” for Christians since the “Fluch des Gesetztes” has been removed by Christ. Romans 13,8 is cited referring to the love that fulfils the law. Answering this question, the preacher insists that no person, no Christian may say that the commandments have nothing to do with him/her or with the neighbour. Reference is made to Luther’s discovery as it finds expression in the explanations of his Catechisms. Every commandment places me before God and from this vantage point the “sondern” posits the radically positive extrapolation of the commandments in the Small Catechism. Two examples are then used to clarify this. This section is dealing with the tension between the **“second use”** of the “law” and the **“gospel”**, but does not seem able to keep the tension fully dialectic.

E: This section ends the sermon with a summary of “how Christians should use the commandments” (“damit umgehen”) to make life better for the neighbour. A new aspect, brought into the commandment to keep the Sabbath by Luther, is taken up viz. resting under God’s Word. A summarising prayer concludes everything in a call for Christians to be grateful for the commandments because they “helfen mir, daß ich mein Leben nicht verschwende, unnötig zerstöre. Sie helfen mir einen guten Weg zu finden”. Back to the first commandment: “You show me that I can’t live without you and that You don’t want to live without me. Thank you, Lord!” This last section fits fairly well into the category of the **“third use”**

of the “law” but does not become concrete enough to give practical guidance.

Overall the thrust of this sermon can be defined as a directly personal one, calling the hearers to accountability: You are meant! This is expressed in both the “caring” and the “warning” aspects of the commandments as they pertain to a person’s life with and for the neighbour.

2) The distinction between “law” and “gospel” is underlying the whole sermon. But its main thrust and emphasis can be localised in the ordered polarity from “gospel” to “law” (third use).

3) No explicit distinction can be found between the three uses of the “law”, although it might be implicit in the careful distinction between the “warning” (second use) and “caring” (third use) aspects of the commandments.

4) An appeal is clearly made to “take it personally” in the introduction and “to be thankful” in the prayer in the ending. But in the body of the sermon the “ethical” consequences are not found in the form of appeals but rather in terms of warnings or just statements about how things ought to be.

5) Some guidance is given in line with Luther’s explanations of the commandments (Small Catechism) as “positive radicalisation” of the commandments.

Sermon 2. Text: Exodus 20,1-17

Dear congregation!

A

The Ten Commandments must be one of the most well known parts of the Old Testament. And also one of the most misunderstood ones! Many view the commandments just like they would view the rules of a rugby game: If you are caught breaking them, then you are punished. God is the referee looking on while you play. You try to stay within the rules and win. You can kick, push, fight, as long as it is within the rules, or as long as you are not caught breaking a rule.

This approach to the commandments results in a legalistic religion, where my motive is to win, and my attitude: As long as I stick to the rules I'm OK. This is the pharisaic attitude that Jesus had to endure in New Testament times. And this same attitude is sometimes found in Christian groupings that have a "better than thou" attitude, where the people "play by the rules", regardless of the consequences.

God's intention with the commandments, however, was a different one. One could almost say that God was giving the constitution for his new people, for Israel. And this constitution, this basic law that was to govern the relationship between him and his own, and between the people, had a basic message: **I bring you freedom, says God, and others should experience freedom through you!**

B

1. God brings freedom

This is the basic message, the starting point. God starts off his constitution with a summary of what he *has* done. He says: "I brought you out of Egypt, I rescued you!"

This basic message shows us something about God's nature: He is a God bringing freedom, a God wanting us to live: not a dictator who sets up a totalitarian state. Although verse 5 seems to indicate that, when it speaks about a jealous God who punishes 3 or 4 generations when he is disobeyed, we often forget to read verse 6, which states that he does good to a thousand generations when he is loved! His anger is by far outweighed by his love and goodness!

Thus the basic tenor of God's constitution is that we have a God who cares, who liberates, who wants to show life!

Although the Old Testament is often portrayed as being in stark contrast with the New Testament, the Law opposed to the Gospel, the basic thrust of the commandments shows that God's attitude towards mankind has always been one of love and care.

In Jesus, however, this attitude became *unmistakably* clear: His whole life conveyed the message: **I CARE FOR YOU!** In Jesus God did no longer rule "from above", "from a distance", but in Him he came right amongst us. Jesus entered the life of bondage, became one of us. And whenever he called someone to be a disciple, he said: **Follow me!** This call entailed the message: I will lead you to life! Believe in me, and you shall live!

Thus the basic tenor of the gospels is in fact the same as that of the commandments, or more specific, of the first commandment: "I am your saviour! I am the one that sets you free, and no-one else!"

The often disputed and attacked infant baptism conveys this message in a very clear and visible way: God says to a baby that does not ask for it, does not expect anything: "I have acted! I am your saviour! Before you ever could consider turning to me, I have acted to set you free!"

Have you heard this message? It is God's message to *you*!

This message of freedom is also apparent in what in Lutheran tradition is the 3rd commandment (*Luther did not count the second commandment, prohibiting the making of idols, and instead subdivided the 10th commandment into two: 9 and 10 - this is why Lutheran children get confused when they learn the commandments at school and in confirmation class and discover that from the second to the ninth commandments their numbering differs from that of other children!*)

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy". The misunderstood praxis says: Break the Sabbath, and you will be punished". This is often reflected in the Jewish faith, with Seventh day Adventists and in quite a few Christian groups. This misunderstanding turns the Sabbath into a sombre day, and you wait for it to pass. Nowhere did it become more apparent to me than in Jerusalem: During the Sabbath everything was quiet. But when Sabbath ended, celebrations started! The joyous celebration is at the end of the day (the Jewish day *starts* with the evening)

Jesus put this into a new perspective when he said: man was not made for Sabbath, but the Sabbath was given for us! That means: It is a day to rest in the presence of my creator and redeemer, a day to be recharged (not charged!). The aim is not to fulfil some religious duties to satisfy God, but to celebrate and worship God, to have fellowship with Christ and his body in communion, to have tea together, to visit each other and to just relax and rest. The Sabbath day is the Old Testament version of Jesus' words: Come to me all who are heavy laden and burdened, and I will give you rest! The Sabbath day is an invitation to rest and be renewed, to be restored to life! And this is the thrust, the foundation of God's constitution, in the Old and New Testament: I live, and I want you to live too!

This brings us to the second major aspect of the commandments:

C

2. Through us, others should experience freedom too

Did you notice something about this constitution of God? It does not speak about anybody's *rights* anywhere! Not a single right is mentioned. Only obligations.

I believe that this is one of the reasons why the commandments failed in their purpose to create a realm of freedom. Because it goes against the grain of our human nature to focus on our obligations. Human nature first asks: What are my rights! I fight for my rights, fight for my survival! (In that sense rugby and many other sports are a good reflection of our basic human nature!)

Just turn on the TV, and you will see this nature reflected in almost any news bulletin: strikes and marches, where people demand certain things. Just look at our society, how many of us live in fear that we are going to lose out.

"Fight for your rights" has become a common slogan!

God's intention was different: "Care for each other" was his message. Take care of your parents, your wife/husband, your fellow human beings. Take care of their lives, possessions, their reputation.

This very same attitude is also that of Jesus when he says in today's gospel reading: Love your neighbour. Thus I could say that God's constitution in law and gospel does not speak about my rights, but about my obligation to look after my neighbours' rights! If everybody would do that, then no one would have needed to fight for their own rights!

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of God's constitution is that it also protects me against myself. This is how I interpret the last commandment: "Do not covet". The New Testament parallel would be: You have a Father in heaven who takes care of you! Do not be concerned.

Coveting starts off a process during which I become more and more unhappy about what I have and am. Almost every body else seems to be better off than

I am. Old and New Testament proclaim: Accept what you are, who you are, and live your life, live out your self! Love yourself!
But all this goes against the grain of human nature.
That is why Christ had to come to this earth: he spoke of a new birth, of a re-creation. In Christ God wants to change our basic attitude. He wants to release us from the fight for our own existence, and set us free, by proclaiming: I take care of you! You take care of others!
In his explanation on Baptism Luther spoke about a daily repentance. That means that I as Christian turn back to God on a daily basis, and each day I start off again, serving Him anew. Each day I will pray: Lord, I did not live the freedom that you intended for me! I am sorry. Give me the strength to live out what you intended for me!

D

In the 10 Commandments God gave his constitution. But we messed it up thoroughly. In Christ we have the opportunity to start anew. He transforms our hearts and minds. Are we willing to be transformed? Are we willing to see the salvation and pass it on to others? Amen.

1) The structure of this sermon is given clearly at the end of the introductory section where the basic message is formulated in two main parts: "I bring you freedom, says God, and others should experience freedom through you!" Part 1 = God brings freedom; Part 2 = Through us others should experience freedom too.

A: The introduction starts by "putting right" certain misunderstandings which are characterised as "legalistic" and "pharisaic". Intention to reveal "God's intention". This is described as "giving the constitution for his new people". This constitution has the "basic message" : Freedom.

B: The first part now details the proclamation that God brings freedom. The God of the Exodus is portrayed as one who "wants us to live". In the Old Testament this is seen to be hidden at certain times when there is mention of a "jealous God" for instance, but "the basic thrust of the commandments show that God's attitude towards mankind has always been one of love and care". But "in Jesus this attitude became unmistakably clear". There follows a Christological extrapolation of God's intention in the commandments and the thesis is posited that "the basic tenor of the gospels is in fact the same as that of the commandments", especially that of the first commandment. Referring to infant baptism, defending it as God's

act of liberation, the preacher moves to the first direct and personal word to the hearers: "Have you heard this message: It is God's message to you!" The message of freedom is now reiterated with the third commandment (Lutheran counting) with Jesus' new perspective on the Sabbath. A strong distancing occurs from the "legalistic Jews, Seventh Day Adventist" and "a few Christian groups" and an experience in Jerusalem. Again a clear equation is made: "The Sabbath day is the Old Testament equivalent of Jesus' words: Come to me all who are heavy laden etc." "And this is the thrust of God's constitution, in the Old and the New Testament: I live, and I want you to live too!"

C: Now in the second part the consequences are put forward: "Through us, others should experience freedom too." Rights are contrasted to obligations, because the commandments only look at the latter, they "failed to create a realm of freedom". "Human nature asks first about rights". The Television is mentioned as exemplary in this regard. Contrasted to this is "God's intention" viz. "Care for each other". This is implicitly what the commandments intended. Again an equation is made with "what Jesus says". "God's constitution... speaks about my obligation to look after my neighbour's rights". It "also protects me against myself". Coveting is taken as an example. But "all this goes against human nature", therefore we need Christ, who brought "new creation, releasing us from ourselves to care for others". This is confirmed with Luther's explanation about Baptism in the Small Catechism.

D: The concluding paragraph restates that the 10 commandments are "the constitution of God". But "we messed up!". Christ then gives us the "opportunity to start anew". "He transforms our heart and minds. Are we willing to be transformed? Are we willing to see the salvation and pass it on to others?" An appeal is made to our "willingness to be ... willingness to see and to pass on!"

(Criteria 2-5 taken together.): The **theological process** of the sermon is as follows: 1. First the law is presented as God's original plan for human freedom. (This is the first use of the "law".) 2. This intended freedom is to happen through us to others too. (Essentially this remains within the field of the first use of the "law"). The Old Testament and New Testament are seen theoretically as complete parallels. Torah and Jesus have identical intentions but 3. implicit in the whole sermon and explicit in the conclusion is the opinion: "we messed up and Jesus had to come to put this mess back into shape so that we can live according to God's will". (Here we have an indistinct progression from the second use of the "law" to the liberation of the gospel and then immediately to the third use of the "law").

Sermon 3. Text: Exodus 20,1-17

Liebe Gemeinde,

A

Stellen wir uns einmal vor, es gäbe keine Gesetze, keine Ge- und Verbote, keine Verordnungen und Vorschriften, die uns vermeintlich das Leben schwer machen. Nicht nur wäre dann das Parlament als oberster Gesetzgeber arbeitslos und deshalb überflüssig sondern sogar der Straßenverkehr würde total zusammenbrechen. Es kann doch nicht jeder einfach machen, was er will - das Chaos wäre nicht ausdenkbar. Es ist deshalb klar und deutlich, daß die Menschheit ohne Gesetze nicht auskommen kann, daß unser menschliches Zusammenleben gesetzlich geregelt werden muß, um unserer Schwachheit und Sündhaftigkeit willen, würde Paulus sagen. Aus Gnade und Barmherzigkeit hat Gott, unser himmlischer Vater, seinem Volk, seiner Gemeinde eben darum in seinen 10 Geboten Richtlinien gegeben, die das Verhältnis zu ihm und zu den Mitmenschen bestimmen und ordnen sollen. Es hat manchmal den Anschein, als ob das Gesetz Gottes in unserer Lutherischen Kirche etwas in den Hintergrund gedrängt wird, während es doch das erste Hauptstück unseres lutherischen Katechismus ist das wir Älteren alle im Konfirmandenunterricht auswendig lernen mußten. In den reformierten Kirchen hier im Land bilden die 10 Gebote, die "Wet van die Here", einen Teil der gottesdienstlichen Liturgie, wie bei uns wieder das Glaubensbekenntnis. Deshalb ist es gut und sinnvoll, daß unsere Predigtordnung uns zwingt auch einmal über die Bedeutung der 10 Gebote für unser Leben in der Verantwortung vor Gott und unseren Nächsten nach zu sinnen. Vielleicht haben viele von uns den Wortlaut inzwischen vergessen wie er uns aufgezeichnet ist im 2. Buch Mose, Kapitel 20, Verse 1-17. (Lies Text. Nr.954.61)

B

Liebe Gemeinde, es kann natürlich nicht die Aufgabe der Predigt sein, all diese Gebote einzeln auszulegen, dazu wären eine ganze Reihe von Predigten nötig und dazu lese man wieder Luthers Kleinen Katechismus unter Nr. 806 unseres neuen Gesangbuches. Wir können hier nur auf den einzigartigen und universalen

Charakter der 10 Gebote eingehen und vielleicht Schwerpunkte erläutern. Die Formulierungen: "Du sollst" und "Du sollst nicht" wollen uns deutlich machen, daß es sich hier nicht um Ratschläge und Anregungen handelt, sondern wirklich um Gebote, denen man um Gottes und des Nächsten willen Gehorsam schuldig ist. Wir haben es hier zu tun mit einer Kundgebung des heiligen Willens Gottes. "Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott" - er hat die alleinige Verfügungsgewalt über unser Leben, und darum will er haben, daß wir unser irdisches Leben in geordneten Bahnen leben, ein Gott wohlgefälliges Leben führen. Die Gebote Gottes machen alle unseren dummen Sprüche wie "Jeder ist sich selbst der Nächste" oder "Tue Recht und Scheue niemand" zunichte. Der Dekalog, wie die 10 Gebote auch genannt werden, will Gottes Hoheitsrecht gerade auch für den Alltag geltend machen, es gilt für alle Bereiche unseres Lebens, es ist einfach allumfassend. Deshalb sind auch alle Gebote auf das Erste als die eigentliche Mitte bezogen - all die anderen Gebote sind Entfaltungen und Auslegungen dieses ersten Gebotes. Wer Gott liebt kann nicht anders als auch seinen Nächsten zu lieben, genau wie es unser Wochenspruch im 1 Johannesbrief, 4,21 ausdrückt, wo es heißt: "Dieses Gebot haben wir von ihm, daß wer Gott liebt, daß der auch seinen Bruder liebe." Gott hat uns seine Gebote gegeben nicht um uns zu erschrecken, nicht um unser Leben unerträglich zu machen, nicht um uns zu peinigen und zu demütigen, sondern weil er uns liebt, weil er weiß wie leicht wir vom rechten Wege abirren können. Gott will in seiner Liebe zu seinen Geschöpfen in unserem Tun und Reden, im Denken und Wünschen, im Hoffen und Vertrauen zu seinem Recht kommen. Luther hat das in seiner Erklärung der 10 Gebote mit meisterhafter Prägnanz ausgesprochen. "Wir sollen Gott über alle Dinge fürchten, lieben und vertrauen." Darauf allein kommt es an. Und das hat natürlich und selbstverständlich Auswirkungen auf mein Verhältnis zum Nächsten. Was wir unserm Mitmenschen zuliebe oder zuleide tun, sieht Gott als ihm selbst angetan.

...
Was immer wir Menschen untereinander auszumachen haben, wie immer wir miteinander umgehen, was wir einander nehmen oder geben, wie wir einander bedrohen oder uns gegenseitig helfen, ob wir einander verachten oder ehren, uns das Leben gegenseitig schwer machen oder einander Freude bereiten: immer ist Gott dabei als der Hüter seiner heiligen Ordnung, als der Anwalt meiner Mitmenschen. Wo immer wir in Versuchung sind, Menschen als Mittel für unsere Zwecke zu mißbrauchen und Gottes Recht zu unserem Vorteil zu beugen und zu verdrehen, haben wir Gott gegen uns. Auf die Frage, was denn wohl das größte Gebot sei, hat Jesus, der Sohn Gottes, letztgültig geantwortet: "Du sollst Gott, deinen Herrn, lieben von ganzem Herzen, von ganzer Seele, von ganzem Gemüte und von allen deinen Kräften." Und weiter: "Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst." - wie wir es vorhin in der Evangeliumslesung gehört haben. Und das ist dann auch die Zusammenfassung der 10 Gebote.

Der Gott des Friedens aber mache euch tüchtig in allem Guten, zu tun seinen Willen, und schaffe in uns, was ihm gefällt, durch Jesus Christus, welchem sei Ehre von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit! Amen.

1) This sermon cannot be structured into various parts, although it does have an introduction leading up to a main argument.

A: The introduction calls people to imagine a world without commandments. This would spell chaos. In the Lutheran Church the 10

commandments are said to be repressed although they are the first chapter of Luther's Catechism. Reference is made to the Reformed liturgy that includes the reading of the "law". In view of our (the Lutheran) repression of these commandments it is deemed good that at least through the course of the Church Year Readings we have to consider the meaning of the commandments. This introduction is separated from the body of the sermon by the reading of the "sermon text" (Exodus 20,1-17).

B: In the main body of the sermon the argument can be summarised as follows: Intention of the preacher is not to explain the individual commandments but to show up their universal and unique character. The formulations "thou shalt ..." and "thou shalt not ..." show that they are not just good advice but true commandments, that "we have to obey" for "God's and the neighbour's sake". God is the only one that has jurisdiction over us, and thus all our evasive and individualistic sayings ("Sprüche") are destroyed. We are faced with "Gottes Hoheitsrecht für den Alltag". Therefore all commandments are related to the first as their true core. All the commandments are explications of the first. "Wer Gott liebt kann nicht anders, als auch seinen Nächsten zu lieben" (reference to the watchword of the week: I John 4,21). "Gott will zu seinem Recht kommen ... in unserem Tun." Reference is made to Luther's explanations in the Small Catechism. All interactions among us are to be seen under God's care for our neighbour. Where we tend to twist God's law to our own advantage, God is against us. This is clear also in the highest commandment as cited by Jesus. The latter is not cited but mentioned as the summary of the 10 commandments. The closing benediction of the sermon is a biblically phrased appeal to allow the God of peace to work his will in the hearers, through Jesus Christ.

(**Criteria 2-5** taken together) Theologically this sermon remains in the one-dimensional understanding of "law" as God's way of caring for and

guarding us and our neighbour (**first use**). No "law" - "gospel" dialectic is present.

Sermon 4. Text: Exodus 20,1-17

Liewe gemeente!

A

Dit kan nie die doel van hierdie preek wees, om op elk van die 10 gebooie in te gaan nie. Daarvoor sou dit beter wees om tien preke te hou. Ons sal vanoggend ons daarop beperk om 'n antwoord op die vraag te probeer vind: "Watter rol speel die 10 gebooie as geheel in die lewe van 'n Christen?"

Behalwe die 10 gebooie bevat die OT tallose ander gebooie, voorskrifte en verordeninge. Hulle rol was egter tydelik en beperk. Toe Paulus as sendeling onder heidene begin werk het, het dit vir hom duidelik geword, dat dit nie God se wil was nie, dat diegene wat tot die geloof in Christus gekom het, verplig moes word om die Ou Testamentiese wet in sy geheel te hou nie. Die gemeente in Jerusalem het aan die begin getwyfel dat Paulus se besluit, om die heidene te doop en in die Christelike kerk op te neem sonder onderwerping aan die wet van Moses, reg was. Vir hulle was dit 'n uitgemaakte saak dat al hierdie wette en voorskrifte God se wil vir alle mense weerspieël.

Met watter reg kon Paulus al hierdie wette, wat eeu-lank die godsdienstige lewe van die Jode bepaal het, eenvoudig opsy skuif? Dit is 'n vraag wat ook vir ons vandag nog van belang is.

Een rede is dat baie van die voorskrifte, veral wat offers betref, in die tyd voor Jesus se koms op dit sou wys wat Hy sou voltooi. Jesus het gekom om Homself as offer te gee, om die mensdom met God te versoen. Die hele stelsel van offers in die OT was maar net 'n beeld, 'n heenwysing na die een offer wat Jesus sou bring en alleen in staat sou wees om vergifnis van sonde te bewerkstellig. Na Jesus hierdie offer gebring het, was hierdie heenwysing nie meer nodig nie. As daarmee aangegaan sou word, sou dit beteken, dat die betrokke persone nie glo dat die versoeningsdood van Jesus werklik voldoende was om ons heil te verskaf nie.

Daar is nog ander redes waarom die vroeë Christene nie volgehou het met die nalewing van die Ou Testamentiese wet nie. Maar dit is nie die plek hier om nog verder daarop in te gaan nie.

B

Wat vir ons belangrik is, is die feit dat die 10 gebooie 'n unieke plek inneem in dié sin, dat hulle uitgesonder is om hul geldigheid te behou in die nuwe bedeling. Hulle het nie deur die koms van Jesus Christus oorbodig geword nie.

Dit blyk duidelik daaruit dat Jesus by talle geleenthede na die een of ander van die 10 gebooie verwys het, en in die Bergpredikasie selfs sommige van hulle breedvoerig uitgelê het.

Juis hierdie uitlegging deur Jesus wys egter dat daar 'n nuwe benadering ten opsigte van die 10 gebooie van ons Christene verwag word. 'n Gebod is inherent 'n vaste norm of maatstaf wat gestel is en wat nie na willekeur verander mag word nie maar letterlik en stiptelik gevolg moet word. Jesus wil ons egter van hierdie legalistiese houding teenoor die 10 gebooie bevry. Die houding wat Jesus van sy volgelinge verwag, is die wat die Profeet Jeremia as teken van die nuwe verbond voorspel het. Ons vind dit in Hoofstuk 31 v.3: "Maar dit is die verbond wat Ek na die dae met die huis van Israel sal sluit," spreek die HERE: "Ek gee

my wet in hulle binneste en skrywe dit op hulle hart; en Ek sal vir hulle 'n God wees en hulle sal vir My 'n volk wees."

Jesus wil dus nie hê dat ons slaafs die wil van God vervul deur letterlik sy voorskrifte na te kom nie, of ons dit nou as reg en goed aanvoel al dan nie. Mits ons sy volgelinge word, belowe Jesus dat die Gees ons harte sal verander, sodat ons nie meer met die wil van God sal bots nie maar daarmee sal ooreenstem. Ons sal dan self aanvoel wat sy wil is, sonder dat dit deur 'n starre en onbuigbare gebod of verbod ons voor oë gehou moet word. Ons vervul dan ook nie meer die wil van God omdat ons moet nie, maar omdat ons lus het om dit te doen. Uit eie besluit wil ons niks anders nie. Daar is 'n diepliggende behoefte in ons hart om juis dit te doen wat God se welbehae wegdra.

Met hierdie nuwe houding van ons harte teenoor die 10 gebooie word ons dan ook bewus daarvan hoe voorlopig en onvoldoende hulle die wil van God weerspieël. Hulle gee ons nie meer as baie algemene riglyne wat wys in watter rigting ons na die wil van God moet soek nie. Hulle is nie meer as 'n growwe oriëntasie vir persone wat die regte koers heeltemal kwyt geraak het nie en is alles behalwe 'n leidraad om God se wil tot in die fynste besonderhede te leer ken.

Vat as voorbeeld die vyfde gebod: "Jy mag nie doodslaan nie." As ons dit letterlik neem, sal elkeen wat nog nie moord gepleeg het nie, meen dat hy die gebod nagekom het. In sy meesterlike uitlegging in die Klein Kategismus wys Dr. Martin Luther egter daarop, dat hierdie gebod vir ons implikasies het wat baie verder as dit strek. Reeds iemand wat sy naaste aan sy liggaam skade berokken of leed aandoen, oortree die gebod, ja selfs diegene wat in gebreke bly om sy naaste in alle liggaamlike nood te help en by te staan. Sien julle die geweldige verskil? Jesus gaan nog 'n stap verder in die Bergpredikasie. By Hom gaan dit altyd om die hart, waaruit ons dade voortspruit. Hy weet dat moord altyd die gevolg van haat is wat ons in ons hart koester. Haat is die wortel waaruit alles voorspruit wat in die vyfde gebod belet word. As Jesus praat van die woorde "Raka!" of "Jou dwaas!", wat mense teen hul broeders slinger, dan wys Hy daarmee op 'n hart wat net veragting en wrok teenoor sy medemens voel en hom iets slegs toewens. Hierdie negatiewe gevoelens moet ons aandag geniet. Dit is nie genoeg om geen uiting te gee aan ons negatiewe gevoelens nie. Die gevoelens en wense self moet oorkom word. Gevolglik eis Jesus dan ook dat ons ons vyande moet liefhê, hulle van harte - nie net met die mond nie - moet vergewe en hulle moet seën d.w.s. hulle iets goeds moet toewens.

Ons het nou een van die gebooie uitgesonder om as voorbeeld te dien. So kon ons ingaan op elk van die ander gebooie, maar ek meen dat dit duidelik geword het, wat die nuwe gesig is wat die 10 gebooie in die nuwe bedeling gekry het.

C

Maar stel die verskerping van die gebooie deur die uitlegging van Luther, en veral van Jesus, ons nie voor 'n splinternuwe probleem nie? Wat ons daar b.v. oor die vyfde gebod gehoor het, van vyande wat ons moet liefhê en van harte moet vergewe, is dit nie iets wat ons krag ver oorskry nie? Word ons daarmee nie hopeloos ooreis nie?

Liewe vriende, dit is waar: ons eie kragte is geensins toereikend nie. Ons het 'n toevoer van krag nodig wat van buite moet kom. Ons eintlike probleem is dat ons gewoonweg weier om dit te erken en toe te gee. Ons verkies om so te maak asof ons mense genoeg is om self reg te kry wat God van ons verwag want die oomblik wanneer ons erken dat ons die krag en vermoë kortkom, moet ons 'n belangrike besluit neem, naamlik om Jesus se hulp in te roep, en ons weet diep in ons hart, dat Hy ons alleen kan help as ons Hom as ons persoonlike Heiland en Verlosser aanvaar. En dit beteken dat ons Hom die heerskappy oor ons hele lewe en wese oorhandig. As ons dit doen, as ons gewillig is om die nuwe verbond met God in Jesus Christus te sluit, dan sal Hy ook sy deel van hierdie verbond nakom en uitvoering gee aan die belofte dat Hy sy wet in ons binneste sal gee en op ons

harte sal skrywe. Dit beteken dat Hy ons harte sal verander, sodat ons gewillig sal wees, ja begerig sal wees, om sy wil te vervul. Hy vul ons harte dan met sy liefde deur die werking van die Heilige Gees, soos Hy dit deur sy profeet, Esegïel belowe het: "Ek sal julle 'n nuwe hart gee en 'n nuwe gees in jul binneste gee; en Ek sal die hart van klip uit julle vlees wegneem en julle 'n hart van vlees gee. En Ek sal my Gees in julle binneste gee, en sal maak dat julle in my insettinge wandel en my verordeninge onderhou en doen."

Ons moet egter nie die fout begaan om te dink dat hierdie verandering van ons harte iets is wat oornag afgehandel sal word nie. Soms is die verandering so drasties dat ons ons self nie weer ken nie, maar dit is selfs in sulke gevalle 'n voortgaande proses. God verwag dat ons nie dadelik tou opgooi wanneer ons agterkom dat die Ou Adam nog nie volkome uitgeslaan is nie. Dan moet ons maar weer ons toevlug neem tot gebed en Hom vra vir nuwe kragtoevoer deur die Heilige Gees. So leer ons om al minder op ons eie krag en al meer op sy krag te steun.

Van hierdie voortgaande proses van heiligmaking praat Paulus in 1. Tes. 5:23 waar ons lees: "Mag God, die bron van alle vrede, julle volkome aan Hom toegewyd maak en julle geheel en al na gees, siel en liggaam so bewaar dat julle onberispelik sal wees wanneer ons Here Jesus Christus weer kom! Hy sal dit ook doen, want Hy wat julle roep, is getrou."

Hierdie woord wys vir ons dat ons die volkome onberispelikeid eers sal bereik by die weerkoms van Christus. Intussen sal die Heilige Gees ons stap vir stap verder lei. Ons hoef nie bang te wees dat Hy ons nooit die uiteindelijke doel sal laat bereik nie. Die teks sê: "Hy sal dit ook doen, want Hy wat julle roep, is getrou." Alleen as ons weier om die Heilige Gees toe te laat om sy opbouingswerk in ons te doen, sal ons nooit by die doel uitkom nie, naamlik om onberispelik voor Jesus te staan by sy weerkoms. Elkeen van ons moet self kies. Wil jy die werking van die Heilige Gees weerstaan en bly soos jy is, of wil jy Hom 'n kans gee om sy wonderlike omskeppingswerk in jou te verrig? Amen

1) Structurally this sermon is made up of three sections, each beginning with a "problem" or question and then giving "the answer". After reading the text the preacher homes in on the question: What role do the 10 commandments play in the life of the Christian?

A: The intention is to answer the above question but then the hearers are taken to a different problem: Paul's audacity in not requesting the "heathens" to keep all the commandments of the Old Testament, once they have become Christians. This question is deemed important for hearers today. And the answer is promptly given: Jesus fulfilled some of the laws by his sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. There are other reasons, but it is not the place to discuss them here. What is important, according to this sermon, is that the 10 commandments have been given a unique place and have not become obsolete with the coming of Christ. This is evident

because Jesus often refers to some of the commandments (Sermon on the Mount for e.g.) But this also makes clear that Christians have to have “a new approach” to them.

B: What this “new approach” should be is the “problem” of the second part. A “legalistic relationship” to the commandments is contrasted with a “charismatic relationship” (my phrase) based on Jeremiah 31,3. The Spirit will see to it that our wills do not clash with God’s will. “Ons sal dan self aanvoel ...” And once this happens, we will realise the preliminary character of the commandments. They merely give direction, “’n growwe oriëntasie”. Luther’s explanation to the 5th commandment in the Small Catechism is given as an example of the radicalisation that happens for us Christians, and it is emphasised that Jesus goes even further in the Sermon on the Mount with the same commandment.

C: Now the problem is taken up that we are not able “to do it”. “Ons is hopeloos ooreis”. We usually deny our inability to do it - thinking that we can do what God requires. But once we realise that we can’t do it, **we** need to take an important decision: to call in Jesus’ help and we know deep down that he can only help us if we accept him as our personal Saviour and Redeemer. **We** need to hand over our whole life to him. When **we** do this, when **we** are willing to “make this covenant with Jesus Christ” **then** He will keep his side of the deal. **Then** he will change our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. This of course does not happen overnight - it can be an ongoing process (“Heiligmaking” ref. 1 Thess. 5,23) “Intussen sal die Heilige Gees ons stap vir stap verder lei!” But if we refuse to let the Holy Spirit do its “opbouingswerk” in us, we will never reach the goal. **“We must choose”**. Do you want to resist the Holy Spirit or do you want to give him a chance to recreate you?

