

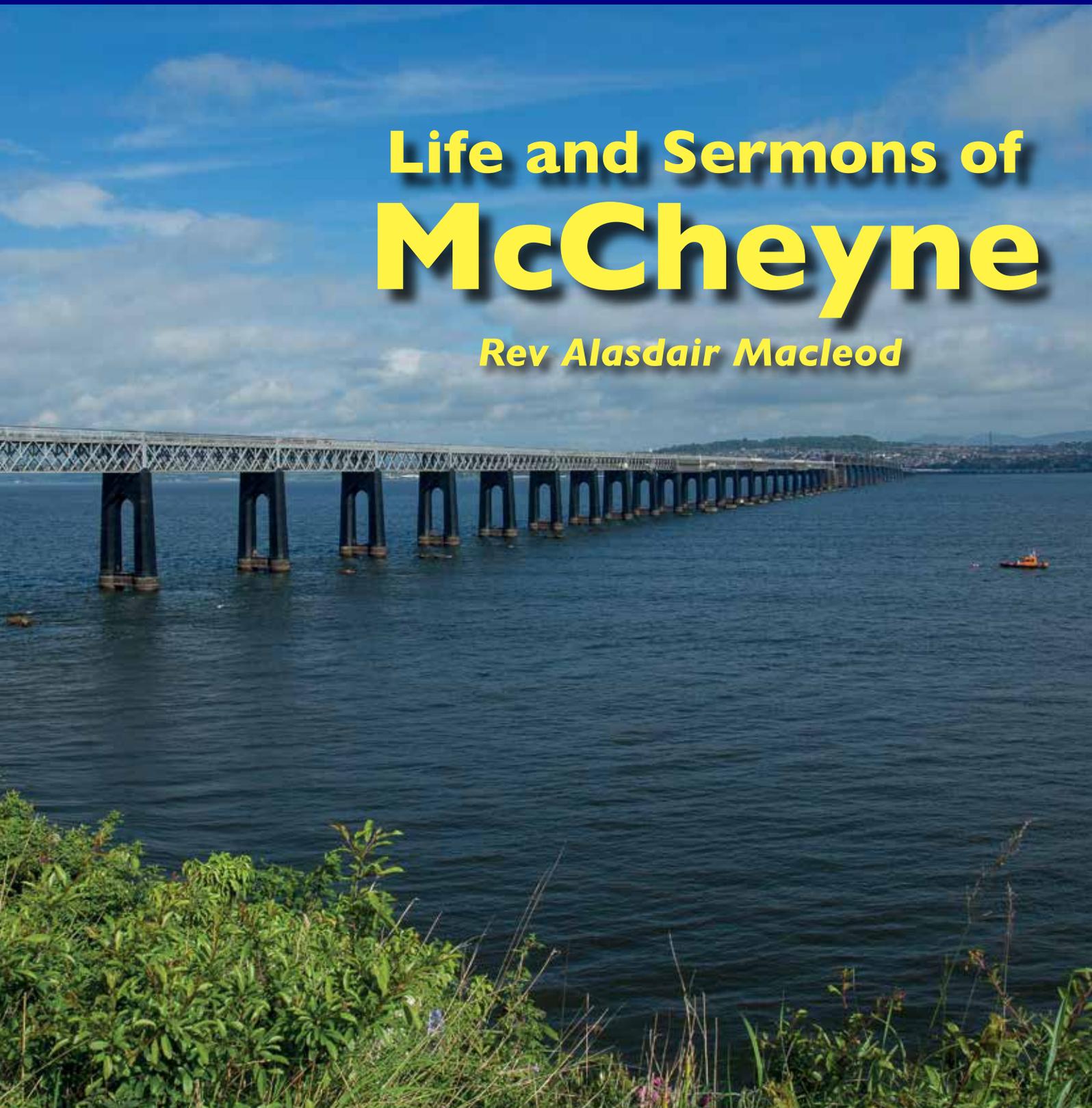
Free Church
Witness



DECEMBER 2014 ISSUE

Life and Sermons of
McCheyne

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A Broad Church or a Narrow Church?

