

Free Church **Witness**



MAY 2016 ISSUE

Seven Marks of True Revival

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The Fear of God

One of the qualities which characterised the early New Testament church was the fear of God. Luke writes: 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied' (Acts 9:31). Of few churches today could it be said that the Christians walked in the fear of God or that this fear distinguished their worship. It is rare to find books or to hear sermons on this subject, yet, when we search the Scriptures, it is a very important concept and to be found throughout the Old and New Testament. Here is something we should strive to have individually and also as a characteristic of our Church.

But what is the fear of God? It is not easily defined. The fear of God is different from the fear one might have when confronted by a poisonous snake or an intruder in the middle of the night. It is quite different from the fear of the wicked on the judgment day. We will look at various passages of Scripture which will help us to build up a definition.

First Reference

We first come across the fear of God in Genesis 22:12. Abraham had been commanded to offer up his beloved son Isaac, the one for whom he had waited so long and the one through whom the promises were to be fulfilled. He tied his son to the altar and took the knife and was only stopped at the last second by the angel of the Lord who declared, 'now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me'.

A man of God could rightly be described as one who feared God (Job 1:1).

Respect to a Father

Properly, we respect our parents. 'A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name' (Mal.1:6). A father is to be respected. This is often missing today. Many fathers are absent. Following their lusts, they have moved on to a new partner. Because of their sinful pleasure-loving lives, they command little respect. Their failure to discipline lovingly and consistently their children means that their children treat them with contempt. The manager at work should also be 'feared'. Our egalitarian society rejects the idea of honouring anyone but ourselves. But God's commandment states, 'Honour thy father and thy mother' and that includes all who are placed in authority over us. Loving respect should characterise our relationship to God.

No fear of God

Romans 3 gives a graphic picture of the wickedness of unconverted man: 'They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of

peace have they not known' (vv12-17). This is followed by the greatest condemnation of all and that which sums up all the rest: 'There is no fear of God before their eyes' (v18). The unregenerate, dead in trespasses and sins, wallowing in wickedness, have no respect for God, neither do they bother to keep His commandments. No fear of God is the opposite of walking in His ways.

An Element of Fear

There is a certain element of fear in the fear of God. Jesus said: 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him' (Lk.12:4-5). Governments have from time to time persecuted Christians even to death. Naturally we fear pain, torture and death, but Jesus warns against undue concern with regard to the fear of physical death; however we should be greatly concerned about eternal death. Don't fear persecutors but fear God.

The Beginning of Wisdom

The best-known verse with regard to the fear of God is Proverbs 9:10 (the same words are also in Psalm 111:10). It states, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Proverbs 1:7 is similar, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge'. True knowledge and understanding begins when we give God His rightful place. Wisdom is knowledge in practice. It is wise living. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God' (Ps. 14:1). The atheist is a real fool. Giving God His proper place as Creator, Ruler and Judge is where wisdom begins. 'The fear of man bringeth a snare' (Prov.29:25). Seek not the praise of man. Do not worry what people think or threaten to do, but be concerned to have the approval of God.

None like God

God is so great, there is none like Him. He is much to be feared. 'Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?' (Jer.10:6-7). He is infinitely glorious: 'Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance' (Is.40:15). He is the one who sits on the circle of the earth and the inhabitants are as grasshoppers before him (v22). The fear of the Lord involves great views of God.

Terrifying

God came down on Mount Sinai in a cloud in the presence of all Israel. There were thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake. He spoke forth the Ten Commandments in the ears of the people, so that every Israelite heard the voice of God from the top of the mountain. They were so frightened that they pleaded with Moses to be their mediator, to receive the word from God and to

announce it to them, rather than hearing directly from God. So terrifying was the sight that Moses himself said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake' (Heb.12:21). When Isaiah received his call to be a prophet he had a vision of God which shook him so much that he cried out, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts' (Is.6:5). God is truly awesome.

Response to pardon

One of the most fascinating verses of Scripture on this theme is to be found in Psalm 130: 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared' (vv3-4). Every man and woman is a sinner deserving hell but God forgives some so that they will fear Him. So fearing Him is the loving, joyful, thankful, relationship with Him which is the result of forgiveness. There is no true fear of God without love for Him.

Different from slavish fear

This fear is different from slavish fear. John writes, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love' (1John 4:18). The devils have great fear but not the fear of the Lord. They believe in God and tremble, thinking of their future torment (Jas.2:19). The wicked on the day of judgment will call on the mountains to fall on them and the hills to cover them from the face of Him who sits on the throne (Rev.6:16). That is the fear of those who do not have the fear of God in their hearts. But the true Christian can say, 'to depart, and to be with Christ ... is far better' (Phil.1:23).

Blessed Fear

Those who fear God are blessed and happy and will be so eternally: 'Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways' (Ps.128:1). God loves those who fear Him and this fear is explained as walking in His ways. To be blessed by God is to receive all that is good and also to experience all things working together for one's good (Rom.8:28). Nothing can compare with the blessing of God.

Pursuit of Holiness

Those who fear God pursue holiness. We are to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God' (2Cor.7:1). Writing to the Philippians, Paul encourages them to strive to be holy, 'Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil.2:12).

Reverential worship

Worship has become much more informal these days. Anything seems to go. All that seems to matter is what

will make people feel relaxed and what will they enjoy, rather than focussing on God and what He requires. The element of fear is missing. Hebrews explains the kind of worship God is looking for: 'Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire' (Heb.12:28-29). The pictures of heaven in the books of Daniel and Revelation describe the reverence and awe which characterise the perfect worship of God.

Two Kinds of fear

It is important to grasp the difference between the fear of the Lord that the true Christian has and being frightened of God as the sinner sometimes is and as he will be forever in hell. Adam hid in the Garden but Moses said 'Show me thy glory' (Exod.33:18). He wanted

to see God and God to be with him. The wicked fear the consequences of sin but the righteous fear sin itself. The sinner fears the shame of being found out, but the godly fear bringing shame on God. The ungodly in their fear wish God did not exist, but true God-fearers could imagine nothing worse than a universe without God.

Gathering these thoughts together, in the words of Professor Robert B Strimple, there is in the fear of God 'the convergence of awe, reverence, adoration, honour, worship, confidence, thankfulness, love, and, yes, fear'. Solomon, in his wisdom declares, 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil' (Eccles.12:13-14).

Is it Time to Reappraise your Giving?

Rev James Macinnes (Lochalsh & Strath)



Have you considered how the tiny drops of evening rain collect into trickling beads of water, which gathering other droplets, eventually increase into a steady flow? Then from source to sea, each river system grows as countless little streams empty into the main river. Even something as vast as the Amazon, more than fifty miles wide as it enters the sea, began as trickling droplets. It is hard to measure the power of such a river, or even one of the much smaller rivers of our own land. Wouldn't it be great to be able to bring power like this to advance the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ?

There can be no question that the greatest contribution that anyone can make to the advance of the gospel is to plead in prayer with our gracious Lord, seeking His blessing upon individuals and congregations; that preachers would declare the great breadth and length and depth and height of the love of God in Christ Jesus, and that individual believers would so live as to adorn this gospel with the sweet testimony of a life well-lived. Yet, vital as it is, prayer must not stand alone. Is there not an inconsistency in praying for blessing while withholding what we as individuals might do to prosper the work of the gospel? Quite probably you already give regularly, and perhaps generously, to support the gospel

work in your local congregation and beyond, and maybe you feel you can do little more. Yet, if each person that reads the Witness magazine did a little more, what then? If all the little drops were gathered together? It has been calculated that one extra pound each week from each person in the denomination would provide enough to pay for two additional ministers. It doesn't seem possible does it? But it is possible, and maybe you can be a part of this. It certainly doesn't just depend upon you, but, under God, it does also depend upon you, and me, all of us. Together, with the blessing of God, provision can be made for further advancing the gospel work of our Church.

In the Highlands it is thrilling, once the rain has stopped, to stand and listen to the burns cascading down the mountains, pouring into rivers, white and full, bursting their banks, as they roar toward the sea. And so many of these same Highland glens, like so many of the cities and towns, the far North and South, the East and West of this sin-darkened nation, have a desperate need for gospel preaching.

Please take a little time to consider if you would be able to increase your gift to the Lord's cause this year.

Obituary

Donald Maciver (Edinburgh)



On the evening of Wednesday, 16th September 2015 the congregation in Edinburgh suffered a great loss with the passing of Donald Maciver. The high esteem with which Donald was held was evidenced by the high number who attended the service in Edinburgh and also the funeral on the Island of Lewis. There were those present from the Free Church (Continuing) but also many from outwith the denomination.

Donald was aged 83, and had been in good health until the last few months when illness meant that his strength abated. However, his illness was patiently borne and, as was recorded of his father some sixty-five years earlier, 'Grace triumphed over fear and infirmity, and this pilgrim to the celestial city approached the river singing the songs of Zion, and passed over in a wonderful calm to the desired haven'. Indeed, even nurses and carers would comment on the spiritual peace that was evident at Donald's bedside.

Donald Murdo Maciver was born on 19th April 1932, the second youngest of six children to Rev Murdo and Mrs Dolina Maciver. Rev Murdo Maciver was originally a lay-agent but his apparent preaching abilities were soon recognised. However, when ordination was suggested to him he rather took advantage of full theological training at the Free Church College, Edinburgh and was subsequently ordained to the charge of Shawbost on 20th November 1919, where he was to exercise a faithful and fruitful ministry until his passing in 1950. Thus, as a son of the manse, Donald was exposed at an early age to the saintly company of many Christians, including many noted ministers of the Gospel.

Donald met Mary Isabella Nicolson, who was later to become his wife, while in the hostel at the Nicolson Institute in Stornoway in 1948. He left school soon thereafter and spent a short time serving in the Merchant Navy in the North Sea, before being called up to do National Service. Donald was stationed at RAF Chigwell in Essex, serving as part of the ground crews, but in 1953 he was demobbed and joined Perth City Police.

Donald married Mary (Mabel) on 3rd June 1955 in Perth. During this period there were some strivings of the Holy Spirit evident, but his attendance at church was sporadic. It was not until the sudden death of an acquaintance around 1956 – a death in which he had a professional role and which had a profound effect upon him – that he was led seriously to consider spiritual matters and the many Gospel privileges he had enjoyed as a young man

in the manse. Donald's attendance at Perth Free Church became regular and, eventually, under the faithful ministry of Rev Kenneth Mackay he was converted and professed faith.

Donald left Perth in 1960 to join Edinburgh City Police. He transferred his membership to St Columba's Free Church where he was under the preaching of Rev Professor Dr G N M Collins, Rev Donald Lamont and eventually Rev John J Murray. He was ordained to the diaconate and then to the eldership in the 1960s, and learned from many of the godly men that were on the St Columba's Kirk Session at that time.

Donald was a very able Christian, a man of conviction, a truly spiritual man, with the old-school stamp of true piety about him. His place was never empty on the Lord's Day or at the prayer meeting. His godliness was evident in his prayers, and he was a competent precentor in both Gaelic and English. He became the Session Clerk in St Columba's, was the Assembly officer for several years and the Free Church College officer for three years.

Like many in 2000, Donald had divided loyalties and remained within the residual Free Church until convicted in 2008 to leave and join the Free Church (Continuing). From then until his death, he was a loyal and faithful friend to the minister and to the congregation in Edinburgh.

We commend to the covenant mercy of the Lord his dear wife Mabel, daughters Isobel and Mairi, son Murdo, granddaughter Anna, and grandsons Finlay, Donald, and Angus, that He may sustain them in their bereavement. Edinburgh congregation has lost one of its own, but nevertheless we rejoice that, '...it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (1John 3:2).

Rev James I Gracie

'The Exercise' In The Scottish Reformation (Part II)

Rev John J Murray

The second part of a paper given at the first colloquium of the Southern Presbytery held in Shettleston Church on 13th December 2014. Last month, in the first part, Mr Murray traced the historical origins of 'the Exercise'.

IV An Example of the Practice

It appears that the Exercise in some areas was in danger of falling into disuse. We find that the General Assembly of 1576 took the matter seriously and passed a new Act stating that 'the dishaunting and intermission of exercise almost everywhere is greatly lamented and the chief reason thereof is for lack of penalty and punishment of such as either should prophesy themselves or occupy the second place of addition'. All ministers are commanded to attend the Exercise and penalties for absence are imposed. We do not have much concrete evidence of the practice of the Exercise on record except in the Presbytery of Stirling. Valuable information from these Stirling Presbytery Records has been produced in a doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh by Peter Komlosi in *The Dual Aspects of Ministerial Training in the late Sixteenth Century*. We are indebted to this thesis for what is recorded.

Three groups of participants can be identified. Therefore three types of Exercise seem to have been developed in the initial years of the 1580s.

1. The first group were the parish ministers who met on a weekly basis. These meetings were often referred to as 'public exercise' in contrast to the exercise of trials that had been set aside for possible candidates for the ministry. The ministers set the task for themselves to offer Scriptural exegesis on an assigned text in the form of a sermon to each other. Usually consecutive passages from Scripture were read and explained. Once the sermon was heard another minister undertook to make some practical observations on the first speaker's exposition. Often a candidate for the ministry supplied the second speaker. In Stirling they drew up a list of the prospective ministers and readers and so the participants had time to prepare and the 'moderator' could organize a replacement as necessary.

2. The second group of participants who took an active part in the exercise were those practising ministers and readers against whom charges of heresy and alleged misconduct of life were brought by their colleagues or by members of their congregation. We see that William Scott, reader first in Callander then in Kilmachog, was assigned the task of making the exercise on the last part of chapter 28 of Matthew. He was given almost two months to prepare for the Exercise. The examiners

gathered in the minister of Stirling's dwelling and found the sermon sound and therefore continued him, as of before, to exhort his flock and minister baptism until they took further trial of him.

3. The third group had to do with examining candidates for the ministry, especially those who were recent graduates of one of the universities. The General Assembly which met in St Andrews in April 1582 ordained the presbyteries to try and examine those who desired to enter the ministry 'and such as they find qualified, to provide them to kirks'. The earlier routine of examination had been undertaken by visitors commissioned by the General Assembly. In Stirling, both in the examination and gradually in the admission of candidates to the ministry, the presbytery had a significant role to play. Between 1581 and 1587 only four recent university graduates were undertaking the Exercise in Stirling, all four having studied at St Andrews.

V Disappearance of the Exercise

The Exercise fulfilled the function of a presbytery. As early as 1563 we find on record that commissioners to appoint kirks had all the authority of superintendents, and had 'the assistance of learned men next adjacent, of meetings of ministers for the exercise of prophecy, of synods etc'. This is the first mention of a body which might take part in ecclesiastical business. In 1573 we read of a copy of the Acts of the Assembly to be given 'to every exercise', so that again the Exercise is being used for other than its original purpose of instructing ministers. At the Assembly of 1579 a question was raised by one of the Synods regarding 'erecting of presbyteries in places where public exercise is used, unto the time the policy of the church be established by law'. The Assembly declared that 'the exercise may be judged a presbytery'. The General Assembly met no more than twice a year. But there was the lack of institutions that would have managed and controlled church administration at regional and district levels and to meet between assemblies to deal with matters arising in the Kirk.

The first Presbyteries were established in 1581. The Assembly of that year, with help from the Privy Council, decided to set up thirteen model presbyteries in the main towns of the central lowlands 'as examplars to the rest of the country'. They received royal approval.

The earliest extant register – that of Stirling Presbytery – records the creation of the Presbytery on 8 August 1581, with ministers and selected elders from the constituent kirk sessions in attendance. 'The function of the Presbytery was to carry out the examination, ordination and admission of ministers, the supervision and visitation of parishes, the execution of ordinances made in the higher courts such as synods and general assemblies, the licensing of marriage contracts and to deal with issues of church discipline'.

When Presbyteries were established they absorbed the Exercise. In an Act of Assembly 1598 it is stated: 'For better observing of the Presbyteries, it is statute and ordained that every Presbytery shall assemble themselves 'once orderly each week in their full number at the least so many of them as has their residence within eight miles to the place of the ordinary convention of the Presbytery'. It goes on to enact: 'That every member of the Presbytery study the text whereupon the exercise is to be made'. Every ordinary meeting of presbytery in those days was opened with a discourse preached by one of their number on a text which they assigned to him.

When the Presbytery met, but before it was constituted, the delivery of this discourse was the first thing attended to; and it was on no account to be neglected. The half of the time allotted to it was to be taken up 'in the explicatory and analytic part of the text and in answering textual and critical questions and difficulties,. The remaining half of the time was devoted to raising of "doctrines or observations from the text, and applying them in their several uses". The first part of the Exercise was called "making"; the second "adding". When all this was over, and the presbytery constituted, then began another serious bit of work – the "Censure" the sitting in judgment on the exercise to which the brethren had just listened'.

Thomas Boston at the end of the 17th century speaks of the Exercise. At the Presbytery meeting his Exercise lasted an hour and a quarter, and the Presbytery stopped him half way through his addition.

In typical Boston fashion he declares: 'After my entering on the study of the exercise with a pretty good run, the wind fell and I was left to tug and row in it and in the addition even to the end'. The Exercise, at least in its common form, seems to have slowly died out in the middle of the 18th century. Presbyteries and sessions were much slacker at this period than formerly but no party appears to have done anything to revive the Exercise later.

VI Assessment

1 The Exercise in the congregation

It would seem from the passage in I Corinthians 14. 26-32 that this Exercise is appointed for the congregation and it was practised in Geneva and in the 'privy kirks' in Scotland in that way. This form seems to have come under threat through the Anabaptists. They too based their right to 'prophecy' according to their 'inner light', on I Corinthians 14, whereas the Reformed Churches insisted that the work of the Holy Spirit now is not to give new light in the form of more revelation, but to interpret the one and only revelation which came through Jesus Christ. This was to be done via diligent study of the languages in the texts of the Old and New Testaments. Romanists too were looking at Anabaptistic 'propheysings' as the logical development of the Reformation with its insistence on personal Bible study and the resultant breaking down of the partition between clerical and lay. The Anabaptist influence helps to account for the early abandonment of these meetings in many areas of the new Reformed Church. The risk of being identified with their excesses was too great to be tolerated. And this risk continued to influence men's attitudes toward the Exercise.

2 The Exercise in the Presbytery

It appears that the Exercise was adopted as a very useful means of the examination, training and elevating of the ministry in the Church. We cannot but admire the zeal with which the Reformers went about this Exercise. And it must be remembered that in spite of 16th century communication and transportation problems, and the extraordinary responsibilities weighing heavily on every member of the Reformed Church, the Exercise meetings were held each week.

1 The instigators believed the Exercise provided the setting and situation which would identify and further develop those gifts and graces which God had bestowed on men. If anyone appeared specially gifted, Knox's idea was that he might be compelled to enter the ministry (as he himself was in St Andrew's Castle). Formal university education was expected to provide the basis from which this ideal should be further realised at a rapidly increasing pace.

2 They believed that it was necessary to promote a unity of belief based on instruction and assent rather than on ecclesiastical authority, and to maintain a general doctrinal agreement. There were not the commentaries and aids available for the ministers then as there are now. Not only could they learn actual doctrine by listening and asking questions, they also could learn more by

"It appears that the Exercise was adopted as a very useful means of the examination, training and elevating of the ministry in the Church."

observing the study methods and growth patterns of older Christians and thus, as Knox put it, 'be encouraged daily to study and proceed in knowledge'.

3 It appears that a huge effort was made to ensure that those who were in the ministry received not only tight control over both their personal lives and that of their families but also help in their continuing education. This might also be seen as a possible source of motivation for the continuation of one's ministry. It was the combination of the pastoral and disciplinary duties of oversight and the instructional purpose which made the Exercise a vitally important tool in the hands of presbyteries in the late sixteenth-century Kirk. The training programme, the examination and the continuous emphasis on preaching all contributed towards the development of a corps of confessionally, and more importantly, ethically aware ministers.

VII Application for Today

Although views may differ about the nature of the original type of meeting in I Corinthians 14 there are lessons we can apply to our situation today:

1 Surely it is in the local setting that a man can best be assessed, and be given opportunity to be assessed, for the ministry. The local body of ministers and elders are those charged with this responsibility. Perhaps we

are in danger of passing too much of that assessment on to a central Committee. It leads, like in some large denominations, to assessment on many factors, including psychological, more than commitment to sound doctrine and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

2 We choose the best ministers to be lecturers and tutors and rely on them to be experts in their field. This leaves the ordinary ministers to be less diligent in their continued use of the languages and in their ongoing abilities to exegete Scripture and to preach. The Exercise was aimed to maintain a high standard in training and ongoing knowledge of the languages and in exegesis at the Presbytery level.

3 Over the years the Presbytery has tended to take more and more of an administrative role in the affairs of the Church. When the Exercise as a distinctive event began to disappear, a form of it was maintained at the commencement of Presbytery meetings. Now that even the form has disappeared perhaps the time has come to consider re-instating it or having regular Colloquia. Perhaps the role has been taken over by conferences, some arranged by para-Church organisations. These may be a source of encouragement but they cannot fulfil the role that the Exercise had in raising the standard of the ministry.



Ettrick Parish Church, Selkirkshire



News



Mr John Macpherson (centre), with Rev William Macleod and Rev John J Murray.

Knightswood Presentation

Rev William Macleod

At the Annual General Meeting in Knightswood on the 15th of March, a presentation was made to Mr John Macpherson who is retiring from the position of Session Clerk. Mr Macpherson, who knew nothing of the presentation, was surprised when not just his brother Donald, who has recently begun to attend, but also his brother John Sam, who is a member in St Paul's Church of Scotland, turned up for the Tuesday night meeting. In making a presentation Rev John J Murray noted that Mr Macpherson had been

keeping Kirk Session records for at least the last forty years (it may be over fifty – no-one can remember), first in Duke Street Free Church, later known as Grant Street, then in Briton Street Free Church, when his congregation joined with Govan Free Church, and then in Thornwood Free Church (Continuing), which eventually became Knightswood FCC. Mr Macpherson has been meticulous in keeping the Session Minutes, Church Roll, etc. Surely he has been the longest serving Session Clerk in the FCC. Mr Murray, in

his speech, also mentioned how as an eighteen-year-old in a very large congregation with many elders, hands were laid on him and he was placed in the pulpit when the supply failed to turn up. He started the service hoping that the preacher would arrive and, when he didn't, preached on the Prodigal Son. As he is now well into his eighties he is probably the longest serving preacher in the FCC too. He was given a suitably inscribed copy of Tom Lennie's book *Land of Many Revivals*, along with a substantial cheque. Mrs Annie Fraser, on behalf of the congregation, presented him with flowers for his wife Jean, who is housebound. Thankfully he continues as church officer. His warm welcome to all who come to the church has made many a stranger feel at home.

Sunday Trading victory

Christian Institute

The Christian Institute has welcomed MPs' 'wonderful' refusal to open the door to extended Sunday shopping hours in England and Wales. On 9th March the House of Commons voted 317 to 286 to drop the Government's controversial Sunday Trading plans. Institute Director Colin Hart said he was 'delighted' that so many MPs had backed calls to derail the plans. Mr Hart said: 'This is a wonderful and encouraging victory for the millions of people who would have had their family life further undermined had this blinkered legislation gone through. There is no doubt that it

Desk



David Burrowes MP

would have led to more pressure on people to work on Sundays, harming family life and further interfering with Sunday as a day of rest. I'm delighted that MPs from all the main parties have joined together to do the right thing. This is a day to remember. The proposed law offered no real protections for Christians who do not wish to work on a Sunday or people who simply want to keep Sunday as a family day'.

During the debate MPs from across the political spectrum spoke out against the plans. Conservative MP David Burrowes, a Christian, led the debate. Mr Burrowes said that 'Sunday is still special for many people', adding: 'We should ensure that there is a proper place for Sundays for families, businesses and workers'.

Labour MP Jonathan Reynolds also spoke against the proposals and stressed that Christianity is the largest religion in this country. He said: 'Sunday is when my family and I attend church, and the opportunity to do so should not be denied to people who have to work Sundays, whether in the morning or the evening'.

Following the vote, Labour Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Angela Eagle said that weakening the law on Sunday Trading would have 'affected millions of workers'. She added: 'Can we now hear from the Government that they will respect the will of this House and abandon their tawdry attempts to reintroduce this proposal?'

The Government's consultation on the plans received more than 7,000 responses. In its response, the Government noted that trade unions, religious bodies and a number of small businesses and individuals were against the proposals. However, it decided to press on, claiming that the majority of local authorities and large and medium-sized businesses that responded were supportive.

In a legal opinion John Bowers QC, a leading authority on employment law, said the plans offered no protection from detriment or dismissal for people who object to working on Sundays during the opt-out notice period. Mr Bowers also noted that there was nothing to prevent employers from turning down a job applicant just because they will not, or are unlikely to, work on the

Sabbath.

The Government was previously forced to abandon plans to extend Sunday Trading in November last year. The proposals were set to be included in the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, but were dropped after opposition from Conservative, Labour, SNP and DUP MPs.

Sadly in Scotland there is little protection in law for those who do not wish to work on the Sabbath, but we are thankful that it continues for our brethren in England and Wales.

Ashers Baking Company Christian Institute

The Court of Appeal in Belfast on 3rd March has allowed Northern Ireland's most senior lawyer to give detailed arguments in the Ashers Baking Company case. Attorney General John Larkin QC raised an arguable case that anti-discrimination laws in Northern Ireland directly discriminate against those who hold certain religious beliefs, judges ruled.

The Christian Institute is supporting Ashers Baking Company in their stand for biblical marriage, after they were sued for not decorating a cake with a pro-gay marriage slogan.

Simon Calvert, Deputy Director of The Christian Institute, described the court case as a 'legal, political and theological saga' but noted that Ashers' owners are hugely grateful for all the support they have received. In court Mr Larkin said there was a theological context to the way



Simon Calvert, Christian Institute

sexual orientation regulations were considered in the case. And judges led by Lord Chief Justice Sir Declan Morgan agreed there was a point of law that should be considered on the issue. The Attorney General's lawyers will be allowed to make further submissions on the case when the full appeal hearing starts on 9 May.

Arguing against the Attorney General, Robin Allen QC – the lawyer for the customer who ordered the cake – claimed that the previous ruling against Ashers Baking Company decided that 'nearly all' commercial activity 'should be a religion-free and political opinion-free zone'. Ashers Baking Company is owned and run by the McArthur family who have previously spoken of their faith throughout the legal ordeal.

Mr Calvert said: 'The Attorney General has decided to intervene, using his constitutional power to raise questions about the validity of the legislation used against the McArthurs. And it is clear from the decision taken by the three judges, including the Lord Chief Justice, that he has raised matters of importance'. He added: 'By the time the full hearing takes place it will be two years since the cake at the centre of what has become a legal, political and theological saga was ordered'.

Let us be prayerfully supportive of the McArthurs in the stand they are making.

Western Isles Bible Conference

The annual Western Isles Bible Conference takes place DV from Friday 10th June to Sabbath 12th June 2016 at Stornoway FCC. In all there will be five addresses. The speaker expected is Rev Dewi Higham, minister of the Tabernacle, Cardiff, Wales. The theme of this year's Conference will be 'Assurance of Salvation' and it is expected that the preacher will deal with various aspects of this important truth in a way that will help, by God's blessing, to promote and strengthen assurance in the lives of God's people. A warm welcome awaits all. Anyone requiring further details or accommodation should contact Donald MacDonald on 01851 704039.

Burma's troubles

E Kendal

Burma is home to more than 135 ethnic groups, the largest of which is the Bamar (Burman) nation, which comprises 60 percent of the population. The Bamar are Buddhist. However, 57 percent of the land mass of Burma is occupied by ethnic minority nations, most of which are not Buddhist. The Chin (in the west) and the Kachin (in the north) are Christian nations, while Burma's largest ethnic minority nation, the Karen (in the east) is up to 30 percent Christian. Most of Burma's Christians are Baptist, the legacy of pioneer missionary Adoniram Judson.

After World War 2 General Aung Sun (father of Aung Sun Suu Kyi) united the ethnic nations, founded the Union of Burma, headed a parliamentary democracy and secured independence from Britain, before being assassinated in July 1947. Profound ethnic and religious differences made the Union fragile, and infighting left the government weak. On 2 March 1962 Army Chief of Staff, Ne Win staged a coup d'etat and declared himself head of state. Blending Marxism and Buddhist superstition, Ne Win advanced a Soviet-style nationalisation which brought all elements of society under the control of the military junta. It was a catastrophe from which Burma has yet to recover, especially as so many repressive and unjust militarist policies remain thoroughly woven into the fabric of the State.

In Burma all land still belongs to the central government and, though the government grants farmers tillage rights, it will also grab land back illegally if it wants it. Consequently, struggles rage between the central government, which is desperate for resources and foreign investment, and indigenous ethnic nations who would rather die fighting than surrender their ancestral lands. Motivated by greed, emboldened by power and impunity, and fuelled with ethnic-religious hatred, the Bamar-Buddhist Burmese military engages in ethnic cleansing and persecution of unfathomable cruelty.

Terrible cruelty with Impunity

On 19 January 2015 Burmese soldiers savagely tortured, gang-raped and then murdered two Kachin missionaries. Maran Lu Ra (20) and Tangbau Hkawn Nan Tsin (21) had been asleep in the house in the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) church compound when attacked. The savagery was such that it remains the most heinous crime ever committed in the area.

Despite an abundance of forensic evidence, and despite compelling circumstantial evidence that the perpetrators were soldiers from the Light Infantry Regiment No. 503, nobody has been charged. A report by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT) and Legal Aid Network (LAN), released on the anniversary of the attack (19 January 2016), exposes a systemic cover-up of the Army's involvement. The report draws on the findings

of the KBC's investigation team, which was comprised of 15 members and was led by the General Secretary of the KBC, Rev Dr Samson. Fear has escalated, for there is nothing more dangerous than impunity, and the Burmese Military has had too much impunity for far too long.

Please pray that God will:

* empower the new government, led by Aung Sun Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy, to rein in the military, end corruption, eradicate drugs and defend the rights and interests of the ethnic nations; may Aung Sun Suu Kyi be Burma's 'Cyrus' (Isaiah 45:1-13). 'I girded thee [Cyrus], though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else' (vv5c-6).

* direct and empower the new government to institute justice and bring the era of impunity to an end. Recognising that this is an exceedingly dangerous business, pray for God's intervention and protection of all who pursue justice, righteousness, truth and life; may the Lord of Hosts go before them (1 Timothy 2:1-4) .

* bless the Christian leaders of Burma's ethnic nations with divine wisdom and insight, strength and grace, so their nations will know healing.

* intervene in the lives of multitudes of drug-dependent youths now in Chin, Kachin and Karen States, that they will know the healing power of our loving, forgiving, merciful Saviour.

New London Venue

Services continue to be held each week in London. The church building in Putney where we have been worshipping has been sold to developers. Thankfully the Lord has supplied a new very suitable venue – Ham Christian Centre, Lock Road (corner with Lawrence Road), Richmond, London, TW10 7LN. The services continue to be held at 3pm and 5pm with tea served between the services. Please encourage friends who appreciate unaccompanied Psalm-singing and Reformed preaching to come along. If you need further information please contact Rev William Macleod (william@themacleods.org.uk, Tel. 07825 506086) or Mr Stephen Pontin (stephen.pontin@ntlworld.com, Tel. 07852 571040).

New Treasurer Appointment

Dr A Naylor (Convenor of Finance Committee)

Mr Angus Macmillan has intimated that he has decided to stand down from the post of General Treasurer with effect from 30th April. The Finance & Sustentation Committee, on behalf of the denomination, have expressed their sincere appreciation to Mr Macmillan for all his services since 2009 and for the diligent and professional manner in which he has carried out his duties.

The Finance & Sustentation Committee have appointed



Aung Sun Suu Kyi

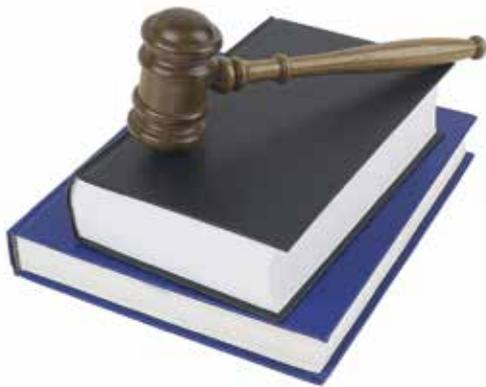
Mr Murray Mackay as General Treasurer, Designate, with effect from 1st April. The Committee will be seeking formal approval of his appointment at the forthcoming General Assembly, DV.

We commend both Mr Macmillan and Mr Mackay to the prayerful concern of all our people in the coming days and that Mr Mackay will be granted wisdom and guidance as he takes up his new role.

Contact details for the General Treasurer Designate are on the inside front cover.

Lewis Christian School

The Lewis Independent Christian School, situated in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, is advertising for a new headteacher. They are looking for someone who would combine the duties of headteacher with the teaching of the primary 4-7 class. Application forms and full information can be obtained from The Secretary, Lewis Independent Christian School, 80 Newmarket, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS2 0ED, or email headteacher@lics.org.uk.



Books

Knowing Christ

Mark Jones

Banner of Truth Trust,
pbk, 250pp, £7.80

Mark Jones is an author for whom I have great respect. He has a masterly grasp of systematic theology which undergirds everything he writes. He has also immersed himself deeply in the Puritans and so his books are full of fresh gems. In this work he focuses on Christ, stronger than Samson, wiser than Solomon and older than Methuselah. 'What are Paul's visions of heaven compared with the sight of the Lord of heaven? There are 27 chapters dealing with such subjects as Christ's faith, emotions, growth, reading, prayers, sinlessness, transfiguration, etc. I found the chapter on Christ's wrath particularly enlightening. This book is biblical, heart-warming and edifying. Preachers will find much to enrich their sermons.

I give three samples to whet your appetite:

'The Son who thirsted was the same who made water; the Son who was too tired to carry the cross was the same who upholds the entire world; the Son whose side was pierced was the same who gave breath and life to the one who did it'.

'If Christ's obedience to the fifth commandment on the cross was necessary, how much more His cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If He had not said these words, "we must have howled out this hideous complaint in the lowest hell for ever" (Flavel). But He did say these words. While they arose out of the greatest discomfort possible for the Son of God, they are words that give believers the

greatest comfort imaginable. They leave us crying out: "My God, my God, why have you embraced me?"

'Jesus did not rise from the dead alone; He did not ascend alone; and He does not sit in glory alone. No, He rose, ascended, and sits as the husband of His bride. He took with Him into glory all His people upon His breast, so that we are as secure as He is in the heavenly places'.

Highly recommended!

William Macleod

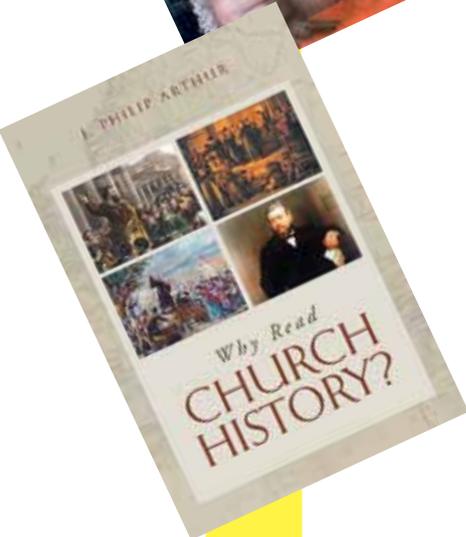
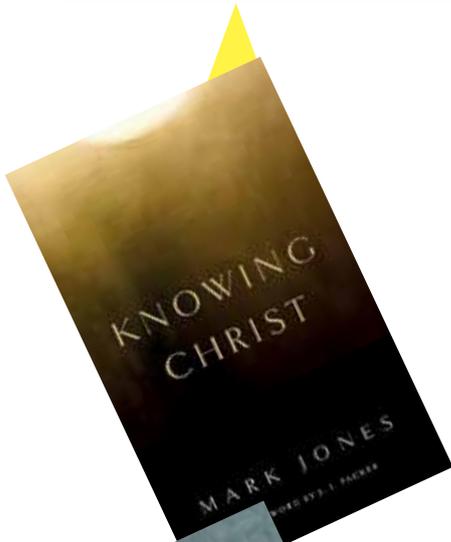
Theodore Beza

The Man and the Myth

Shawn D Wright

Christian Focus Publications,
pbk, 256pp, £8.99

If ever there were a Reformer who was much maligned and unjustly treated it is surely Theodore Beza. He has been opposed by the enemies of the Reformed faith over the years but also, amazingly, he has been scorned by many within the Reformed community, even to this present day. It is to be hoped that this book will go some way to redressing such an injustice. Shawn Wright has done an excellent job in giving a fairer view of Beza – a view found in some of the more academic works such as Richard A Muller's Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics and Andrew Wolsley's Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought. Beza was Calvin's successor in Geneva, but the two men worked closely prior to Calvin's death. Wright has shown the unity of thought, teaching, pastoral concern and the fervent love for the Gospel that existed between the two men. Many have tried to drive a wedge between them by suggesting that, while Calvin was controlled by Scripture, Beza was a slave to Scholasticism. It is alleged



that he imported into Calvin's teaching a dry and arid philosophy. However as Muller has demonstrated in the work mentioned above, a distinction needs to be made between Scholasticism as a philosophical system and Scholasticism as a methodology of study. Like their contemporaries, both Calvin and Beza made use of the systematised method of study found in Scholasticism, but neither of them had any difficulties in rejecting those philosophical aspects of Scholastic thought which were contrary to the Word of God.

The book itself begins with a brief introduction followed by a chapter which sets out Beza's life and the context in which it is to be understood. This is followed by a chapter on Beza's theological vision and the rest of the book takes a closer look at five of the works produced by him, with a final concluding chapter.

The typeface is of a reasonable size and the book is well laid out with footnotes as opposed to endnotes. It is an easy read and is highly recommended as a simple introduction to Beza's life and work and, if it does anything towards the rehabilitation of this much maligned man, then so much the better.

Those who wish to read more of Beza can obtain *The Christian Faith* which has been translated from the French by our own Rev James Clark and is available in a new edition from the translator.

Rev Harry Woods

Why read Church History?

J Philip Arthur

Banner of Truth Trust, bklt, 23pp, £1.50

This little booklet tells us why we should read church history. Phil Arthur's great love and enthusiasm for the subject shines through. The Bible itself lays great stress on the events of the past and teaches a doctrine of history. It is good to trace God's footsteps in providence. He points out the benefit of building on the lessons learned in the past. General histories give a timeline and framework and then biographies fill that in with fascinating personal insights. 'Walking with giants' can be challenging and inspiring. He gives practical suggestions as to where to begin and how to develop our reading of history. This is a useful booklet.

Rev William Macleod

Scottish Reformation Society

Historical Journal, vol. 6

Douglas Somerset (ed)

Scottish Reformation Society,

pbk, 285pp, £9.95

This new volume of historical papers from the Scottish Reformation Society maintains the high standard set by previous issues, with a good variety of Scottish church history subjects addressed.

Two papers by Douglas Somerset address questions of largely human interest from the Reformation period. The

first investigates the historicity of the traditional account of the Reformer John Row converting to Protestantism after seeing a supposed 'miracle' of a blind man's sight being restored exposed as a Romish deception, and finds good reason to consider the account credible. The second argues that the John Knox House on the Royal Mile was in fact very probably Knox's residence, and that Knox's grave lies indeed where the modern marker now identifies it, a short distance from St Giles'. I have myself argued in a previous publication that the House cannot be proved to be Knox's own residence, but while this is true, Dr Somerset answers the usual objections well, and makes a compelling case in favour of the probability of the tradition being accurate after all.

Of broader significance is an excellent paper by Matthew Vogan on the importance of conventicles for the Church of Scotland between the first and second Reformations, marshalling a remarkable range of sources to indicate the wide prevalence of these meetings and their importance in keeping vital spiritual religion alive in days of growing compromise and persecution. Similarly, Jeffrey Stephen contributes an important book review, defending the Presbyterians of the 1690s from charges of excessive harshness laid against them in a recent publication of Episcopalian sympathies. These papers show, as do those by Dr Somerset, a very detailed knowledge of historical sources, and careful referencing throughout.

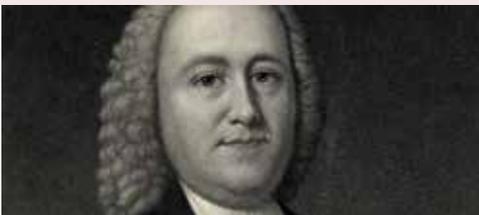
The two other major papers of the volume focus on the survival of Covenanting principles after the Revolution Settlement of 1690. Dr Somerset presents extensive research into the wide variety of Covenanting groupings that functioned in the early eighteenth century, some of them very extreme, and some all too vulnerable to doctrinal declension. Of more contemporary interest, Gordon Keddie presents a detailed and interesting survey of the history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is a sad picture of decline into widespread nominalism, and ultimately to the closure of all but two of the historic congregations. The denomination has since experienced some numerical recovery due to accessions from the majority Free Church since 2010.

Mr Keddie, an RP minister in the USA, is frank in admitting that ultimately the twentieth century RPs had to concede that their forefathers had been largely wrong in the principles of the application of the Covenants they had contended for at their division in 1863, and had to move away from traditional positions such as making abstention from voting a term of communion. He also concedes that they were kept apart from the Free Church, and latterly from the Free Church (Continuing), more by culture and history, than by substantive divergence in principle. It is interesting to note that there was an observable difference in focus, even in such a small church, with some always looking more towards the Free Church, and others more towards closer

relations with the international RP Church. Finally, Roy Middleton draws his immense researches into the hapless nineteenth century minister Jonathan Ranken Anderson to a close with an immense and detailed bibliography of his literary remains, including a painstaking indexing of all his extant sermons. To those of us less than enamoured of Anderson, this has little value. Even more curious is the inclusion of a biographical study of a Wiltshire ironmonger, H B Pitt, who helped to gather and reprint some of these materials in the early twentieth century. The most intriguing detail here is that when reading Anderson's sermons at local Gospel Standard chapel services, Mr Pitt would mark out the 'free offer of the Gospel' sections in the sermons to remind him to omit them. For all our disapproval of

Anderson's divisive course from the Free Church in the latter years of his life, it is good that Pitt and others found experimental teaching and spiritual nourishment in these remains, and commendable that they sought to pass that blessing on to others. But 'heroes' must always be treated with caution, and Mr Middleton's research has given grounds for real wariness in trusting Anderson as a guide. As always, readers of these sermons must be careful to weigh the content in the light of Scripture. The volume is warmly commended to those with an interest in Scottish church history.

Rev Alasdair J Macleod



Left: Gilbert Tennent

Seven Marks of True Revival

Rev Alasdair Macleod (Knock & Point)

Knock & Point is a congregation with a history of revival over the last hundred years, and some of our members can remember seasons of remarkable blessing during the 1940s and 1950s. Sadly, revival has not been much experienced in recent years, but we long and pray for it to come again.

Recently, I have been reading a couple of books on that subject. *The Log College* by Archibald Alexander, originally published in 1851, is a classic account of the times of revival in America during the Great Awakening of the 1740s, later republished by the Banner of Truth. *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750 – 1858*, by Iain H Murray, published in 1994, also by the Banner, studies the century following the first Great Awakening.

Iain Murray demonstrates how the American view of 'Revival' changed and deteriorated over that hundred-year period, so that revival came to be seen as something that could be produced by human effort rather than requiring a sovereign work of the Spirit of God. Here on Lewis, it is the older, and more Biblical view of revival that has prevailed, and so we look to the Holy Spirit to grant such blessing again.

But what would true revival look like? Here, drawing examples from these two books, I suggest seven marks of genuine Revival.

I. Revival is a Sovereign Work of God

There is no human effort that can summon the Spirit of God to work, and so we cannot by man-made efforts produce Revival. We can produce emotion, enthusiasm, even fanaticism, but these will not result in genuine conversions unless the Spirit is working. True revival arises only from God.

Example – In 1787, the spirit in America was secular and worldly. Educated people believed that the philosophy of Hume and Paine had explained away religion as just a natural phenomenon. But three or four students at Hampden Sidney College, Virginia, began to meet secretly for prayer. When the other students realized what they were doing, they began whooping and banging on the door to disturb them. But the college president was sympathetic, and took charge of the meetings himself, with most students in attendance, amidst a charged atmosphere. Within two weeks, fully half the student body was reckoned to be under conviction of sin, and many were soundly converted, beginning a revival that spread throughout Virginia, one of the harbingers of the Second Great Awakening.

2. Revival Arises Through Faithful Preaching

Preaching will not guarantee revival, but revival is generally the blessing of the Spirit on 'the foolishness of preaching', especially where such preaching is doctrinally sound, Biblically-based, and warmly passionate.

Example – In 1740, the powerful Irish-born preacher Gilbert Tennent moved to Boston, and there preached faithfully for about three months. His preaching was 'justly terrible, as he, according to the inspired oracles, exhibited the dreadful holiness, justice, law-threatenings, truth, power and majesty of God, and His anger with rebellious, impenitent and Christless sinners: the awful danger, every moment they were in, of being struck down to Hell, and damned forever, with the amazing miseries of that place of torment'. Hundreds were converted, with one local minister recording six hundred anxious inquirers coming to him during the three months.

Tennent later served as a minister in Philadelphia, but sadly had adopted a practice of reading his sermons, instead of

preaching freely. He never saw the same blessing on his later ministry.

3. Revival Leads to Deep Conviction

When the Spirit works powerfully, He shows people their sins, and the solemn wrath of God promised against them. This results in a deep experience of conviction.

Example – A younger brother of Gilbert was John Tennent, later the much-loved minister of Freehold, NJ, who experienced severe conviction of sin before he received assurance of salvation. Gilbert wrote: 'His conviction of his sin, danger and misery was the most violent in any degree of any I ever saw. For several days and nights together he was made to cry out in the most dolorous and affecting manner, almost every moment. The words which he used in his soul-agony were these: "O my bloody lost soul! What shall I do? Have mercy on me, O God, for Christ's sake". Sometimes he was brought to the very brink of despair'. This is a very different experience of conversion from most Christians in our day.

In times of widespread revival, even some of those who had previously lightly professed Christ were overwhelmed by the realisation of their sins, and by a fear that they had eaten and drunk unworthily at the Lord's Table, and so anxiously sought the Lord afresh.

4. Revival Leads to Deep Impressions of the Glory of God

Christians in the Highlands who knew revival often described extraordinary experiences where they were brought to wonder at the exaltation of God. This is entirely typical of true revival, where God is glorified rather than man.

Example – Another member of the Tennent family was William, Junior, who succeeded John as minister of Freehold. He experienced powerful seasons of revival, on one occasion becoming deeply overwhelmed with God's glory while walking in the woods prior to a service. He was found lying on the ground by his elders, and was helped into his pulpit, praying only that 'God would withdraw himself from him, or that he must perish under a view of his ineffable glory'. After a few minutes of silent prayer in the pulpit, he was able to stand, gripping the desk, and begin the service. The sermon that followed was one of such power that it made a lasting impression on all who heard it. His ministry resulted in a great number of converts.

5. Revival Leads to an Increase of the Spiritual Graces

Revival involves the Spirit working, and therefore it brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, especially in love for God and for His worship.

Example – True revival under the ministry of Samuel Davies in Hanover, VA, resulted in such a love for God's worship that some households in his congregation had gatherings all through the night singing Psalms and hymns, while good books were received with delight. He himself exhibited his love in the deep warmth and compassion with which he pled with men to turn to Christ.

6. Revival Leads to Emotion and sometimes Excesses

True revival involves a whole community being disturbed by the fear of God, and by the prospect of salvation. It involves much emotion, and deep concern. Inevitably, this sometimes can be expressed in disorderly scenes. A wise minister knows how to calm such scenes, and direct individuals under the fear of Hell to the Lord who alone can deliver from it.

Example – During the Second Great Awakening, David Rice was a minister in Kentucky, and saw an upsurge of 'bodily agitations' in his congregation, as people were swept up by the emotions of the services of revival. His method of calming these scenes was remarkable: 'In the most solemn manner, [he] began to repeat those words of Scripture: "Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord God Almighty!" Never was anything more impressive. There was an instantaneous hush through the whole house. The venerable old patriarch, having thus secured their attention, proceeded to express his sentiments on the Bodily Exercises, and to dissuade from encouraging them'.

7. Revival Can Lead to Division and Doctrinal Error

Sometimes good men make the mistake of condemning a whole revival because of the excesses of a few. 'Quench not the Spirit'. What is even worse, however, is where there is some spiritual blessing, and the widespread emotion that accompanies it, without wise leadership and sound teaching. This can lead directly to division and error entering the church.

Examples – In 1741, the Presbyterian Church in America split over the first Great Awakening, a division that persisted for seventeen years, as the theologically sound but cold and suspicious men of the Synod of Philadelphia stood aloof from the revival being experienced by the Tennents and others, who formed a separate 'Synod of New York' during these years. There were faults on both sides of this dispute, and the division was healed to general satisfaction in 1758.