(Criteria 2-5 together:) Theologically this sermon can be described as confusing the "law" and "gospel" dialectic in such a way that the gospel-faith becomes a performance demanded from the Christian. A strong emphasis is laid on the choice of the Christian, the decision that needs to be taken, to allow the Spirit to do its work. Such strong insistence on human choice does indeed give the sermon the overall feel of burdening the hearers with this task, without giving them any really liberating joyous message of the unconditional grace of the gospel. "Gospel" becomes "law" and the proclamation of God's word becomes a motivational speech to Christians to convert themselves to the God of the commandments.

Sermon 5. Text: Exodus 20,1-17

Liebe Gemeinde!

A

Ich möchte in den kommenden Wochen von den vorgeschriebenen Predigttexten abweichen und einmal, soweit es zeitlich möglich ist, über die **10 Gebote** predigen. So lange es Christen gibt, ist die Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen dem Gesetz und Evangelium eine umstrittene Sache gewesen. Immer noch halten Christen sich gegenseitig das Gesetz und die Gebote vor, als hätte es nie einen Paulus oder Luther gegeben. Bei vielen spielt immer noch das Gesetz eine größere Rolle als die Gnade Gottes. Das Ziel dieser Predigt ist, daß wir uns einmal allgemein fragen wollen, welche Rolle das Gesetz im Leben eines Christen spielt und spielen sollte.

Weil Gott uns die 10 Gebote gegeben hat, müssen wir danach leben - darauf kommt es doch eigentlich an, hört man oft. Und wer die Gebote hält, ist dann ein guter Christ. Wer danach lebt, der wird gerettet, wer sie bricht, wird verdammt. *(Deshalb sagen dann auch manche Menschen: Ich habe mir nichts vorzuwerfen; ich habe ja nichts gestohlen; ich habe nicht getötet; ich habe die Ehe nicht gebrochen; ich tue in der Kirche doch, was von mir verlangt wird; ich zahle meine Kirchensteuern; ich heilige den Feiertag; usw. usw. - deshalb müsste Gott mit mir zufrieden sein.)*

Oder man sagt: Ich bin eben ein schwacher Mensch, es ist eben menschlich, daß ich auch mal schwach werde und die Gebote nicht immer ganz erfülle. Gott ist aber ein gnädiger Gott und wird mir diese Fehler schon vergeben. Das alles hat aber nicht das geringste mit dem christlichen Glauben zu tun. Das Christentum ist keine Gesetzesreligion, sondern verkündigt Gnade. Der Unterschied zwischen diesen beiden liegt darin: bei einer Gesetzesreligion strengt sich der Mensch an und versucht nach den Geboten zu leben, um damit zu Gott zu kommen. Zuerst muss der Mensch gehorsam sein, dann wird Gott gnädig sein. Das ist aber nicht christlicher Glaube. Das Christentum verkündigt Gnade, d.h. nicht was der Mensch tut ist wichtig und bestimmt wie Gott handelt, sondern Gott hat schon in Gnade gehandelt. Die wesentliche Aussage des

christlichen Glaubens ist, dass Gott unser liebender Vater ist, er tut den ersten Schritt auf uns zu. Gott handelt also zuerst und nun fragt er: Wie reagierst du darauf? Unser Leben ist also immer eine Antwort auf Gottes Handeln und nicht umgekehrt.

Christliche Gemeinde entsteht also nicht da, wo die Gebote eingehämmert werden und wo man sich bemüht, die Gebote zu halten, sondern dort wo Christus verkündigt wird, dort wo Gottes Gnade und Liebe in Bewegung kommt, dort wo Gottes Handeln an uns verherrlicht wird.

Wenn das so ist, können wir fragen: Wozu ist denn das Gesetz da? Warum stehen denn die 10 Gebote überhaupt in der Bibel? Irgendeine Rolle muss das Gesetz doch wohl spielen? Diese Bedeutung wollen wir jetzt herausfinden.

B

Es wurde oft in den vergangenen Jahrhunderten der grosse Fehler gemacht, die 10 Gebote aus ihrem biblischen Zusammenhang zu reißen. Man hat eben gesagt, die 10 Gebote sind doch für alle Zeit gültig. Das ist aber einfach nicht wahr. Die 10 Gebote sagen nicht, daß sie das Grundgesetz für die gesamte Menschheit für alle Zeit sind. Der Fehler liegt darin, das man den 1. Satz der 10 Gebote nicht ernst nahm: **Ich bin der Herr dein Gott, der ich dich aus dem Lande Ägypten, aus dem Sklavenhause, herausgeführt habe ...** Dann erst folgen die 10 Gebote. Dieser Text macht es also ganz klar, daß Gott selbst etwas tat und erst dann von seinem Volk eine Antwort forderte. Gott befreite sein Volk aus ägyptischer Gefangenschaft. Gott fragt: **Wißt ihr noch, was ich für euch getan habe? Aus Dankbarkeit dafür sollt ihr in einen Bund mit mir eintreten und euch nach diesen Geboten verhalten...** Die 10 Gebote gehören in den Zusammenhang eines Bundes.

Es heisst: **Mein Volk, ihr Juden, lebt euer Leben aus dieser Erinnerung heraus, daß ich euch aus der Gefangenschaft befreit habe** (Gott hat befreit und erwartet, daß sie nun demgemäß leben.)

Wenn wir das begriffen haben, verstehen wir, was christlicher Glaube ist. Dazu ein kurzes Beispiel:

Es gelang einem Pastoren, einem Menschen aus einer elenden Lage zu helfen. Dieser Mann wollte Selbstmord begehen. Gott segnete die Seelsorge des Pastoren und der Mann wurde aus der Tiefe der Verzweiflung wieder herausgeholt. Dieser "gerettete" Mann wurde dann die Dankbarkeit selbst. Jeden Wunsch las er von den Augen seines Befreiers ab und tat noch viel mehr für ihn - aus Dankbarkeit. Immer wieder fand er neue Gelegenheiten, um seine Dankbarkeit zu zeigen. (Das ist der Sinn des Gesetzes).

C

Das ist christlicher Glaube. Gott rettet uns, Gott schenkt uns seine Gnade und Liebe. In Christus hat er einen neuen Bund mit uns gemacht. Und allen, die das an sich erfahren, fließt das Herz über: - aus Dankbarkeit, und sie beginnen nach Gottes Willen zu fragen. Herr, was kann ich für dich tun, um dir meine Dankbarkeit zu zeigen? (Das ist die Grundlage christlichen Glaubens. Gott rettet uns aus Sünde und Verzweiflung und unsere Freude darüber treibt uns, Gottes Willen zu tun, der findet immer wieder neue Gelegenheiten, Gott mit Wort und Tat dafür zu danken. In der Bibel stehen also nicht strenge Gebote und Verbote, denen wir uns unter allen Umständen zu fügen haben. Wer das predigt, hat keine Ahnung, was christlicher Glaube ist. Die Gebote sind kein Zwang, sondern stehen unter dem Evangelium).

Die Erfahrung der Errettung kommt zuerst. Wir erfahren, daß Gott uns aus Ägypten geführt hat, aus unserer Verzweiflung heraus, aus der Verlassenheit, aus

meinen Minderwertigkeitskomplexen, aus den Lüsten und Begierden, aus der Anbetung des Geldes, aus dem lauen Leben des Durchschnittsmenschen heraus und, daß er uns neues Leben geschenkt hat. Und dann, in der Erinnerung an Gottes Liebe, fragen wir nach Gottes Willen. Dann sind uns die Gebote eine Hilfe und ein Wegweiser. Dann wollen wir aus Dankbarkeit nicht mehr fluchen, stehlen, lügen oder betrügen. Aber das Geheimnis der Rettung liegt nicht in der Erfüllung des Gesetzes, das Geheimnis der Rettung liegt darin, daß Gott mich zuerst geliebt hat und mir durch Jesus Christus an seinem Leben Anteil gibt. Das Gesetz, - 10 Gebote -, kein Zwang mehr, womit ich vor Gott bestehen muß und kann, sondern eine Richtlinie, wie ich leben soll, um meine Dankbarkeit für Gottes Gnade zu zeigen. Von Gottes Liebe und Gnade dürfen wir leben. Nichts mehr müssen wir tun, einen gnädigen Gott zu bekommen - Gott schenkt uns seine Gnade und sagt: **Laßt euch an meiner Gnade genügen!**

Es wird viel Elend durch ein falsches Verständnis des Gesetzes verursacht. Das sind z.B. Eltern, Lehrer, oder andere, die aufrichtig gläubig sind, die die Liebe Gottes erfahren und den Heiligen Geist empfangen haben und, die sich in die göttliche Ordnung eingefügt haben. Sie haben das Evangelium angenommen und sind erfüllt von Dankbarkeit. Sie führen ein zuchtvolles Leben. Aber dann wollen sie diesen Lebensstil ihren Kindern und anderen aufzwingen, die Gottes Liebe noch nicht erfahren haben. Die Gläubigen versuchen anderen dann das Joch des Gesetzes auf die Schultern zu legen, das sie selbst ja nur mit Hilfe des Heiligen Geistes tragen können. So fangen Menschen an, sich gegen die Gebote aufzulehnen. Deshalb ist die Aufgabe gläubiggewordener Menschen nicht die anderen unter das Gesetz zu stellen, sondern sie unter den Einfluß des Heiligen Geistes und der Gnade Gottes zu bringen. Christlicher Glaube kommt nicht durch Auswendiglernen der 10 Gebote. Worauf es ankommt, ist daß Eltern ihren Kindern die Liebe zu Jesus und die Kraft, die von ihm kommt, vorleben. Wer diese Liebe dann selbst erfahren hat, der hat das Bedürfnis in Zucht und Ordnung zu leben und das ist dann kein Zwang mehr, kein peitschendes Gesetz. *(Erst schenkt Gott uns seine Liebe und dann antworten wir Gott auf diese Liebe mit unserem Gehorsam aus tiefer Dankbarkeit.)*

Zum Schluß noch ein letzter Gedanke *(In dem Masse, wie wir Gott lieben, leben wir in Dankbarkeit und Gehorsam.)* Um so größer und tiefer meine Erfahrung mit der Liebe Jesu, desto größer wird meine Dankbarkeit, mein Dienen und mein Gehorsam. Wehe, wenn nur die Angst vor der Verdammnis, vor dem Gericht Gottes, mich abhält zu sündigen! Wehe den Predigern, die uns mit Verdammnis drohen. Nur die Gnade Gottes kann uns retten. Gott freut sich über Menschen, die ihn lieben, selbst wenn sie auf ihrem Wege stolpern, Gott hat mehr Freude an einer stolpernden Liebe als an einem zähneknirschenden, freudlosen und gezwungenen Dienst, darauf ruht kein Segen! Gott liebt uns und sucht unsere Liebe zu gewinnen, damit wir ihm aus Liebe gehorchen und nicht aus Furcht vor dem Gesetz und Gericht. Der Kern des christlichen Glaubens ist Gottes Liebe. *(Diese Liebe bewirkt Befreiung und Versöhnung).* Und wenn diese Liebe Gottes einen Menschen erreicht und ausfüllt, möchte er ihm bedingungslos dienen, bis in den Tod. Amen.

1) The structure of this sermon is formally made up of three parts, but theologically it falls into two dimensions. First I briefly summarise the three parts.

A: The introduction refers to various “wrong” understandings of the commandments. In contrast to these, true Christian community happens (“entsteht”) where Christ is proclaimed as God’s grace and love. If that is the case, then why do we have commandments?

B: This question is to be answered. For this to be done correctly one must see the commandments within their original context of liberation and covenant. “Aus Dankbarkeit dafür sollt ihr in einen Bund mit mir eintreten und euch nach diesen Geboten verhalten.” These words are printed in Bold by the preacher. An example of a seriously depressed man that was helped by the pastor is retold - this man became very grateful and constantly wants to do things to show his thankfulness. The preacher concludes in brackets: “Das ist der Sinn des Gesetzes.” Very clearly this is the **“third use”** of the “law” proclaimed in parallel with the liberation of Israel and their commitment to keep the commandments.

C: Then there follows the application in terms of Christian faith. God gives grace and love through Christ in a new covenant and then we flow over with gratefulness and begin to ask about God’s will. “Die Gebote sind kein Zwang sondern stehn unter dem Evangelium.” Each paragraph goes through this thought-process: first liberation and then fulfilling the law out of thankfulness. An exemplary situation is again used to take the hearers through the same process: faithful parents wanting to force their children into the mould of the 10 commandments. This is deemed to be wrong, because the children need to experience Christ’s love, then they will want to live under the commandments in thankfulness. The sermon closes with a last thought that has the same thrust: The greater my experience of Jesus’ love, the greater will be my gratefulness. This is the **“third use”** of the “law” in its classically Calvinist mould (cf. discussion of the Heidelberg Catechism below).

(Criteria 2-5) Theologically this sermon can be situated in the "Barthian" (cf. the chapter on the theology of the two churches' catechisms - i.e. Chapter 2) mode of moving from "gospel" to the "law" (third use). Neither the first nor the second use of the "law" occur anywhere in the sermon.

Sermon 6. Text: Exodus 20,1-17

Liewe gemeente,

A

Die Bybel beskryf aan ons hoe Moses op die berg Sinai geklim het, veertig dae en veertig nagte daar gebly het, en hoedat hy die 10 gebooe ontvang het. Die berg Sinai is in 'n baie verlate en droë gebied geleë. As 'n mens die berg opklim laat 'n mens op hoogte van om en by 1100 meter die laaste vallei agter. Vanaf daardie punt klim 'n mens net oor rots en klippe sonder enige noemenswaardige plantegroei tot die hoogste punt wat 2400 meter hoog geleë is. 'n Mens sal miskien hier en daar 'n voël sien swerf. Bedags brand die son genadeloos en snags is dit snerpand koud.

Dit is op hierdie berg wat Moses geklim het. Veertig dae en veertig nagte het hy daar in alle eensaamheid vertoef. Hy was alleen met sy verlede, 'n verlede waarin hy 'n Egiptenaar doodgeslaan het, iets wat lank gelede gebeur het, maar nogtans 'n beeld wat hom nie gelos het nie. Moses was alleen met sy verlede waarin God hom gebruik het om die Israelitiese volk te lei. Moses se vraag was dus: Hoe moet ons aangaan? Ons is nou wel verlos van die Egiptenare, maar wat staan ons te doene in die woestyn, in die eensaamheid en verlatenheid? Hoe moet ons lewe?

Moses het die volk in die vallei agtergelaat. Die volk het gevoel dat hulle heeltemal verlate is, verlate deur Moses en deur God, en omdat die volk hierdie verskriklike verlatenheid en onwis nie kon verdra nie, het hulle vir Aaron gedwing om vir hulle 'n groot standbeeld van 'n stier te giet, die beeld van voortplanting en lewe.

Moses op die ander kant was standvastig, en het veertig dae en veertig nagte die eensaamheid verduur, totdat God uit die eensaamheid met hom gepraat het en die tien gebooe aan hom dikteer het.

Veertig dae en veertig nagte het hy gewag dat God op die ou einde met hom praat. Toe ervaar Moses, met die woorde van Psalm 94 uitgedruk: "Hy wat vir ons ore gemaak het, sou hy nie self kan hoor nie? En hy wat ons oë gemaak het, sou hy nie kan sien nie?" God praat met Moses juis toe hy eensaam en alleen was.

B

Liewe gemeente,

Moses se situasie voor God is ook ons situasie. Daar is telkens situasies in ons lewe wat ons net onder een opskrif kan beskryf en dit is: God praat nie, en ons wag. God is op eienaardige wyse verborge, terwyl ons wag. Die vraag aan ons is: is ons bereid, het ons die moed om vir God te wag? Besluit ons nie al te vinnig, nee, ek gaan nie wag totdat God met my praat nie. Miskien praat hy ook nie met my nie? Wie weet: heelwaarskynlik hoor hy my nie. Die voorbeeld van Moses en die voorbeeld van baie ander Christene wil ons moed gee om vir die

God te wag wat so eienaardig verborge is, en dan eers praat, want God wil vir ons sê: Ek en niemand anders, geen ander magte in die skepping, is die Here jou God. Laat ons wag, totdat God met ons praat, al wag ons vyf minute elke oggend of aand.

As God swyg dan word ons terdeë daarvan bewus dat ons nie goddelik is nie, die skepping nie goddelik is nie, en daar niks in hierdie wêreld is wat soos hy is nie.

Dit is ook die les wat die Israeliete deur die eeue geleer het, om geen ander magte en gode langs hulle God te hê nie. Nie besit en nie seksualiteit nie, nie sukses en nie lus om onself te martel nie, durf ons God wees nie. Oor die eeue heen het God sy volk opgelei om nie die magte en kragte van die skepping te aanbid nie, maar om alleen van God hulp te verwag. Die profete moes keer op keer die volk met skerp woorde daaraan herinner, maar op die ou einde het die volk tog sy les geleer en so kon sy geloofsbelydenis tot vandag toe lui: Luister, Israel, die Here is ons God, Hy is die enigste Heer.

C

Liewe gemeente,

Israel het die eerste les geleer, daar is net een God en Hy is die Here.

Onmiddellik daarna egter word Israel met 'n tweede gevaar gekonfronteer. Die eerste gebod self het vir hulle 'n afgod geword. Ten tye van Jesus se lewe was daar mense wat die eerste gebod so ernstig opgeneem het, dat die gebod naderhand net nog gebruik was om mense van mekaar af te skei. Mense is geskei in twee groepe: die wat op God vertrou en die ander wat God nie vertrou nie. Die eerste gebod is toe net daarvoor gebruik om die geregtes en die sondaars van mekaar te skei.

Ook op 'n ander manier is die eerste gebod verkeerd verstaan, deurdadig dit die sondaars, wat bewus was van hulle skuld, net verder verneder en dieper in hulle moedeloosheid gedompel het. Die eerste gebod is dan verstaan as 'n onoorwinbare straf van God vir diegene wat sondaars en ongereg was.

Liewe gemeente,

Jesus staan hierdie dodelike misverstand van die eerste gebod teë, asof dit net die funksie gehad het om die goddelose van die regverdiges te skei en die goddelose verder te verneder. Jesus moes toe die nuwe en finale uitleg aan die eerste gebod gee. Ek is die Here, jou God, wat die regverdiges en goddeloses van mekaar skei, wat die sondaars straf, lui in Christus se uitleg: Ek is die goeie herder, ek is die goeie herder wat sowel die regverdiges asook die goddeloses liefhet en red en wat my lewe gee, sodat die sondaar kan lewe.

D

Liewe gemeente,

As Christus sê: Ek is die goeie herder, en daarmee vir ons wys dat hy in liefde na ons almal omsien, dan kan die Fariseër nie meer alleen aanspraak maak op die eerste gebod nie. As Christus die liefdevolle herder is, dan kan ook ons nie ons van ander mense, van die sondaars wil laat skei nie, maar dan kan ons hulle net soos Christus die sondaar en die goddelose wil liefhê en nie veroordeel nie en hom help dat hy kan lewe.

Die finale uitleg van die eerste gebod en die gebooi is en kan net wees: 'n Nuwe gebod gee ek julle, julle moet mekaar liefhê. Soos ek julle liefhet, moet julle mekaar ook liefhê.

Met hierdie uitleg het Christus 'n geweldige beweging in die wêreld begin, wat sê: het mekaar lief.

E

Ons voel dikwels deur God alleengelaat, net soos Moses en die volk alleengelaat was.

Wat bly aan ons oor om te doen? Of ons reageer soos die volk Israel destyd en hou vas aan ons afgode, wat hulle ook mag wees, of ons wag daarop dat God self met ons praat, dat hy self sy koninkryk laat kom op hierdie aarde.

Die moed om lief te hê, die moed om steeds aan te hou om menslik te wees, word aan ons gegee deur die een wat Jesus die Trooster genoem het. Hy maak dat ons aanhou om lief te hê en menslik te wees en te bly, tot die dag wat God sy koninkryk heeltemal sal laat verwesenlik. Want Hy, God, is die Here ons God en niemand anders nie.

En die vrede van God wat alle verstand te bowe gaan, bewaar julle harte en sinne in Jesus Christus. Amen.

1) The structure of this sermon can be divided into five parts. The text is read at the beginning.

A: Introduction of the situation, in which Moses received the 10 Commandments. Emphasis is placed on his being alone and God being silent for a long time and the people below making the golden calf because there is "no word from the Lord".

B: A first application is made in the correlation of "our" situation with that of Moses. Situations in which God is silent. Moses' example wants to encourage us to wait for God, the hidden God, who says, when he does speak: "I and no-one else, no other power, am your God." Then the sermon moves back to Israel and the "lesson" they learned in history not to put their trust in any other power but God. Mention is made of "belongings" "sexuality", "success", "lus om onself en ander te martel", Prophets reminded the people again and again until their creed could be : "Shema Israel ..."

C: Now the move is made from this "first lesson" (monotheism) to a "new danger" i.e. that the first commandment could become an idol ("afgod"). In Jesus' time it was used so earnestly that it came down to separating the righteous and sinners from each other. Jesus opposed this "deadly" misconception of the first commandment. He gave a "new and final"

interpretation to the first commandment i.e. I am the good shepherd, that loves and saves both the just and the godless, I give my life for that.

D: Another application of the above is made: The Pharisee no longer can have exclusive right to the first commandment and therefore we can only want to love the sinners not separate from them but help them to live. Final explication of the first commandment is the "new commandment" of Jesus. This started a movement in the world: love each other.

E: The sermon moves back to the introduction of feeling abandoned by a silent God - two reactions are possible: idols as substitutes or wait for God to speak. The courage to love, to remain human is given by the "Comforter". This (the Holy Spirit) is what makes us able to wait until God brings in his kingdom - "want Hy, God, is die Here ons God en niemand anders nie".

In summary the thrust of this sermon is to reinterpret the first commandment as Jesus' final "new commandment", that we can "obey" with help from the Holy Spirit.

2) No clear distinction is made between "law" and "gospel" nor are the two concepts brought into a dialectical tension.

3) Neither the first nor the second use of the "law" is present as an entity - and thus the "third" use becomes a form of explaining the gospel.

4) Only indirect appeals are made: to wait for God to speak; to love and not condemn sinners.

5) Guidance is given very briefly in the unobtrusive hint to "wait for God five minutes mornings or at night". This hints at some kind of "spirituality" that can be practised by the hearers. But nothing concrete is mentioned.

Sermon 7. Text: 2 Corinthians 5,14-21

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A

I should be dead, so let me invest in life

Today you see me standing here on the pulpit, alive and well. It could have been different. In 1954 I was a student and lived with my mother in Wonderboom South, a quiet suburb of Pretoria. To reach the university I owned a small motor bike. There was not much traffic on the roads at the time; there were also very few stop signs. I used to go down the hill from our house and swing into the main street in a wide curve. One day I suddenly found myself in front of a car. I can still today see the chrome grid a foot in front of my eyes. It was a Mercury. I remember how my bike crashed into the pavement and how the car danced on the road as the driver tried to avoid me. I never understood how I got out of this accident completely unscathed. I should have been dead.

I did not go to the university. I went home almost in a trance. I was alone in the house. I knew that I should have been dead by now. By the end of the week there should have been a funeral. My mother should have cried at the grave and my brother and my friends should have closed the grave. As far as they were concerned, I should have been no more. I considered myself dead and yet miraculously granted a new life. I could begin all over again. I could see the roses, fix my motor bike, go back to my studies. But why did God allow me to live again? Was this new life he gave me not given so that I should serve Him? Was I not supposed to be dead in terms of my own agenda and take up the agenda of God in my newly granted life?

Since then I have often thought of parallels. I could have been born in a slum; I could have been unemployed; our house could have gone up in flames; I could have been maimed or killed in Imbali; our country could have been ruined beyond repair by civil war and social chaos like Mozambique, the Sudan or Somalia; our earth could have been blown up in a nuclear holocaust. It almost happened during the Cuba crisis. In fact all this did not happen. If it could have happened, but did not, our healthy, secure, prosperous life is a gift of grace, not something that we can take for granted.

Say I win a million Rand from Operation Hunger. I have not worked for it, it is not due to me, I am not entitled to it. So why not freely invest it where it is needed, rather than use it up for myself?

We should have lost our possessions, our health, our jobs, our homes, even our lives. If that is true, why not invest them for the benefit of others; why not use them to the benefit of those who suffer what we do not have to suffer? Why not live our full and rich lives on behalf of those for whom life is so very difficult?

B

The disciples should have died, but Jesus took their place

Let us draw a little nearer to what happened on the cross. If the leader of a revolutionary band is captured and executed, strictly speaking his followers should also be captured and executed. After all, he only represents what they had all stood for, with what they had all identified. And if they have not been

captured and killed, will they not feel the obligation to dedicate their lives for what he could not continue to do because he lost his life?

This is precisely what happened in that fateful night, when Jesus was betrayed and captured. The accusation was that he was a revolutionary leader who attempted to overthrow Roman rule. That is why the Romans put the inscription "the king of the Jews" on his cross. His followers had identified with him; they followed him in a jubilant procession into Jerusalem; they cleansed the temple with him. If Jesus was guilty of insurrection, they were guilty of insurrection. If it had been the Romans alone who were trying to quench a rebellion, they could have rounded up the entire mob and crucified all of them. The Romans have done that very often at the time.

But now they got away with their lives. According to John's Gospel Jesus asked them: Whom are you looking for? And when he told them: it is me, so let these go! the soldiers were so flabbergasted that the disciples had a chance to escape. Should they not feel the obligation to use their spared lives to continue his work, now that he was dead? Should they not, instead of living their lives for their own benefit, live for him who had died in their stead?

C

On its own his death was not significant

But why should Jesus have to die in the first place? To understand this we again have to look at the story of what happened.

Jesus was executed as the "King of the Jews". That means he was executed as punishment for insurrection against the Roman Empire. Such a death was horrific in itself, because it was one expression of the brutal oppression of subjugated peoples by the Roman imperialists. Crucifixion is also an extremely painful and slow death.

Yet there is nothing special about such a death. The Romans have crucified hundreds of people like this. And in the long history of humankind thousands have been condemned to death and executed for treason, subversion, of rebellion. There have been deaths in human history. On its own the cross itself has no message other than the fact that the Roman empire did not tolerate insubordination.

D

In his death the God of mercy was rejected by humankind

His death was only significant because in this death something happened to God. As far as we know Jesus was not engaged in armed revolution. So why did the Romans kill him? The reason was that Jesus conveyed and enacted a message which was not acceptable to either of them. And chances are that it is not acceptable to us either.

In contrast with the theologians of his time, he said the idea of the law of God was to serve the people of God; not that the people of God were to serve the law of God. He is a God who is concerned for people not for legal provisions.

Primarily he did not proclaim the coming judgement of God but the coming kingdom of God. Again this says something about God: he does not want to destroy humankind because of its sins but to redeem and restore them to their original glory.

He did not distance himself from the sinners and the outcasts of his time, but he accepted them into his fellowship. This says something about God: he is a God of mercy. He did not turn his back on human suffering, but allowed his hands and his reputation to get dirty in acts of healing and feeding. This says something about God: he is a God of compassion. He did not act as a big chief who demanded service from his followers, but he himself served his followers. This says something about God: it is a God who identifies with the slave, not

with the master. He also said that the humble service of a slave is the basis of all legitimate

authority, pride and military power are not.

He did all this in the name of God. In short, he represented the God of mercy, of love, of service, of concern, a God who comes and looks for what is lost.

Neither the Jewish nor the Roman authorities liked this message. It was subversive. It took away the privileges of the religious and political elite: the first are the last, the last are first. It placed the social order on its head. None of us, who are privileged in religious and in social terms, like this kind of message. So this particular death on the cross was special because he who died was special. He was special because he stood for something special: the God of mercy against the God of merciless justice. When Jesus was condemned to death, it meant that the God whom he had proclaimed and represented was rejected. God's offer of mercy, of forgiveness, of fellowship was turned down. In other words, when Jesus was crucified, something happened to the God he had proclaimed, the God of mercy.

E

The God of mercy exposed himself to this enmity

And now comes the crucial point: God allowed all this to happen. He allowed his messenger to be killed as if he was a sinner and deserved death, although he was no sinner. Christ was "made sin for us", Paul says. By allowing his messenger to be ridiculed, accused, condemned, tortured, executed, he exposed himself to human enmity. He exposed himself to human animosity precisely because he is a God of mercy, not a God of revenge. So the crucifixion of Jesus was not only an expression of human sin, but also of God's redeeming love.

In sum, the death of Jesus on the cross represents the action of humanity **against** God. But it also represents the action of God for humanity. That is the crux of the matter. That is why the death of Jesus was special.

We are part of sinful humanity. What the Jewish leaders and the Roman governor did to Jesus, the representative of God's mercy, we repeat daily. We reject this God of mercy in our thoughts, our words, our attitudes, our actions, our families, our schools, our businesses and professions, our churches, our politics, our economies, everywhere. We are all in the flesh, says Paul, we all belong to this world.

Jesus died because of the sin of the world, that is the sin of humanity. And because we are part of this sinful world, he died because of us. But he did not only die because of us, he also died for us. Three times in a single sentence Paul repeats this phrase: he died for us all because God gave himself to us, even when we were still his enemies.

F

The sacrifice - by whom and to whom?

Christ died for us - that is the message of Good Friday. All Christians confess that. But why should Christ have died for us? The common explanation is that our sin was so great that some restitution, some compensation, some ransom, some sacrifice had to be made to absolve us from our guilt - in much the same way as if we had fallen into debt and somebody has to bail us out. This is what we find in all our hymns.

But this explanation is also a cause of great uncertainty among Christians because should God not be able simply to forgive us when we repent and plead for mercy? In fact, the Bible is full of instances where God did just that. So why should Jesus have died such a gruesome death? Is our God really such a cruel God, a God who is interested in nothing but his holy law, that he requires a victim before he is ready to forgive and forget? Why do we then proclaim him to

be a God of mercy and love? Why does Paul say that the law has come to an end in Christ? Christians always had difficulties with that.

In the second place, we do not understand why we still have to die if Jesus has died on our behalf. This motif of the sacrifice of human beings to God belongs to the Old Testament thought.

But the more powerful message found in the New Testament is not that Christ sacrificed himself to God for us, but that God in Christ sacrificed himself to us. The God of mercy came to us in the humility and the commitment of a kind man and allowed himself to be rejected together with this man without retaliation. He forgave us. He reconciled us with him and established the ministry of reconciliation, Paul says. And his messengers now call for all of us to accept that offer. Not God was reconciled to us, but we were reconciled to God. It was not the law of God's demand which had to be satisfied, but the gospel of his gift, which we have to accept or reject.

That is why Paul can say that Christ died for us and that his death was an expression of his agape, his self-giving love.

G

Let us identify with Christ

That is what God did on our behalf on the cross. But how do we react? Why not accept this verdict over our sinful lives and consider ourselves actually to have received what we deserve, namely death? Why not consider ourselves dead? That is the meaning of baptism, Paul says, that we act as if our old lives were drowned (Romans 6) and we come up into a new life dedicated to the risen Christ.

Let us act like children who play as if they were mother and father. They identify with their role models. Let us play as if we had been killed by Pilate. Let us identify with Christ in his death. Let us also identify with Christ in his new life. Let us act as if we were already risen into a new life with Christ.

This would free us from the compulsions of this sinful life (the flesh, as Paul calls it). It would make us free to live in fellowship with God like Christ (the new creation, as Paul calls it). We would no longer be indebted to the flesh so that we should do its will, Paul says. This world, this life in the flesh, has no right over us any more. All rights end when death comes, and we are supposed to be dead. If I die I only receive what I should have received long ago. So I might as well live not for myself but for others - without losing anything. Having "died" in terms of our own life, we can now live for him.