Broad churches are bad and narrow churches are good – right or wrong? Well, it's not that simple. There is a godly broadness and an evil broadness and similarly there is a biblical narrowness and an unbiblical narrowness. Yet many people miss this. One church is criticised simply for being broad as if that was automatically evil. They think the narrower a church is, surely the better. Some think the stricter and the harsher the discipline in a church the more biblical it is. However, reflect for a moment: Is it a healthy and happy home where the father rules with a rod of iron and the slightest infringement of the rules incurs a severe beating? Not without purpose does the Scripture say, 'Fathers provoke not your children to wrath' (Eph.6:4). Harshness of discipline in either the family or the church is unbiblical. None were stricter than the Pharisees when it came to discipline, they were a very narrow church, but were not commended for it.

Sinful Broadness

Many churches today tolerate all kinds of errors. There seems to be no church discipline apart from discipline for 'divisiveness' or for being evangelical and holding

firmly to biblical principles. There are churches which tolerate heresy, for example rejection of the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ and the substitutionary atonement. It seems a long time since we heard of heresy trials in the big churches, yet truth is fundamental to the church of Christ. Paul states to Titus : 'A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself' (Tit.3:10-11). Obviously, even in the early church, when they had so much of the Spirit and had the apostles and prophets around to guide them in the truth, they still had heretics. There are plenty around today too. John writes: 'If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds' (2Jn.10-11). Those who teach heresy, if they will not repent, should be put out of the church. Sadly, in the mainline churches today, those who preach and teach false doctrine are tolerated.

Another problem in many churches is the acceptance of behaviour which is in serious breach of the moral

law. The Bible, for example, condemns homosexual behaviour yet many broad churches allow practising homosexuals even to be ministers. Paul had to admonish the church in Corinth to remove from their midst a man who committed adultery with his stepmother (1Cor.5). Christ died on the cross not only to save us from the guilt of sin but also to save us from sin itself. The Corinthians seem to have been puffed up with their own liberty and charity (1Cor.5:2). Their glorying was not good (v6). They were to purge out the old leaven and not to keep company with fornicators.

Wrong Narrowness

The Pharisees had no place in their church for any who had fallen. Sinners were not welcome even when they had repented. They seem often to have cast people out of the synagogue. They had a great respect for the Sabbath day, added many laws to define how the Sabbath should be kept and then disciplined people for breach of their Sabbath laws. Jesus healed a paralysed man and told him to take up his bed and walk. As the man made his way home carrying his bed the Pharisees stopped him and told him that he was breaking the law. When the disciples were hungry on the Sabbath and picked ears of corn, rubbed off the husks and ate them, again the Pharisees were ready to discipline. They basically accused the disciples of working, harvesting on the Sabbath. Interestingly they did not condemn the disciples and Jesus for walking through the fields on the Sabbath. Some of the more narrow among us might argue that the Sabbath be kept holy by staying at home privately worshipping God and going to the synagogue to publicly worship Him. We must take care not to judge the liberty of others by our own standards.

Jesus made plain that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Works of mercy such as healing the sick are appropriate on the Sabbath and also works of necessity such as preparing food. Further if an animal was in distress, if it had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, it was to be rescued. Church discipline can be too strict and neither glorifying to God nor edifying for man. It can involve disciplining people for breaching man-made laws, or applications of God's law.

Biblical Broadness

The church of Christ is to be broad in the sense of being welcoming to all, whatever their background, nationality, culture and past sins. Jesus was criticised for sitting down and eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. We should be pleased if drug addicts, adulterers, prostitutes, homosexuals and criminals come to our church. None is to be excluded. There is something wrong if we show respect of persons. Here is someone wealthy or highly educated, do we specially honour them? Do we give a special welcome to those who come from our own background, culture and church? Over there is a black

man or a Filipino lady; are they made to feel welcome? What about the alcoholic who has been living on the streets? What about this lesbian lady who turned up at church? Our church should be broad enough to welcome all. That does not mean of course that we condone their sinful lifestyle. We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit who can change every sinner into a saint. Every child of Adam needs to repent. We must be born again. And 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature' (2Cor.5:17).

