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EDITORIAL

The five hundredth anniversary of the reformation has given an opportunity to reflect upon its significance. Events have taken place across Europe and further afield to commemorate Luther nailing his ninety-five theses to the church door in Wittenberg. Many books have been published, articles written and conferences arranged to mark the occasion.

The ninety-five theses were posted in 1517, but Luther's lesser known theses presented in defence, at the 1518 Heidelberg Disputation, provide a more comprehensive account of his theology. Here he spoke of the theology of the cross, 'A theologian of glory, calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.' (21) His concern was that the enemies of Christ's cross set it aside and love and glory in their own works instead. In Christ's death the evil works of the 'old man' — the flesh — are crucified. But the enemy of the cross calls the works of the flesh 'good' and rejects Christ as the only source of works that please God.

Luther's juxtaposition of 'cross' and 'glory' is striking. Clearly he has a specific idea of 'glory' in view. He is not seeking to eliminate glory from Christian theology. It has a rightful place. There is God's glory and Christ's, the church is being transformed from one degree of glory to another and creation has its glory. Luther would not deny any of these truths. Instead he is speaking about those who seek glory apart from Christ and his cross. They are seeking a counterfeit glory, one that cannot last. Luther's contrast of the 'theologian of the cross' with the 'theologian of glory' draws our attention to the necessity of the cross in Christianity.

We can observe that suffering and glory are bonded together in Christ's life. It is only by way of the cross that Jesus rises from the dead and ascends into heaven. Notably in Luke's resurrection narrative the angels and Christ speak to the disciples *after* his suffering about *both* his suffering and glory. The gospel message was not only the victory of his resurrection, but also that he must first suffer these things (cf. Luke 24:7, 26, 46).

The same pattern is also found in the apostles' preaching. Thus, alongside Christ's resurrection and ascension, they preached his sufferings, necessary for our salvation (cf. Acts 2:36; 3:15, 18–21; 5:30–31; 10:39–40; 13:28–29; 17:3; 20:28; 26:23). This is also evident throughout the New Testament letters (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1–4; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 1:5–6). The apostles preached Christ's suffering and resurrection as both are integral to the gospel. Hence the preaching of the cross was central to both Christ's and the apostles' message. It is also essential to the gospel message today.

I came across with interest some articles marking the anniversary of the reformation in the secular press. Those I read were broadly appreciative of the reformation, recognising its achievements, expressing appreciation of the changes that resulted from it in society, the opportunities produced, liberties secured and developments that followed in art and science. Although the truth of Christ in his word lay at the heart of the reformation, this was not valued so highly in what I read.

Secularism proposes alternative ways to Christianity of dealing with suffering and pursues another glory, apart from Christ's sufferings. But today, as before, there is no lasting glory except for that which is found through Christ crucified. 'For all flesh is like grass'. The cross remains a folly to those who reject Christ. It is to be avoided. But it is also the wisdom and power of God today for salvation. Jesus instructs that the Christian life is the way of the cross. Through this path he prepares us for his glory (Luke 9:23-27; 2 Cor. 4:17).

Luther's contrast of the 'theologian of the cross' and the 'theologian of glory' is a helpful check that we are promoting the way of Christ and his cross in what we say and do. For today also, it is through Jesus' suffering that many shall be brought to glory (Heb. 2:10).

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