According to Paul all this does not mean that because he died, we no longer have to die. No, our present life, which is a life "in the flesh" will inevitably end in physical death one day. But in the mean time we can identify with the new life of the risen Christ and thus anticipate our new life.

This is what faith means. Nobody lives for himself, nobody dies for himself.

When we live we live for the Lord, when we die we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. That means that we continue not with our own agenda, but with his agenda. We do what he would have done. We stand for what he stood for. And so his life is continued in our life. This means that we live in the interests of others, their healing, their security, their prosperity.

Why should we whites in South Africa, for instance, not concentrate on the question how we could help the millions of impoverished, uneducated, unemployed, hopeless people to get out of the mud and onto their feet, rather than on the question how we can protect our wealth, our security, our privileges? Certainly it would free us from fear, it would give us the power to love, it would give us new hope, it would give us new joy. We could again walk upright among our fellow South Africans.

Christ died in this world. He is no longer with us "in the flesh". If we identify with him, his death can represent our death until we die. And if we identify with him, our life can represent his life in this world until we die. To represent means to make present. The risen Christ can be in this world through us, his Body.
Amen.

1) This sermon can be neatly divided into 7 parts. Presumably the text is read at the beginning, and then a course covering 7 core thoughts, is followed.

A: "I should be dead, so let me invest my life" - a personal story is related to bring across the intended truth.

B: "The disciples should have died, but Jesus took their place." - a rather detailed explication of the occurrence of the cross of Jesus and the situation of his disciples.

C: "On its own his death was not significant" - a short historical input relativising the crucifixion of Jesus. "On its own", it just confirms that the Romans "did not tolerate insubordination".

D: "In this death the God of mercy was rejected by humankind." - the theological significance of Jesus' death is explained: - "Something that happened to God".

E: "The God of mercy exposed himself to this enmity". Further theological explanation is given: "the death of Jesus on the cross represents the action of humanity against God. But it also represents the action of God for humanity. Then the move is made to include "us" (the hearers) in the occurrence. What the Jews and Romans did "we repeat daily". "We reject this God of mercy ...", "...because we are part of this sinful world, he died because of us." But "he also died for us."

F: The sacrifice of Christ - by whom and to whom?" The matter of sacrifice in the death of Jesus is explained. Set against the "sacrifice-theology" of the hymns, which parallels Christ's death as payment for debts - the cross is explained as "God's sacrifice to us." In order to "reconcile us with him". And here the move is made toward an appeal to the hearers: Through the cross God established the "ministry of reconciliation". "And his messengers now call for all of us to accept that offer." "God was not reconciled to us, but we were reconciled to God. It was not the law of God's demand which had to be satisfied, but the gospel of his gift, which we have to accept or reject."

G: "Let us identify with Christ" - "that is what God did ... But how do we react? Why not accept this verdict ..." "Let us act like ..." "Why should we Whites in South Africa, for instance, not concentrate on" "If we identify with him, his death can represent our death until we die. And if we identify with him, our life can represent his life in this world until we die." A whole row of appeals aiming for ethical involvement in the world as "the Body of Christ" is given as concluding section of the sermon.

In summary the thrust of the sermon is to move the hearers to live ethically appropriate lives as the "body of Christ". Such a life would be the right reaction to what God did in sacrificing himself for us. A classical move from the indicative to the imperative, with many "if then", "should", "ought to" and other terms denoting strong obligation on the part of those "who accept the offer of reconciliation".

2) Both terms "law" and "gospel" appear in the sermon, but their function is not clear - e.g. The "law" is seen as the negative backdrop to let the gospel of mercy come out stronger in section F. But previously the "law" was positively mentioned with the purpose of "serving the people of God" in contrast again with those ("theologians of his time") who said "that the

people of God were to serve the law of God.” (Apart from this being an unnecessary generalisation about Jewish theologians, tending toward anti-Judaic paradigms, it does not help the sermon towards a clear use of “law’ and/or “gospel”. One sentence makes this confusion particularly clear. Speaking about the reconciliation that occurred through the sacrifice of Christ, the preacher writes: “It was not the law of God’s demand which had to be satisfied, but the gospel of his gift, which we have to accept or reject.” The understanding of “law” is further confused by throwing in the question (in the sacrifice context of section F): “Why does Paul say that the law has come to and end in Christ?” And then continuing with the comment: “Christians always had difficulties with that.”

3) There is no clarity in the “use of the law”, the whole sermon tends in its appeals to a certain imperative (third use), towards doing right (“identifying with Christ”), this being portrayed as the hearers’ proper reaction to “what God has done.” But everything hinges on their “acceptance of the offer”, making it clear that “gospel” only really becomes effective when and if the hearers accept it.

4) Rhetorically the sermon uses a manipulative mode - “survivor’s guilt” is used to press obligations. Appeals are made with the idea that the hearers are now indebted to God for his sacrifice, and should thus do various things: “accept the offer”, “accept the verdict”, “identify with Christ”, “help the millions of impoverished” etc.

5) No really practical or concrete guidance is given for living in the “real world”, apart from some very general exhortations “to concentrate on the questions how we could help...”.

Before I move to the analysis of the Reformed sermons below I want to make some preliminary observations about the Lutheran Sermons above.

On the whole one can say that a clearly traditional use of the "law and gospel" dialectic is not present in these sermons and that this is probably the cause of the lack of concrete guidance for living in the real world. Such guidance has been carefully avoided, perhaps out of fear of being seen as legalistic, but the outcome is legalistic nevertheless, and this sadly in a very unclear and superficial way. If we do not get the "law and gospel" dialectic right, we will not be able to guide our hearers into faithful living in the real world.



1.4 Analysis of 7 Sermons from the Reformed Tradition

For my analysis of Reformed sermons I took a random selection of seven published sermons. I am not making statistical statements about all reformed sermons in South Africa, but merely asking whether there is some evidence of a clear and consistent use of the "law" and how such a use functions in the context of South Africa. For a more statistical approach, see the work of Johan Cilliers mentioned earlier. I mention the authors here, because I am dealing with published material.

Sermon 1 by Allan Boesak: *Wat nie agterweë mag bly nie*. From: Die Vinger van God, Preke oor Geloof en die Politiek. Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1979. Pages 57-62

Text: Galatians 6,2

Daar is Evangeliese noodsaaklikhede wat deur jare van vervlakking en misbruik vandag met agterdog bejeën word. Die woorde versoening en vergifnis, wat vir die lewe van die Christen en die Christelike gemeente onmisbaarheid is, is hiervan 'n voorbeeld. Daar is talle swart Christene wat frons as vandag oor versoening gepraat word. En dan nie soseer omdat versoening nie as noodsaaklik erken sou word nie, maar eerder omdat versoening, vergifnis, liefde, woorde en werklikhede is wat handig deur die 'Christelike' maghebber gebruik was om teenstand en protes te fnuik.

En tog kan die gemeente van die Here nie bekostig om om hierdie woorde, en wat hulle simboliseer, heen te lewe nie. Die bereidheid tot vergifnis en versoening is 'n Evangeliese voorwaarde vir 'n heel, Christelike lewe. Die gelykenis van die onbarmhartige skuldeiser (Matt. 18) staan nie verniet in die Bybel nie, en die dringendheid waarmee Paulus die Korinthiërs vra:

'Ons bid julle om Christus wil, laat julle met God versoen!', het vandag nog niks van sy erns ingeboet nie.

Die werklikhede van toe - partyskappe, wantroue, verdagmakery, vooroordeel - is tot vandag in die Christelike kerk aanwesig en as die apostel vandag 'n brief sou skryf aan die Christelike gemeente, sou hy seer seker dieselfde woord laat val; 'Dra mekaar se laste en vervul so die wet van Christus...'

Hierin lê 'n onontwykbare punt, hier is tegelyk die rots waarteen die Christelike kerk homself keer op keer kapotloop. Dit is hier waar die gehoorsaamheid van die gemeente getoets word; dit is hier waar gesien kan word of ons bereid is Jesus na te volg en afgesien van die feit dat Hy aan ons kant is toon dat ons ook aan sy kant is.

Wat beteken hierdie woord? Die vreemde is dat Paulus hier wil praat van 'n 'wet'. Is dit dan nie hierdie selfde brief aan hierdie selfde gemeente waar hy juis teen 'n wetbeheptheid argumenteer nie? Heel hoofstuk drie en vier is aan hierdie tema: vryheid van die wet, gewy, en hoofstuk vyf begin al met Paulus se beroemde triomfkreet:

'Staan dan vas in die vryheid waarmee Christus ons vrygemaak het, en laat julle nie weer onder die juk van diensbaarheid bring nie' (5:1)

Dat hy dus tog van die 'wet' wil praat, wys alleen daarop dat hierdie 'wet van Christus' wesenlik iets anders is as die wettisme waarteen Paulus so flussies gewaarsku het nie, maar toon ook die onontwykbaarheid van die saak aan.

Vireers val dit op dat Paulus in sy woordkeuse dit sò stel dat dit ons herinner aan die gees en die toon van die Tien Woorde in Exodus 20: 'Vervul so.....' En 'Jy mag (Nie.....)' Staan hier naas mekaar. Dieselfde gebiedende vanselfsprekenheid kom na vore in ons teksvers. M.a.w. Paulus stel dit nie so asof die gemeente hierin 'n keuse het, of hy dit nou wil of nie wil nie - as jy gemeente van Jesus Christus is en wil wees, is dit geen punt van diskussie nie. Die belydenis van gemeente van die Messias te wees, maak die vervulling van die wet van Christus tot 'n vanselfsprekende saak. Immers, ons is die gemeente *van Christus!*

Bowendien, en nou kom ons by die ander ooreenkoms met die Tien Woorde in Exodus 20, Christus het hierdie wet van Hom self 'n duidelike vulling gegee in twee merkwaardige uitsprake wat ons vind in Matt. 11:28 - 30:

'Kom na My toe, almal wat vermoeid en belas is, en Ek sal julle rus gee. Neem my juk op julle en leer van My, want Ek is sagmoedig en nederig van hart, en julle sal rus vind vir julle siele; want my juk is sag en my las is lig.'

Hierdie 'juk van Jesus', die las waarvan Hy praat, is niks anders as die 'wet van Christus' waarna Paulus verwys nie. Jesus se verwysing na sy wet maak twee uiters belangrike dinge vir ons duidelik: Eerstens, nogmaals, die ooreenkoms met die wet van Exodus 20, naamlik dit: net soos die wet in Exodus 20, staan ook hierdie wet van Christus binne die raamwerk, onder die dekmantel van bevryding. Die beklemtoning van die ruimte wat Jahwe vir sy volk geskep het deur die bevryding, is die inset van die Tien Woorde. Daarmee begin die wet en in die lig daàrvan moet die vanselfsprekenheid van die gehoorsaamheid gelees en verstaan word, sý diensbaarheid, sý gehoorsaamheid, sý bevrydende handele is die inset, die drakrag en die voleinding van sy wet. Die vreugdevolle waarheid van die tora, die blydschap oor die andersheid van hierdie wet, is ook hier die grondtoon: die Bevryder is die Wetgewer.

Die tweede vloei uit hierdie laaste voort en is nie minder aangrypend nie. Hierdie wet heet in ons teksvers 'die wet van Christus'. En inderdaad, dit is sy wet, want Hyself het dit bekragtig. Hy het dit self uitgevoer. Hy is dit wat gewillig was om Middelaar te wees tussen God en mens. Hy is dit wat deur sy leiding en dood Versoener geword het, Bewerker van Gods heil vir die mense. Terwille van die mense het Hy die groot Lasdraer geword. In sy dood aan die kruis *dra* Hy die sonde van die wêreld: Ons traagheid, ons onwil en eiewilligheid; *dra* Hy die verskriklike vervreemding tussen ons en God en tussen ons en ons naaste. En hierdie weg voer Hom deur die bitterheid van die worsteling in Getsëmanè tot aan die kruis van Gólgota. So kos die versoening met God en tussen die mense 'n prys - en die gemeente kan met iets minders nie wegkom nie. Sò ook word Hy onder ons Bevryder, en die Bevryder is Wetgewer. Wie glo in die bevryding van mense deur die Messias, kan Hom nie meer aan die Gebod onttrek nie. En wie die gebod gehoorsaam doen, ontdek dat dit die gebod van die Bevryder is. Daarom noem Jesus sy juk sag en sy las lig. En daarom loop die gehoorsaamheid aan hierdie wet uit op die 'rus vir die siel'.

So kom ons eindelijk by die wet self. 'Dra mekaar se laste'. Dit moet duidelik wees dat Paulus hier nie pleit vir 'verdraagsaamheid' nie. Hier word nie gevra vir (wat vandag so dikwels gehoor word) 'n tolerante maatskappy nie. Hier is geen sprake van 'n oppervlakkigheid waar 'ieder aan homself en sy eie oordeel' oorgelaat word nie. Die apostel vra dat die gemeente mekaar se laste moet dra - *mekaar* moet dra.

Natuurlik is dit so dat ons elkeen eie laste het wat gedra moet word, en die Bybel sal ons hierin gelyk gee. Trouens, Paulus doen dit ook 'n paar verse verderop. En wie van ons ken dit? Die dinge ten opsigte van onself waarmee ons gedurigdeur worstel; die geheime, private sondes wat dit vir ons onmoontlik maak God in ons lewe *God* te laat wees en die naaste werklik *naaste*? Wie van ons weet nie van die gevoel van magteloosheid en frustrasie wat ons teister omdat ons sien wat in die gemeenskap verkeerd is, weet van die onreg wat dag na dag

bedrywe word, sò graag ons solidariteit met ander wil betoon, en ons kan nie - want die sisteem is soos 'n groot monster wat geen teenstand duld nie? Ons ken dit, en dit is ewesovele laste wat ons gedwing word om te dra - dag in, dag uit.

Maar in ons teks het die apostel iets anders in die oog. Die verantwoordelikheid ten opsigte van die *ander*, die laste van die *ander*, dit moet ons dra. Die ander: vir hom, vir haar, moet ons leer sien. Ons word, as Christene in die wêreld, nooit gekonfronteer met 'gevalle' of met abstrakthede nie, maar met mense, met medemense vir wie die Evangelie ons 'n verantwoordelikheid oplê. Ons word geroep om mekaar se laste te dra; daardie sondelaste wat in sy subtiële en sy blatante, sy appèlerende sowel as sy afstootlike gedaante, die rug van my naaste kromtrek.

Dit geld vir die mens in ons maatskappy, ons swart medebroer en suster, wat self nóg minder het as ons. Dit geld vir daardie mense wat, al word hulle net so verdruk soos ons, self in 'n nog laer sosiaal-ekonomiese kategorie val. Hulle is die 'ander' wat voortdurend 'n appél tot my rig, wie se onvermoë om self sy angste en verlangens te verwoord juis die verantwoordelikheid op my lê om dit ter wille van hulle op te neem., en sonder kompromie of ophou die reg te soek. Want wie gemeente van Christus wil wees, kan net nie anders nie: 'Dra mekaar se laste'.

Maar hiedie woorde geld nie net die mense wat op my steun en diegene wat van my solidariteit afhanklik is nie. Dit geld ook die mense wie se laste nie deerniswekkend is nie, maar weersinwekkend. Die mens wat my onderdruk, die maghebber wat sy mag meedoënloos aanwend om my 'n tweede- derderangse status te gee sodat my 'burgerskap' van my geboorteland slegs 'n lêë woord is. Die uitbuiters, wat my degradeer tot rad in sy ekonomiese masjien, wat my onderbetaal sodat sy winste en sy sosiale posisie veilig mag bly. Die politieke manipulator wat vir sy onmenslike wette edelklinkende name uitdink en met asemrowende arrogansie dit ook nog 'Christelik' wil noem. Ook hy is die ander! Ook ten opsigte van hom geld die woord: Dra mekaar se laste. Want in die grond van die saak is sy hoogmoed, die onreg wat hy pleeg, die houding wat hy openbaar, die apartheid wat hy bedrywe - dit alles is sonde, die teken van sy vervreemding van God, en van my. Dra sy laste! Want die solidariteit, die vergifnis en die versoening mag nie agterweë bly nie. En wie gemeente van Christus wil wees, kan nie anders nie: 'Dra mekaar se laste'.

Hier word ons geroep tot gehoorsaamheid en navolging wat nie ontduik kan word nie. Ons mag die verantwoordelikheid ook nie wegrasionaliseer nie. Ook sal ons nie skuil agter ons (*geregverdigde*) politieke vooroordele nie. Daarvoor is die vergifnis en die versoening te werklik; daarvoor is die eise van die Evangelie te ondubbelsinnig en sal ons, op ons beurt, nie met God mag speel nie. Want nogmaals, wie gemeente van God wil wees, sal die vanselfsprekendheid van dié gebod eie moet maak. Dit sal ons erns moet wees, want die prys wat Jesus Christus hiervoor betaal het, is te kosbaar.

En tog sal ons juis daarom moet oppas dat ons nie meedoen aan die tradisionele lewensgevaarlike speletjie waarin die versoening en die vergifnis misbruik word nie. Bereid tot vergifnis en versoening? Ja wel! Maar die versoening kos Jesus Christus sy lewe, dit vra 'n prys. Om as swart en blank met mekaar in hierdie land versoend te lewe is genade, en dit is nooit goedkoop nie. Daarom sal die versoening sonder die konfrontasie, sonder die betaling van die prys, nooit 'n werklikheid word nie. Vergifnis beteken nie dat die sonde bedek word en versoening is ook nie die handige, of die vrome versluiering van die skuld nie. Intendeel! Versoening volg juis op die ontdekking, op die ontmaskering van die sonde.

Te lank probeer Christene in hierdie land die werklike versoening uit die weg gaan deur 'n versoening te verkondig wat berus op die versluiering van die skuld en op 'n vrome verswyging van die kwaad. Te lank het mense geprobeer om versoening te bewerk deur apartheid, asof die twee nie diametraal

teenoor mekaar staan nie. En laat ons maar eerlik wees: versoening is nie handjies hou en saamsing 'Black and white together' nie. Versoening is nie om saam met blankes te gaan kamp nie. Versoening is ook nie om saam 'n 'multi-rasiale' SACLA-kongres te hou waar ons vir 'n maand lank apartheid ophef en heel broederlik en susterlik 'in die Gees' verkeer om daarna ons aparte en apartgehoue lewensstyl terug te keer nie. Versoening is nie om 'goed te voel' nie maar om te doen wat reg is. En eers as dit vir SACLA daàrom gaan, kan ons seën verwag.

Bowendien, versoening vind nie plaas tussen 'blankes' en 'nie-blankes' nie; dit vind nie plaas tussen koning en onderdaan nie. Egte versoening vind nie plaas tussen onderdrukker en onderdrukte nie - dit vind plaas tussen mense. Mense wat in hul outentieke, kwesbare, en tog hoopvolle menslikheid teenoor mekaar staan. Daarom is die bevryding, die algehele, totale bevryding van mense onvervreembaar aan die versoening verbonde. En aan die vergifnis.

Skuldvergifnis word voorafgegaan deur skuldbelydenis. Solank kollektief gesproke, blank Christelike Suid-Afrika sy skuld nie wil besef en bely nie; solank Christene angsvallig keer om nie 'valse skuldgevoelens aangepraat' te word nie, sal die kwaad wat ons onversoend hou, ook nie oopgeklou en genees word nie.

Maar uiteindelik bly die woord staan: Dra mekaar se laste, en vervul so die wet van Christus. As swart Christene in Suid-Afrika hierdie woord verontagsaam, as ons die werklikheid daarvan in ons lewe wil ontken, as ons op hierdie punt die Evangelie wil manipuleer, is ons die naam Christelik nie werd nie. Maar as ons die versoening vervlak en die vergifnis goedkoop wil maak, sal die oordeel van God ons tref. Hiervoor is die bloed van Jesus Christus te kosbaar en die bloed van sy kinders te kosbaar in sy oog.

Maar die bereidheid bly. Die gemeente verlang daarna en soek daarna. In die versoening breek Christus die demoniese werklikhede oop wat ons lewe gevange hou: die vooroordeel, die verskuilde hoogmoed, die magswellus, die vergeldingsdrang. In die skuldbelydenis en die skuldvergifnis word ons menslikheid aangespreek, en in Gods ruimte gestel.

Ten slotte nog twee dinge:

Maar as julle die mense hul oortredinge nie vergewe nie, sal julle Vader julle oortredinge ook nie vergewe nie (Matt 6:15).

Want die hele wet word vervul in een word: jy moet jou naaste liefhê soos jouself (Gal. 5:14).

Sò sê die Woord van God dit. Is daar iemand wat dit anders wil sê?

1) With the heading: "Versoening en Vergifnis", the preacher clearly states the theme of the sermon. The context of South Africa is very clearly taken as point of reference throughout the sermon. E.g. The suspicion about "cheap reconciliation" used by the oppressor to keep resisters at bay. Moving through all this the sermon aims at the "necessariness" ("vanselfsprekendheid") of the short exhortation of the text: Galatians 6,2. Based on the reconciliation that is proclaimed the hearers are urged to bear the burdens of others. This is where the obedience of the congregation is tested. This "law" is explained as being different from the legalism which Paul struggles against in this Epistle. But then the

“ooreenkoms” (linguistically first but then also in terms of the liberating context) with the “ten words” in Exodus 20, is mentioned and explained. Christ is himself a fulfilling of the “law” (Mt 11,28-30). In the light of the liberation the “obligatoriness” (“vanselfsprekendheid”) of obedience to the “law” must be understood.

Christ is the one who fulfilled his “law” fully - he became the big bearer of burdens for humans, bearing the cross etc. And so he becomes “our” liberator, so that obedience to this “law” ends in “peace for the soul”.

Then the preacher explicates the “law of Christ” - “bear one another’s burdens” :- it is not just common tolerance - no, it concerns bearing the responsibility for the other - mention is made of various burdened people - but even for those who oppress etc. What they do is also “lastly sin, alienation from God and from me”. And so the appeal is made to bear these burdens too. But not in terms of “cheap reconciliation”, that would be playing with God - no, the price is high. Reconciliation only comes when sin is confronted, revealed, opened up to scrutiny. For too long have Christians in this country tried to live around such real, costly reconciliation. It is not about feeling good but about doing what is right. It happens between people and this is bound to forgiveness - this again needs to be preceded by confession of sin. Collective confession of guilt is asked of the white South Africa, unless that is done, there will be no reconciliation. And yet, the word remains: “bear each others’ burdens....” We should not disregard this word.

Having summarised this sermon loosely it can be seen to be constructed in such a way as to motivate the hearers towards costly reconciliation in a very specifically mentioned South African context. Facing sin, confronting sin, urging confession on the whites as a prerequisite to forgiveness - but also to “bear each others’ burdens” somehow loosely based on the fact that Christ is our big “Burden Bearer”. On the whole the sermon stays on the

plane of “explaining God” and “God’s will” and does not reach the plane where “God is proclaimed”, either in “law” or in “gospel”. This results in some very legalistic-sounding phrases that make our salvation (“peace of mind”) dependent on our actions as urged by the author.

(Criteria 2+3): Both terms “law” and “gospel” do appear and the sermon does distinguish “the law of Christ” from what is termed “legalism”, although that is not defined clearly. The classical scheme of indicative and then imperative moves through the sermon, urging hearers to live by the “law of Christ”, because Christ himself did so for us. In a sense then this could be termed an instance of the **third use** of the “law”, but since the first and second use are not clearly distinguished nor related to the gospel dialectically, the gospel is not proclaimed as the really motivating ‘dynamis’ for right living and the general feeling of the sermon is legalistic.

(Criteria 4+5): On the one hand a clear appeal is made for fairly explicit things i.e. confronting sin, confessing sin, bearing one another’s burdens - but it is not clear where the sermon locates the authority for these appeals - is it the authority of God, the Gospel (viva vox) or just the written word? The last sentence of the sermon suggests the last option.

Sermon 2 by Willie Jonker: *Vry van die Wet*. From: *Vreemde bevryding*.
Lux Verbi, Kaapstad, 1989. Pages 33-39
Text: Romans 7,5-25

*Maar nou is ons vrygemaak van die wet,
Want ons het gesterf en staan nie
Meer onder die wet waardeur ons
Gebind was nie
Nou kan ons dien in die nuwe bedeling
Van die Gees
Nie in die ou bedeling
Van wetsvoorskrifte nie (Rom 7:6).*

A

Die meeste mense het maar die idee dat 'n mens moet probeer om so goed moontlik te lewe as jy enige hoop wil hê om in die hemel te kom. 'n Bietjie meer Bybels uitgedruk: hulle dink dat 'n mens gered word deurdat jy die wet van God gehoorsaam, Alle heidense godsdienste redeneer so. Omdat ons almal se harte van nature heidens is, redeneer ons ook dikwels so. Selfs Israel het so geredeneer.

Maar dan verstaan 'n mens die wet verkeerd. Die bedoeling van die wet is nie dat ons deur die onderhouding daarvan moet "kwalifiseer" om gered te word nie. Die bedoeling van die wet was van die begin af om te dien as *die leefreëls* van die kinders van God. Dit sê aan ons hoe God bedoel het dat die mens moet lewe as hy in die regte verhouding tot God en sy medemens staan. In ons situasie as sondaars beteken dit dat die wet aan ons sê hoe 'n mens moet lewe as hy klaar deur die genade van God gemaak is.

Die onverloste mens verstaan dit egter verkeerd. Hy dink dat hy 'n kind van God kan word deur te probeer om die wet te gehoorsaam. Hy sien dit soos 'n soort toets wat 'n mens moet probeer slaag. As jy kan slaag, verdien jy om gered te word. Daarom moet jy jou bes doen. Al kan jy nie altyd doen wat die wet vra nie, moet 'n mens tog hoop dat God barmhartig sal wees en jou sal vergewe waar jy te kort skiet. Maar in laaste instansie kom 'n mens se redding tog tot stand deurdat jy opreg probeer om die wet te gehoorsaam.

B

Maar wat is die resultaat van hierdie misverstand? Aan die antwoord op hierdie vraag bestee Paulus veral in die brief aan die Romeine baie aandag. As gewese Fariseër weet hy maar te goed hoe die Jode en ook hy self probeer het om deur nougesette onderhouding van die wet Gods guns te verdien. Maar hy weet ook dat dit 'n gevaarlike misverstand is en dat die resultaat daarvan presies die teenoorgestelde is van wat die onverloste mens beoog: sy pogings om die wet te onderhou loop nie net uit op 'n slawerny onder die juk van die wet nie, maar dit stort hom ook nog dieper die verlorenheid in, omdat dit sy sonde net meer maak.

Op verskillende plekke wys Paulus daarop dat die wet die effek op die sondige mens het dat dit sy sonde meer maak, omdat dit hom juis tot sonde prikkel. In Romeine 7.5 lees ons byvoorbeeld: "Toe ons nog 'n sondige lewensbestaan gevoer het, was die sondige hartstogte wat deur die wet wakker gemaak is, in elke deel van ons liggame werksaam en het ons vrugte gedra in diens van die dood." Verderaan in dié hoofstuk (vs 7ev) verduidelik hy uitvoerig wat hy daarmee bedoel. Gods gebod is heilig en goed Dit sê duidelik aan ons wat verkeerd is. Omdat ons egter sondaars is en God van nature haat, spring die begeerte in ons op om presies te doen wat God verbied. So het die goeie van God op die sondige

mens 'n verskriklike effek: dit hits hom aan om die sonde te doen en maak op hierdie manier sy sonde net erger.

Ons ken almal dié verskynsel by kinders. Verbied maar 'n kind om iets te doen, en dan ontstaan daar by hom juis die begeerte om te doen wat jy hom verbied het. Skielik lyk wat verbied is, na die begeerlikste ding op aarde. Paulus illustreer dit aan die gebod om nie te begeer nie (vs 7 ev) Daardie gebod maak juis elke vorm van begeerte in die sondaar wakker. Vanweë die sonde is ons so pervers dat die goeie gebod ons juis uitlok om nog meer sonde te doen. Dit is soos 'n stok wat in 'n bos gesteek word waarin 'n adder skuil en tot gevolg het dat dié na buite skiet.

Vir Eva het spesifiek die verbode vrug gelyk na iets om te begeer (Gen 3:6) En vir ons as nageslag van Adam is die wet nog steeds soos 'n vlymskerp skeermes waarmee 'n kind speel: omdat ons innerlik verkeerd is, roep dit 'n verkeerde effek by ons op en maak dit ons sonde meer (Rom 5:20). Tereg kan Paulus dus hier in Romeine 7:5 sê dat die sondige hartstogte in ons sondige lewensbestaan deur die wet wakker gemaak word en dat dit in elke deel van ons liggame werksaam word en vrugte dra in diens van die dood.

C

Selfs as ons op 'n moralistiese wyse meen dat ons die wet hou, is ons opstand teen die ware intensie van die wet nie geringer as wanneer ons in allerlei begeerlikhede sou ontbrand om vuil en gemene sondes te doen nie. *Die wettiese mens is net meer geraffineerd.* Uiterlik hou hy homself aan die gebod en verfyn hy dit selfs tot 'n netwerk van moets en moenies. Maar sodoende gaan hy op 'n uiterlike en oppervlakkige wyse met die wet om. Wie dit doen, word trots op homself en sy eie goedheid en kyk met veragting neer op diegene wat na sy mening nie so goed soos hy is nie. In sy hardheid van hart bou die fariseër met sy wetswerke 'n skans rondom hom op handhaaf homself, selfs teenoor God. Daardeur kom hy nog al verder van God te staan, omdat hy daarvan oortuig is dat hy die genade van God nie nodig het nie. Nog meer as by die heidene is die misbruikte wet by die Jode (en by die Christene) 'n muur wat hulle van die vryheid van die kindskap van God skei.

D

Hoe teenstrydig en vreemd dit dus ook al mag klink, tog is dit presies wat die Bybel leer: *dat verlossing vir ons alleen moontlik is as ons van die wet bevry word.* Paulus sien dit selfs as 'n soort hoogtepunt van sy hele evangelie dat hy dit as die goeie nuus mag aankondig, soos dit in ons teks staan: "Maar nou (in Christus) is ons vrygemaak van die wet!" Daarop kom hy telkens weer terug, byvoorbeeld in die briewe aan die Galasiërs en die Filippense.

Maar wat beteken dit? Dit kan tog seker nie beteken dat die wet van God eenvoudig opgehef is en nie meer geld as uitdrukking van wat Gods wil is vir sy kinders nie? Dit kan ook nie beteken dat Gods wet nie meer sou geld as die maatstaf waarvolgens God oor die lewens van mense oordeel nie. In die wet het ons immers te make met God se ewige en heilige wil, en dit sal in alle ewigheid geldig bly. Dit is die wesenswet vir die mens as God se skepsel en kan daarom nooit afgeskaf of prysgegee word nie.

Nee, Paulus bedoel dan ook nie dat die wet in enige van hierdie betekenisse afgeskaf of opgehef is nie; hy bedoel dat ons vrygemaak is van die *veroordeeling* van die wet. Dit beteken:

*God veroordeel ons nie omdat ons nie aan die eise van die wet voldoen het nie.

*Die vraag of ons in die regte verhouding met God is, word nie beslis op grond daarvan of ons in staat is om die wet van God te onderhou nie.

*Ons oortreding van die wet word nie in berekening gebring by die vraag of ons tot kinders van God aangeneem sal word nie.

E

Die Evangelie is dat Christus in ons plek die vloek van die wet gedra het en die dood as die loon van die sonde ontvang het (Gal 3). Die wet het dus reeds sy loop geneem wat ons betref. Maar Paulus verduidelik ons situasie ook nog op 'n ander manier in Romeine 7:1-4. Die wet, sê hy, het net gesag oor 'n mens solank as hy lewe. Omdat ons saam met Christus aan die kruis gesterf het, het die wet geen vat meer op ons nie. Wat die wet betref, is ons dood. So min as wat die wet nog vir 'n dooie mens geld, geld dit vir ons as eis waaraan ons moet voldoen. Ons is by wyse van spreke onder die heerskappy van die wet weggehaal. Ons staan nie meer onder die wet nie.