There is another side to Biblical broadness. We live in a world where even before we were born there were many churches. Essentially there is one church of Jesus Christ purchased with His blood. Divisions are often sinful but they are also part of present human experience. How do we deal with them? Do we excommunicate all churches but our own? No doubt we will consider our own the most biblical and that is why we are members of it, though more often we are members of churches because we are born into them or have followed respected leaders into them. However, we should recognise what is good in other churches and seek as much fellowship as we can with them without compromising biblical beliefs and practices. Some churches are terribly narrow and separatist. They are the true church and all others are schismatics. 'No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you' (Job 12:2). We are to recognise that God has given wisdom and godliness to others. Where churches do not deny the fundamentals of the faith or justify sinful behaviour which God has condemned we should recognise them as true churches and seek Christian fellowship with them.

Scriptural Narrowness

There is only one way to heaven and Jesus is the way. He speaks to us about a narrow gate and a narrow way and the few there be that find it (Mt.7:14). There are lots of people on the broad road which leads to destruction. Sadly this is true ecclesiastically too. Most churches in Britain today are not true churches. They do not have the gospel and they are leading men and women to destruction. We must not be ashamed to point out to people that unless they are born again they will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Jn.3:3). Not only are unrepentant Muslims and Hindus excluded but also Roman Catholics who trust in the priest, the Virgin and the mass. Members of the Protestant churches who rely on their good works to save them will also perish. Faith alone in Christ alone is the narrow but only way of salvation.

Biblical Discipline

Biblical discipline is vital to the health of the church. Where there has been a scandalous breach of one of the commandments or where soul-destroying heresies are

tenaciously held to, such persons should be disciplined. Proper procedures must always be followed. Where the sin is private, attempts should be made to deal with it privately. Jesus makes this plain: 'Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican' (Mt.18:15-17). Church discipline is the action of the church courts and must be taken only on the basis of two or three witnesses and after careful consideration of the evidence. Harsh discipline which skips these steps is not God glorifying.

Things Indifferent

There are some matters on which Christians take different positions. Alcohol is one of these. Some Christians feel very strongly that it is wrong to drink any alcohol and can give very cogent reasons for this. Others argue that the Scriptures allow drinking in moderation. Some churches will excommunicate a person who drinks even in moderation but this is wrong. It is an area of life where the Bible leaves each Christian to make up

his or her own mind. There are many similar matters. For example in the realm of dress sometimes churches have taken very strict views, laid down the law and disciplined on that basis. There are two dangers here, one of making culture a law and the other of invading the area of legitimate Christian liberty. The church has no right to lay upon Christians laws which Christ has not laid upon them. He is the sole King and Head of the church. While modesty is prescribed, Christians may interpret this differently.

Conclusion

Let our churches be broad in the sense of preaching the gospel freely to all, in welcoming all kinds of people into our churches and in seeking to unite those whom the world would consider as opposites into the one family of God. Let us be narrow in rejecting teachers of false doctrine and those who profanely break the commandments while claiming to be Christians. Let us be narrow in carefully and lovingly disciplining the church, purifying it of uncleanness, warning those who are tempted, protecting the flock from evil influences and maintaining the good name of Christ. Let us be broad in not condemning those whom the Bible would not condemn and in giving scope to our fellow-Christians in things indifferent, things that are traditional, cultural and not forbidden by the Word of God.

Six Steps to Better Thoughts, Feelings and Actions

Rev David Murray

The wisest man in the world said, 'As a man thinks in his heart, so is he' (Proverbs 23:7).

What we think has a huge impact on what we feel and what we do.

For example, if I think about all the things I failed to do today, I will get discouraged and possibly even angry. I will then drive home in a bad mood, and those thoughts and feelings will have a knock-on effect on how I interact with my wife and children.

If, on the other hand, I focus on what I actually managed to accomplish, if I look at the boxes I ticked today, and fade out everything else, then I go home cheerful, energised, and ready to play with my children and chat to my wife.

What we think has a huge impact on what we feel and what we do.

Dark and Dangerous

Now think of a more serious example. If a person thinks only on the bad things that have happened in his life, or on the bad things that could possibly happen in his life and that becomes a long-term habit, he is going to end up very depressed, very anxious, and maybe even suicidal. Although there are and have been many good things in his life and there are good things ahead, yet looking on the dark side has become such a habit that he finds it really difficult to change what his mind fixes upon. People have told him to change and he's told himself to change, but he feels stuck and sinking fast.

Skilful Advocate Needed

This man needs someone to come alongside and help him to see and focus on the good things in his past, present and future, to reason him to a more realistic and accurate picture of his life. As if in a court of law, he needs a trained and skilful advocate to bring exhibits and evidence before him and to persuade him to make revised judgments based upon the facts that are being presented to him.

Hopefully, as the evidence mounts and reason prevails,

the mind gradually learns to think along different pathways, the old negative habit weakens and the new positive habit increases in strength until it becomes the new normal. As that happens, his emotional well-being improves, his energy returns, his relationships improve and he becomes productive at work again.

What we think has a huge impact on what we feel, and what we do.

Traffic Jam Therapy

Let me return now to a simpler and less serious example in order to break this down further in a way that we can all relate to (well, the men at least).

Next time you're sitting in a traffic jam and you start steaming and screaming, try to understand where these feelings and actions are coming from by asking yourself these questions.

Step 1. What are the facts?

The facts are that I am in a two-mile queue and the radio tells me it will take one hour to clear due to a breakdown in the fast lane several miles ahead.

Step 2. What am I thinking about these facts?

I'm thinking about the idiot who broke down in the fast lane. I'm thinking about all that I could have done with this hour.

Step 3. What am I feeling?

I'm angry at the fellow who broke down, I'm frustrated about the lost time and I'm worried about what my friends will think about me for being late.

Step 4. Can I change the facts?

No, there is no way out of the traffic jam.

Step 5. Can I change my thoughts about the facts?

Yes, I can believe that this is God's plan for this hour of my life. I can be grateful for time to stop and think and pray in the midst of a busy day. I can practise my breathing relaxation techniques. I can listen to a sermon on the CD player. I can pray for my friends.

Step 6. What am I feeling now?

Slowly I feel peace, tranquility, calm and trust in God coursing through my heart and body.

We are what we think

In each of these examples, I've asked six questions in two groups of three. The first three – about facts, thoughts,

feelings – help us identify our thoughts and recognise how they are impacting our emotions and behaviour. The second three – also about facts, thoughts, feelings – help us challenge our thoughts, change them and so change our feelings and actions. In summary:

How did I get into this mood?

Facts, thoughts, feelings.

How do I get out of this mood?

Facts, thoughts, feelings.

The Psalmist followed these steps when he found himself depressed and worried (eg Ps.42, 73, 77).

These six steps are also at the core of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and help explain why it is so effective as part of a package of holistic care for suffering people.

Christians who have compassion for hurting and broken people would become even more effective in helping them if they would learn the basics of how to use this God-given tool. A couple of good books to get you started would be I'm not supposed to feel like this by Chris Williams and Paul Richards (a simple introduction written by three Christians), or Mind over Mood by Aaron T Beck, Dennis Greenberger and Christine A Padesky (not written by Christians but even simpler and very practical).

For more difficult issues and complicated problems, I'd recommend that pastors and counsellors try to find out whether there are any Christians who practise CBT in their area, or at least someone who will work with you (and not against you) as a Christian pastor and counsellor. You will learn a lot from them and over time you will see them as a vital and valued part of your pastoral care team - all under the authority of God's Word.

What we think has a huge impact on what we feel and what we do.

'The mind gradually learns to think along different pathways, the old negative habit weakens and the new positive habit increases in strength until it becomes the new normal.

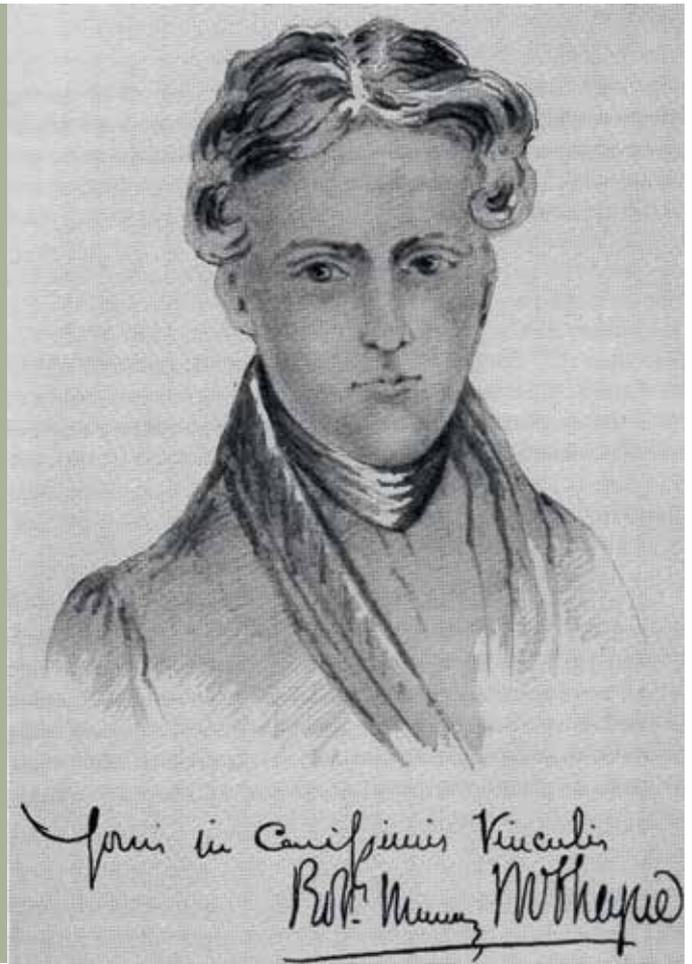
What we think has a huge impact on what we feel, and what we do.'



Life and Sermons of Robert Murray McCheyne (Part I)

Rev Alasdair J Macleod

*This is the substance of a paper delivered at the School
in Theology in Larbert, 2013.*



Robert Murray McCheyne died a young man, yet his achievements were broad, and his significance is consequently substantial and diverse. The focus for this paper is the 'Life and Sermons', and therefore I will focus particularly on McCheyne the preacher. His importance in this area is more than sufficient to justify serious and sustained attention, as I will particularly aim to demonstrate, especially to those unfamiliar with the quality of McCheyne's sermons. Indeed, I aim to show that he is one of the great lights of the nineteenth-century pulpit, and consequently one with plenty to teach the preachers of today.

With such a focus, inevitably some areas of interest from McCheyne's life must be left for other occasions. In particular, it will not be possible to address at any length McCheyne the pastor and personal evangelist; the man of prayer; the lover of the Jews and co-founder of what later became Christian Witness to Israel; the explorer of the Middle East and co-pioneer of the Scottish mission to Budapest; or the one who experienced blessed revival on his return to Dundee. All would make stirring articles; but right now, let us focus above all on McCheyne the preacher of the Word of God.

In structure: I will briefly introduce my approach to McCheyne in the context of Christian biography; then (I) outline the life, especially as it relates to his initial development as a preacher; (II) conduct a general analysis

of McCheyne the preacher on the basis of the evidence we have in the extant published sermons; and (III) draw out some key practical lessons for modern preachers to apply from McCheyne's example. Note that I will draw most of my examples for this paper from the three recent volumes of hitherto unpublished material printed by the Banner of Truth, *Old Testament Sermons*, *New Testament Sermons* and *Sermons on Hebrews*, especially the first two of these, for reasons that will become clear as we proceed.

Introduction: McCheyne and Christian Biography

Hagiography is the curse of Christian biography, and nowhere more evidently than in the posthumous study of Robert Murray McCheyne. He towers before us now, in the mind's eye, the powerfully zealous, wonderfully blessed, startlingly young minister of St Peter's, Dundee, ever immortalised as a Presbyterian Saint. The frequent quotations we hear in sermons are invariably prefaced: 'the great...', 'the holy...', 'the saintly Murray McCheyne', and with good reason. McCheyne's biography is a stirring, humbling record of Christian endeavour and achievement; a minister who did more in 29 short years of life than most who double or treble that lifespan. The diary extracts reveal even in private life a burning passion for holiness, an earnest longing to win souls, a passion

for the glory of Christ. Further from the stipend-lifting Moderate it would be hard to travel.

But the problem with hagiography is the application. