

Rizpah: The church *coram Deo*

ABSTRACT

The theme of guilt and the role of the church in a violent society is the focus of this paper. Grappling with sin and its consequences is one of the vocations of the church. More than being legally and ethically responsible to earthly law, the church has to come face to face with God's eternal law and the devastation of our guilt. The Russian author, Dostoyevski, and the Dutch theologian, Noordmans, contribute to the discussion. This theme is relevant to the whole church, but is specifically applied to the search for unity between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa today.

INTRODUCTION

The devastating effects of sin and guilt, God's demand for expiation and the salvation of a remnant are themes that are present in the biblical account of Rizpah in 2 Samuel 21. Firstly, a closer scrutiny of the text is necessary to come to grips with a Biblical view of these themes, after which they are explored further in dialogue with Dostoyevski and Noordmans in an attempt to find a theologically coherent and ecclesiologically relevant view of expiation for the Dutch Reformed Church living "coram Deo" in South Africa today.

THE BLOOD GUILT OF SAUL THE "CHOSEN OF THE LORD"

The story of Rizpah begins with a devastating famine in Israel for "three years, year after year". The blood guilt of Saul and his house affects the land. This relationship between the shedding of blood and the suffering of the earth is implicitly present in the passage. "Dort, wo unschuldig vergossenes Blut auf oder in den Erdboden fließt, ist die Frucht des Landes gefährdet" (Wacker 2003:551)¹. This is closely related to Ge 4:11,12 where the blood of Abel calls forth from the earth, making the earth powerless and Cain a fugitive. In Hosea 4:2-3 where blood is spilled, the land also mourns and even the animals leave.

Goslinga (1962:382) explains that the Gibeonites², whom Saul tried to destroy, were remnants of earlier inhabitants of Canaan who were not exterminated and formed part of what was collectively called the Amorites³. Josua 9:3,15-27 describes the making of the covenant with the Gibeonites, which Saul broke. Exum notes that this treaty should not have been made (1997:262), because the Gibeonites tricked the Israelites into making this covenant with them. This reminds strongly of Jacob tricking his way into receiving Isaac's blessing. There is a fascinating word-play on the words "seven" and "oath" in this passage (Exum 1992:112). It is because Saul did not keep the

1. Compare Numbers 35:33

2. Hertzberg proposes that the Gibeonites could have been in service at the sanctuary of Gibeon and that they could have been the priests of Nob in 1Samuel 22 (1964:382).

3. Genesis 15:16; Josua 23:12; Josua 24:18

oath (שבט) with the Gibeonites that the seven (שבע) were hanged. In contrast to Saul, verse 7 states that David did keep his covenant with Jonathan (1Sa 20:16) in showing mercy to Mephibosheth⁴. The breaking of the covenant oath resulted in disaster with a sevenfold punishment (which culminated in wild animals eating their children)⁵ (Lev 26:15-22). This curse was the inevitable result of the breaking of the covenant oath and it was exacted on the seven sons of Saul in this passage.

Two verbs are used in describing how Saul wanted to destroy the Gibeonites, the verb (כלה) “annihilate” or “destroy”, which is also used in Exodus 32:10 where God wishes to “destroy” the people for the idolatry of the golden calf and the verb (כה) “smite”, which is used both in verses 2 for the zealous way in which Saul killed the Gibeonites and in verse 12 to describe how the Philistines killed Saul⁶. Saul died in the same way as the Gibeonites, which indicates that there is some direct relation between the crime and the punishment.

The name of Saul’s son Armoni (ארמון), means “citadel” or “palace”. Saul’s legacy was a palace built on the blood of the Gibeonites⁷. The Pulpit Commentary states that the people took the Gibeonites’ land and all received benefits from Saul’s breaking of the covenant and that his actions were popularly accepted. This national sin resulted in a national punishment (1913:512). Smelik says that the “zeal” (זא) with which Saul tried to exterminate the Gibeonites together with the phrase “for the children of Israel and Judah”⁸, refer to rampant nationalism (Goslinga 1962:383). There is therefore also an element of collective responsibility for the near extermination of the Gibeonites.

This “zeal” of Saul has a striking parallel in that of Phinehas in Numbers 25:8-13, who saved the people from the wrath of God by striking down and impaling the Israelite man and the Midianite woman whose relationship symbolised the idolatry of the people. The “jealousy” (זא) of God is also evident in the Law, because He visits the sins of the fathers unto the children unto the third and the fourth generation (Dt 5:9). The reach of God’s Law extends beyond the individual and the collective responsibility.

The Biblical Illustrator (1909:318) refers to Romans 10:2, showing that the Jews’ zeal (ζηλος) without knowledge, made them seek their own righteousness and not submit themselves to God’s righteousness. There is a close connection with Saul of the New Testament who persecuted the church in his zeal (ζηλος) for God (Php 3:6). The Jews’ zeal for God was without knowledge like that of Saul of the Old Testament and Saul of the New Testament.

The Pulpit Commentary (1913:512) and Green (1975:166) contend that David’s actions were not politically motivated, because the bloodguilt of Saul’s house is evidently the cause of the retribution. Many others however, believe that it was quite a clever political act that did suit David just too well (i.a. Word Biblical Commentary 1989:251). Wacker points out the subtle difference in the way in which David and Saul acted on behalf of the people: “David wird gezeichnet als der König, der mit Gott für sein Volk agiert, Saul dagegen als einer, der im Handeln für sein Volk sich gegen Gott vergeht” (2003:553).

4. However, David's oath (שבט) not to kill Saul's descendants (1Sa 24:21,22) gives a strange perspective on these events.
5. The breaking of the covenant relationship with the Gibeonites resulted in the ultimate breaking up of family relationships of Saul.
6. The firstborn of the Egyptians were also struck down in this way (Ex 12:12).
7. It is noteworthy that from the seven only Saul's own sons are named.
8. לבני ישראל ויודה

Saul and Jonathan were hanged (הלה) ⁹ and it could well be assumed that the birds also feasted on their bodies. ¹⁰ In Deuteronomy 21:22 it is forbidden to let a body hang (הלה) overnight, because the land will be defiled if you do. Noordmans proposes that this law came into being because of Rizpah's resistance to the law exacted on the seven (1990:230).

EXPIATION BY THE SEVEN

In verse three, one finds the verb “to cover” ¹¹ “to make expiation” or “to make amends with” (כפר). This concept focuses the attention on the central theme of expiation. Expiation in the Old Testament usually included an offering, be it of a bull or of money (Ex 21:30; 30:10). In Exodus 32:30-35 God killed many of the people to make expiation for the idolatry of the golden calf. Throughout Leviticus, God demands an offering to be made for expiation ¹². The noun has the meaning of “ransom” as in Isaiah 43:3 where God says he gave Egypt as a ransom in place of Israel ¹³.

Where did this demand for expiation come from? As God once “sought” David (1Sa 13:14), David “seeks” (צק) God's face in verse 1 to find out the reason for the drought. The zealous force of this seeking becomes evident when we read that Saul “sought” to destroy the Gibeonites in verse 2. David *seeks* God's face while Saul *seeks* to exterminate the Gibeonites (Wacker 2003: 553).

Goslinga points out that David was within his rights to ask the injured party for a means to make amends (1962:384). The Gibeonites, not having the same social status as the Jews, did not have a right to demand justice from David and had to wait for him to ask them to propose some form of restitution.

The verb used for the execution of the seven means to “dislocate”, “expose”, “sprain” (צק) and is used only in 5 places in the Old Testament and three times in this passage (verse 6, 9, 13). It has the sense of “sprain” when Jacob's hip is dislocated in Genesis 32:26. In this passage it is used three times and refers to some sort of exposure with arms and legs broken (Koehler and Baumgartner 1958:398) and is probably best translated as “hanged”, with the Vulgate translating “*crucifigere*” (Goslinga 1962:387). It is also used in Numbers 25:4 where the leaders are hanged because of Israel's relationships with Moabite girls and the worship of Baal of Peor. In Jeremiah 6:8 God says to Israel to allow themselves to be instructed so that He does not “dislocate” (צק) his soul from them, with the English Standard Version translating “turn from in disgust”.

Wacker (2003:549) shows how “propitiate” (εξιλασμαι) (v3) in the LXX, is a clever word-play with the “expose in the sun” (εξιλασμαι) (v6). Dus compares the use of the verb in 2 Samuel 21 and Numbers 25 where the leaders of the people are also hanged in the sun. Heller is convinced that it is a rite in honour of the sun god (Blenkinsopp 1972:48, 49).

The punishment of the seven is exacted by the “birds”, “insects” (צופ) (Lev 11:20) or “flying creatures”, which would probably include flies. One of the curses, in Deuteronomy 28:26 and Jeremiah 7:33, for not obeying the commandments of the Lord and worshipping idols, is that one's

9. David hanged (הלה) the murderers of Ishbosheth (2Sa 4:12) and Absalom also hanged (הלה) in this way (2Sa 18:10). The ten sons of Hamman, who tried to exterminate the Jews, were also hung in the same manner in Esther 2:23.

10. like they feasted on the body of the hanged baker in Genesis 40: 19,22

11. This verb is used for the covering of the Ark in tar in Genesis 6:14.

12. Leviticus 4;5;14;15

13. also in Psalm 49:8; Proverbs 21:18

body will be food for the birds and no one will come to chase them away. The curse on the house of Jeroboam, Baasha and Ahab is that God will wipe away their houses and cause them to be eaten by the birds (צופ) in the field and the dogs in the city¹⁴.

The place where this crucifixion takes place is in Gibeon according to the LXX, but Gibeah is often connected with the house of Saul¹⁵, which makes the BHS reading of Gibeah more likely. The fact that his family is hanged in the very heart of the home of Saul makes the restitution for the injustice to the Gibeonites seem more appropriate. There are also two possible interpretations for the בהר יהוה, which could either be the “hill of God” or the “chosen of God” (Pulpit Commentary 1913:512). In calling Saul the “chosen of God”, the ironic truth of the rejection of the chosen one is highlighted.

In searching for the reason for the drought, David found “the face (פני) of God (יהוה)”. This is the “face” that would cut off the memory of the evil-doers from the earth (Ps 34:16). It is quite disconcerting to think what this “face of God” looked like when its gaze resulted in the hanging of the sons and grandsons of Saul “before” (לפני) God in verse 9. God effectively stares them to death. This is also the “face” before which Sodom is destroyed (Ge 19:13) and which Moses has to beg not to punish the stiff-necked people for worshipping the golden calf (Ex 32:11). This “face”, which Rizpah endured, is the face (προσωπον) in Revelation 20:11 from which even heaven and earth fled.

RIZPAH AND THE REMNANT

The Gibeonites are called a “remnant” of the Amorites. The greek λειμμα (remnant) occurs only twice in the Septuagint and once in the Greek New Testament. In 2 Kings 19:31 God, in his zeal, will save a remnant (λειμμα) from Jerusalem to escape the extermination by Assyria. This same remnant is found in Romans 11:5, where God has chosen a remnant from the Jews according to the election of grace.

Goslinga shows how there is a line of judgement from 1 Samuel 31, where Saul and his sons die, to 2 Samuel 3:27 and 2 Samuel 4:6 where Abner and Ishbosheth are killed, ending in this passage. There is also a line of mercy for Mephibosheth from 2 Samuel 4:4 to 2 Samuel 9:7 to 21:7. He survives in the genealogy of Saul in 1 Chronicles 8:34 through his son Mica in 2 Samuel 9:12 (1962: 378).

The name Mephibosheth (מפּיבּוֹשֶׁת) probably comes from the words פאה and בשה meaning “dispel” and “shame”. Having fallen and become lame at the news of Saul and Jonathan’s death (2Sa 4:4), it is as if he has already carried the shame of Saul’s house in his body and David has mercy on him. It is as if Mephibosheth (the son of Saul and Rizpah) dispels the shame through his death and Mephibosheth (the son of Jonathan) bears the shame in his name and body. It reminds of the substitution of Jesus Christ for Jesus Barabbas (Mt 27:16).

David’s compassion (חמיל) stands in contrast to Saul’s compassion (חמיל) for the Amalakitite king, Agag¹⁶, for which God rejected him. It seems that Saul is always at odds with God’s will. First not killing enough in 1 Samuel 15 and then killing too much, by nearly exterminating the Gibeonites. Interestingly Saul’s motivation for compassion and for killing is to act in accord with the people of God and not with the God of the people.¹⁷

14. 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24 The same fate awaits the people because of what Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem some years earlier (Jer 15:3).

15. 1 Samuel 11:4; 15:34; Isaiah 10:29

16. 1 Samuel 15: 3,9,15

17. 1 Samuel 15: 9,15,21 and 2 Samuel 21: 2

Rizpah's vigil probably started in the beginning of the Barley harvest in April during the Feast of Massoth, when the first fruits were offered¹⁸. The offering of the first fruits and of her sons coincides.

The barley (שצרה) was ripe in April at about the Passover time (Dt 16:9) and the autumn rains usually came at about the middle of October, which means that Rizpah's vigil lasted about six months (Pulpit Commentary 1913: 513). Wacker comments on the reference to Rizpah: "Die kürze der Angaben, die textuelle Knappheit von nur einem Vers, mit der über ihre Tat berichtet wird, steht in eklatanter Spannung zu der Länge der Zeit, da Rizpa wacht" (2003: 558).

The "rock" (צור) on which Rizpah places herself, stands in sharp contrast to (God) the "rock" (סלע) where David finds his shelter in 2 Sam 22:2. In the LXX, both these words are translated with *petra*, which is the "rock" on which Christ would built his church (Mt 16:18), but also the "rock of offence" (πέτραν σκανδαλου) of Romans 9: 33.

Rizpah is a concubine (פלגש), left behind alone to face the terrible consequences of her husband's (the King's) actions just like the concubine of Judges 19 was left behind alone to face the frightening consequences of the Levite's inactions.

The Gileadites stole (גנב) the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from the Philistines like Rizpah effectively steals the bodies of the children from the birds and from the wrath of God¹⁹. She watches over their remains in the hope that God will have mercy on a remnant of her people.

The name "Rizpah" (רצפ רצפה) means, "hot coal". This is the same "hot coal" placed on Isaiah's unclean lips in Isaiah 6:6,7 to purge them. The Greek equivalent *αθηραι* is found in Romans 12:20 where God reserves vengeance for himself and tells us to serve our enemies and by doing so heap burning coals on their heads. That widow with her sackcloth²⁰ probably did not only give a red face to her enemy David, but also to her righteous enemy – to the "face of God".

COLLECTIVE GUILT?

The central problem in this passage is the problem of guilt and its consequences. For the modern mind it is difficult to grasp the possibility that one person is punished for another person's guilt. John Hick voices the opinion of many modern theologians and Christians on this point: "It is hardly necessary to criticise the penal-substitutionary conception (of the atonement), so totally implausible has it become for most of us. The idea that guilt can be removed from a wrong-doer by someone else being punished instead is morally grotesque" (1993:119). Recent theological works on atonement have also tried to emphasise the victorious nature of Christ's work of atonement over against the violence of a penal substitutionary form of atonement like Aulèn and Weaver (Boersma 2004:182,183,195).

This problem is however not so obvious to resolve in the Old Testament. The commandments of God on this subject seem quite ambiguous. In Ezekiel 18 and Deuteronomy 24:16, God commands that the son must not pay for the sins of his father, while Deuteronomy 5:9 is quite clear that the sins of the fathers are visited on the sons to the third and fourth generation, because of the jealousy of God.

-
18. Hertzberg has the impression that this sacrifice during the offering of the first fruits might be intended to have the same effect as the offering of the sons of Hiel (1K 16:34) and the offering of the firstborn son of the Moabite King (2K 3:27) (1964:384).
 19. Wacker points out the interesting fact that the Gileadites also fasted for seven days (1Sa 31:13), correlating with the seven sons being crucified (2003: 562).
 20. The "sackcloth" (שק), which Rizpah spread out, was used for grain, but also worn as a sign of mourning upon the naked body according to Koehler and Baumgartner (1958:929).

How is one to understand this ambiguity? Wisdom teaches that both of these commandments of God are true, it only needs to be applied wisely to a specific situation.

The fact that Saul was “smitten” (נכה) (v12) by the Philistines in the same way as he “smote” (נכה) the Gibeonites (v2), does indicate an acceptable sort of punishment, where a person is punished for his own sin. However, it would seem that God decided that the sons should also pay for the sins of their father. The hanging of the seven sons and grandsons of Saul in 2 Samuel 21, appears to be a classic example of the penal-substitutionary model of atonement, which is so morally unacceptable to modern man. Not only are the seven punished for the sin of Saul, but many people had to face the devastation of the drought in our passage. It affected the whole nation and even the Gibeonites, who were the wronged party.

It seems that God’s punishment does not fit the crime. God’s punishment exceeds the crime even sevenfold (Lev 26:15-29). It is true that one can attempt to explain the sin of the near extermination of the Gibeonites as a form of collective guilt like Exell: “The sin of Saul was regarded by God as a national sin, either because the people shared in the plunder, or because they sympathised with or connived at the deed. The matter was one of double guilt, for, besides the shedding of innocent blood, there was the violation of a solemn compact” (1909:315). The holders of unrighteous spoil were probably Saul’s descendants, even if they did not commit the deed themselves. The whole nation however also benefited from his murders.

The idea of collective guilt does not take away the problem of substitutionary punishment. Why would seven princes have to die for one king, years after the transgression when he already died as a result of his sins? It would seem that not only does the punishment exceed the crime - it exceeds the criminal.

It seems terribly unjust of God to demand this. One might be tempted, like most commentators, to explain this event by saying that the punishment of the seven sons was the Gibeonites’ idea or that it was just a clever political act by David²¹. This is not convincing, because this execution took place before “the face of God” (*coram Deo*) (פני יהוה)²².

The breaking of the covenant relationship, which lies at the root of all sin, has such far-reaching consequences, that it leaves one speechless like Rizpah before the wrath of God’s judgement. The immeasurable depth of the destructive force of sin becomes evident in this passage. Noordmans compares the effects of sin to that of ice breaking open before an ice-skater and spreading beyond his control (1934: 253).

GOD’S JUDGEMENT

The truth of the collective nature of guilt leaves no room to see the seven sons as victims²³. They are sinners, being punished by God for their own, their father’s and a whole nation’s iniquity. Even

21. This passage is not primarily concerned with a historic critical problem whether this is the justice of the Gibeonites’ sun-god or an anthropological problem whether human sacrifices were done in the Ancient Near Eastern world or a political problem whether David had ulterior motives. In this passage the believer comes face to face with God and his eternal law.

22. Even if one were to see the killing of the sons of Saul as a ruthless act by David to further his own political interest, like Brueggemann (1990:336,337), this does not detract from the fact that God did condone this killing in some way, since it took place before his face as the passage states. This interpretation is then possible even without following the “conventional interpretation” as Brueggemann calls it (1990:336). The fact that David did not kill Saul (even though he had the opportunity) and continued to see him as the “anointed of God” (1Sa 24:6) also makes this sudden ruthless killing of Saul’s sons unconvincing.

23. Compare Suchocki, MH. 1994. *The Fall to Violence*. New York: Continuum, p.149.

an attempt to explain the consequences of sin ethically by showing the collective nature of their guilt would not justify the substitutionary execution of the seven children. This is also evident in Luke 13: 4: “Or those eighteen who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the others in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will perish²⁴.”

God’s judgment confuses our moral judgements. In a certain sense God’s judgement is “jenseits von Gut und Böse” of which Nietzsche speaks. God’s Kingdom is however, not an un-ethical world “beyond good and evil” in the Nietzschean sense of the word, but it is the supra-ethical world of the Predestination, as Noordmans calls it (1921:126).²⁵

Dostoyevski understood this supra-ethical world much better than most. In his novel, the Brothers Karamazov, one finds the four sons of Fyodor Karamazov: Dmitry, Ivan, Alyosha and Smerdyakov (a half brother). The eldest son, Dmitry has a terrible relationship with his father, who is an unscrupulous sensualist. They end up falling in love with the same woman and become rivals. Dmitry is at a distinct disadvantage because he has no money, but he is convinced his father owes him money as part of his inheritance. On more than one occasion he flies into a passionate rage at his predicament and threatens to kill his father. His father is eventually murdered and everybody suspects him of being the murderer.

The police arrest him at a drunken party with the woman he loves and as he is taken away to the prison he passes by some peasants and hears a child crying. He asks why the child is crying. They tell him it is because the child’s house has been burnt down and his clothes are wet. Later, in conversation with his brother Alyosha, he is speaking about his punishment and that he would be sent to the Siberian mines to stay with hardened criminals.

He says:

“And there are so many of them [criminals], hundreds of them, and we are all responsible for them! Why did I dream of that “babby” just then? “Why is the babby poor?” That was a sign to me at that moment! It’s for the “babby” that I am going. For we are all responsible for all. For all the “babbies”, for there are little children and big children. All of us are “babbies”. And I’ll go for all, for someone has to go for all. I did not kill my father, but I have got to go. I accept it!” (Dostoyevski 1958:694).

This is almost an echo of the words of Jesus in Matthew 3:21 where John wants to stop him from being baptised with the other sinners. “But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness’” (English Standard Version). These were also Dostoyevski’s last words (Sajkovic 1962: 91).

The price for the fulfilment of all righteousness is high. Sin and its consequences do not disappear, even after the knowledge of the salvation has come to us. It actually multiplies disproportionately - seven princes die for one king²⁶.

An ethical judgement of expiation can only result in the words of one of the Brothers Karamazov, Ivan, showing how the suffering of children is too high a price to pay for truth. “... I renounce higher harmony altogether. It is not worth one little tear of that tortured little girl who beat herself on the breast and prayed to her “dear, kind Lord” in the stinking privy with her

24. Thanks to Prof. P. F. Theron for pointing this out.

25. Noordmans, O. 1921.Predestinatie, in: Verzamelde Werke, Deel 2 p.127

26. In 2 Samuel 24, 70 000 people die for one bad decision of David.

unexpiated tears! It is not worth it, because her tears remained unexpiated. They must be expiated, for otherwise there can be no harmony. But how, how are you to expiate them? Is it possible? Not, surely, by their being avenged? But what do I want them avenged for? What do I want a hell for torturers for? ... And if the suffering of children go to make up the sum of sufferings which is necessary for the purchase of truth, then I say beforehand, that the entire truth is not worth such a price” (Dostoyevski 1958: 286,287).

This could very well have crossed the mind of Rizpah guarding the dead bodies of her children. Saul murdered the Gibeonites and now her children are killed in the place of Saul to avenge their deaths. Expiation is demanded and given by God, but what does that have to do with her children? God did not give his own son, but Rizpah’s sons. The fact that God did eventually give his own son did not change the fact that her sons had to die. What about the people who are still dying?

Our disgust at the “morally grotesque” (as Hick puts it) of the penal-substitutionary atonement hides a deeper truth. The truth is that we are implicated by this form of atonement. Other people’s suffering is the price for the expiation of our sins. The death of her children is the cost of Rizpah’s life. The remnant survives through the expiation done by others. Our life is made possible through an infinitely intricate network of substitutionary suffering culminating in the cross of Jesus Christ. In the church we live of the body of Christ in whom the expiatory bodies of innumerable people are connected²⁷. In continuing this line of thought, the cost of life in South Africa today would include the following:

DEATHS IN DETENTION IN SOUTH AFRICA			
NAME/AGE	DATE	PLACE DETAINED/ DIED	OFFICIAL / ALLEGED CAUSE
1. DIPALE, Ernest Moabi, 21	1982/7/8/8	Johannesburg, John Vorster Square	Suicide by hanging
2. NGALO, Johannes, 26	1984/7/15	Parys	Found dead in cell due to serious internal injuries
3. MTHETHWA, Ephraim, 22	1984/8/25	Durban Central Prison	Suicide by hanging
4. MOLELEKE, Jacob, 16	1984/9/29	Sebokeng	Shot in police van during altercation
5. MASEKO, Samson, 19	1984/11/11/19	Katlehong	Died of injuries after being in police custody
6. NCHABELENG, Peter, 59	1986/4/11	Schoonoord, Lebowa	Allegedly tortured by police
7. MASHOKE, Benedict, 20	1987/3/26	Burgersfort Polic Station	Suicide by hanging

NAME/AGE	DATE	PLACE DIED	CIRCUMSTANCES
Jesus Christ	±33 AD	Golgotha	crucified

27. The accusation against the Eucharist in the early church that it was cannibalism takes on a poignant meaning in light of this view. Those bodies connected to the body of Christ would in a sense form part of the bread and the blood.

DEATHS ON FARMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

NAME/ AGE	DATE	PLACE DIED	CIRCUMSTANCES
1. Du Toit, W, 64	2002/7/26	Brits	hung from bathroom ceiling
2. Smith, Fanie, 42	2003/7/30	'Vadersdeel', Heilbron, FS	torched to death on farm
3. Snyman, Ian	2004/2/29	Cob Wildlife farm, rural Wild Coast EC	tortured, executed by 5 men
4. Fourie, Henk, 29	2004/5/20	Varkenskraal, Groblersdown	gunned down in cold blood, nothing robbed, 4 attackers
5. Terreblanche, Christoffel, 83	2004/5/31	Hobhouse, FS farm	bashed to death with knopkieries
6. Theron, Richard, 60	2004/7/7	Koesterfontein farm, Magaliesburg	murdered, nothing robbed
7. Meyer, Edwin	2004/7/26	Olifantshoek	commits suicide after squatter threat

Noordmans says: "... the great mystery of the substitution, [is] the culmination of everything in the Gospel. It is the righteousness of God; his last argument, with which he crushes the hardest of hearts and wins them for his Kingdom. Our mind and sense of justice rebel against this. But the cross of Golgotha has a power, of which only the hidden man knows in his heart of hearts. The reconciling death of Jesus is the final resting place for that heart" (translation JT) (1955:308²⁸).

THE CHURCH *CORAM DEO*

In South Africa today, the calling of the church is for all to be responsible for all. The Dutch Reformed Church knows Saul's zeal for his nation and his God, which was like the Jews without knowledge and seeking our own righteousness (Ro 10:2,3). We know about blood-guilt and a broken covenant²⁹. We are beginning to know the face of God like Rizpah and will come to know God's rejection like her. Our hope beyond hope is the promise in Romans 11:15: "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" This is the promise of the eternal covenant of God to which Rizpah clung for six months, day and night, while chasing away the flies from the corpses of her sons.

Noordmans says, "Who is God and how are his ways? Finally, the hill of Golgotha, with the cross and the mother under the cross, is more clearly depicted in the history of the house of Saul, the rejected, than in the house of David, the chosen one. Nowhere in the latter does one find a

28. "...het grote mysterie der plaatsbekleking, waarop alles in het Evangelie uitloopt. Dat is het recht Gods; zijn laatste argument, waarmee Hij de hardste harten verbrijzelt en ze wint voor zijn koninkrijk. Ons verstand en ons rechtsgevoel komen er tegen in opstand. Maar het kruis van Golgotha heft een macht, waarvan alleen de verborgen mens des harten weet. Het verzoenend sterven van Jezus is het laatste rustpunt van dat hart."

29. There is a broken relationship (covenant) with the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church, the Reformed Church in Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, which the Dutch Reformed Church is trying to heal by way of church reunification.

scene so far beyond our daily existence and in which so much violence is done to God for another kingdom, than here with Rizpah” (translation JT) (1955:230³⁰).

It is the calling of the Dutch Reformed Church to chase away the “flies” from the bodies of those who, before 1994 and since 1994, made expiation for our sins through Christ.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnold PM. 1990. Gibeah: the search for a Biblical city. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Bergen, RD. 1996. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.
- Blenkinsopp J. 1972. Gibeon and Israel. The Role of Gibeon and the Gibeonites in the Political and Religious History of early Israel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boersma, H. 2004. Violence, Hospitality and the Cross. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Brueggemann, W. 1990. First and Second Samuel. Louisville: John Knox.
- Caquot, A. 1994. Les Livres de Samuel. Genève: Labor et Fides.
- Dostoyevski, F. 1958. The Brothers Karamazov. Magarshack, D (translation). Great Britain: Penguin.
- Exell, JS. 1909. The Biblical Illustrator, II Samuel. London: Francis Griffiths.
- Exum JC. 1992. Tragedy and Biblical Narrative. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Exum JC. 1997. Rizpah. Word and World, Vol. 17 no. 3 Summer 1997.
- Goslinga, CJ. 1962. Commentaar op het Oude Testament. Het tweede boek van Samuel. Kampen: Kok.
- Green, ARW 1975. The role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East, in: American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series No. 1, Freedman, DN (ed.). Missoula: Scholars Press.
- Hertzberg, HW. 1964. The Old Testament Library: I & II Samuel. London: SCM Press Limited.
- Hick, J. 1993. The Metaphor of God Incarnate. Westminster: John Knox Press.
- Interpreter's Bible Vol. 2. 1939. New York: Abingdon.
- Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros. 1958. Koehler and Baumgartner (eds.). Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Noordmans, O. 1921. Predestinatie, in: Verzamelde Werke, Deel 2. Kampen: Kok.
- Noordmans, O. 1934. Herschepping, in: Verzamelde Werke, Deel 2. Kampen: Kok..
- Noordmans, O. 1955. Gestalte en Geest, in: Verzamelde Werke, Deel 8. Kampen: Kok.
- Pulpit Commentary. 1913. Spence, HDM et al (eds). London: Funk & Wagnallis Company.
- Robinson, G. 1993. Let us be like the nations. A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Sajkovic, MT. 1962. Dostoyevski: His image of Man. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.
- Suchocki, MH. 1994. The Fall to Violence. New York: Continuum.
- Smith, HP. 1904. The International Critical Commentary, The Books of Samuel. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
- Wacker, M. 2003. Rizpah oder: Durch Trauer-Arbeit zur Versöhnung. Anmerkungen zu 2 Sam 21, 1-14, in: Textarbeit. Festschrift für Peter Weimar. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Wells, P. 2006. Cross Words. Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.
- Weaver, JD. 2001. The Nonviolent Atonement. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- West, G. 1997. Reading from the Boundaries: Reading 2 Samuel 21:1-14 with Rizpah, in Scriptura 63, pp. 527-537.
- Winters, A. 1997. The Subversive Memory of Woman: 2 Samuel 21:1-14, in: Subversive Scriptures. Vaage, LE (ed). Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International.
- Word Biblical Commentary, 2 Samuel Vol. 2. 1989. Anderson AA (ed). Texas: Word Books.

30. “Wie is God en hoe zijn zijn wegen? Tenslotte is de heuvel Golgotha, met het kruis en de moeder onder dat kruis, in de geschiedenis van het huis van Saul, de verworpene, nog duidelijker afgebeeld dan in die van het huis van David, de uitverkorene. Nergens in die laatste komt een tafereel voor dat zo ver is uitgeheven bo ons dagelijks bestaan en waarin God zoveel geweld wordt aangedaan om een ander koninkrijk, als hier bij Rizpah”.

KEY WORDS

Guilt
Church
Expiation
Dostoyevski
Noordmans

TREFWOORDE

Skuld
Kerk
Versoening
Dostoyevski
Noordmans

Johann Theron
Huguenot College, PO Box 16, Wellington, 7654, RSA
E-mail: theroj@hugernote.co.za