F

So radikaal as wat Paulus dit sê, moet ons dit vir onself aanvaar. *Ons kan nie meer, nooit meer, deur die wet veroordeel word nie. Wat ons regverdiging voor God betref, wat ons verlossing betref, kan die wet heeltemal buite rekening gelaat word.* God neem ons sonder meer in genade aan. Die boek van die wet met sy beskuldiging teen ons is 'n geslote boek. Ons is werklik vry van die wet.

G

Maar daarmee is natuurlik nie alles gesê nie. Want om dood te wees saam met Christus beteken nie net dat ons *vrygemaak is van die wet* as veroordelende instansie nie, maar ook dat ons op 'n besondere manier *aan Christus verbind* is om voortaan vir Hom te lewe. Romeine 7:4 sê: "Julle behoort aan Hom wat uit die dood opgewek is. Daarom moet ons nou 'n vrugbare lewe lei in diens van God." Vers 6 sê dieselfde: "Ons staan nie meer onder die wet waardeur ons gebind was nie. Nou kan ons dien in die nuwe bedeling van die Gees, nie in die ou bedeling van die wetsvoorskrifte nie."

Daar staan in die Ou Testament 'n wonderlike belofte aangaande die nuwe verbond wat God met sy volk sal oprig, wanneer Hy hulle 'n nuwe hart en 'n nuwe gees sal gee en die kliphart uit hulle liggaam sal uithaal en aan hulle 'n hart van vleis sal gee: "Ek sal my Gees in julle gee en Ek sal maak dat julle volgens my voorskrifte leef en my bepalings gehoorsaam en nakom" (Eseg 36:27 ;vgl Jer 31:33). Dit is wat bedoel word met "die bedeling van die Gees" waar Paulus in ons teks praat.

Deur die Gees skryf God die wet op die tafels van ons hart. Die wet waarvan ons bevry is as veroordelende instansie, maar wat tog ons wesenswet is, kom terug, maar nou word daardie wet deur die *Gees* in ons binneste geplaas. Dit word geïnternaliseer. Daar ontstaan 'n *begeerte by ons om presies dit te doen wat die wet vra*. En hoe anders is dit nou! Die wet wat eens 'n veroordelende en verknegtende wet was, omdat ons dit misverstaan en verkeerd daarmee omgegaan het, word nou die volmaakte wet wat 'n mens vry maak, soos die apostel Jakobus sê (Jak 1:25).

*Dit maak ons vry, omdat dit vir ons die goeie weg aanwys waarop ons met vrymoedigheid voor God en mens mag wandel.

*Dit maak ons vry, omdat die voorskrifte daarvan presies pas op dit wat ons, volgens die drang van die Gees in ons harte, bedoel is om te wees.

Miskien ervaar u dit nog nie heeltemal so nie. Ons is nog so halfslagtig, so swak in ons geloof, so innerlik verdeeld. Maar in die geloof mag ons daaraan vashou dat dit werklik die waarheid aangaande ons is. En as ons die Gees vertrou om ons hoe langer hoe meer te maak wat ons in Christus reeds *is*, sal ons ook steeds meer

vry word om van harte God se wil te doen. Want waar die Gees van die Here is,
daar is vryheid!

1) The heading: "Vry van die Wet" indicates clearly that the "law" will be central to the sermon, appropriately so as it is also central to the text. The sermon seems to be structured as follows:

A: First a legalistic "abuse" of the "law" is to be corrected. A use that makes the "law" a "qualification" for salvation. This is contrasted with the use of the "law" as "leefreëls", the latter being the original intent of the lawgiver after the people were liberated from Egypt. This is very clearly the "third use" of the "law".

B: The legalistic abuse of the "law" is a faulty understanding by the "unsaved": "a test you have to pass". The result of this abuse is "to make sin even more" (quoting v. 7f) - "our sinful yearnings are awakened by the law".

C: The moralist abuse is described also as a rebellion against the "true intention" of the "law" - just a more refined way of abuse - obedience on the superficial level leading to pride and disdain against those who are not as good. This separates them (the Jews?) even further from God.

D: "Strange as it may sound" the sermon goes on, "salvation is only possible if we are liberated from the law". This announcement is therefore the climax of Paul's gospel. "In Christ we are set free from the law!" And then some explanations of this "liberation" are given:

- It does not mean that the "law" no longer expresses God's will.
- It does not mean that the "law" is no longer the "rule" by which our lives are judged. The "law" is still God's holy and eternal will.
- It does not mean that the "law" is abolished in any of its meaning.
- It (merely?) means that we are free from its damnation ("veroordeeling").

This last statement is now unfolded in three subsections:

- God does not judge us on the ground that we cannot keep the "law".
- Our right relationship with God does not depend on our ability to keep the "law".
- Our trespassing of the "law" is not brought into the question of our acceptance as children of God. This is a very clear formulation of the "**law**"
- "**gospel**" **dialectic** as based on Paul's theology.

E: The Christ-event is described as basis for our liberation from the "law". The "curse" of the "law" has been borne by Christ (Galatians 3) - the "law" has run its course. Using Romans 7,1-4 our death with Christ implies that "law" no longer has jurisdiction over us (**gospel** as liberation from the **law**).

F: And now the hearers are urged to apply this to themselves as "radically as Paul says it". The "law" does not come into the equation - God accepts us by grace. We are free from the "law".

G: Our "death with Christ" not only means freedom from judgement by the "law", but also a special binding to Christ in order to live for him (Romans 7,4). The Old Testament promise is recalled: heart of stone to be replaced with one of flesh (Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31). The Spirit writes God's "law" onto the tablets of our hearts - it is internalised, there creating a yearning in us to do precisely what the "law" asks. The judging or condemning "law" becomes the liberating "law" (James 1,25). (**third use**)

- It liberates because it shows us the way to live before God and humans.
- It liberates because its precepts fit precisely that which is put into our hearts by the Spirit, what we are meant to be.

Even against any experience to the contrary the hearers are urged to hold on to this as the truth about themselves. Trust the Spirit to make us into that, which we already are in Christ :- doing God's will.

Summarising this construction of thought one could say that the message of this sermon is: because you are free from the condemning "law" through Christ you can now live by the power of the Holy Spirit in the guidance of the "law".

(Criteria 2+3): The **second use** of the "law, that convinces us of our "sin" is in fact being used here. It is not clear whether this is the preacher's intention, because he mainly talks about the "law" enticing us to more sin which is only one aspect of the second use as defined by the reformers but this is probably conditioned by the text. The purpose of this second use is, however, clearly to establish the condition for the gospel to bring the **third use** into action - guiding the hearers through the Holy Spirit into a right living according to God's will.

This is a classic rendering of Reformed theology in my (pre-research) opinion. The "law" as God's original intention. The "gospel" as God's graceful intervention on our behalf because we cannot keep the "law". And then the "law" again as restored to its "proper" use: as a guideline that we **can** keep in the power of the Holy Spirit. A thorough analysis of reformed theology will need to verify the validity of my opinion. It may indeed be no more than an impression gained from my experience of reformed sermons.

4) Not many direct appeals are made - except at the end: to "trust that this is indeed our situation!" Indirectly the moral appeal of the "law" to righteous living is present throughout.

5) No practical "guidance" for life in the "real world" is given in this sermon.

Sermon 3 by Willie Jonker: *Nie meer slawe nie, maar kinders*. From: *Vreemde bevryding*. Lux Verbi, Kaapstad, 1989. Pages 40-47

Texts: Romans 8,1-4,12-16; and Galatians 4,3-7

Romeine 8:1-4, 12-16 en Galasiërs 4:3-7

A

Dit is 'n groot voorreg om binne die verbondskring gebore te wees en op te groei. Van kleins af word ons gedrenk in die weelde van Gods beloftes; ons ken die vreugde om in die geloof te mag wandel.

Ons word egter ook aan 'n groot gevaar blootgestel. Dit is die gevaar van gewoning: ons raak van kleins af so gewoon daaraan om die klanke van die Woord van God te hoor dat die volle inhoud en diepte daarvan nie tot ons deurdring nie. Dan mag ons wel dink dat ons weet wat die betekenis van die evangelie is, maar dikwels gaan dit tog aan ons verby en mis ons die vreugde wat daarin opgesluit lê

B

Een van die begrippe wat ons van kleins af ken en dikwels gebruik, is die begrip kinders van God. Dit is egter lank nie altyd seker dat ons die volle betekenis daarvan verstaan nie. As Paulus egter hierdie uitdrukking op sy lippe neem, is dit vir hom vol van varsheid van 'n nuwe ontdekking. Daarvan lê ons teksgedeelte 'n sprekende getuigenis af. Om iets te probeer weergee van wat in die uitsprake van Paulus oor die kindskap opgesluit lê, gebruik ons die drie begrippe: Status, geaardheid en mentaliteit.

C

Vir Paulus is die begrip "kinders van God" ten eerste 'n aanduiding van die nuwe status van diegene wat in Christus glo. As Jood het die kinderskap van God vir hom direk te make met God se belofte aan Abraham. In die Ou Testament word Israel meermale die kind of die seun van God genoem. Dit hang saam met die verbond wat God met Abraham en sy nakomelinge gesluit het. God se verbond beteken dat Hy vir Abraham en sy nageslag 'n God is en dat hulle sy volk is. Hy is vir hulle 'n Vader en hulle is sy kinders.

In hierdie sin kan Paulus in Romeine 9:4 ook sê dat God vir Israel "as sy kinders aangeneem" het. Die evangelie wat Paulus nou aan die heidene verkondig, is dat hulle deur Christus ook aan hierdie aanneming tot kinders deel ontvang het.

Hulle was vroeër ver van God af, sonder deel aan die verbonde en die belofte wat daarmee saamgehang het, sonder hoop en sonder God in die wêreld (Ef 2:12). Maar deur Christus het hulle "lede van die huisgesin van God" geword (Ef 2:19). In die prediking van die evangelie maak God aan hulle dieselfde belofte wat Hy aan Abraham en sy nageslag gemaak het en beveel Hy hulle om te glo dat Hy om Christus ontwil ook aan hulle en hulle kinders die vergifnis van hulle sondes geskenk het en hulle tot sy kinders en erfgename aangeneem het. Langs die weg van die geloof ontvang ons, wat van afkoms heidene is, die objektiewe status van kinders van God en huisgenote van die geloof.

Die hart van die evangelie is dat ons deur die bloed van Christus vrygekoop is uit die mag van die sonde, dat ons bevry is van die skuld en die straf daarvan, dat ons vrygemaak is van die vloek van die wet en die oordeel wat oor ons voltrek moes word, en dat ons uit louter genade, sonder enige prestasie of verdienste van ons kant, verlos is uit die mag van die duisternis en oorgebring is in die koninkryk van die Seun van Gods liefde. In Galasiërs 4:5 vat Paulus dit alles saam as hy skryf dat Christus ons losgekoop het om as kinders van God aangeneem te word.

God het ons ter wille van Christus as sy kinders aangeneem, Dit is die objektiewe werklikheid waarin ons gestel is, ons werklikheid in Christus, en dit word aan ons in die doop en die nagmaal beseël en bevestig. Daarom kan daar met reg in die formuliergebed ná die kinderdoop gesê word: "Ons dank U dat U ons en ons kinders deur die bloed van Jesus Christus van al ons sondes gereinig het en ons deur u Heilige Gees tot lidmate van sy gemeente ingelyf en tot u kinders aangeneem het".

Maak tot hierdie gebed u eie! Neem die belofte van God ernstig op. Glo dat u in Christus die status van 'n kind van God ontvang het, en dank God daarvoor!

D

Maar daarmee is die volle betekenis van die kindskap van die gelowiges nie uitgeput nie. Wat objektief in Christus waar is, word ook deur die Heilige Gees in ons lewe ingebring en aan en in ons subjektief waargemaak. Dat ons vrygespreek is van die sonde, dat ons sonde vergewe is, dit moet in ons lewe grondvat in die sin dat ons met die sonde breek, dat ons ook innerlik van die mag van die sonde vry word, dat die sonde nie meer oor ons heerskappy voer nie, en dat ons na die beeld van God vernuwe word.

Dit wil sê : die status van ons kindskap moet in die konkrete toestand van ons lewe gestalte kry, deurdat ons die geaardheid van ons hemelse Vader deelagtig word.

En inderdaad, Paulus verkondig dit ook as deel van die evangelie: wat Christus objektief gedoen het om ons te bevry, word subjektief in ons lewe voltrek deur die Heilige Gees. Aan hierdie waarheid is veral Romeine 8 gewy. Daarom is dit ook die hoogtepunt van die eerste gedeelte van hierdie brief waarin Paulus die afgrondelike sondigheid van alle mense skets, en die onmoontlikheid daarvan om deur die onderhouding van die wet te probeer om goed te lewe en God te behaag. Intendeel, in die lewe van die sondaar dien die wet eerder as 'n prikkel om nog meer sonde te doen, omdat ons sondige vlees juis dit graag wil doen wat God ons verbied. So word ons slawerny onder die sonde deur die wet net nog groter. Romeine 7 gee ons 'n verpletterende insig in hierdie waarheid, en dit loop dan ook uit op die noodkreet: "Ek, ellendige mens! Wie sal my van hierdie doodsbestaan verlos?" (vs 24).

As Paulus daarop antwoord, wys hy ons nie net op Jesus se soendood waardeur ons van die skuld van ons sonde vrygekoop is en die status van kinders van God ontvang het nie, maar ook op die Heilige Gees wat ons innerlik bevry van die mag van die sondige vlees en ons vernuwe om regtig in ons harte kinders van God te word.

Kyk maar na Romeine 8:2 - "Die wet van die Gees wat aan jou in Christus Jesus die lewe gee, het jou vrygemaak van die wet van sonde en dood". Die Heilige Gees maak ons werklik innerlik vry, tot diep binne in die verborge dieptes van ons onbewuste bestaan, deurdat Hy in ons kom woon.

Ook dit word egter ons eiendom langs die weg van die geloof. Paulus se hele betoog in Romeine 8 is 'n pleidooi by ons om ons aan die Gees te onderwerp, aan die Gees gehoorsaam te word, ons deur die Gees te laat lei. Dit is die weg waarlangs die vryspraak wat om Christus ontwil aan ons gegee is, in ons lewe word tot die vryheid om nie meer aan die sonde gehoorsaam te wees nie, maar te begin lewe soos 'n kind van God.

En as ons dit doen, sê Paulus, dan is ons kinders van God (vs 14). Die begrip "kind van God" kry hier dus 'n spesifieke betekenis. Dit gaan nie net om die

heilstand van die gelowiges waarin hulle deur Christus gestel is nie, maar ook om hulle karakter, om wat hulle nou reeds is. Hulle word ook subjektief en innerlik die lewe van Christus deelagtig. Wie hom deur die Gees laat lei, word ook in sy geaardheid 'n kind van God: hy handel soos 'n kind van God, dink soos 'n kind van God, redeneer soos 'n kind van God.

Iets van die karakter van die Vader word in sy kinders se lewe sigbaar. Weliswaar is dit gebrekkig, fragmentaries, voorlopig, maar dit is tog daar. En dit is steeds duideliker daar namate ons ons deur die Gees van God laat lei en nie meer probeer om in eie krag die wil van die Vader te doen nie. Waar die Gees van die Here is, daar is vryheid, vryheid om navolgers van God te word soos geliefde kinders (Ef 5:1).

E

Maar daarmee hang nou ook 'n derde nuanse van die begrip "kinders van God" saam. Dit is die nuanse van die gesindheid, die mentaliteit van 'n kind van God.

Ons verstaan dit die beste as ons na Israel kyk. Hulle het geprobeer om deur die wet soos kinders van God te word en te lewe, maar daardeur het hulle in 'n wettiese verhouding tot God te staan gekom. Hulle hele godsdiens het 'n saak van verdienste geword. En daardeur het hulle in 'n situasie van diensbaarheid aan die wet beland, waardeur hulle eerder die gesindheid en mentaliteit van slawe as dié van kinders ontwikkel het. 'n Slaaf staan nooit in 'n verhouding van vryheid en gemeenskap met sy heer nie, want sy lewe word beheers deur verpligtinge, knegskap en vrees.

Dink hier maar aan die gelykenis van die verlore seun, waarin Jesus, in die figuur van die oudste broer, die verhouding skets waarin Israel tot God gestaan het: harde werk en slaafse diens, maar sonder liefde tot die Vader en sonder om werklik soos 'n kind van die Vader teenoor Hom te voel en te reageer (Luk 15:25-32).

Paulus skryf in ons teks: "Die Gees wat aan julle gegee is, maak julle nie tot slawe nie en laat julle nie weer in vrees lewe nie; nee, julle het die Gees ontvang wat julle tot kinders van God maak en wat ons tot God laat roep: 'Abba!' Dit beteken 'Vader' (Rom 8:15). Paulus wil ons leer dat ons as kinders van God in die grootste vryheid en vrymoedigheid met God mag verkeer in die gesindheid van kinders.

In sy brief aan die Galasiërs kom Paulus weer op dieselfde tema terug en teken dan in die helderste kleure die teenstelling tussen die mentaliteit van diegene wat God soos slawe probeer dien deur wette en gebooie te probeer gehoorsaam, en diegene wat in Christus vrygemaak is en as kinders van God in liefde en dankbaarheid lewe (Gal 3:1-5:26). Die toppunt van sy uiteensetting is opnuut die wonderlike woord van ons teks: "En omdat ons sy kinders is, het God die Gees van sy Seun in ons harte gestuur, en in ons roep Hy uit: 'Abba!' Dit beteken: 'Vader!' (Rom 8:5b).

Luther noem die Vadernaam die vriendelike, soete, hartlike woord. Dit mag ons op ons lippe neem in diepe vertroue en dankbaarheid, wetende dat niks ons sal kan skei van die liefde van God in Christus Jesus nie. Paulus sê: "Die Gees getuig saam met ons gees dat ons kinders van God is" (vs 16). God wil dat ons hierdie vrymoedigheid moet hê, en daarom bevestig Hy dit deur sy Gees in ons harte.

F

Paulus beklemtoon dit veral teenoor die Joodse Christene wat wel Christus as hulle Verlosser aanvaar het, maar tog van oortuiging was dat 'n Christen nog

steeds daaraan gebonde is om die wette van die ou bedeling te onderhou. Hulle het hulle selfs daarvoor beywer om die Christene uit die heidendom daarvan te oortuig dat hulle besny moes word en op allerlei maniere weer die feestye en die reinigingswette, soos dit in die Ou Testament voorgeskryf word, te onderhou.

Maar daardeur word die evangelie in sy hart aangetas. Die vervulling van die wet word op hierdie manier tog weer 'n vereiste of minstens 'n newevereiste vir die redding, naas die geloof in Christus. Maar so kom die Christene weer onder die juk van diensbaarheid. Die vreugde en die sekerheid van die verlossing in Christus is dan daarmee heen. Die Christelike lewe word weer wetties, 'n lewe van "raak nie, smaak nie; roer nie aan nie" (vgl Kol 2:21). En die egte vryheid van Gods kinders bly in die slag, saam met die liefde wat die verhouding van die kinders tot die Vader moet bepaal.

Wie sal ontken dat dit die instelling van baie Christene is wat dikwels selfs voel dat hulle heiliger as ander is, omdat hulle so nougeset, so wetsgetrou, so toegewyd is - maar daarom dikwels ook so vreugdeloos is en van die egte vryheid van Gods kinders niks openbaar nie?

Paulus ontken nie dat die gelowige nog onder 'n verpligting staan om die goeie te doen nie. Hulle het geen verpligting meer teenoor die vlees om volgens hulle sondige natuur te lewe nie (Rom 8:12). Maar hulle staan ook nie onder 'n wettiese verpligting wat hulle weer tot slawe maak nie.

Wel staan hulle onder 'n verpligting teenoor die Gees wat hulle nie weer tot slawe maak nie, maar tot kinders wat vry en bly in die huis van die Vader is.

G
Mag God u hart so vervul met die wete dat u sy kind is dat u teenoor Hom in die liefde sal staan waarin daar geen vrees meer is nie., net wederliefde - en diepe dankbaarheid daarvoor dat Hy werklik ons Vader is. Ons het God immers lief, omdat Hy ons eerste liefgehad het (1 Joh 4:17 - 19).

1) Structure:

A: An introduction concerning the experience of many that have grown up in the "covenant" and are thus "used to" being part of the faith, and in danger of missing the depth of the meaning thereof.

B: "Children of God" is taken as one such concept, that we need to understand fully again. It encompasses three concepts: status (C); character (D); and mentality (E).

C: Theologically the indicative of the new *status* given in Christ is expounded. The hearers are called to own this "reality" in the prayer from the order of baptism quoted. (Clear **gospel** proclamation)

D: The objective *status* given to us in Christ now needs to be made a subjective reality by the Holy Spirit. This is part of Paul's preaching of the "gospel", that the Spirit does this. In reference to Romans 8 (and retrospectively Romans 7) the working of the "law" to incite us even more to sin is mentioned as part of this process (working of the Spirit) ending in the plea of Romans 7,24). Citing Romans 8,2 "law of Spirit liberating you of the law of sin and death" this happening is said to lead to the freedom not to sin anymore. This is the "*character*" of the children of God. (**gospel**)

E: Connected to the character there is another nuance that comes to the fore: the *mentality* of the children of God. Using the mentality of the people Israel as a negative example of a slave mentality to the "law" the preacher then describes the mentality of the children of God as being one of true children, that call God "Abba" (Romans 8,15). Reference is made to Galatians 3,1-5 and 26 to reiterate this opposition of the two different mentalities.

F: Then Paul's dispute with Jewish Christians that wanted to remain faithful to the "law" is also brought to bear on the issue. This is then also observed to be a faulty mentality of many Christians today, who think themselves to be holier than others because they are obedient to God's "law". The obligation to do good is not denied, but contrasted with the "freedom of children" to live in the father's house.

G: A closing wish that God would fill the hearer with the knowledge of being God's child - which would be free of fear and full of love and thankfulness, "we love because God loved us first" (1 John 4,17-19).

(Criteria 2+3): There is a clear distinction of "**law**" and "**gospel**" in this sermon, even a *separation* in the following sense: the "law" being the force that convicts us of sin (second use) and that entices us to more sin

(Romans 7) and opposed to this the “gospel” being the liberation from the “law”. The distinction becomes a separation especially in the depiction of Israel as “under the law” and the Christians as free from the “law”. This leaves no possibility of a “good use” of the “law”, except for a vague obligation to do good.

4) Appeals are made twice to the hearers to own the liberation that being made children of God brings or effects.

5) As a result of the radical separation of “law” from “gospel”, no guidance for living in the real world is given. This critical evaluation will need to be compared to an analysis of reformed theology and its systematisation of the terms “law” and “gospel”.

Sermon 4 by Flip Theron: *Die bediening van die versoening*. From: *Vreemde bevryding*. Lux Verbi, Kaapstad, 1989. Pages 87-95
Text: 2 Corinthians 5,16-20

Calvyn het by geleentheid na die predikant verwys as “die mannetjie verrese uit die stof”.

Ek het gedink dat dit goed sal wees om op hierdie Hervormingsondag hierdie stofmannetjie en sy werk so ‘n bietjie van naderby te bekyk. Die vraag wat ons gaan besig hou, lui: *Wat doen ‘n dominee nou eintlik?*

Ek ken mense wat hierdie vraag prettig sal vind. Nie geweet ‘n dominee doen eintlik iets nie! Daarteenoor is ander mense weer diep onder die indruk van die vol program van die predikant, Hulle vra nie wat doen die dominee nou eintlik nie, maar sê: Wat doen die man tog nie alles nie! Hy preek, doen huisbesoek, doen siekebesoek, troos mense by begrafnisse, vertel grappe by huweliksonthale. Wanneer hy die skool nie oopsluit nie, sluit hy hom toe, ensovoorts, ensovoorts.

Maar ook diegene wat grondig oortuig is van die veelvuldigheid en uiteenlopendheid van die verpligtinge van die predikant, mag wonder: Wat is nou eintlik die wese van die werk van ‘n dominee? Trouens, dit kan met die dominee self gebeur dat nadat hy die dag in alle windrigtings rondgehardloop het, hy die nag lê en rondrol en wonder: wat doen ek nou eintlik?

Die Reformatore het nie daarvoor getwyfel nie. Daarom het hulle die Roomse priester vervang met die Protestantse predikant. Wat sy eintlike taak is, het Paulus hulle vertel. Dit staan as opskrif bokant ons gelese perikoop, naamlik : *die bediening van die versoening*. In 2 Korintiërs 5:18 het ons dan ook gelees : “Dit alles is die werk van God. Hy het ons deur Christus met Homself versoen en

aan ons die bediening van die versoening toevertrou". Hierdie bediening van die versoening neem volgens Paulus die vorm aan van die bring van 'n boodskap. Parallel met die uitspraak aan die slot van vers 18, naamlik dat God aan ons die bediening van die versoening toevertrou het, lees ons aan die slot van vers 19: Die boodskap van versoening het Hy aan ons toevertrou.

Die Hervorming dink derhalwe aan die predikant primêr as 'n boodskapper. Daarom skryf die dominee die letters VDM(Verbi Divini Minister). *Bedienaar van die Woord van God*, agter sy naam. Die bediening van die versoening neem die gestalte aan van die bediening van 'n boodskap. En "die boodskap van die versoening bestaan daarin dat God deur Christus die wêreld met Homself versoen het en die mense hulle oortredinge nie toereken nie" (vs 19). God se versoening, sy vergifnis, sy vrypraak (vs 21), is die inhoud van die boodskap wat die dominee bedien.

Die feit dat die bediening van die versoening nou juis die gestalte aanneem van die bediening van die Woord (boodschap), is 'n aksent wat baie tipies is van die Hervorming. Die strydskreeu *sola Scriptura* (die Woord alleen) maak die Reformasie anders as die twee ander groot Christelike tradisies, naamlik die Oosters-Ortodokse Kerk en die Rooms-Katolieke Kerk. Nie die Woord nie, maar allerlei heilige handeling dien as bemiddeling van die heil in die Oosterse tradisie. 'n Ortodokse erediens is 'n geweldige indrukwekkende gebeurtenis. Die liturgie is 'n grootse Goddelike drama wat gepaard gaan met imponerende rituele. Die heilige kultus is die middel waardeur die mens met God en die heil verbind word. By Rome neem die bediening van die versoening veral die vorm aan van die bediening van die sakramente. Laasgenoemde is as 't ware gelaai met die krag van die heil. In die Roomse Kerk staan die altaar dan ook sentraal, met die preekstoel aan die kant.

In vergelyking met die Ortodokse Kerk en die Roomse (asook die Anglikaanse) Kerk is 'n gereformeerde kerkdiens maar onindrukwekkend, byna vervelig. Geen optogte, geen klokkes, geen kerse. Dit is so sober dat die risiko van aan die slaap raak aansienlik is. Die gereformeerdes het die preekstoel verskuif van die sy na die sentrum. En op die preekstoel het hulle die Boek geplaas. En agter die Boek nie 'n priester nie - dié vind jy by 'n altaar - maar 'n mannetjie, 'n stofmannetjie. In sommige gereformeerde kringe word hy soms wel nog 'n toga aangetrek, maar dit is sommers net om hom toe te maak en nie om hom op te tooi nie. (Altans, ek hoop so. Die toga is in elk geval aan die verdwyn. Dan word ons liturgie nog minder indrukwekkend, maar waarskynlik meer gereformeerd. Optooisels pas in elk geval sleg by 'n stofmannetjie). En hierdie mannetjie, verrees uit die stof, bedien aan ons die Woord.

Selfs die sakramentsbediening het die Hervorming eintlik as Woordbediening verstaan. Hulle het hul daarvoor beroep op Augustinus wat die sakrament 'n sigbare preek genoem het. 'n Mens sien soms die bloemiste adverteer hulle produkte met die slagspreuk: Sê dit met *blomme*". Toe God ons op Golgota vrygespreek het, het Hy dit eens en vir altyd gesê met *bloed*. Maar elke nagmaal sê Hy dit nog weer met *brood*. En elke Sondag sê Hy dit nog weer met die *Boek*. En die stofmannetjie wat die *blye Boodschap* bedien.

B

Nou wil ek graag u aandag vra vir die woord *bedien*. Ek meen die dominee se beroep is die enigste waarvan ons praat as 'n *bediening*. Wanneer hy die dag aftree, praat ons van sy geseënde bediening. Ons noem hom mos 'n bedienaar van die Woord. Ons is al so gewoond daaraan dat dit nie meer vreemd val op ons ore nie. Maar waarom gebruik ons in hierdie verband die woord *bediening*? Hoe bedien jy 'n woord?

Hoe bedien jy versoening? Kos, ja, dit word bedien. Ons praat van die gehalte van die tafelbediening in 'n restaurant.

Tog interessant dat die woord "bediening" wat Paulus gebruik, ook gebruik is vir die werk van 'n tafelbediende. Destyds was dit 'n baie nederige werk. 'n Tafelbediende was ook maar 'n stofmannetjie. Dit mag ons help om die werk van 'n dominee beter te verstaan.

Wat aan tafel bedien word, is klaar gereed gemaak. Die werk van 'n kok is heeltemal anders as die werk van 'n kelner. Wat die kelner bedien, is elders deur iemand anders berei. Dit geld ook vir die versoening wat Paulus bedien. Hy het dit nie bewerk nie. "Dit alles is die werk van God. Hy het ons deur Christus met Homself versoen"(vs 18). Wat God in die vuur van Golgota berei het, bedien Paulus nou: die versoening, die vergifnis, die vrysprak. Wat God gedoen het, deel Paulus nou uit. Dalk moet ons as dominees die grappie dat ons niks doen nie, meer geniet. Want eintlik is dit waar: "Dit alles is die werk van God". Op Golgota het Christus gejubel: Dit is volbring! Daarom lê die Reformasie klem op die sola Scriptura, die Woord alleen. Omdat alles reeds volbring is, kan God se daad nog net verkondig word. Wat Christus volbring het, kan nog net vertel word. Sy versoening kan nog net toegesê word. Sy verdienste kan nog net bedien word.

Daar was in 'n stadium hier in ons land 'n TV-reeks *Lottery*. Dit het gehandel oor die werk van twee jong mans wat by 'n lotery gewerk het waar mense miljoene rande kon wen. Hulle het die heerlike taak gehad om aan die wenners die blye boodskap te bring. Kan u u voorstel hoe het die twee se gesigte gelyk wanneer hulle met die goeie tyding by die huis aankom? Ek het gedink: Sò moet 'n VDM se gesig lyk. Dit het 'n mens herinner aan die woorde van Jesaja 52:7 wat deur Paulus in Romeine 10:15 op die verkondiger van die evangelie (blye boodskap) van toepassing gemaak word: "Hoe lieflik is op die berge die voete van hom wat die goeie boodskap bring, wat vrede laat hoor, wat goeie tyding bring, wat verlossing uitroep; wat aan Sion sê: Jou God is Koning!" Dit is die eintlike werk van 'n dominee. Hy is 'n vreugdebode.

Ongelukkig is die aard van die verkondiging kort na die Hervorming nie meer verstaan nie. Die preek is toe nie meer verstaan as bediening van die volbragte versoening nie, maar dit het ontaard in 'n godsdienstige praatjie. En van alle praatjies is daar niks so vervelig soos 'n vroom praatjie nie. Die preek het die vorm begin aanneem van godsdienstige informasie, goeie advies, selfs ernstige vermaning en aansporing tot wat jy moet doen om met God in die reïne te kom. Hoogstens is die preek nog verstaan as allerlei mededelings oor die heil, maar nie meer (soos die Reformasie dit bedoel het) as mededeling van die heil nie.