Much more tragically, the Second Great Awakening, from about 1800 onwards, came to Kentucky while there were few ministers there able to teach sound doctrine, or to guide the people aright. Some, under the influence of intense emotion, joined the sect of the Shakers, who were fanatical in doctrine, and morally loose in their teachings. Many others, however, strayed into Arminianism, and over the next fifty years this man-centred false teaching spread throughout the rest of the United States, becoming increasingly accepted as orthodoxy in American Evangelicalism.

Conclusion

As believers we pray and long for revival, and trust in God to grant it at the right time. We also look to Him for wisdom, that we may be preserved from excess, division and error, both in the day of revival, and in our present 'day of small things'.

Congregational Remittances - March 2016

CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2016	ORDINARY REMITTANCES			
	2016 Mar	2016 To Mar	2015 To Mar	
Presbytery of Inverness				
Aberdeen	0	1,300	3,900	3,900
Duthil-Dores	2,441	2,503	6,575	5,822
Inverness	0	3,800	7,100	4,500
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,400	4,200	4,200
Poolewe & Aultbea	65	596	1,749	1,775
Total Inverness	2,506	9,599	23,524	20,197
Northern Presbytery				
Assynt & Scourie	235	0	0	0
Brora	0	3,000	3,000	2,000
Kiltearn	0	1,000	2,000	500
Tarbat	0	3,500	7,000	1,500
Total Northern	235	7,500	12,000	4,000
Southern Presbytery				
Arran	170	216	1,345	1,379
Ayr	0	900	2,700	1,800
Dumfries	0	0	200	100
Edinburgh	5,099	1,800	5,400	5,750
Glasgow - Partick	2,548	1,500	4,500	4,500
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	3,800	5,800	6,000
Glasgow - Knightswood	0	1,700	5,700	5,300
Rothsay	0	0	0	0
Total Southern	7,817	9,916	25,645	24,829
Outer Hebrides Presbytery				
Cross	0	2,668	5,944	5,894
Harris - Leverburgh	85	1,400	3,950	3,900
Harris - Scalpay	0	2,000	6,000	6,000
Knock & Point	0	1,200	3,200	4,000
North Uist	990	1,000	2,000	2,000
Stornoway	855	6,392	19,260	18,763
Total Outer Hebrides	1,930	14,660	40,354	40,557
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron				
Bracadale & Duirinish	0	1,200	2,400	3,000
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	0	2,400	3,200	2,800
Lochalsh	80	950	2,850	2,700
Strath	0	375	1,425	1,260
Portree	0	1,200	3,600	3,600
Snizort	0	1,300	3,900	3,900
Total Skye/Lochcarron	80	7,425	17,375	17,260
Smiths Falls	0	0	1,000	
Total Congregations	12,568	49,100	119,898	106,843
Other Donations	0	2,081	5,591	6,627
Legacy	0	0	0	0
TOTAL Including Gift Aid	12,568	51,181	125,488	113,470



The Knowledge Of God And Of Ourselves (Part II)

Rev James Clark

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:5-6).

In Part I Mr Clark dealt with the knowledge of God.

2. A Deeper Knowledge Of Self

Secondly, this leads to a deeper knowledge of self. The more we know God, the more we will understand ourselves. In fact, at the beginning of his Institutes, John Calvin declares this to be the key to true religion – the knowledge of God and of ourselves. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore [as a result] I abhor myself'. Is it not a great wonder that Job and those like him can actually hold discourse with a holy God; that God permits unholy sinners, not only to approach Him but also to talk to Him? He asks them to listen to Him. Of course, this is all possible through the mediation of Christ Jesus. And is it not a wonder that Job can speak to God? Perhaps we take that for granted but we shouldn't.

God permits sinners to draw near and to speak, He even gives us the power within us to complain, to murmur, to criticise. God permits us to draw near and to speak; this is not a small matter. With this increased knowledge of God there comes increased knowledge of himself and he says, 'I know that thou canst do every thing' (verse 2). In other words, for the first time throughout this book he is acknowledging that God knows what he is doing. Part of his problem was that he could not put into proper words what was happening to him. You might say that this is the argument of the Book of Job. Job had a good case but it was badly argued. His 'friends' had a bad case but they argued it well. The trouble was that they were arguing from the covenant of works. Isn't that quite common nowadays? In court cases for example:

good cases are badly argued and lost, bad cases are well argued and won.

'I know that thou canst do every thing' (verse 2). Here Job understands his own pride. God said, 'Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not' (verse 3). He sees his own pride. It wasn't for the lack of being warned. In one of the earlier chapters, Elihu said to him, 'Should it be according to thy mind?' (Job 34:33). That may be put to us all: should it be according to thy mind? Should your own destiny, your own life, the universe, should everything go according to thy mind? Isn't that a wrong attitude? Yet, in our unbelief and impatience, is that not what we are implying? A late minister once described the bearing of one's cross as when your will and God's will cross! — 'Should it be according to thy mind?' (Job 34:33).

This is the great problem in our lives — self. It was John the Baptist who said, 'He must increase, but I [I, myself] must decrease' (Jn.3:30). Should that not be the prayer of our lives — that Christ would increase and self would decrease? Augustine prayed, 'Deliver me from that evil man — myself!' — this evil man within me. There are some, of course, who understand that the old man refers to the unconverted man who dies and is buried at conversion (Rom.6:3-6). They take Romans 6 to refer to what happened in the past but Romans 7:14-25 as the ongoing struggle in the Christian. There you have the experience of a godly man, the apostle Paul, who says that the law of sin, the flesh, is very much alive in him. It has lost its dominion but it is there inside rebelling: 'Deliver me from the body of this death'.

I believe that when Paul says 'our old man is crucified with Christ' (Rom.6:6) it means that the old man has received his deathblow: he will never be what he was before — in command, in dominion. Crucifixion is a slow

lingering death and you will not be perfect in holiness until you reach that place where Christ is, at the right hand of God; it is only then, as the Psalmist says, 'I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness' (Ps.17:15), that is His likeness in you. At present we go on looking for that moment of satisfaction when we shall see Him as He is, because at that time we shall be like Him. Meanwhile, 'I abhor myself'.

You will notice that the centre of SIN, literally, is 'I'. That is significant! That evil man, myself — 'I abhor myself'. Some may think that the language is too strong. My friends, if you had a glimpse (and God has spared us this) of the full corruption and extent of sin within you then you would be overwhelmed and faint in your soul. God spares His people that; He alone knows and searches the heart. Mercifully, in one way, we see only part, 'For we know in part' (1Cor.13:9). It is questionable if we could stand the full sight of our own sinfulness. Sin is this selfish independence from God; that everything should be according to our mind (Job 34:33).

Job had been impatient and now he abhorred himself. We read: 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job' (Jas.5:11). The word there means endurance. He continued with heroic outbursts of faith and trust — 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him' (Job 13:15), but his fault was his impatience. However, he went on in the kind of patience that is endurance, literally continuing under something; bearing your load, your burden, but still going on. In Job's case, crawling on in the dust — but he is still going on! He will go forward on his hands and knees, spiritually, rather than go back. Job had a good case but badly argued. James tells us that when we are suffering, patience is wisdom (Jas.5:10). Job was lacking both wisdom and patience — he acknowledged this, 'I abhor myself'.

To be continued



Above: River Jordan

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.
Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

Amos 3:2