Dit hou verband daarmee dat die Bybel as Woord van God verstaan is as 'n bron van allerlei godsdienstige inligting. Dat God ons sy woord gegee het, beteken vir dié wat dit sò sien dat Hy vir ons allerlei informasie gegee het wat jy nie elders kan gaan naslaan nie. Die Bybel ontaard sò tot 'n handboek. Om van 'n handboek te sing: "God het ons sy Woord gegee, en die Woord bly ewig waar", is egter maar moeilik. Maar ons kan wel daarvoor sing, omdat Hy, wanneer Hy ons sy Woord gee, dit doen op dieselde wyse waarop 'n bruidegom sy woord gee vir sy bruid. Sò gee God in die Bybel "sy Woord"! Dit gebeur ook in die Woordverkondiging: God se vergifnis word u toegesprek. Onder die preek word jy vrygesprek, as u wil: vrygesprek. Wie preek, hou immers nie 'n praatjie nie, maar hy bedien die versoening. Soos tydens nagmaal: Neem, eet, dit is my liggaam; dit is my bloed. Volgens Calvin drup dan ook saam met die stem van die prediker, die bloed van Christus op ons neer. Joseph Parker het gesê:

Preaching is shedding of blood. Hy is reg. Net maar: dit is nie die dominee se bloed nie.

Die prediker vertel jou nie wat jy moet doen om gered te word nie; hy vertel jou wat God gedoen het vir jou redding. Jy kan dit nie verdien nie; dit word aan jou bedien. Jy kan dit nie bewerk nie; jy kan dit net maar ontvang. Jy kan net daarvoor dankie sê, of daarvoor bedank. Jy kan dit net aanvaar, of dit laat vaar. Paulus smeek dat ons tog sal aanvaar wat hy bedien. "Ons tree dus op as gesante van Christus, en dit is God wat deur ons 'n beroep op julle doen. Ons smeek julle namens Christus: Aanvaar die versoening met God wat Hy bewerk het!" (2 Kor 5:20).

Dit is geloof. Die sola Scriptura (die Woord alleen) korrespondeer met die Reformatoriese sola fide (geloof alleen). Al wat jy met God se Woord, sy boodskap, kan doen, is: jy kan Hom op sy Woord neem, of Hom verwerp. Ongelukkig verstaan mense dikwels nie die verband tussen die Woord alleen en die geloof alleen nie. Onbewustelik dink hulle die geloof is my aandeel aan die versoening. Dit bring mee dat hulle hulself probeer red deur hulle geloof. Wanneer 'n mens egter jouself probeer red deur enigiets: jou goeie werke, jou godsdien, ja, ook jou geloof, glo jy nie God se Woord nie. Wie werlik glo, hou op om homself op enige manier (sy bekering, sy wedergeboorte, sy geloof) te probeer red. Hy neem God op sy Woord. Hy aanvaar dat Christus se versoening genoeg is vir al sy sondes - ook vir sy ongeloof. Hy glo Paulus die stofmannetjie. Hy glo God!

D

Hierdie goeie tyding gee hom vreugde. God se vryspraak maak hom vry. Die blye boodskap maak hom bly. En wie bly is, gee daar blyke van.

Ek het netnou verwys na vrolike gesigte van die twee jong mans uit die TV-reeks *Lottery*. Dis nog niks. U moes die gesigte sien van die ontvangers van die blye boodskap. O, dit was pret. Hoe hagliker hulle situasie was, hoe prettiger was dit. Eers hoor hulle nie regtig nie. Dan hoor hulle, maar hulle kan nie hulle ore glo nie. (Dit is immers nooit maklik om 'n goeie tyding te glo nie. Dit is te goed om waar te wees, sê ons.) Dan is hul gesigte pure verbystering. En dan gaan hulle deur die dak. Jy vrees hulle rand die vreugdebodes aan van pure uitbundigheid. O, die vrolikheid, o, die saligheid. Hoe sing ons nou weer? "Diep was ons verlore, Christus is gebore. Juig nou, juig nou!"

Dit het komplete gelyk asof die ontvangers van die goeie tyding nuwe mense was, asof hulle weer gebore was. Dit herinner aan wat Paulus hier skryf in 2 Korinthiërs 5:17: Iemand wat aan Christus behoort, is 'n nuwe mens (letterlik: nuwe skepping). Interessant die woord wat Paulus gebruik vir nuut. Daar was twee woorde wat hy kon oorweeg, naamlik *neos* en *kainos*. *Neos* beteken: nuut in die tyd. Dit dui op iets wat nog nie lank daar is nie. Paulus kies egter vir *kainos*. Dit beteken: nuut in hoedanigheid. Dit dui nie maar net op iets wat nog nie lank daar is nie, maar wel op iets wat nog nooit daar was nie. Dit is nuut in die sin van verrassend, ongehoord. Hierdie nuut staan radikaal teenoor oud, soos lig teenoor duisternis, nuwe skepping teenoor ou skepping, koninkryk van God teenoor die koninkryk van hierdie wêreld. Die 1953-vertaling vervolg dan ook:....die ou dinge (d.w.s. Die ou wêreld) het verbygegaan, kyk (hoor u die verrassing?), dit het alles nuut geword.

E

Want hierdie versoening wat die dominee bedien, is nie maar net 'n individuele saak nie. God se versoeningswoord, net soos sy skeppingswoord, skep 'n nuwe wêreld waarin nuwe norme, 'n nuwe gedragswyse, geld. Dit kom skerp na vore in vers 16: Ons beoordeel dus van nou af niemand meer volgens menslike maatstaf

nie. Dit wil sê ons meet mense nou nie meer volgens die norme van die ou skepping nie.

Die kerkvader Augustinus het die koninkryk van God en die koninkryk van hierdie wêreld teenoor mekaar gestel as die koninkryk van nederigheid teenoor die koninkryk van hoogmoed. In die koninkryk van hoogmoed word mense beoordeel volgens menslike maatstaf, met ander woorde, volgens menslike prestasie; in die koninkryk van nederigheid word mense beoordeel volgens genade, of soos die Hervormers sê: sola gratia (genade alleen). In die koninkryk van hoogmoed word mense beoordeel volgens stand en status, ras en klas, grootheid en godsdienstigheid; in die koninkryk van nederigheid geld Galasiërs 3:28: Dit maak nie saak of iemand Jood of Griek, slaaf of vry, man of vrou is nie: in Christus Jesus is julle almal een. Trouens, in die koninkryk van nederigheid bestaan daar 'n uitgesproke voorkeur vir sondears en tollenaars, vir blindes en bedelaars. Terwyl in die koninkryk van hoogmoed ons sonde en ellende ons uit mekaar dryf, bind dit ons juis saam in die koninkryk van nederigheid. Want hoogmoed verdeel, maar God se versoening versamel.

Dit is dan ook gepas dat die Goddelike versoening in die kerk aan ons bedien word deur 'n stofmannetjie.

1) This sermon, being held on Reformation Day 1988, is thematically introduced as dealing with the question of "the Word" as it is "used" by preachers. This question gives it the inner structure.

A: Introducing the main question, informed by the Reformation day context, the preacher asks: What does a preacher actually do? Many answers are given concerning the tasks of the pastor as seen by others and by him/herself. But again the question is repeated. Then referring to the Reformers the sermon sees no doubt about the matter. Taking the "heading" of the sermon pericope (especially 2 Cor 5,18), the answer clearly must be: "The ministry of reconciliation". Then the sermon moves back to the Reformation emphasis on the "word" and the preacher being a "Verbi Divini Minister" argues that Verses 19 and 21 must be the core of the message. A clear distancing from the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox tradition in this regard is made. In contrast to these other traditions the Reformation Church's liturgy, architecture, title for the minister and even ministry of the sacraments all can be seen to emphasise the centrality of the "word".

B: The question of the sermon now centres around the term “ministry” (“bediening”) and some exegetical remarks that the word Paul uses also refers to the work of “serving at table” are given. The fact that what is served at table is already prepared and complete, and that someone else has done this is given great emphasis. Using a TV series called “Lotery” the “joy” of “serving” reconciliation from God is described.

C: The sermon now laments that somehow this understanding of preaching was lost soon after the Reformation. Preaching became a religious task, information, advice, motivation to do something etc. Concomitant with this change came the understanding of Scripture as a source book of religious information. The hearers are brought back to the understanding of preaching as a “giving of the word” as a bridegroom does to his bride. It is the proclamation of actual reconciliation. Then a clear distinction is made between what happens in preaching as a pure proclamation on the one hand and the “usual” way of seeing preaching as telling people what to do to be saved. Referring to 2 Corinthians 5,20 the question is posed: What is the connection between sola scriptura and sola fide? Answer: It is faith in God and not faith in your faith. God’s reconciliation is complete, it even covers your unbelief. (gospel)

D: This brings joy - it changes those completely that hear this good news. With reference to 2 Corinthians 5,17 they are to be seen as a new creation. This “new” is radical.

E: This is not merely an individual matter, it concerns a new world with new norms and values (verse 16). Augustine’s distinction between kingdom of lowliness (“nederigheid”) and the kingdom of haughtiness (“hoogmoed”) is conveyed. In the latter people are judged by their human successes etc. In the former according to “sola gratia”, which means there are no differences that should influence the judgement in any way (Galatians 3,28). Mention

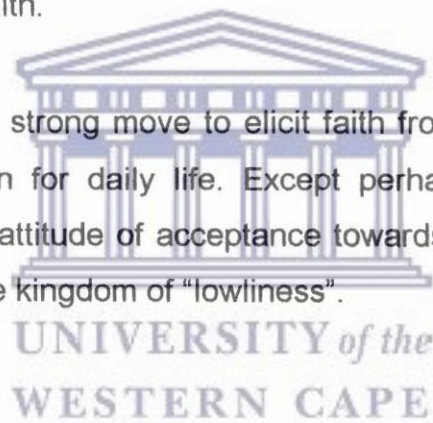
of the preferential option of God for sinners etc. is made in conclusion and thus it is deemed good that such a message be proclaimed by a "little man of dust" (Calvin's comment also cited at the beginning of the sermon).

2) The terms "law" and "gospel" are not explicitly used but implicitly the distinction is guiding and informing the whole sermon.

3) The three uses of the "law" are not in the viewer of this sermon, though the last part of it could be seen as implicitly expressing the **third use**.

4) Appeals are not made but the sermon does argue strongly for a certain understanding of the gospel that expects or implies a certain reaction from the hearers viz. faith.

5) Apart from the strong move to elicit faith from the hearers no practical guidance is given for daily life. Except perhaps in the last part which implies a certain attitude of acceptance towards others that are "different" yet included in the kingdom of "lowliness".



Sermon 5 by Johan Cilliers: *Die aanhef: Tussen genade en gebod*. From: Voorskrif vir vryheid; Oordenkings en Bybelstudie oor die Tien Gebooie (Eksodus 20,1-17). Lux Verbi, Kaapstad, 1991. Pages 13-18
Text: Exodus 20,1-2

A

In 'n klooster in Wittenberg sit hy alleen, vooroorgeboë in diep bepeinsing oor 'n sekere skrifgedeelte. Een vraag brand in sy gemoed: *Waar vind ek 'n God?* Die jaar: ongeveer 1513. Die skrifgedeelte: Romeine 1:17. Die man: 'n toegewyde monnik, genaamd Martin Luther. Maar laat hom self vertel van sy ervaring op die betrokke dag:

“Die woorde ‘regverdig’ en ‘geregtigheid van God’ het deur my gewete geblits. Ek het geskrik. As God regverdig is, dan moet Hy straf. Toe ek eendag in hierdie toring (van die Wittenbergse klooster) nadink oor die woorde van Romeine 1.17, ‘die regverdige sal uit die geloof lewe’, en die ‘geregtigheid van God’, het ek meteens besef: As ons as regverdige uit die geloof moet lewe, en as die geregtigheid van God vir elkeen wat glo tot heil moet word, kan dit nie ons verdienste wees nie, maar enkel en alleen die barmhartigheid van God. So is my gees verkwik. Want die geregtigheid van God bestaan daarin dat ons deur Christus geregverdig en verlos word. Toe het die woorde vir my lieflik geword. In hierdie toring het die Heilige Gees aan my die Skrif geopenbaar”.

Wat Martin Luther op daardie dag herontdek het, was die kosbare leerstuk van die genade, dat die verlossing naamlik “enkel en alleen” deur die barmhartigheid van God geskied, “enkel en alleen” deur sy genade.

Genade. Dit is 'n woordjie wat ons - veral ons as kinders van die Hervorming! - goed ken en goed behoort te ken. Dis een van die vernaamste woorde in ons Christelike woordeskat. Ons hoor dit van kindsbeen af in die kerk. In die prediking, in die liturgie, in Bybelstudiegroepe en Christelike gesprekke. Ons gebruik dit dikwels in ons teologie, getuienisse en gebede. Ja, in die kerk groei ons as't ware in en met die “Genade” op.

En dit hoort ook so. Want met hierdie woord het ons tog by die hartklop van die evangelie gekom, ja, by die hartklop van die wese van God self, want: “Barmhartig en genadig is die Here, lankmoedig en vol liefde” (Ps 103:8). Met hierdie woord het ons die diepste rede en enigste grond vir ons bestaan en voortbestaan uitgespreek.

Waarlik, as dit nie vir die genade was nie, was ons ook nie. Veral nie in die kerk nie. Dink mooi. Wat is dit anders as genade wat ons so ver gebring het, ook deur die donker dieptes van ons lewens heen, tot by hierdie oomblik? En wat is dit anders as genade wat ons verder sal neem, ook deur die trane van die toekoms heen? Wat is dit anders as genade dat die goeie werk wat God in ons begin het end-uit gevoer en voleindig sal word op die dag wanneer Christus Jesus kom? (Fil 1:6) Ons sing mos in die kerk daarvan en tereg, ons moet daarvan sing, mag daarvan sing, kan daarvan sing:

*Alles, alles is genade
Onverdiende guns alleen
Die verlossing uit die kwade
Kan net U, o God, verleen....
-Ges 226:1*

B

Juis daarom is dit so ironies dat hierdie alombekende en veelgebruikte woord juis een van die woorde in die Christelike woordeskat is wat die meeste misverstaan en selfs misbruik word. Feitlik alle ketterye en dwalinge hou op die een of ander wyse verband met 'n verkeerde begrip van die genade. Dit kan baie vorme aanneem. Dit kan byvoorbeeld wees dat ons dinge by die genade voeg wat nie

daar hoort nie, dat ons plustekens op die genade vasplak, omdat ons nie wil aanvaar dat ons van nature so boos is dat ons genade nodig het nie. Genade stuit ons teen ons sondige bors. Ons stamp ons "onafhanklike" kop daarteen. Ons reken dat ons darem 'n teenprestasie voor God kan lewer, dat ons onself darem 'n ent weg na God toe kan opdomkrag.

Ons redeneer so: genade help diegene wat hulleself help. Of meer subtiel: die genade help ons so dat ons onself nou verder kan help. Dan is die bydrae van die genade moontlik vyftig persent, maar ons s'n is ook (ten minste) vyftig persent....

Ons kan natuurlik ook elemente uit die genade wegneem wat wesenlik daartoe behoort: ons kan dit halveer en verskraal. Dan redeneer ons soos volg: As alles dan genade is, vra dit tog geen gehoorsaamheid van my kant nie. Laat ek dan maar eet en drink en vrolik wees, want God sal vergeef. Voltaire het presies dit gesê: "God sal vergeef, dit is mos sy werk. Hy is mos die Hoof van die Departement van Vergifnis!" So kan ons die genade goedkoop maak. Die Duitse teoloog Dietrich Bonhoeffer het hieroor 'n aangrypende boek geskryf: *Nachfolge* (navolging) Hierin sê hy onder meer die volgende: "Goedkoop genade is prediking van die vergifnis sonder verootmoediging; doop sonder die tug van die gemeente, nagmaal sonder belydenis van sonde; absolusie sonder persoonlike bieg. Goedkoop genade is genade sonder navolging, genade sonder kruis, genade sonder die lewende, mensgeworde Jesus Christus..."

C

Maar wat is genade dan? Wat beteken die woord waarin die hartklop van die evangelie saamgevat word? Ek dink ons kan aanvoel dat dit 'n genade, 'n veelseggende woord is. Dat dit menslik gesproke en oënskynlik selfs "teenstrydige" elemente kan bevat. Aan een kant beteken genade ontspanning, rus in die barmhartigheid van God, omdat ek weet dat daar in my geen greintjie goedheid is wat voor God kan regverdig nie. Ja, "nóg gebede nóg geweens kan my red, Heer; U alleen" (Ges. 192:2). Aan die ander kant beteken genade inspanning, roep dit op tot gehoorsaamheid, is trouens 'n onontbeerlike uitvloeisel van genade. Geloof wat nie tot daad kom nie, is tog dood! (Jak 2:26). Genade sê: Dis honderd persent God se werk, en honderd persent ons werk!

Op min plekke sien ons dit so duidelik as juis hier in die inleiding en aanhef tot die tien gebooe. "Toe het God al hierdie gebooe aangekondig: Ek is die Here jou God wat jou uit Egipte, uit die plek van slawerny, bevry het. Jy mag naas My geen ander gode hê nie...." Voordat daar sprake is van gehoorsaamheid aan die kant van Israel, spreek God hulle in genade aan. God neem die inisiatief. Hy voer in die eerste plek die woord. Hy deurbreek die swye. Hy tree in 'n verhouding met Israel en dra hierdie verhouding deur sy woord. Voordat Israel daar was, was Hy. Voordat Israel 'n woord kon uiter, sê Hy: "Ek is..." Voordat Israel as volk gevorm is, "toe het God..."

Eksegete is van mening dat dit die eerste keer is dat God sò direk met Israel praat. Hulle het voorheen wel van Hom gehoor, Hom sien handel. Maar nou spreek Hy hulle persoonlik aan. Nou ontmoet Hy hulle - uit genade. God praat met sy volk! En hoe praat Hy nie! Die gode - die ganse aarde - moet swyg. Alle ander aansprake verstom. Op Sinai is daar donderslae, weerlig, vuur en rook. Niemand kan hom of haar hiermee misgis nie; God praat!

Wel was so 'n aanhef nie 'n vreemde element vir Israel nie. In die staatverdrae van die Ou Nabye Ooste tref 'n mens soortgelyke inleidings aan: Voordat die groot Koning kom met sy stipulasies stel hy hom bekend en herinner hy mense aan sy vorige weldade. Israel het geweet dat dit die Groot Koning by uitnemendheid is wat hulle in die tien gebooe aanspreek, dat die gebooe binne die verbondskonteks vir hulle 'n besondere betekenis het, en dat dit moes dien as koninkryksadministrasie. Sò word God se koninkryk geleef!

Kyk, dat God hoegenaamd met ons praat, is nie vanselfsprekend nie. Dat Hy met ons praat is die suising van die wind en die bruising van die

branders, is genade. Dat Hy veral met ons praat deur sy Woord en sy Gees, deur die prediking, erediens en sakrament, is genade op genade. Wie maar net iets hiervan begryp, moet gehoorsaam wees, ja, wil gehoorsaam antwoord...

Hierby hou dit egter nie op nie. Want God praat nie maar net soos ons dikwels praat nie. Sy stem galm nie op aarde soos oor 'n megafoon nie. Nee, wanneer Hy praat, is Hy self daarby. In sy woorde kom Hy self tot ons. Sy woorde beliggaam Homself. Hy openbaar sy naam, dit wil sê sy diepste wese, aan ons. Sy Naam is: "die Here jou God". Sommige uitleggers vertaal: "Ek, die Here, is jou God..." "Hoe ons ook al die klem plaas, die troos is onmiskenbaar: *jou* God wat *jou* uit Egipte...God waag dit in 'n intieme verhouding met sy volk, Hy gee Homself in sekere sin aan hulle prys. Hy is God!

Dié Een wat Homself aan ons openbaar, wat ons God is, is dus nie 'n X-faktor in die heelal nie, nie 'n statiese begripstelsel of 'n menslike filosofie nie, nie die mistiek van skepping en natuur, of die opwelling van die vroom menslike gemoed nie, maar 'n *persoon*. Met 'n *Naam*. Vol *Liefde*. 'n *Vader*. Hy is weliswaar die God van Abraham, Isak en Jakob, maar ook die God en Vader van ons Here Jesus Christus, en daarom *ons* God en Vader. God se woord het in Christus mens geword, is in Hom letterlik beliggaam, sodat ons kan sê: ons Vader! Ja, wie veral iets hiervan begryp, moet antwoord, wil gehoor gee en gehoorsaam wees...

D

Maar ook hier hou dit nie op nie. Want waar God sò praat, waar Hy Homself sò uit-praat, volg bevryding vir dié wat hoor. God maak geskiedenis, *heilsgeskiedenis, bevrydingsgeskiedenis*. Hy is immers die Een wat Israel uit Egipte, *uit die plek van slawerny, bevry het*. Die opskrif bo die tien gebooe sou daarom kon lui: *Voorskrif vir vryheid!*

Die woord "vryheid" of "bevryding" is tans in die lug. Soos "genade" is dit ook 'n veelgebruikte term. Mense praat van "bevrydingsbewegings", van "vryheidsvegters", van 'n eerste, tweede en derde "vryheidstryd", ensovoorts. God se bevryding het beslis veel ten opsigte van en vir menslike vryheidstrewes en vryheidsideale te sê. Maar ons kan dit nie summier en klankloos identifiseer nie. Israel se bevryding uit Egipte was byvoorbeeld veel meer as bloot 'n politieke bevryding onder die hiel van Egiptenaars uit. Dit was ook veel meer as 'n ekonomiese bevryding tot 'n beter bedeling of 'n geografiese bevryding en verskuiwing na 'n nuwe "vaderland". Dit was 'n unieke bevryding, 'n bevryding tot 'n *nuwe identiteit*, naamlik om volk van God te wees. Dit sluit daarom ook in die bevryding van sonde, van die slawebande en die slawehuis van sonde. Hierdie bevryding is *verlossing*, in die omvattendste sin van die woord.

Dis ook 'n bevryding tot *diensbaarheid*. God maak ons nie vry om losbandig te wees nie. Hy maak ons vry vir Homself...en vir ons medemens. Dié vryheid vloei oor in gehoorsaamheid. Die genade roep om die gebod. Dis daarom nie toevallig nie dat dieselfde Martin Luther wat die genoegsaamheid van die genade vir die kerk herontdek het, altyd, en daarmee saam, die klem geplaas het op die gehoorsaamheid aan die navolging van Christus. Wanneer Luther een van sy mooiste geskrifte skryf, *Die vryheid van 'n Christen*, wys hy daarop dat ware vryheid altyd vryheid tot diensbaarheid is - aan God (die eerste tafel van die wet) en aan die medemens (die tweede tafel). Ja, wie deur God bevry word, word geroep om die gebod van liefde te vervul. Dit kan nie anders nie!

E

Dit tref my telkens weer hoe naatloos die "verbinding" tussen *genade* en *gebod* in die aanhef tot die tien gebooe verloop. Daar is geen pousering nie, geen ongemaklike stilte in God se aankondiging nie. Sonder 'n ripling vloei dit aaneen, pas dit inmekaar: "Ek is die Here jou God wat jou uit Egipte, uit die plek van slawerny, bevry het. Jy mag naas My geen ander gode hê nie..." Want so is dit: wie die genade hoor en begryp, moet, mag, *kàn* die gebod vervul! Dis nie

opsioneel nie, dis deel van die pakket van genade, deel van die hartklop van die evangelie!

Dat dit tog weer by ons Wittenberg kan word! Dat dit tog deur ons gewetes blits en ons deur die Gees van die Skrif verlig word! Dat dit sò by ons Wittenberg word dat ons gehoorsaam en diensbaar word. Dat ons genade ontvang om die genade te verstaan. Miskien is dit die grootste genade van alles....

1) This sermon is part of a series covering the 10 commandments in detail, so in a sense it is unfair to take only one of the sermons for our analysis. However looking at this one sermon does bring out certain theological dynamics ("grace" and "law") very clearly. It can be structured as follows:

A: Using Luther's breakthrough experience of "grace" as an introduction, the preacher homes in on the concept of grace being our gospel lifeblood in the church. (**explained gospel**)

B: Ironically this very central word of our faith is one of the most misunderstood ones. Nearly all heresies basically involve a "wrong" understanding of "grace". Some examples are mentioned:

- Where grace *and* something else is needed.
- Where grace is the *initiator* but the people then have to do the work of salvation with its help.
- Where something is *subtracted* from grace, making it "cheap grace" (Bonhoeffer).

C: What does it mean then? The preacher gives an answer that poses grace as a term of dynamic tension. E.g. "Rest" and "action", total passivity on the one hand and total obedience on the other. And now the text (Exodus 20,1-2) is brought into view, focussing on the idea that here we have exactly this dynamism of grace present in these words. God is the initiator, the liberator etc. God meets his people and speaks to them - this is grace. God insists that He is the God of these people - this is grace.

D: But then God does not stop there, he initiates a liberation history for his people, they are to be freed from the slavery in Egypt. "Freedom" as

buzzword is looked at and the liberation that is meant by the text contrasted to it. It is deemed to be much more. A new identity for the people of God, salvation in the most encompassing sense. It is also liberation for service. God frees us for Himself and for our "co-humans". This flows into obedience, calls to rally us around the commandments. Luther's call to obedient discipleship as a result of salvation by grace is cited (ref to his famous work on the "Freedom of the Christian") and therefore freedom is always to be seen as a freedom for service (**gospel - third use**).

E: Concluding with a reiteration of the seamless connection between "grace" and "commandment" in the text, the preacher says: "He who hears and grasps this grace must, may, can fulfil the commandments." This is not optional but "part of the package", and thus an appeal is made for it to become "Wittenberg" again among us, in such a way that we become obedient and ready for service. This intimate connection between "gospel" and "law" is already made clear by the title of the book: "Voorskrif vir Vryheid" (Prescription for Freedom).

2) In referring to Luther's "grace experience" the preacher touches on the original dynamic distinction between "law" and "gospel", but then homes in on grace and its effects, thus bringing in a different dynamic, one between "**gospel**" and the "**third use**" of the "law" as a natural and obligatory outflowing of grace.

3) In a sense the "first and second uses" of the "law" do not feature in this sermon. Although the "**second use**" is implicit in Luther's experience, it is not clear whether the preacher is aware of this for the purposes of the sermon.

4) The **appeal and expectation** is very clearly made: "That it become Wittenberg" again among us. "Grace" and the "third use" of the "law" are brought together into an ontological union. This is to my understanding not exactly what the "Wittenberg experience" of Luther signifies. Luther learned to distinguish "law" (its second use) from "gospel" and this implies a strong, indeed nearly irreconcilable antithesis between "grace" and "commandment", which is totally absent from this sermon.

5) No practical guidance for living in the "real world" is given in this sermon, but hearers are left to work out the practical consequences of this sermon for their own lives.

Sermon 6 by Johan Taute: Versoening as roeping van die kerk. From: Seisoen vir versoening; Teologiese riglyne en preke oor die bediening van die versoening. Lux Verbi, Kaapstad, 1993. Pages 58-65

Text: 2 Corinthians 5,11-21

4. Versoening as roeping van die kerk

2 Kor 5:11-21: *Dit alles is die werk van God. Hy het ons deur Christus met Homself versoen en aan ons die bediening van die versoening toevertrou (vers 18).*

2 Kor. 5:11-21 vorm deel van die groter verband van 2 Kor. 5:1-6:10 wat handel oor die *inhoud* van die apostoliese boodskap. Die kern van hierdie boodskap is die *bediening van die versoening* (5:18-19). Dit volg op die res van die perikoop waarin beskrywe word dat Christus se sterwe die versoening bewerk het (v14-15) en dat diegene wat in Christus is, deel is van die nuwe "skepping" (v17). In hierdie gedeelte vind ons 'n skets van *God se versoeningsprogram* vir mens en wêreld.

A

Uit die vorige preke behoort dit duidelik te wees wat die omvang van die versteurde verhoudinge is waarvoor die versoeningswerk van Christus die oplossing wil bied. Die sonde wat die gebrokenheid veroorsaak het, is naamlik veel meer as persoonlike *skuld*. Dit is ook 'n *mag* met allerlei vernietigende *gevolge* vir die mens, die kerk en die wêreld. Die sonde is die oorsaak van alle versteurde verhoudinge: tussen God en mens, mens en mens en ook tussen mens en die wêreld. Die vraag is: *Hoe kan so 'n gebroke wêreld weer heel word en wat is die rol van die kerk in God se versoeningsprogram?*

B

God se versoeningsprogram vir 'n gebroke wêreld

Die groot Argitek het 'n wonderlike plan van aksie uitgewerk as antwoord op die omvangryke nood van 'n gebroke wêreld. Sy plan behels 'n omvattende versoeningsprogram wat Paulus die *bediening van die versoening* noem. Dit is 'n volgehoute aksie en 'n voortgaande *proses* wat bedoel is om deur te werk na alle terreine van die lewe: persoonlik (Rom 5), kerklik en sosiaal (Efes 2) en na

die hele wêreld (Kol 1). God se koninkryk is 'n ryk van vrede vir mens en wêreld.

C

Versoeningsagente en medewerkers van God

God het besluit om die gelowiges in te sluit as aktiewe deelnemers aan sy versoeningsprogram vir die wêreld. Ons is sy *versoeningsagente* (v20) aan wie Hy die bediening van die versoening toevertrou het (v18). Ons word opgeroep tot volhardende en getroue diens as instrumente van versoening en vrede. Dit is ons pligstaats van Hom wat ons deur Christus met Homself versoen het (v18). Ons taak is om die versoening te bewerk deur die sonde en gebrokenheid van die wêreld te oorwin. Gelukkig kan ons as "gesante" optree en ons sending uitvoer met die gesag en volmag van Hom wat ons stuur.

Die plaasvervangende sterwe van Jesus Christus is die grondslag en vertrekpunt van alle versoening (v14b-15). God se versoeningsprogram *begin* egter net by die kruis. Die betekenis en implikasies van hierdie Goddelike inisiatief moet nou deur die kerk uitgeleef en sigbaar gemaak word. Christus het die gelowige met God versoen tot die status van 'n "nuwe mens" (v17). Hierdie "nuwe mens" word noodwendig geroep tot betrokkenheid by die versoening van die hele wêreld.

In verse 18-21 vind ons 'n nuwe wisselwerking tussen die versoeningsdaad van Christus en die gelowiges se bediening van die versoening. God het die versoening eenmalig bewerk en skenk terselfdertyd die bediening of diens (diakonia) van die versoening aan die gelowiges. Ons nuwe verhouding met God bring noodwendig ook 'n nuwe verhouding met mekaar en 'n nuwe verantwoordelikheid vir medemens en wêreld.

Versoening is ook die primêre inhoud van die boodskap van die kerk. Elke gelowige is met sy inlywing in Christus gelyktydig ook geroep tot versoeningsprofeet. Dit behels die oproep tot versoening met God (v20, vgl. Rom 5), tot versoening tussen mense (Efes 2) en tot die herstel van die gebrokenheid van die hele wêreld (Kol 1).

Die gelowige wat sy versoening met God reg verstaan, word deur die liefde van Christus *gedwing* tot arbeid as versoeningsagent in God se koninkryk (v14)!

Elkeen wat deel in die voorreg van God se versoeningswerk en in die voorreg om vrede met God te kan hê, elkeen met ewige heil en sekuriteit, kan nie anders nie as om oor te loop van God se versoeningsgenade. Vanuit sy versoening met God kan die gelowige dus nie anders nie as om ander met die boodskap van versoening te dien en te bedien.

Die betekenis van die bediening van die versoening vir elke individuele mens, vir die kerk, vir die samelewing en die hele wêreld, is reeds uitgespel in die vorige preke. Vanweë die aktuele belang van versoening in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing, volg verdere rigtingwysers vir die bediening van die versoening op hierdie terrein. Twee vereistes en twee take van die versoeningsagent word vervolgens aangedui.

D i)

Vereistes vir versoeningsagente

Christus het sy lewe gegee as daad van liefde om ons met God te versoen. Hoeveel is ons bereid om te doen? Versoening kom nie vanself nie, dit vra 'n prys en opoffering! Dit behels onder meer selfverloëning en 'n nuwe beskouing van die medemens.

Selfverloëning

Versoendes in Christus is mense wat "nie meer vir hulleself moet lewe nie" (v15), maar vir Christus en vir ander. Hulle dien nie meer hulle eie belange nie maar, soos Christus, die belange van ander. Selfhandhawing moet plek maak vir

selfverloëning en eie-belang vir Christus-belang. Selfsug is verby, want Christus het alles kom nuut maak vir deelnemers aan God se versoeningsprogram. Die eerste noodsaaklike stap in die lewe van die versoeningsagent is eerlike *selfondersoek en selfverloëning*. Solank die suigrag van 'n persoon se eie begeertes en belange of sy vrese sy gedrag bepaal, kan hy nie ander dien met die versoening nie. Deelname aan versoening vra verootmoediging en eerlike selfondersoek - vir individue en kerke. Niemand is immers sonder skuld nie; almal het 'n aandeel aan die gebrokenheid van die wêreld. Daarom moet ons oppas! - Selfregverdiging staan in die weg van die realisering van God se versoeningsprogram. Versoeningsagente moet seker maak dat hulle nie dalk self deel van die probleem is nie.

Die bediening van die versoening in die wêreld is so totaal anders as 'n politieke magspel waar elkeen beding vir die maksimum voordeel vir homself. Nee, die bediening van die versoening is 'n "diens" - 'n bereidheid om die eerste tree te gee, om die tweede myl saam te loop. Hierdie diens behels die bereidheid om *eerste* die hand uit te steek en die inisiatief te neem. Daarom sê Jesus: "Geseënd is die vredemakers, want hulle sal kinders van God genoem word" (Matt 5:9). (Die praktiese betekenis van selfverloëning word hieronder verder verduidelik onder die opskrif: *Die bediening van die versoening as kruisweg*).

'n Nuwe mensbeskouing

Deelnemers aan God se versoeningsprogram is ook nuut in hulle *mensbeskouing*; dit wil sê in hulle beoordeling van ander (v16). Ander word nie meer volgens die oë van die wêreld in "menslike maatstaf" gemeet nie - die lei al te maklik tot vooroordele, wantroue, geringskating, verdagmakery, haat, rassisme en selfs tot geweld teen mekaar. Die "nuwe mens" sien ander soos Christus hulle sien. Daarom volg die liefde in die gestalte van openheid, aanvaarding, respek, vertroue en vergifnis (vgl Rom 12). Verder word daar ruimte en nuwe lewensmoontlikhede geskep vir die medemens en word sy voordeel nagejaag (1 Kor 6:13). Dit is God se wenresep vir versoening!

Een van die grootste probleme in ons samelewing is die onvermoë van mense om hulle in die posisie van ander in te dink. Geen wonder nie dat ons so ver vervreem en verwyder is van mekaar. In hierdie wêreld van vervreemding leef ons met misverstande en word die beeld van die ander deur stereotipes en wanindrukke verduister. Die bediening van die versoening vra mense wat bereid is om uit hierdie bese kringloop te breek en oor grense heen in die skoene van ander te gaan staan. Eers dan kan ons ander gaan dien en bedien met liefde en versoening.

ii)

Take van versoeningsagente

Draers van geregtigheidswaardes

Dit is die taak van die kerk en dus van alle gelowiges as versoeningsagente om geregtigheidswaardes in sowel die *harte* van mense, as in die *samelewing en sosiale strukture*, te vestig en uit te bou. In die bediening van die versoening is dit die enigste geloofwaardige weg na ware en blywende versoening in die samelewing.

Fasiliteerder van gesprekvoering

Deurlopende kommunikasie is onontbeerlik in die versoeningsproses. In 'n konflik moet die kerk bydra tot die bevordering van kommunikasie en die vestiging van kommunikasiestrukture sodat gereelde blootstelling en interaksie kan plaasvind. Die kerk kan ook help om dooiepunte in onderhandelinge te deurbreek deur as fasiliteerder van gesprekvoering op te tree.

Tydens gesprekvoering kan mites, stereotipes, ideologiese interpretasies van die werklikheid en ander valse persepsies ontdek en aangedui word. Verder word opponente se verwysingsraamwerke verbreed deur die blootstelling aan nuwe

inligting. Sodoende kan die *waarheid* oor die konflik en die werklike oorsake al duideliker na vore kom. 'n Gemeenskaplike analise van die probleem kan ook help om 'n gesamentlike strategie te vind vir die oplossing. In hierdie kommunikasieproses word wedersydse respek, begrip en aanvaarding ook bevorder.

Die "nuwe mens" as versoeningsagent kan op hierdie wyse help om klowe van vervreemding te oorbrug. Die bevordering van kommunikasie is 'n belangrike taak as deel van die kerk se bediening van die versoening. Een van die geheime in die versoeningsproses is luister en nogmaals luister na mekaar - "Als niemand luistert naar niemand vallen er doden in plaats van woorden"! (Jona Beranová).

E

Die bediening van die versoening as kruisweg

Versoeners, vredemakers en bemiddelaars beland dikwels tussen strydende partye in die spervuur van 'n konflik. Die rede is 'n kompromislose keuse vir die waarheid, vir ware geregtigheid en duur versoening. Die wêreld verdra nie versoeners wat hulle gewetens op alle moontlike maniere aanspreek nie. Dikwels vind versoeners geen "tuiste" nie en ontvang hulle min steun van mense.

Versoeners word dikwels gekneus soos die appels aan die kante van 'n kis.

Dikwels voer die versoeningsagent ook uiters ongewilde handelinge uit, soos *skuldbelydenis* of *vergifnis*. Diegene wat nog volgens die reëls van

selfregverdiging en vergelding leef, kan dit natuurlik nie verstaan of verdra nie.

Juis daarom is selfverloëning as vereiste van die versoeningsagent (vgl hierbo),

'n essensiële deel van die bediening van die versoening as *kruisweg*.

Die rol van die versoener mag nie verwar word met "neutrale" onbetrokkenheid en passiwiteit nie. Die kruisweg beteken om ondubbelsinnig kant te kies vir die

waarheid en teen alle onreg. Dit behels verder die aanvaarding van

verantwoordelikheid vir sowel die eie aandeel as die oplossing van die konflik.

Solank die fout, die oorsaak en die sondebok altyd elders gesoek word, kan die versoeningsproses nie op weg kom nie.

Alhoewel die kruisweg deur die wêreld as swaakheid verwerp word, is dit die weg

van *geloofsvolwassenheid*. Ware grootheid en krag volgens die evangelie lê juis

opgesluit in 'n nederige dienskneggestalte - in hierdie geval in die diens of

bediening van die versoening (vgl ook 2 Kor 12:9-10).

Prakties kan die kruisweg van selfverloëning die volgende beteken in 'n konfliktsituasie:

- Die oorsake van konflik moet deur albei partye geïdentifiseer word (vgl A.4.3 - geregtigheidswaardes as maatstaf vir die beoordeling van die oorsake).
- Die skuldige party moet *berou* toon en bereid wees om sowel die oorsake as die konsekwensies daarvan, sover as moontlik te verwyder - dit is sy kruisweg.
- Die benadeelde party moet bereid wees om te *vergewe* en om vrede te maak met dié oorsake en konsekwensies wat *nie* kan verander nie - dit is sy kruisweg.
- Die twee partye moet *ooreenkom om gemeenskap ten volle te herstel* op die basis van geregtigheid en gelykwaardigheid.

Berou en skuldbelydenis is 'n wesenlike deel van die versoeningsproses. Die kruisweg vereis dat skuld eerlik, duidelik en openhartig bely sal word teenoor mekaar. Die egtheid van hierdie belydenis word bewys in die bereidheid om alle oorsake van onversoendheid te verwyder en alle skade wat daardeur aangerig is, so ver as moontlik reg te stel. *Berou en skuldbelydenis* impliseer altyd 'n nuwe lewe - op sy minste 'n opregte voorneme om te strewe na sosiale geregtigheid vir almal.

Vergifnis is net so 'n noodsaaklike deel van die versoeningsproses. Vir die veronregte is die deurlopende *bereidheid* tot vergifnis en die aanvaarding van

konsekwensies wat nie kan verander nie, sy kruisweg. Hierdie bereidheid maak dit ook makliker vir die skuldige party om sy skuld reg te stel. Vergifnis is egter nie 'n kompromie met die sonde nie. Daarom kan dit net 'n volle werklikheid wees indien dit volg op 'n egte skuldbelydenis en die voorneme van skuldiges om die onreg (so ver as moontlik) te herstel.

Vir versoeningsagente is skuldbelydenis en vergifnis 'n *lewenstyl*. As essensiële stappe in die versoeningsproses is dit dikwels 'n pynlike proses, maar dit is die geboortepyne van 'n nuwe toekoms. Dit is deel van die kruisweg wat lei tot die herstel van gemeenskap tussen mense; dit is die fondament waarop die gebou van egte versoening in reg en geregtigheid kan verrys.

Die mense van die wêreld het die groot Versoener gekruisig. In navolging van Hom is die kruisweg van die bediening van versoening ook ons roeping. Jesus het immers self gesê: "As iemand agter My aan wil kom, moet hy homself verloën, sy kruis dra en My volg..." (Matt 16:24).

F

Slot

Volgens die jongste sensus assosieer ongeveer driekwart van die Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking met die Christelike geloof. Hier is dus 'n geweldige potensiaal vir die stigting van versoening en vrede (die vrug van versoening) onder ons opgesluit. Ons sal egter daarna moet strewe om soveel as moontlik instrumente in te stem op die melodie van versoening. In die mate waarin die vals note verdring kan word en meer en meer instrumente die versoening dien en bedien, sal God se bedoelde vredeslied al meer hoorbaar word!

Vrede begin by die "nuwe mens" in Christus wat as versoeningsagent deelneem aan die groot Argitek se versoeningsprogram. In die mate waarin die kerk die bediening van die versoening verkondig en utoileef, kom vrede tussen God en mens, asook tussen mens en medemens, tot stand. As alle versoendes met God hierdie kragtige boodskap vir die gebroke wêreld verstaan, kan hulle tekens van versoening oprig by elke moontlike geleentheid. Selfs enkele tekens het reeds krag en betekenis. Tekens gee hoop, en hou die visie lewend vir God se koninkryk van vrede.

As elke gelowige die gebed van die heilige Fransiscus daagliks bid en leef, kan Suid-Afrika onmoontlik dieselfde bly:

Here maak my 'n instrument van u vrede;
Waar daar haat is, laat my liefde bring;
Waar daar leed is, laat my die gees van vergifnis bring;
Waar daar twyfel is, gee dat ek u geloof mag versprei;
Waar daar wanhoop is, help my om hoop te bring;
Waar duisternis is, om lig te bring;
Waar droefheid is, om vreugde te skep.

Mag ons wonderlike Hemelse Vader, die Inisieerder van alle versoening, die lof en eer ontvang vir sy heerlike versoeningsprogram wat vrede vir mens en wêreld moontlik gemaak het. Mag die versoeningswerk van Christus aan die kruis ons opnuut aangryp en lei om Hom daagliks in die kruisweg na te volg. Mag die Gees van Christus elke gelowige inspireer en toerus om getroue versoeningsagente te wees. Amen.

Because this sermon is published as part of a series about reconciliation it is perhaps again not quite "right" to use it separately for analysis. But it does show up some of the important dynamics under discussion.

1) Structure

A: The introductory paragraph refers back to the previous sermons and their depiction of the extent to which relationships are broken and in need of the reconciliation wrought by Christ. Sin is presented as the power that has such destroying consequences for people, church and world. The question the preacher pursues is this: How can such a broken world be healed and what is the role of the church in this process?

B: The second part gives a definitive answer to this question: "God's reconciliatory program for a broken world". Paul's "ministry of reconciliation" is introduced as God's plan and process that is to work through all levels of life: personal, church, social and world.

C: To launch this program God has decided to include the faithful as active agents and co-workers. The basis of reconciliation is the vicarious dying of Jesus Christ - but the meaning of this divine initiative must now be lived out by the church. Verses 18-21 of the text are recalled to emphasise the close relationship between Christ's reconciliation and the believers ministry of reconciliation. We are "forced" to be agents of reconciliation. One can't do otherwise but to serve and minister the message of reconciliation (**gospel and third use in union**).

D: Because this is so important to the present situation in South Africa, the consequences are spelled out in terms of two "obligations" i) and two tasks ii) of agents of reconciliation:

- i) - denial of self and a new view of humans.
- ii) Carrying the values of justice into the hearts and structures of society and facilitate communication for reconciliation.

E: The ministry of reconciliation is a "way of the cross". Although it is a way scorned by the world it is the way of "faith-maturity" and can involve the following in practice:

- the causes of conflict must be identified by both parties.
- the guilty party must show remorse and be prepared to remove the causes and consequences of the conflict.
- The disadvantaged must be prepared to forgive and make peace with those things that cannot be changed.
- Both parties must agree to repair the communion fully on the basis of justice and "equal worth".

These points are further explained with the emphasis on the remorse and confession as practical steps on the way of the cross. Also the forgiveness is deemed to be an indispensable part of the process of reconciliation. The latter being the way of the cross for the disadvantaged party.

For reconciliation-agents confession and forgiveness become a "lifestyle" (Mt 16,24).

F: In closing the sermon refers to statistical fact that three quarters of South Africa's population associate with the Christian faith. This is seen as constituting a massive potential for reconciliation and peace. We, however, need to strive to tune as many instruments as possible to the tune of reconciliation. Peace begins with the "new human in Christ", that works/participates as an agent of reconciliation in the great architect's program of reconciliation. This is seen as the task of the church and finally of every believer (quote from St. Francis Prayer for peace work) and the heavenly Father is involved as the initiator of reconciliation. May this grip us anew and lead us daily on the way of the cross.

(Criteria 2+3): No explicit mention is made of "law" or "gospel". However, the gospel message is clearly identified as reconciliation and posited as the starting point for everything else. Implicitly there is a distinction

detectable vaguely between what God does in Christ and our response i.e. "third use".

4) On the whole the sermon has a very strong appeal to reconciliatory action as the "right" response to God's reconciliation - this is what is expected from Christian believers.

5) A whole set of practical steps is offered for those who would want to respond positively to the appeal of the sermon. In this sense a **very helpful** sermon for "life in the real world" of South Africa and its conflicts. But what prevents it from being heard and misunderstood legalistically?

Sermon 7 by Dirkie Smit: "Die vrug van die Gees is Liefde". From: *Gesigte van die Liefde; Om te leef soos God se mense, Meditasies oor die vrug van die Gees*. Lux Verbi, Kaapstad, 1998. Pages 29-36
Texts: Galatians 5, 14, 22; and 1 John 3, 18

Wat wil die Gees in ons bereik?
Die liefde.

Daaroor kan daar geen twyfel bestaan nie. Die hele Nuwe Testament is vol daarvan. Ook Galasiërs maak dit duidelik. Die vrug van die Gees is liefde (5:22). Vers 14 sê dit reeds uitdruklik. "Die hele wet word in hierdie een gebod saamgevat: Jy moet jou naaste liefhê soos jouself."

Liefde is nie één van die vrugte van die Gees, naas ander nie, maar die enigste vrug. Al die ander is slegs gesigte van dié liefde, aspekte daarvan, gestaltes, voorbeelde, konkrete toepassings daarvan.

Die vrug van die Gees is liefde.

En dis geen wonder nie. Want Gód is liefde. Wie nie liefhet nie, het geen kennis van God nie, want God is liefde (1 Joh. 4:8). God is liefde, en wie in die liefde bly, bly in God en God bly in hulle (1 Joh. 4:16).

"God is liefde". Populêre woorde. En boonop wáár.

Die probleem is egter dat ons dit maklik omdraai. En begin sê: *liefde is god*. En dan vergoddelik en aanbid ons maklik ons eie opvatting van liefde. Vanaf vrye, losbandige seksualiteit, tot enge, selfsugtige volk- en groeps liefde, tot watter vorm van liefde ook al. Die logika bly dieselfde. Ons begin by ons eie - vleeslike - soort liefde, en noem dít "god".

Daarom moet ons 'n andersom logika volg as ons wil verstaan wat die Gees wil bereik met ons. As ons begryp dat God liefde is, dan moet ons luister na wat God Self sê oor liefde. En dít is die liefde wat ons moet openbaar.

Wat sê God oor dié liefde?

Baie! En in die komende meditasies sal ons langer aandag gee aan enkele *gesigte van dié Liefde*. Ons begin met 'n paar aspekte daarvan wat duidelik word uit hoofstukke 3 en 4 van 1 Johannes. Dis immers nie sonder goeie rede dat Johannes "apostel van die liefde" genoem word nie....

B

2.

Die eerste wat Johannes duidelik maak, is dat die liefde wat God is, bereid is om die inisiatief te neem.

Werklike liefde is dit: nie die liefde wat ons vir God het nie, maar die liefde wat Hy aan ons bewys het deur sy Seun te stuur as 'n versoening vir ons sondes (1 Joh. 4:10). Ons het lief omdat God ons eerste liefgehad het (1 Joh. 4:19). Dit beteken: hierdie liefde word nie opgeroep deur die voorwerp van die liefde nie.

Dit is juis die verskil tussen natuurlike liefde, waarmee niks verkeerd is nie! wat eweneens 'n goeie gawe van God is! waarmee God ook ons lewe vul met genade en seën! en, aan die ander kant, die Christelike liefde, die sogenaamde *agape*-liefde.

Natuurlike liefdes, soos erotiese liefde of vriendskap of aangetrokkenheid is liefdes *ter wille van*. Dis vorme van liefde wat feitlik vanselfsprekend opgeroep word, natuurlik, werktuiglik deur die voorwerp van die liefde. Omdat iemand vir ons mooi is, of vriendelik of gaaf is met ons, of van dieselfde familie of afkoms is as ons, of wat ook al. Daar is 'n rede vir ons liefde teenoor hulle. Dit word in ons opgeroep, gemotiveer deur iets in hulle.

Maar die Christelike liefde is liefde *ten spyte van*. Soos God se liefde teenoor ons. Hy het ons eerste liefgehad. Sonder enige rede of motivering aan ons kant. Om die waarheid te sê, toe ons nog God se vyande was. Goddeloos. Sondaars. Toe het God - ten spyte van ons - sy Seun gestuur om ons met Hom te versoen en ons sondes te vergeef. Uit liefde.

Baie mense verstaan nie hierdie onderskeid nie. En daarom verstaan hulle ook nie die diepste aard van die Christelike liefde nie. En dan neem hulle aanstoot as die evangelie sê dat ons ander moet liefhê, mense wat ver van ons af is, wat anders is as ons, wat ons nie regtig aanstaan nie, van wie ons van nature nie regtig hou nie - tot op die punt dat hulle dalk ons vyande kan wees.

Mense wat nie die Christelike liefde mooi verstaan nie, dink net in terme van natuurlik vorme van liefde. En dan vererg hulle hulle oor sulke oproepe tot liefde. Hulle begryp eenvoudig nie hoe daar van hulle verwag kan word om te hou van sekere mense, om aangename, warme gevoelens teenoor sekere mense te koester - mense van wie hulle inderwaarheid nie juis hou nie.

Maar: die Christelike liefde is van 'n ander aard. En daarom kan die Bybel dit beveel.

Natuurlike liefde kan 'n mens nie beveel nie! Dit word uitgelok, dit ontvlam vanself, of dit is nie daar nie.

Maar *agape*, die Christelike liefde wat die Bybel van ons eis, wortel in 'n ander gesindheid. Wat die inhoud, die talle verskillende gestaltes, die gedaantes, die *gesigte* van hierdie Christelike liefde is, sal mettertyd duideliker word, soos wat ons verder blaai en lees.

Allereers moet ons egter sien: hierdie liefde wortel in die bereidheid om die *inisiatief te neem*. Soos God teenoor ons die inisiatief geneem het en ons eerste liefgehad het...

C

3.

Die tweede aspek, wat direk daarmee saamhang, is dat hierdie liefde bestaan in *selfopoffering, selfprysgawe*.

Hiëraan weet ons wat liefde is: Jesus het sy lewe vir ons afgelê. Ons behoort ook ons lewe vir ons broers af te lê (1 Joh. 3:16).

Dié liefde - wat God is - het 'n prys gekos, die hoogste prys gekos.

Sonder enige rede, sonder enige verdienste aan ons kant, was Jesus bereid om hierdie pad enduit vir ons te loop. En daarom - skryf Johannes - moet ons bereid

wees om hierdie pad enduit vir ánder te loop. Martin Luther sou hiervan sê dat die Christelike naasteliefde eers dáár nodig word waar die naaste ons krenk en net ons haat verdien.

En Jesus Self het opgemerk dat, as ons net diegene sou liefhê wat vir óns liefhet, ons geen loon sou hê nie, omdat almal dít doen!

Ware liefde, Christelike liefde, is liefde wat bereid is om die pad te loop van die minste te wees, te dien, die pad van selfprysgawe. Dit is omtrent nie nodig om dit uitdruklik toe te pas op ons lewe, ons huwelike, ons menseverhoudinge nie. Dit is vanselfsprekend. Net dít: Christelike liefde sê nie: eers vat ek vir myself wat ek wil hê en dan gun ek jou dieselfde nie.

Christelike liefde sê: wat myne is, is joune, tot selfs my lewe, want Christus het syne vir my gegee.

'n Bekende skrifuitlegger verklaar dít só: Christelike liefde is die bereidheid om dít wat waarde het vir my eie lewe oor te gee sodat dít die lewe van ander kan verryk (Dodd).

Wat waarde het vir my eie lewe?

Ja! My tyd, my kragte, my besittings, my vriendskap, my geleenthede, my vermoëns....

D

4.

Maar daar word ook 'n *derde* aspek van hierdie liefde - wat God is - duidelik uit hoofstukke 3 en 4 van 1 Johannes. Dit is dat hierdie liefde - wat die inisiatief neem, ten spyte van, wat bereid is tot selfoorgawe - nie 'n blote gesindheid of praatjies vra nie, maar *dade*.

Wie aardse besittings het en sy broer sien gebrek ly maar geen gevoel vir hom het nie - in die woorde van die 1933-vertaling: "sy hart vir hom toesluit" - hoe kan die liefde van God in hom wees? Ons liefde moenie net met woorde en lippetaal wees nie, maar moet met die daad en in waarheid bewys word, en dan in opregtheid (1 Joh. 3:17-18).

Dis tog duidelik!

Ons dink dikwels met liefde word 'n *gevoel* bedoel, 'n sterk emosie, 'n gewaarwording. 'n emosionele toegeneendheid. Maar dis *nie* wat Jóhannes met liefde bedoel nie.

Ook Luther sou in kommentaar hieroor teenoor teoloë van sy dag sê dat die liefde geen verborge toestand is nie, maar sigbare, praktiese *dade*.

Ons is so maklik blote praatjiesmakers. Ons word (kastig!) so opgewonde oor die nood van ander, maar as dít by konkrete dóén kom, is ons so traag.

Dit is selfs so maklik die geval in liefdesverhoudinge. Dit help tog nie 'n man sê hy het 'n vrou lief - al betuig hy dít hóé hartstogtelik en oortuigend en aanhoudend - as hy diep in sy hart eintlik homsêlf liefhet en die ekstase van die verhouding, en wat hy daaruit kan haal, nie? Dis tog nie liefde nie? As hy haar waarlik liefhet, sal hy dít tog deur *dade* wys: deur vir haar om te gee, haar gevoelens te respekteer, *haar* voordeel te soek?

E

God se liefde teenoor ons, sê Jóhannes, is een waarin Hy die inisiatief geneem het, ten spyte van wat ons was. En Hy het sy eie Seun oorgegee, vir ons, in 'n konkrete dáád van uiterste liefde. Die evangelie verwag dat ons deur die Gees ook in sulke *dade* van liefde sal leef...

Hoe die Gees ons elkeen daarin sal lei, is onmoontlik om vooraf en in die algemeen te sê. Waarvan die Gees ons elkeen sal oortuig - in ons familie- en gesinslewe, in ons werkkring, in ons gesprekke oor die openbare en politieke lewe, in ons omgang met ons eie besittings en geleenthede, ás ons hierdie waarhede deel maak van ons lewe en ás ons die Gees tóélaat om ons só te lei, en

dan daarvolgens handel - dit is onvoorspelbaar; onmoontlik om vooraf en in die algemeen te sê.

Want dié liefde van God in Christus is geen wet, reël of voorskrif wat ons bloot moet toepas nie.

Die bedoeling is dat die Gees ons elkeen só sensitief sal maak in ons eie, spesifieke en konkrete lewensomstandighede, dat ons met Christus se oë na mense sal leer kyk!

En dít mag beteken dat sovele omstandighede waaraan ons al gewoon geraak het skielik opnuut, of vir die eerste keer, swaar op ons harte en gewetens mag begin lê, omdat ons mense in nood begin raaksien, anders begin raaksien as vroeër, en ons begin besef dat ons kán help, dat ons wel 'n verskil kán maak. Wel deur opoffering heen, maar as ons net inisiatief sal neem ... kán ons. Só kan in ons huise, in ons gemeentes, in ons buurte, in ons dorpe en stede, in ons land en vasteland, 'n nuwe klimaat ontstaan, wat nuwe lewe moontlik maak...

F

5.

Direk teenoor hierdie lewe deur die Gees staan die vlees. Die vlees wat nie liefhet nie, maar haat.

Johannes sê: Moenie verbaas wees as die wêreld julle haat nie. Ons weet dat ons klaar uit die dood na die lewe oorgegaan het, want ons het die broers lief. Wie nie liefhet nie, bly in die dood. Elkeen wat sy broer haat, is 'n moordenaar; en julle weet dat geen moordenaar die ewige lewe in hom het nie (1 Joh. 3:13-15). Om te haat - so het Calvyn verduidelik - is om te wens die ander persoon vergaan.

Dit is om te wens die ander een was nie daar nie! Dit beteken: ons kan nie met hom of haar of hulle klaarkom nie. Ons sien geen moontlikheid daarvoor nie.

Ons wens hulle wás nie...

Haat is om te sê: Ek wens ek was nooit met hierdie man getroud nie.

Haat is om te sê: Ek wens daardie vrou by die werk bly uit my pad uit, want sy krap my om elke keer as ek haar sien.

Haat is om te sê: Dié en dié groepe mense in die samelewing moet tog net nie naby my kom nie; ek wil met hulle niks te doen hê nie.

Dan is ons liefde nie groot genoeg om ander mense in hulle andersheid, hulle vreemdheid, selfs hulle verkeerdheid, te aanvaar en lewensruimte vir hulle te maak en te gun nie.

Dit is die haat waarvan Johannes praat.

Dis om jouself so lief te hê dat daar mense is vir wie jy nie ruimte kan maak nie. En hiérdie haat is vleeslik, sê die evangelie.

En daarteen waarsku Johannes in aangrypend duidelike taal. Hy sê: As iemand sê: "Ek het God lief", en hy haat sy broer, is hy 'n leuenaar; want wie sy broer, wat hy kan sien, nie liefhet nie, kan onmoontlik vir God liefhê, wat hy nie kan sien nie. En hierdie gebod het ons van Hom gekry: Wie vir God liefhet, moet ook sy broer liefhê (1 Joh. 4:20-21).

Trouens, voeg Johannes by, as ons hierdie liefde begin openbaar, as ons begin wandel deur die Gees, sal ons ontdek dat die wêreld, dat die vlees, óns ook begin haat. Die vlees haat diegene wat op dié manier begin liefhê, wat inisiatief neem in stukkende verhoudinge, wat bereid is tot selfverloëning en kruisdra, wat tasbaar, prakties, konkreet dade van liefde begin toon.

Die vlees haat die wandel in die Gees.

Liefde is ... bereid om die inisiatief te neem, selfopofferend, te sien in dade.

1) Another sermon from a series that should perhaps not be read alone, but again a clear system of theology can be seen even in this “excerpt” from the series. The series is about the “Fruits of the Spirit” (in the context of the traditional Pentecost Prayer Meetings in the Reformed church). It has the following structure:

A: The introductory question: What does the Spirit want to accomplish in us? Answer: Love! Then the sermon launches into a first reconnaissance of “love” as a “fruit of the Spirit”. It is the fruit, not one among others, because “God is love”. We often turn this around and then divinise and idolise our own definitions of love. If we want to understand what the Spirit is about we need to follow God’s logic not ours. Listen to what God says about love. The series will deal with various aspects of what God says about love. Here the sermon concentrates on 1 John 3 and 4.

B: The first aspect that is taken from the core text is that the love that God is, is prepared to take the initiative. A strong distinction is made between natural love (a good gift from God) and Christian love (agape). The first is love “for the sake of”, the second is love “in spite of”. Christian love, like God’s love for us, is love that does not have any motivation or reason caused by its object. This kind of love, therefore, can be demanded and is demanded by the Bible. What the precise content of this kind of love is will become apparent in the further sections of the series, but first the need to understand the roots of this love i.e. it roots in the readiness to take the initiative, - again in parallel = “as God took the initiative toward us and loved us first ...”.

C: The second aspect from the core text is that of self-offering, self denial as expression of this love. Starting with the vicarious suffering and death of Jesus for his brothers we are also to lay down our lives for our brothers (1 John 3,16). Seek the good of the other not your own good.

D: A third aspect that defines Christian love is that this love asks deeds, not just speeches and attitudes. It is not an emotion, not a hidden condition, but visible in practical deeds. Some negative examples are given - people who make beautiful speeches but are reticent to do anything; - a relationship where the man expresses his love for a woman, but in the end seeks only his own self in the relationship - this is not love.

E: The three aspects above are now brought into a logic, step by step argument starting with God's initiative toward us, in spite of us and giving his Son over for us as concrete deed of ultimate love. The gospel expects such love from us through the Holy Spirit. How this will happen cannot be said in advance and in general, we need to make these truths part of our life and allow the Spirit to lead us and act accordingly. It is no "law" that just needs to be adhered to. The idea is that the Spirit will make each person so sensitive in and for our particular circumstances, that we will look with Christ's eyes at people. This may mean that some accustomed things become heavy burdens for us and we realise that we can make a difference. Here the context of South Africa is clearly brought into focus.

F: In a final round the opposing force to this life through the Spirit is named: "The Flesh". From John the reminder that the "world will hate us" (1 John 3,13-15) is cited. "Hate" is taken into view (with Calvin's description: "The will that the other may perish"). Various examples are again taken up, some from the specific situation in South Africa. Then our love is not big enough to accept others in their otherness etc. John's warning that if you hate your brother, although you claim to love God, you are a liar (1 John 4,20-21). If you love God, you have to love your brother. Once we do this, we will find that the world hates us too. "The flesh hates those that love in this way, that take initiative in broken relationships, that

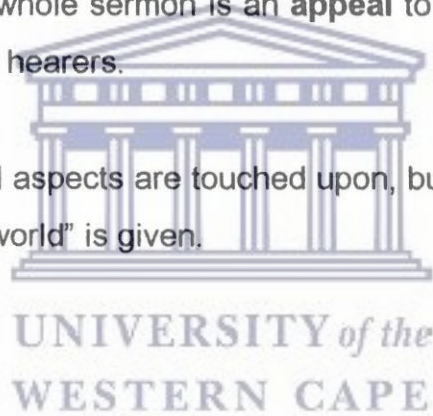
are prepared for self denial and carrying the cross, prepared for tangible, practical and visible deeds - The flesh hates such a life in the Spirit.

2) **“Law” and “gospel”** are not explicitly mentioned except for a brief phrase in section E. The **“law”** as diagnosing or revealing our sinfulness is not used. The **gospel** is seen as God’s initiative and “love in spite of us” and as such is clearly spelled out.

3) The three uses of the “law” are not distinguishable. What we have here is again, to my pre-research understanding, a classic rendering of reformed theology according to the order: “gospel and law” (**third use**).

4) Implicit in the whole sermon is an **appeal** to allow the Spirit to work the fruit of love in the hearers.

5) Some practical aspects are touched upon, but no “concrete guidance for living in the real world” is given.



2. Lutheran and Reformed Teaching on “Law and Gospel”

Introduction - The Background of the Debate

"using the third use" or the Elert versus Barth debate

Two essays, one by Karl Barth, **"Evangelium und Gesetz"** (1935) and the other by Werner Elert, **"Gesetz und Evangelium"** (1948) have become famous (infamous) in the debate about the "law and gospel" dialectic, perhaps mostly because they have been understood to represent the two most extreme views on the matter. The sadder part of the matter is, however, that careful reading shows how this is an example of a "failed dialogue". The blame could be placed squarely on Elert's shoulders, for his is the essay written in response to Barth's. But essentially in both essays an aggressive, perhaps even wilful misreading of the "opposing position" can be found. It could be a fruitful exercise to study this "failed dialogue" and learn from its mistakes, but this would again be enough for a separate paper. What is important for this work is the realisation that neither point of view seems to bring us closer to a differentiated yet clearly biblical mode of preaching the "whole word of God". For many years (and in some cases still) these essays have served to harden the "battle-lines" between Lutheran and Reformed theologians. It is through the work of such scholars as Albrecht Peters and Axel Deneke (in the Lutheran "camp") and Walter Bauer and F-W. Marquardt (in the "Barthian camp"), that a new openness to dialogue and a more differentiated reading of the biblical and catechetical material has come forward.

On the background of the above debate I intend in this chapter to present a brief study of the relevant theological traditions that underlie the particular way the two denominations (churches) have proclaimed the "word of God". Because both churches are historically confessional churches with their respective confessional writings, and by their ordination, in addition to Holy Scripture, bind their preachers to these particular confessions, I assume that the preaching in these churches has been influenced and informed by the theologies of their respective confessional writings. Since in the Lutheran Church's history the catechisms were originally intended to give newly "converted" clergy (from "Roman Catholic" priests to "Lutheran" preachers) a basis for their proclamation (a task they had previously not had to fulfil regularly), and in the Reformed Church the Heidelberg Catechism regularly features as a basis for preaching, I decided to concentrate mainly on the catechisms of both churches. They are also apparently the most prominent and most frequently used confessional writings in the preaching and teaching of both churches. It is therefore at least historically correct to assume that they carry a lot of weight in the present preaching of these churches. Whether this is indeed the case and to what extent, is a question that arose in my mind while I was analysing the sermons from the two churches in South Africa. A careful comparison of the sermon-analyses in chapter 1 with the study of the catechetical traditions here will show that neither church seems to have been very adamant about remaining within the orbit or framework of its historical tradition regarding the use of "law" and "gospel" language. Now, there may of course be (good) reasons for this, but that would be the subject of another enquiry. A first step, as it is attempted here, can only be to establish this, using the empirical material available.

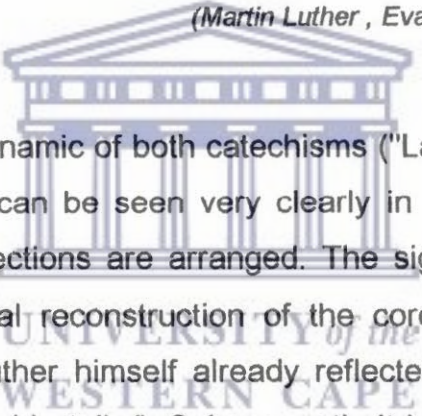
Before launching into a more detailed study of the catechisms another point needs to be stated as it holds true for both traditions. In both catechetical traditions the above mentioned distinction of "law" and

"gospel" is not explicitly used and this could be one of the reasons for its near disappearance in the preaching of these churches. However it is my perception that this distinction (in its two basic variations: "law and gospel" / "gospel and law") gives to each catechetical tradition its distinctive inner theological structure. I will now try to illustrate this in the study below.

2.1 The two Lutheran Catechisms and their "use" of the ten commandments

*"All die Gebot uns geben sind,
daß du dein Sünd, o Menschenkind,
erkennen sollst und lernen wohl,
wie man vor Gott leben soll.
Kyrieleis."*

(Martin Luther , Evangelisches Gesangbuch 231,11)



The theological dynamic of both catechisms ("Large and Small Catechism" of Martin Luther) can be seen very clearly in the structure, the order in which the main sections are arranged. The significance of this order for Luther's theological reconstruction of the core of the Christian faith is something that Luther himself already reflected upon in various writings and even in his "table talks". Subsequently it became a contended theme that divided scholarship into two main camps, one affirming (v. Zezschwitz) the significance of the order, the other denying (Achelis) it (Meyer 1929,82ff).

In his monumental commentary work on Luther's Catechisms Albrecht Peters shows conclusively that the order in which Luther placed the various sections of the Catechisms does have a very dynamic theological significance (1990,38ff). However the precise nature of this significance in terms of systematic theology is still hotly debated, because it essentially raises one of the main questions which (since the time of the establishment of the Lutheran Orthodoxy) has threatened to split the Lutheran Church into

two opposing “confessions” (Philippisten and Gnesiolutheraner), i.e.: the question about the so called “third use of the law”, which can conclusively be found in Philip Melancthon’s later system, but for which only inconclusive evidence can be found in Luther’s own writings. Luther seemed to be hesitant to systematise the effect of the Gospel in the lives of Christians, but it can be shown that even he saw the need of writing and preaching about this aspect of Christian faith, which Melancthon systematised into the “third use of the law” and which is traditionally dealt with under the heading of “Sanctification”.

In the following I will accept that the order of the sections in Luther’s Catechisms is theologically significant but argue that a decisive change of direction in the interpretation of this significance is needed.

Let us look at the order and the usual interpretation (based seemingly on Luther’s own explanations) of its significance first. We have the *decatalogue* first, followed by the *Apostles’ Creed* and then the *Lord’s Prayer*. Based on an early version (quoted below) of Luther’s interpretation of this order the generally accepted Lutheran understanding has been this: We are *first* given the decatalogue so that we should know what we have to do and what we should not do, then, when it has become clear that we are unable to fulfil God’s will and thus doomed to be judged unworthy by God, we are *secondly* given “the faith” that opens a new and final way to salvation (by silencing the “law” and imputing the necessary righteousness to us) and then *thirdly* we are given the prayer of those who have been saved by this faith. This interpretation would at first glance seem to fit the “law - gospel” dynamic of the Lutheran tradition and can be systematised in parallel to a Trinitarian scheme as Luther does himself on occasion (Peters 1981,49) or moulded into a kind of “ordo salutis” (as in the time of late Lutheran Orthodoxy and especially in Pietism) that shows how we progress toward salvation through these three chapters of the Catechism, but a careful

reading of two of Luther's own interpretations of the order will show that the above interpretation lacks the dialectic edge that is found throughout in Luther's theology. In the "Kurze Form" of 1520 he explains it like this:

*"Drei Stücke (Dekalog, Glaube, Vaterunser) sind dem Christen zur Seligkeit nötig: das erst, daß er wisse, was er tun und lassen soll. Zum andern, wenn er nu sieht, daß er es nit tun noch lassen kann aus seinen Kräften, daß er wisse, wo er's nehmen und suchen und finden soll, damit er dasselbe tun und lassen möge. Zum dritten, daß er wisse, wie er es suchen und holen soll." (Meyer 1929, 83).
[my underlining]*

In his introduction to the "Second Part" of the Large Catechism, i.e. "The Creed", Martin Luther interprets the relationship between and the order of decalogue and creed as follows:

*"Thus far we have heard the first part of Christian doctrine. In it we have seen all that God wishes us to do or not to do. The Creed properly follows, setting forth all that we must expect and receive from God; in brief, it teaches us to know him perfectly. It is given in order to help us do what the Ten Commandments require of us. For, as we said above, they are set on so high a plane that all human ability is far too feeble and weak to keep them. Therefore it is as necessary to learn this part as it is the other so that we may know where and how to obtain strength for this task. If we could by our own strength keep the Ten Commandments as they ought to be kept, we would need neither the Creed nor the Lord's Prayer."
(Luther 1959, 55). [my underlining]*

In both the above quoted versions of Luther's explanation of the order a clear move can be found toward the fulfilling of the commandments with the "strength" that comes from "the faith". In the first one could even say that both the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are there for the Christian to attain to

the salutary keeping of the Commandments. This movement is thus not linear but circular (perhaps even dialectic), positioning the believers into a tension between "law" and "gospel", helping them to realise their sinfulness ("law"), and then to find both faith ("gospel") and life ("law"). The movement into which the believer is drawn through the catechism's structure begins with the ten commandments as the pedagogical revelation of human sinfulness which drives the believer into the "arms of grace" (second use of the law) where the faith is received for salvation (gospel), but (and here the simple linear understanding is left behind) this faith is expressly given with the purpose of enabling the believer "to do what the ten commandments require", thus turning the faithful around to face the ten commandments again and living life accordingly.

In an essay about "Luthers Theologie nach seinen Katechismuspredigten", Ulrich Asendorf shows that the abovementioned circular dynamic finds repeated expression in Luther's catechism-sermons (a series of four sets of such sermons held in May, September, November/December 1528, and in Holy Week 1529). "Die Zehn Gebote enthalten das, was wir tun sollen (43,27). Das Credo (Symbol) dagegen ist überliefert, damit wir das zu leisten vermögen (praestare possimus), was wir schuldig sind (43,28f)" (Asendorf 1992,8). And again in the same vein he brings out the dynamic relationship between Law and Gospel as not being merely linear in its thrust: "Das Gesetz ist also nicht allein paidagogos ad Christum, sondern es beschreibt zugleich das heilige Leben. Christologie und Gesetzeserfüllung gehören so aufs engste zusammen, viel mehr, als es die schematische Folge von Gesetz und Evangelium erkennen läßt (45,1-8). Beide stehen daher auch nicht einfach gegeneinander, sondern gehören gerade auch aus christologischen Voraussetzungen zusammen" (Asendorf 1992,8). This theological dynamic or even dialectical understanding of the relationship between law and gospel clearly has consequences for preaching. "Gesetzespredigt heißt also nach Luther *auch* konkrete

Einweisung in die einzelnen Gebote und nicht etwa nur prinzipielle Belehrung über das Verhältnis von Gesetz und Evangelium" (Asendorf 1992,10). And from this then Asendorf poses as an important task for preaching today the attempt to win back an authoritative proclamation of the law. "Ferner kann die Vollmacht der Gesetzespredigt nur zurückgewonnen werden, wenn sie *auch* im Sinne der Einweisung in die Erfüllung der einzelnen Gebote geschieht, in denen sich ein heiliges und gottgemäßes Leben verwirklicht" (Asendorf 1992,10). He suggests that this will be made possible by a renewed and intensive study of the catechisms and the sermons from which they evolved, this would be "die entscheidende Hilfe bei einer Elementarisierung der heutigen Verkündigung" (1992,10).

From the above it seems clear that within Lutheran theology there has been a tendency toward antinomianism (springing from a merely linear understanding of the "law and gospel" dynamic) on the one hand as well as a clear call away from such a one-dimensional understanding of God's word. In 1981 already Albrecht Peters warned his theological fraternity about the reductionistic nature of such a simplistic understanding of the "law and gospel" dialectic, referring particularly to the "teaching" that limits the use of the "law" to only two uses, he writes that this "verkürzt empfindlich die reichen Einsichten des Reformators und nähert sich bedenklich dem *Antinomismus Agricolas*" (1981,137). Then he shows how Luther's own working with the "law" particularly in the catechisms and the later writings introduces a further function (use) of the "law" with special significance for the believers. Astonishingly here we even find that "law and gospel" both seem to be included into an overarching function of the "law". "Dieser *Usus puerilis decalogi et ceremoniarum* hat eine gesetzartige Außenseite und eine evangeliumsoffene Innenseite. Von außen droht Gottes strenges Gebot..... Zugleich aber erschließt nicht eigentlich unser beharrliches Sich-Üben, sondern das in jenem (referring to the "strenges

Gebot") mächtige Gotteswort das Herz für die frohe Botschaft, hat es doch >>die Kraft, wo mans mit Ernst betrachtet, höret und handelt, daß es nimmer ohn Frucht abgehet, sondern allezeit neuen Verstand, Lust und Andacht erwecket, rein Herz und Gedanken machet<< (GK I,101;BSLK 586,10)." (Peters 1981,138) Luther can even speak of this use of the "law" (including the paraenetic sections in the New Testament) as an "Usus practicus evangelii" (Quoted by Peters 1981,139) and frequently uses the decalogue to teach both children and adults how to live a Christian life. I would even venture to say that this is basically what Luther is doing with the decalogue in the catechisms, because his explanations of the ten commandments there do not contain much of the "second use" of the "law" that exposes our sinful, unredeemed nature. Instead Luther's interpretation of the decalogue gives a whole lot of very practical, every day "advice" on how to live as a believer, that has been saved by the faith as professed in the 2 Article of the Creed, "Von der Erlösung".

In summary then such a more-dimensional use of the "law and gospel" dynamic, with a specific thrust toward a "third use" of the law, seems to be a more adequate representation of Lutheran theology.

"Für eine adäquate Interpretation seiner (speaking of Luther) Unterscheidung zwischen Gesetz und Evangelium dürfte es wichtig werden, daß wir nicht allein auf den fraglos zentralen *Usus theologicus* oder *elencticus legis* starren, sondern zugleich sein Drängen auf das neue Leben durchdenken und hierzu die >>Übung<< des *Glaubens in den Werken* entfalten" (Peters 1981,57 author's emphasis).

Based on this decisive study by Albrecht Peters, I suggest that it might be a first step away from the one-dimensional and reductionistic understanding of "law and gospel" to coin an expanded theological set of categories (for practical use in homiletics) that encompasses the double movement from

law to gospel and from gospel to commandment. (Gesetz - Evangelium - Evangelium - Gebot)

"Diese lebendige Doppelbewegung, zunächst vom anklagenden Gesetz zum freisprechenden *Evangelium*, sodann aus der unmittelbaren *Gottesgewißheit* heraus zum konkreten *Gehorsam in den Geboten*, charakterisiert Luthers Zeugnis von Gesetz und Evangelium (my emphasis). In dieser endzeitlich ausgerichteten Dynamik ist beides miteinander verkoppelt, einerseits die *grundlegende Zuordnung: Gesetz - Evangelium*, andererseits die hieraus erwachsende *neue Zuordnung von Evangelium und Paränese* (author's emphasis). Ersteres unterstreicht: Die freie, ungeschuldete Christusgnade bricht ein in den Machtbereich des Gesetzesfluches und reißt den neuen Menschen heraus, freilich dergestalt, daß der alte Adam beharrlich in den Tod des Gottesgerichtes gegeben wird. Letzteres zeigt an: Wer in Christus ist, darf frei atmen im Gnadenraum des konkreten Gotteswillens; das Gesetz oder behutsamer die neutestamentliche Ermahnung ist hier wirklich die >Form des Evangeliums, dessen Inhalt die Gnade ist< (Karl Barth: *Evangelium und Gesetz*)" (Peters 1981,54).

Recent work in Lutheran Ethics also seems to be moving strongly in this direction or at least searching for new theological categories to bring together, what has traditionally and unfortunately been driven apart in mainstream Lutheran thinking viz. "law and gospel" or as Reinhard Hütter terms this dialectic "Christian Freedom and God's Commandments" (1998,31), taking his starting point from a famous treatise of Luther on Christian freedom he asserts, "Anything less than the whole radical dialectic is a fatal mistake" because it would hinder the full expression of the shape of Christian freedom and turn the whole ethical debate into "Protestantism-lite" (1998,41).

In view of the above "discovery" it is to me very disturbing to find that this aspect or "use" of the "law" does not seem to have found its way into the sermons within the Lutheran Church in South Africa. Perhaps it is also significant, in the sense of showing up a lack of interest among South African Lutherans, that it was a Reformed theologian that started the work of rediscovering the "law and gospel" dialectic in the Lutheran tradition by presenting a detailed study of the relationship of "law and gospel" as a hermeneutic-homiletical principle in the work of the German Luther-expert Hans-Joachim Iwand in his doctoral thesis in Stellenbosch (Burger 1983). This is an eminently practical thesis, stressing the importance of a differentiated preaching of "law" in its second use ("elenchticus", "skuldaanwysende en noodaanwysende prediking"), "gospel" as the indicative of salvation, and "command" as the concretising of salvation (Burger 1983,139 et al.). Such a differentiated "use" of "law and gospel" with particular emphasis on the "usus practicus evangelii" could play a major role in the Christian community's search for appropriate values and social norms within the "antinomian" culture of South African society without legalistically reducing Christian freedom to "being nice to everybody" nor re-establishing an order for salvation to be attained by human effort and piety.

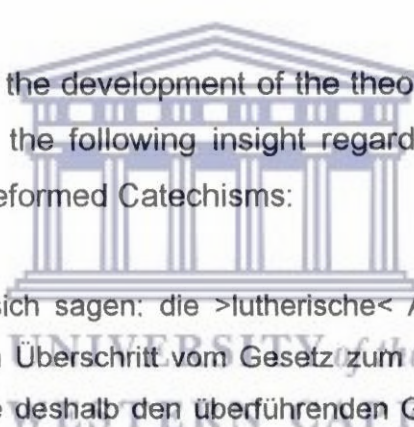
Of course I can see the danger of enhancing a legalistic use of the law by urging us to rediscover the "evangelic" third use - a danger that is already evident in the Lutheran sermons analysed above. The fact that they do tend toward such a legalism is to me an indication, that the preachers have a sense of "something is missing here", and they try to fill the vacuum somehow. The "answer" to the problem of legalistic preaching is not withdrawal from the third use, as it is sometimes suggested among Lutheran pastors in discussions on the subject. The danger of something being "abused" should not prompt us to discard it completely, but to work even harder at finding its proper "evangelic" use. After I had completed

most of my work on this thesis, the book by Johan Cilliers was published, dealing with this very issue, again significantly, from the Reformed side: *Die genade van gehoorsaamheid. Hoe evangelies is die etiese preke wat ons in Suid-Afrika hoor?* (2000).

2.2 The Heidelberg Catechism and its use of the ten commandments

In a certain sense it can be said that the Reformed catechetical tradition turns the dialectic of "law and gospel" around to bring out a stronger emphasis on the so called "third use of the law" or rather in more accepted Reformed terminology: the process of "sanctification".

In his analysis of the development of the theology of Jean Calvin, Albrecht Peters comes to the following insight regarding the order of the various sections in the Reformed Catechisms:



"So ließe sich sagen: die >lutherische< Anordnung der Institutio arbeite den Überschrift vom Gesetz zum Evangelium heraus und akzentuiere deshalb den überführenden Gebrauch des Gesetzes; die >reformierte< Anordnung des Genfer Katechismus, die im Heidelberger Katechismus aufgegriffen wurde, unterstreiche die Eingründung der Gebote in das Christenheil und lege deshalb den Akzent auf das Amt des Gesetzes an den wahrhaft Glaubenden" (Peters 1981, 84).

Let us look at the order and divisions in the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) to test the aptness of this characterisation. I will look at the text of the HC itself, guided by the overview given by a prominent South African Reformed theologian in his short "Characterisation" of the reformed confessions in Afrikaans (Jonker 1994). Jonker shows that there are within the text of the HC important pointers that guide its understanding of the order of and

relationship between the various components it includes (1994,102). The high acclaim this work received (Andrew Murray Prize 1997) is in itself significant for this study because it would suggest that the theology it represents is a fairly accurate reflection of the normative theology prevalent in the main stream of the Reformed tradition in South Africa, and that the interpretation of the "law and gospel" concept therein is known to the Reformed preachers in South Africa. I will return to this matter when I compare the findings here with the results of the analysis of the Reformed sermons presented above.

Although the text itself is presented in three parts (I. Von des Menschen Elend; II. Von des Menschen Erlösung; III. Von der Dankbarkeit), and these three parts can be seen to make up the "soteriologische grondplan" of the catechism, based on the inner structure of Paul's letter to the Romans (Jonker 1994,97), the HC can also be divided into five components with a linking section between them all (Jonker 1994,102). First there is *the summary of the law* (questions 3 and 4) followed by the *creed* (questions 22 to 58), then the *sacraments* are dealt with (questions 65 to 80) and subsequently the *Decalogue* (questions 92 to 113) and finally the *Lord's Prayer* (questions 118 to 129) bring the catechism to well rounded off close in terms of a clearly structured spirituality. All of the *links* between these five components are of particular importance to this study as each one gives important indications as to the function of the "law" within the whole. The *first*, linking the *summary of the law* with the presentation of the *creed* (questions 5 to 21), the *second*, linking the *creed* to the *sacraments* (questions 59 to 64), the *third*, linking the *sacraments* to the *Decalogue* (questions 81 to 91), and the *fourth*, linking the *Decalogue* to the *Lord's Prayer* (questions 114 to 117), each in its own way contributes to a clearly differentiated use of two of the "uses of the law" (the second and third use). I will take a brief look at each link in turn.

- The **first** (questions 5 - 21) links the summary of the law to the creed with the pertinent question: (5) "Kannst du dies alles vollk  mmlich halten?" and the answer: "Nein, denn ich bin von Natur geneigt, Gott und meinen N  chsten zu hassen." Then the total depravity of the human race, which resulted from the sinful disobedience of humans (questions 6 - 9) is dealt with as the reason why we cannot perfectly keep the whole law. Then the fact that God is angry at sin, willing to be merciful but also just and therefore has to punish sin (questions 10 and 11) is made clear. Which brings up the questions about how grace and punishment can both be adequately expressed (questions 12 - 21) and the answers leading to the presentation of Jesus Christ as the only sufficient mediator of salvation for all who believe the gospel. And from here the presentation of the saving faith in Jesus Christ can be properly presented as the faith that saves us from the wrath of God over our inability to perfectly keep the law. It is clear then, that the dynamic move from "law" (that reveals our sinfulness, i.e. second use) to the "gospel" (that reveals the grace of God) is the guiding principle behind this first link in the HC and it shows that the Reformed tradition in this instance (especially where it stems from Calvin, as A. Peters makes clear 1981,98) is not as far removed from the Lutheran understanding as is often made out (especially by Lutherans).

- The **second** (questions 59 to 64) links the creed to the sacraments with an argumentation about the use of this faith (59) as the only thing that can justify us before God. The "sola gratia" is then carefully explained with a view to exclude any idea of merit on the part of the believer, even the good works done by the faithful are tainted by sin and thus not sufficient to merit justification (60-63). Lest this is now taken as an invitation to become careless and wicked, the catechism states that it is impossible that those who are in Christ do not bear fruits of gratitude. "Macht aber diese Lehre nicht sorglose und verruchte Leute? Nein; denn es unm  glich ist, da   die, so Christo durch wahren Glauben sind eingepflanzt, nicht Frucht

der Dankbarkeit sollen bringen." (64) We have here a first announcement of the second and most prominent dynamic of this catechism viz. the move from the saving "gospel" to the thankful fulfilling of the "law", not for merit but as a fruit borne in Christ.

- The **third** (questions 81 to 91) links the sacraments to the presentation of the decalogue, more precisely it links the sacrament of the altar, that reminds those partaking in it that they have been incorporated into the body of Christ (question 80 et al.), to the section that deals with the life of one who has been thus incorporated into the body of Christ. Question 81, which can be seen as beginning the linking move, asks: "Welche sollen zu dem Tisch des Herrn kommen?" and gives the answer that already opens up the view toward the life of the faithful: "Die sich selbst um ihrer Sünde willen mißfallen und doch vertrauen, daß dieselbige ihnen verziehen und die übrige Schwachheit mit dem Leiden und Sterben Christi bedeckt sei, begehren auch je mehr und mehr ihren Glauben zu stärken und *ihr Leben zu bessern*." (my emphasis) From here the matter of church discipline is introduced (questions 83-85), in order to make sure that "those who through their confession and life prove to be unfaithful and godless" (question 82) are confronted and moved to repentance. Questions 86 to 91 then present the movement to thankful fulfilling of the law (doing good works) as part of the process of sanctification, that is worked in us by the Holy Spirit. This process encompasses the dying of the old and the rebirth of the new human in contrite repentance and hearty joy in doing the will of God (questions 88 to 90). Immediately before the commandments are introduced, question 91 and its answer make sure that they are seen in the proper light. "Welches sind aber gute Werke? Allein, *die aus wahren Glauben nach dem Gesetz Gottes ihm zu Ehren geschehen und nicht die auf unser Gutdünken oder Menschensatzung gegründet sind*." (my emphasis) The whole presentation of the "law" (the decalogue) stands under this heading, that these "goods works" are done as a result and

out-flowing of *true faith* without any thought of receiving merit or reward on the part of the believer doing them. They are *not done in order to* be saved *but because* the believer is saved. This precision of the nature of "good works" must be taken into account later when we compare it to the way the "law" (third use) is used in the Reformed sermons analysed above.

- The **fourth** (questions 114 to 117) links the decalogue to the Lord's Prayer in order to clarify why such a prayer is needed. Question 114 repeats essentially what had already been asked in question 5. "Können aber, die zu Gott bekehret sind, solche Gebote vollkÖmmlich halten?" The answer negates this possibility and states that the faithful in this life can merely begin to live according to God's will. The question is then asked why God insists so strongly on the ten Commandments, if they cannot be kept in this life anyway (115) and the answer to this opens the door to the introduction of prayer as the place in which the faithful can take refuge when the commandments reveal their sinfulness more and more. "Erstlich, auf daß wir unser ganzes Leben lang unsre sündliche Art, je länger je mehr erkennen und *desto begieriger Vergebung der Sünden und Gerechtigkeit in Christo suchen*. Danach, daß wir ohne Unterlaß uns befeleißigen und Gott bitten um die Gnade des Heiligen Geistes, daß wir je länger je mehr zu dem Ebenbild Gottes erneuert werden, bis wir das Ziel der Vollkommenheit nach diesem Leben erreichen." (115, my emphasis)

The further linking questions then introduce prayer as the way this movement of the Holy Spirit in the faithful is accomplished. Calling on God in prayer is seen to be the best way for Christians to show their gratitude for salvation and grateful prayer is the most appropriate description of the Christian life. It can thus be said that the final section on prayer is linked back to the decalogue in order to give the faithful a "modus operandi" with which they can deal both with the second and the third use of the "law", expressing their gratitude for the guidance given therein. One needs to be

careful however not to make too much of a "method" out of this link between prayer and the fulfilling of the law. In the end both the obedience to the law and prayer remain works of the Holy Spirit in those who believe the gospel. Indeed the whole HC can be characterised as a theology of the Spirit and herein it is very clearly a product of Calvin's influence, whose theology has often been termed pneumatological in its concentration and focus.

2.3 Summary: The dialectic of "law and gospel" in its confessional Lutheran *and* Reformed use. A structural theological summary of the catechisms in comparison to the sermon-analyses of this study.

From the above it can be seen that the HC has the "law" functioning in two very prominent places and in its twofold use as "aanklaer en tugmeester na Christus" (second use) as well as "reël van dankbaarheid" (third use) (Jonker 1994,100). According to Jonker the HC therefor takes up a position between Luther and Calvin. Calvin, insisting that true knowledge of sin and repentance do not merely come from the second use of the law but rather from a confrontation with the gospel as it is found in the creed, places the creed first in his Genevan Catechism. Luther, allegedly putting the emphasis only on the second use of the law as the revealer of human sinfulness in placing the ten commandments at the beginning of his catechisms (Jonker 1994,100). Jonker's argument here is a good example of the widely held misconception that Luther's and Calvin's positions can be equated with the positions taken by Elert and Barth respectively in their "law and gospel" versus "gospel and law" essays. My short study of Luther's catechisms above should demonstrate the need to move beyond such oversimplifications. Although Luther in his Small Catechism does simply put the various parts in an unconnected order with the decalogue at the beginning, the interpretations of this order (in the Large Catechism and in the catechism sermons cited above) and the use to which he wanted the

Small Catechism to be put (it was to be a prayer book for the family), in effect show that his intentions are not at all far removed from those expounded in the Heidelberg Catechism. Essentially both traditions are intent on forming the spirituality of the faithful by taking them on a pilgrimage from a realisation of their own sinfulness (second use) through the liberating experience of the gospel (creed) toward a renewed and grateful life within the space created by the will of God (third use). The danger that both traditions have succumbed to repeatedly, is that of becoming legalistic and moralistic in their use of the "law". Jonker does admit that the history of the Reformed Church also shows "negative fruits" of this kind. "Die neiging tot moralisme is by Gereformeerdes nooit baie ver weg nie. In die ontwikkeling rondom die Puritanisme het dit ook geblyk hoe maklik die gereformeerde liefde vir die wet kan afgly in vorms van wettisme en gestrengheid wat van die heiligmaking 'n juk eerder as 'n vreugdevolle wandel met God kan maak" (Jonker 1994,116).

This warning can in a sense be applied to the sermons analysed above, to see how this problem of moralism does appear in many guises and realise that it is much easier to warn against it than to effectively circumnavigate a moralistic use of the "law" without avoiding the necessary use of the law altogether.

The latter option seemed to me to have been a more prevalent "escape" among Lutheran preachers resulting in an anti-nomianism and a proclamation of the "cheap grace" Bonhoeffer already noticed in the Lutheran tradition prior to World War II, which incapacitated most Evangelical-Lutheran Christians in Germany from withstanding the forceful and demonic "law-unto-itself" ideology of the "German Christians" (Bonhoeffer 1937,1-12), and which I believe also contributed to the very low profile of the Lutheran Church (especially the white churches) in the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa. It is insufficient and to my

understanding even incorrect to blame the much maligned "two-kingdoms" doctrine of Lutherans for their lack of involvement in the issues of this world (Jonker 1994,41), although of course a *wrongly interpreted* "two-kingdoms" doctrine by some Lutherans themselves was often used to defend such lack of participation. It was precisely Luther's teaching of the two different ways in which God deals with the world (law and grace) that caused him to "interfere" constantly in the affairs of the rulers of his time, and the interpretations of the ten commandments in his Large Catechism can clearly be seen to impact all areas of life (even the political).

I would venture to say here that the "kingdom of God" theology of the Reformed Church, with its powerful striving to hallow all of life, and place even the public and political arena under the authoritative Word of God (Jonker 1994,41), which is often introduced as an antidote to the "two-kingdoms heresy" of the Lutherans, to my view had as one of its direct results the "national-christian" paradigm that provided the theological legitimization of the Apartheid ideology. The treatment that Sebastian Castellio received at the hands of Calvin's church-state in Geneva could perhaps be seen as a first instance of the "third use of the law" gone frighteningly wrong (Stefan Zweig, 1954). Indeed, as it is argued by John de Gruchy, Reformed theology, although it is in itself a "liberating theology", needs to be liberated from its legalistic and oppressive past (1991).

Both traditions seem to have abused their very central teachings in the way they involved themselves or refrained from involving themselves in the South African situation, and I suggest that this should lead both Churches to re-examine their proclamation, specifically their "use of the law" in their preaching, as I have attempted to do here.

Both traditions have a strong ethic of sanctification built into their central confessions, and in both theologies this ethic revolves around a "third use of the law", differing only slightly in emphasis but on the whole aiming for a life of the faithful that is to be included, circumferenced, protected and guided by the gracious will of God. Both traditions seem to have gone astray in their use of the "law" in their preaching, and therefore I suggest that a new engagement with the "law" by way of listening to a "Jewish" use of Torah, can be of great value for both traditions in rediscovering their own heritage. In my studies I have come across some Christian theologians that have taken this route and I would like to present some of their thinking here. This can only be a brief introduction of such thinking and I intend it to be an invitation to my colleagues in both Churches to pursue this line further.



3. Some new attempts regarding "law and gospel" (especially in Paul's writings)

"One has either got to be a Jew or stop reading the Bible. The Bible cannot make sense to anyone who is not 'spiritually a Semite.' The spiritual sense of the Old Testament is not and cannot be a simple emptying out of its Israelite content. Quite the contrary! The New Testament is the fulfilment of that spiritual content, the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham, the promise that Abraham believed in. It is never therefore a denial of Judaism, but its affirmation. Those who consider it a denial have not understood it."
(Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 1965, 14)

Introduction

Strictly speaking one cannot attribute the fully fledged "law and gospel" dialectic to Paul because it does not literally appear in this form anywhere in his writings, and yet it has been said (in both Lutheran and Reformed traditions) to be essentially a correct interpretative model for Pauline theology. There is a large body of literature devoted to a more detailed and differentiated understanding of the various "dualisms" Paul uses and the debate has flared up time and again as to the import of the exegetical research done by a wide range of theologians from a large spectrum of differing persuasions. To mention only two from the "opposing" camps that I have looked at, we find a strongly biblicist and conservative view represented by Colin G. Kruse in his book, *Paul, the Law and Justification* (1996) on the one hand and an open, critical stance towards Paul's theology in Heikki Räisänen's book, *Paul and the Law* (1983). I will not treat this whole debate here, as it seems to be limitless in its expansion, but I cannot quite avert my suspicion that in many cases the exegetical research is guided by the predetermined theologies and standpoints of the researchers - this suspicion of course would be supported strongly by the thought of critical theory in view of hermeneutics in general and the critique of ideologies in particular. On the whole the research on the question of the

acceptability of the "law and gospel" dialectic as an adequate interpretation of Paul's theology can be loosely divided into two groups.

- The one is led by a strong determination not to allow a "Sonderweg" for Israel and holds on to a supersessionist reading of the history of Israel and the Church. In recent debates in Germany this group is still very adamant that Christians have a duty to proclaim Christ to the Jews as the only way to salvation (for example Strecker 1993,27-29; see also the book by Colin Kruse mentioned above).
- The other is led by a strong interest in the Christian-Jewish dialogue and the insight that historic Christian teaching on this issue has in the past led to both anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism and can thus be seen as one of the determining precursors and causes of the persecution of Jews that has sadly accompanied Church history through most of its two millennia (Fasching, 1992).

Both groups, however, appear to be using "law and gospel" in its reductionistic, linear understanding, the first in order to defend it as biblical (i.e. the New Testament as replacing the Old Testament) the second in order to show that such a reading is not in accordance with the greater biblical understanding of the "law". For the purposes of this study I will limit myself to the discussion of *three questions*, that have been raised by scholars that are attempting to move beyond both a mere linear understanding of the "law and gospel" dialectic on the one hand and the rejection of the anti-Judaistic, supersessionist reading of church history on the other hand:

1. What does the phrase "Christ is the telos of the Law" in Romans 10,4 signify?

2. Does an overview of the development of Paul's theology justify the use of the "law and gospel" dialectic in the homiletical understanding and use of his thought?

3. Does the Jewish way of "using" the Torah (in Halacha and Aggada) provide new insights for our proclamation of "the whole word of God"?

3.1 What does the phrase "Christ is the telos of the Law" in Romans 10,4 signify?

As a first introduction to a new way of thinking about the "law" I want to present a summary of an Article by Peter von der Osten-Sacken that was given as introductory material to the Theme of the "Woche der Brüderlichkeit 1976" in Berlin. These weeks were held annually with the specific purpose of bringing Christians and Jews into dialogue with each other, and Peter von der Osten-Sacken's essay clearly has this purpose and context in mind, although it can be read by Christians as a call to review our use of "law" in our own worship and preaching settings. As such I want to present its findings here.

Von der Osten-Sacken's starting point is the long Christian tradition (beginning with Marcion and climaxing in the recent darkest times of Christian anti-Semitism) of effectively saying that the "Old Testament" (this name is shown to be pejorative) is for the Jews and the "New Testament" is for Christians. This understanding sees the "Tenach" merely as the "Voraussetzung" for the Christian message and with this message it has become redundant (überholt). It can now be used (abused) as a negative backdrop upon which the Christian gospel can appear in its clarity and superiority. Such a way of using the "OT" is still prevalent even among modern scholars today (Levinson: 1991,27). This understanding found its

classic legitimation in a verse of Paul - Romans 10,4 - that has been translated by most interpreters as : "Christ is the end of the law."

Von der Osten-Sacken now proceeds to show how such a translation of "telos" as "end" is possible only if the verse is taken out of its context and used as an anti-judaic slogan against Paul's own intentions. Paul, in the context, is practising what he is saying i.e. Christ is the fulfilling (Erfüllung) of the Torah. And this is done using the Tenach. "Nicht das Ende der Thora ist nach dem Apostel in Christus begründet, sondern das Ende eines bestimmten Verhältnisses zu ihr, nämlich eines solchen, in dem der Mensch die Kraft zur Erfüllung der Thora nicht von Gott, sondern von sich selbst erwartet. Und das ist etwas grundlegend anderes" (Von der Osten-Sacken 1985,6). This is not merely a fight about words but an important decision with far reaching consequences. Because, if the law has come to an end in Christ, then the Torah is brought to silence, is made powerless and loses its relevance. "Dann wird das Alte Testament zum Buch des Scheiterns, und die große Hoffnung für ganz Israel, die Paulus in demselben Brief an die Römer ein Kapitel später formuliert und die ohne die Thora völlig unverständlich bleibt, wird folgerichtig zur unbegreiflichen Inkonsequenz des Apostels" (1985,6). But if Christ is understood as the fulfilment of the Thora, as Paul and the first Christians did, then a joint Jewish and Christian search for the continued relevance of that which has been fulfilled in Christ can be launched. "Denn sie wird ja nun nicht negiert, sondern bleibt das ins Lebenweisende Wort, sie bleibt, um nochmals Paulus zu zitieren, 'heilig, gerecht und gut' (Röm 7,12)" (1985,6).

Von der Osten-Sacken now proceeds to show some first attempts at changing the attitude of Christians in this regard. This will not be easy since we are dealing with a long tradition of neglect. For instance, the witness of the Old Testament is barely visible in the liturgy of the Church (referring mainly to the Lutheran service, which does not include the

minimum of a reading of the "law" as it has at least been retained in the reformed liturgical tradition) and so also in the Apostolic Creed the Old Testament is sadly missed.

As a "remedy" for this ignoring of the witness of the Tenach, Von der Osten-Sacken brings in the Jewish notion of history as "salvation history" quoting from the Mishna (Traktat Pesachim X,5) referring to Exodus 13,8: "Von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht ist jedermann verpflichtet, sich so anzusehen, als ob er selbst aus Ägypten gezogen wäre; denn es heißt: Erzähle deinem Sohn an jenem Tage (dem Passahfest) also: Deswegen ist der Herr für mich eingetreten, als ich aus Ägypten zog (2. Mose 13,8). Darum schulden wir Dank, Lob, Preis, Verherrlichung, Huldigung, Verehrung und Anbetung Ihm, der für unsere Väter und für uns alle diese Wunder getan, uns von Knechtschaft zu Freiheit, von Kummer zu Freude, von Trauer zu Festesfeier, von Dunkelheit zu großem Licht und von Dienstbarkeit zu Erlösung geführt hat. Laßt uns Ihm das Hallelujah anstimmen" (1985,7).

And as Christians of heathen origin we should remember that our salvation lies in our incorporation into the history of God's People Israel. Thus in a concrete sense the tradition that links "law" and "history" in interpreting Romans 10,4 is to be rediscovered as saying "Christ is the fulfilment of history", this finding in history the reality of Israel and the nations, that has been transformed in Jesus Christ into the new creation of God and in which life can be understood and lived within this interpretative framework. "Die Geschichte zerplatzt nicht in lauter einzelne, die einsam ihren Heilsweg ziehen. Vielmehr weist Christus als Erfüllung der Geschichte die Völker ein in die Teilhabe an der Geschichte Israels, in die Teilhabe am dankbaren Gedenken wie an der Erwartung der verheißenen gemeinsamen Zukunft" (1985,9).

Torah can thus be seen in its central and guiding function for living under God's Word in both the Jewish and the Christian tradition, and history is the arena of life in which this can be done. Die "Gleichsetzung von Gesetz oder Thora und Geschichte zeigt, was Geschichte nach biblischen Verständnis ist: Der Bereich des Lebens und Zusammenlebens Israels und der Völker, in den hinein die verheißende und fordernde Weisung (Thora) Gottes ergeht und den er mit dieser Weisung gestalten will. Die Juden leben aus dieser Thora in der Hoffnung der kommenden Erfüllung ihres Wortes. Die Christen leben mit ihr in der Hoffnung, die in dem Glauben an die Erfüllung in Jesus Christus begründet ist" (1985,9).

Looking at Torah in this way can help us to break it free from the reductionistic stranglehold of a merely linear "law and gospel" or even "gospel and law" interpretation. Such a new view also brings back the eschatological dimension of the promises and directives contained in Torah (cf. Romans 8,19-22) and opens the way to a positive and concrete, practical use of the "law" for life in the Kingdom of God that has drawn near in Jesus Christ (Mk 1,15).

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3.2 Does an overview of the development of Paul's theology justify the use of the "law and gospel" dialectic in the homiletical understanding and use of his thought?

The principal (1976-1986) of the "Praktisch-Theologisches Ausbildungsinstitut" (PTA) of the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg, Gerhard Bauer, held an address at the "Herbsttagung der Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit" in Mannheim on the 8 November 1980, which had as its overall theme: "Gesetz und Evangelium. Scheidung,

Unterscheidung oder Entscheidung zwischen Juden und Christen - am Beispiel des Apostels Paulus". His address is entitled "Die Gratwanderung des Paulus vom Gesetz zum Evangelium" and it contains such a wealth of insights into our questions regarding the use of "law and gospel" in our preaching, that I want to present its main arguments here.

Using the metaphor of walking on a ridge (Gratwanderung), which includes the element of risking a fall down either side, Bauer attempts to describe Paul's theology as one of development from "law" to "gospel". He sets his dealing with the matter against the backdrop of the discussion within protestant theology of the last 450 years that was mainly concerned with distinguishing itself from the "papistischen Werkgerechtigkeit" on the one hand and on the other an inter-protestant "struggle" between nomists and antinomists, Lutherans, Melanchthonians and Calvinists, that centred around the "three uses of the law" that I have been dealing with in some detail above.

Bauer makes special mention of the fact that the Lutheran Confessions do clearly teach a "third use" of the law (Konkordienformel as quoted by Bauer 1980,28), but that the controversy was never looked at from anything but an inter-protestant angle, although this "third use" has such an undeniable similarity to a Jewish understanding and use of Torah (1980,29).

Christian theology has done everything in its power to make sure that a false view of Judaism as opposed to Christian faith remains intact, i.e. Judaism = legalism and Christianity = gospel (Bauer 1980,29). He then expressly states that his essay as well as the whole meeting has the goal of countering this false equation. This he then does by giving a (to my knowledge at least) new overview of Paul's torah-critical theology as having three roots.

a) First a Christological root - Paul's radical change to a torah-critical stance can be understood autobiographically on account of his confrontation with Christ, which changed his world completely and abruptly. This is not to be explained on the grounds of sound rabbinic argument, which Paul does use regularly in other matters. This radical change in his relationship to Torah is grounded in Paul's very own experience and personal understanding of his encounter with Christ (Galatians 2,15f.19f). Bauer then asks whether the torah-critique of Paul, that clearly has its basis in Paul's Christ-experience, something that we cannot rationally explain and understand, should be accepted by modern theology in the face of the costs it entails, i.e. having to declare that the Jewish Torah and the righteousness that it aims for is nothing but "excrement" (Philippians 3,7)?

b) The second root of Paul's torah-critique is ecclesiological and to be found most clearly in Romans 9-11; where the Apostle struggles with the question of the relationship of Christians with those Jews that have no faith in Jesus as the Christ. He gives a very positive value to Israel as people of the covenant and carriers of the promise and yet remains sharply critical of Torah as well as Israel's faithfulness to Torah. Why? Bauer answers that this is so, because Paul is convinced that in his great mercy God has led those that did not know Torah to Justification in Christ, while those that seek God with the Torah, that pursued a "law of righteousness" did not attain it (Romans 9,30ff). Since there is now another way to righteousness for the nations, that is grounded in God's gracious mercy alone, the way of the law falls under Paul's criticism. But this does not lead to a dualism or antithesis between law and God, as in the letter to the Galatians. Israel's faithfulness to Torah remains despite its "No" to Christ, enfolded by the faithfulness and mercy of God and therefor within the promise of the remaining covenant. In fact Paul's torah-critique in Romans 9 - 11 is also a pointed "church-critique" - a criticism of Christians that boast over Israel,

posit their supersession as God's people and turn Torah and Christ into two opposing and mutually exclusive ways to salvation (Bauer 1980,35).

c) The third root of Paul's torah-critique is eschatological - for Paul the end time has come with the coming of Christ. The torah was given as a way of living justly before God in this aeon, but this aeon has come to an end now, therefore the torah has lost its weight. As long as the faithful lives in this world, he/she remains confronted with the Command, the law of love, that is fulfilled through the life of the newly created human. Paul can even speak of this law as the Torah of Christ (Galatians 6,2). But this is mentioned by the way and is thus no longer heard under the massive eschatological language of "the end", the reconciliation of God with humans, the liberating power of the Spirit, that gives life as opposed to the killing power of the "law". Referring to Peter von der Osten-Sacken's address at the Berlin Church Day 1977, Bauer reiterates the "destructive" elements inherent in Paul's eschatology - "pure death theology" against which any constructive elements, that might be found in it as well (such as "resurrection with Christ", "life in the fulfilment"), have no chance of being heard, or they are spiritualised and individualised (1980,36). In the light of this critique of Paul's Torah-critique the Jewish "No" to the Gospel of the fulfilled times, to the advent of the messianic age, represents to us Christians the necessary "eschatological reserve" (Vorbehalt), as Marquardt has reminded us: "Mit seiner Treue zur Tora und seinem Nein zu Jesus als dem Christus sei, so sagt er, Israel 'der weltgeschichtliche Zeuge für dies Noch-nicht des göttlichen Willens' ... Es widerstrebt dem christlichen Pathos der endgültigen Zeit, Wahrheit und Urteile. Es existiert als Ferment der Dekomposition falscher Vollkommenheiten ..." (quoted by Bauer 1980,36).

Heading for a more context-oriented discussion of Paul's use of the law, Bauer asks/warns: "Wird er dabei abgleiten in eine Christus Mystik (first

root a), in ein triumphalistisches Kirchenverständnis (second root b) und in ein enthusiastisches Endzeitbewußtsein (third root c)?" (1980,37 my comments in parentheses).

Having touched on the problematic of the terminology ("nomos" and "Gesetz" for torah and "Torah/nomos" for the whole Hebrew Bible) and on the genuinely Pauline dualism of Torah and Promise (not "Torah and Gospel" as it developed in subsequent systematisations of Paul's theology), Bauer gives an overview of the content of Paul's teaching on the Torah, following Eichholz (*Die Theologie des Paulus*, Neukirchen 1972) dividing the subject matter into "a) Die Grenze der Tora, b) Der Auftrag der Tora, c) Die Erfüllung der Tora" (1980,38f). Summarising this the law in Paul's teaching can be characterised by these three aspects:

a) It is limited because it cannot deal adequately with sin, it can only condemn and because its time is limited.

b) It has as its main task the revelation of human sinfulness (second use) and

c) it is fulfilled in God's sending of his son (Romans 8,3-4) and in those who live in the Spirit, not in the flesh (implicit third use). It seems however that Paul avoids the term "law" to describe the life of the faithful and yet paranaesis has a prominent place in his letters (some of them very stern) to the congregations.

Bauer's own conclusions begin with an outright rejection of both the dualistic and dialectic distinction of "law and gospel" as unbiblical - there is no text in the canon that can be cited in support of such a divisive formula for "using" God's Word, and since it has fostered an almost anti-Semitic distinction between an allegedly legalistic Jewish religion and an allegedly grace-filled Christian religion, we should refrain from its use completely

(1980,41). If one does want to continue its use, it should at least be done correctly. "Richtig ist, daß die Zweiheit durch den Unterschied gegeben ist zwischen dem, was Gott tut, und dem, was der Mensch tut: 'Das gesetz gebeut und foddert von uns, was wir thuen sollen, ist allein auff unser thuen gericht und stehet ym foddern, denn Gott spricht durch das gesetz: das thue, das lasse ... Das Euangelion aber prediget nicht, was wir thuen odder lassen sollen, foddert nichts von uns, sondern wendet es umb, thut das widderspiel ... und spricht: Sihe, lieber mensch, das hat dir Gott gethan, er hat seinen son für dich ynns Fleisch gesteckt ...'(Luther,M. WA XVI,366,31ff. qouted by Bauer 1980,41).

A final conclusion by Bauer, that I want to mention, as it seems to be relevant to my study is this. Despite of all his critical re-evaluation of Paul's theology and its resulting aberrations in church history, there is one thing he wants to keep very clear - that the message of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom - the exclusive Kingdom of God - can liberate us and all heathens - not from the Jewish Torah, but from the law, the schemes and compulsions of this world, from the "Anspruch, der sich als Gegengötter gebärdenden 'Elemente' und Mächte dieser Weltzeit" (1980,42).

Transposing this into our quest for a practical and concrete use of "law and gospel", one could re-emphasise that "law" (even in Luther) would first and foremost be that "concrete and actual 'voice' which 'sounds in the heart' and the 'conscience', a real voice which afflicts man in his isolation from God and demands that he fulfil his humanity" (Forde 1972,14). "Law is that which accuses and terrifies in a real sense, anything that does this functions as law" (Forde 1972,15). And the word that liberates us from this "law", is the gospel that proclaims God's unconditional grace to those that are condemned by this "law".

Such an understanding of "law" does not need to be linked directly to the concept of Torah. Indeed, Torah can and does often function as "law" in this way too, but this should not be seen as its only or most important function, because other things, powers and influences outside of the torah fulfil this function of "law" (second use) much more prominently. Even the gospel message itself can be used (or abused) to function in this condemning way, when it is turned into a demand, that its believers have to fulfil in order to be saved. Johan Cilliers has shown very clearly that this is a sadly prevalent mode of using the gospel in South African preaching (Cilliers 1994,40ff).

3.3 Does the Jewish way of "using" the Torah (in Halacha and Aggada) provide new insights for our proclamation of "the whole word of God"?

Finally I want to introduce a "new" way of reading the Bible, that Axel Denecke has proposed as a result of his learning in the "Judenschule". Denecke was appointed as "Beauftragter für Christentum und Judentum" in the Lutheran Church of Hannover in 1990 and has published the work he did in this capacity in his book, *Als Christ in der Judenschule* in 1996 (Schalom-Bücher Band 4). This book offers a lot of practical help for a renewed praxis of preaching the Word of God informed by a listening to Jewish theology, but I want to concentrate on one particularly helpful discovery, that Denecke presents in connection with his learning from the Jewish reading of Torah.

In his book Denecke looks at the different understandings of revelation (Offenbarungsverständnis) in the Jewish and Christian traditions and initially contrasts them by using the first letters of the Hebrew and the

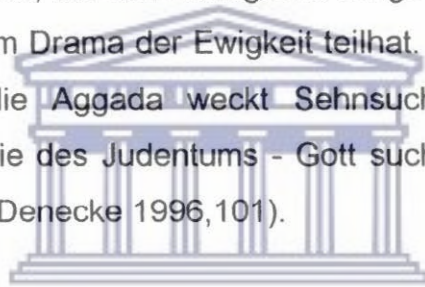
Greek alphabet, Aleph and Alpha respectively. The Jewish "Offenbarungsverständnis" is likened to the open, undefined sound of the Aleph as "prinzipiell unabgeschlossen, sie ist offen nach vorn bis in die heutige Zeit hinein", and it is described as "der anfängliche Hauch der Offenbarung Gottes" (1996,87) and thus not to be seen as a fixed, canonised code of "law", as it is often caricatured in the popular Christian view of Judaism.

The Christian "Offenbarungsverständnis" is likened to the more defined, finalised sound of the Alpha, as the "Anfang der wirkmächtigen messianischen Offenbarung des Wortes Gottes in einem Menschen von Fleisch und Blut" and is therefore described as the "menschgewordene Hauch der Offenbarung Gottes" (1996,92). But this comparison does not imply that the Christian "Offenbarungsverständnis" as opposed to the Jewish one is to be seen as a totally closed and final one, it is rather the revelation of the clearly defined beginning of something that has not yet come to its conclusion. "Auch die christliche Offenbarung ist - auch und gerade nach orthodoxem Verständnis - eine im Kern offene, unabgeschlossene Offenbarung. In Jesus Christus hat das Heil zwar begonnen, es ist aber noch nicht abgeschlossen. So wie für Juden die Tora offen nach vorn ist, so ist für Christen die Offenbarung in Christus offen nach vorn" (1996,95).

This realisation prompts Denecke to suggest that Christians can learn a lot from the Jewish way of reading scripture in "Halacha und Aggada" (1996,97) because both are very specialised ways in which the Torah is continually explicated (entfaltet) into the present context: "a) religionsgesetzlich (halachisch) die Tora Gottes nach Mehrheitsbeschluss der Rabbinen weiterentfaltend, b) in freier Erzählung (aggadisch) mit nie endender Phantasie in geistgeleiteter Erfindung neuer Geschichten"

(1996,91). A quote from A. Heschel makes it clearer what the essence of the two "uses" of Torah is.

"Die Halacha verkörpert die Fähigkeit, das Leben nach einem festen Vorbild aufzubauen: Sie hat formende Kraft. Die Aggada ist der Ausdruck einer nie endenden Sehnsucht des Menschen, die oft aller Grenzen spottet. Die Halacha formt das Leben nach rationalen Gesichtspunkten, preßt es in ein Schema. Sie definiert und spezifiziert; sie setzt Maß und Grenze, sie fügt das Leben in ein exaktes System. Die Aggada handelt von den unsagbaren Beziehungen des Menschen zu Gott, zum Mitmenschen und zur Welt. ... Die Halacha lehrt, wie man alltägliche Dinge tut; die Aggada sagt, wie man am Drama der Ewigkeit teilhat. Die Halacha schenkt Wissen; die Aggada weckt Sehnsucht..." (A. Heschel, "Philosophie des Judentums - Gott sucht den Menschen" as quoted by Denecke 1996,101).



From a summarised understanding of the Jewish way of reading the scriptures by way of Halacha and Aggada, Denecke moves to a suggestion that Christians can read the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a similar manner. Jesus is the "fleischgewordene Tora" that needs to be taken into the world both in halachic and aggadic form, so that it can give form and content to the liberation wrought by the God of Israel in Jesus Christ (1996,103f).

In a further chapter Denecke then summarises his findings in this regard in a set of 10 theses under the heading "Daß Jesus unsere einzige 'Halacha' ist und wie wir die Jesus-'Aggada' weitererzählen - Zusammenfassende Thesen zu 'Gesetz und Evangelium' - 'Halacha und Aggada' - 'Freude an der Tora'" (1996,133).

Because these theses are to my understanding of our "preaching crisis" a real even if radical alternative, that can help us deal with the crisis, I want to present them here in some detail. I will translate each thesis in turn (it is placed in italics below) and comment on its impact for our preaching, particularly in view of the sermon material I analysed above.

1. *The Torah, according to Jewish understanding is "gospel", pure gospel. It may not be qualified theologically by us Christians as "law" (Denecke 1996,134).*

Jewish literature shows very clearly that Torah is seen as a blessing, it is pure grace, that is seen as a special gift to the people Israel. The joy of Torah is therefore an ongoing theme in much of Jewish faith expression. From this the Christians may learn to rediscover the Biblical Torah as a source of life, taking seriously the emphasis of Paul in Romans 7,12 that the Torah is holy, just and good. It gives or creates the freedom humans need to live a meaningful and just life. This aspect is present in a rudimentary form in the sermons analysed above, but they do tend toward a legalistic or at least moralistic use of the "law", mixing the first and second use thereof into a burden instead of proclaiming it as a good gift of God to society.

2. *The Torah as Gospel appears essentially and methodically in a dual mode - as "Halacha" and as "Aggada" (Denecke 1996,135).*

In "*Halacha*" concentrated attention is paid to the letter of the "law" and all the effort is directed toward a clear and correct understanding of the commandments. This is usually done in long discussions and even arguments at the end of which an accepted version is decided upon which is binding to all at that point in time. In "*Aggada*" a creative, narrative exploration of the depths of "*Halacha*" is undertaken, using personal experiences, poetry, stories, myths and legends, parables and metaphors to fill the letter of Torah with life-giving Spirit. This narrative approach to the

"law" is something which our Christian preaching can indeed learn to its benefit, moving it away from the often tediously dry and boring explanations of God's will that we find in our sermons. Letter and Spirit, Commandment and the Joy of Life belong together and this needs to be experienced by our hearers for them to rekindle a fervour for Christian discipleship.

3. *The Torah can only be Gospel because it is both Halacha and Aggada* (Denecke 1996,136). Both ways of using Torah need to be kept alive and together, or else the Torah itself will deteriorate into a legalistic, lifeless burden, placed upon its followers, without giving any respite for the weary. Only in the dynamic tension between the two can the gospel character of Torah be brought to bear on our daily lives.

4. *The Torah in human hands and human mouths is not eo ipso Gospel. It can become "law" in the sense in which it was explained by Paul and the dominant Christian tradition* (Denecke 1996,137). This is the second use in the Lutheran Tradition. It has already been mentioned in my comments on the previous theses, but can be made clearer in the following illustration. If we use *Torah only in its halachic form*, it becomes pure letter, oppressing, stifling life by instilling fear in those who struggle to keep the "law", the spiritual death caused by the letter (Paul's "nomos"). But by the same token, if we use *Torah only as Aggada* it becomes an esoteric system of knowledge relevant only to the subjective spirituality of those who are "in the know", creating a fantasy-world for those who want to escape this "real world". In Christian sermons this danger can be seen where the fear of becoming legalistic prevents us from proclaiming the stern will of God or the paranesis that comes out of the salvation by grace.

5. *The great art of the Jewish understanding of Torah as Gospel is to be found in its viewing Torah in undivided unity of Halacha and Aggada*

(Denecke 1996,137). In this unity the "gospel-power" of the Torah is found. The Halacha gives an earthen groundedness to the Aggada, with practical and accurate guidelines for life in the "real world". The Aggada gives creative life to the Halacha, a "Menschlichkeit" that transforms the commandments into narrative possibilities for life.

6. *Our Christian proclamation suffers under our not being able to preach well halachically nor aggadically, but doing both only half-heartedly we therefore preach "legalistically"* (Denecke 1996,138). Being afraid of the "law" we preach a half-hearted ethic that shies away from practical detail and flounders around in a wishy-washy goodness of a harmless God. Being afraid of "enthusiasm" and subjective spirituality we preach a half-hearted "gospel" not trusting the Biblical narrative to be a truly creative force in the lives of the faithful.

7. *As Christians we have to accept a "Christian Halacha", to be able to think and act a hundred percent halachically* (Denecke 1996,138). *We also have to develop a "Christian Aggada", to be able to be a hundred percent aggadic in our speaking, our poetry, our narrating (weitererzählen) of the great deeds of God.* The *Christian Halacha* is the proclamation of Christ the crucified and risen Lord as sole source of our salvation and life (this is found primarily in the Pauline letters). The *Christian Aggada* on the other hand is the open possibility of rediscovering the depth of the Christ event and its meaning in the narratives that have been developed by the faithful throughout the ages and in the various cultures into which the Christ-halacha has been proclaimed. Jesus of Nazareth started this aggadic proclamation by his use of parables and stories known to his hearers, creatively changing them to include his message. It would to my mind be a very promising experiment to read the four canonical Gospels as such a Christ-aggada.

8. *Christian Aggada without the "Halacha Jesus Christ" would end in arbitrariness. Christian Halacha without such an Aggada would turn into a rigid doctrinal system* (Denecke 1996,140). Here a question needs to be raised about the Christian preaching on "Old Testament" texts. The Christological interpretation of the Old Testament has fallen on hard times, to some extent rightly so, because it was used to bolster a supersessionist view of Israel. But such an abuse should not hinder us from trying to find an acceptable way of reading the Old Testament Christologically. Perhaps this mode developed here can help us in this quest. The following theses are essentially the points that would have to be given major attention for such a quest to be successful.

9. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ is Halacha and Aggada simultaneously. Only thus can it really be Gospel today* (Denecke 1996,140). The creative tension needs to be held in careful balance in the sermons. Some of the Reformed sermons analysed above do come close to this kind of balance. Compare the Reformed sermons by Jonker (2) and Cilliers (5) above et al.

10. *Christian preaching is successful and achieves its goal when it proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Jewish tradition of reading scripture as Christ-Halacha and Jesus-Aggada* (Denecke 1996,141).

"Wenn wir als Christen so vom jüdischen Verständnis der Tora als Evangelium in Halacha und Aggada lernen, dann würde unsere Verkündigung (in Predigt, aber auch in Unterricht, Seelsorge und anderen Handlungsfeldern der Kirche) evangeliumsgemäßer, lebensnaher, menschlicher und in allem auch gottgemäßer werden" (Denecke 1996,143).

Conclusion

With these ten theses of Denecke and my comments, I hope to have shown briefly how our sermon making (homiletics) can creatively and critically change both the theological content and ethical thrust of our preaching if we learn to listen carefully to the Jewish understanding of Torah. A helpful exercise would now be to take some of the sermons analysed above and in seminar-mode work on them with an eye to bringing halachic and aggadic elements into their structure.

In the theological "in service training programme" for Pastors in the Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg, I found a very concrete suggestion in this regard, which I would want to pass on to both the Reformed and Lutheran Church bodies, responsible for the training of pastors. Under the tutelage of orthodox Jewish teachers the trainees take part in a "jüdisch-christliche Toralernwoche". The content is described as follows: "Unter Anleitung von toratreuen (orthodoxen) jüdischen Lehrern werden Texte aus 2 Mose 16-20 gelernt ("Vom Schilfmeer zum Sinai" mit besonderem Schwerpunkt auf den Zehn Geboten)" (Brochure: Kloster Denkendorf, 2001).

The above is a localised practical suggestion from a completely different context, which might not have its place in an academic study for the South African context, but I do believe that unless such concrete steps are taken to rectify our lack of knowledge about Jewish Torah-learning, the content of the cited theses above will remain merely theoretical and we will not have the ability to use them for our preaching.

A first step on the way to such learning would be for Lutheran and Reformed theologians and pastors to work together in a sermon-analysis group or a sermon-preparation group, perhaps using my analysis criteria as a starting point for discussion, and once they have "found their feet" in this

dialogue, realising that there is a great amount of common ground in their respective traditions, learning to listen to the two catechetical traditions in the dynamic moving from "law" to "gospel" to "command" (Gesetz - Evangelium - Gebot) we might soon be ready to invite Jewish teachers to sit in and listen critically to our work with the Hebrew Bible, showing us where our "use" of the "law" is still too restricted and linear, too legalistic and devoid of the "gospel"-dimension, that it does contain for them. We may find that our sermons will become grounded in the "real world", helping our congregants to live a life of faithful pilgrimage under the graceful care of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Father of Jesus of Nazareth.



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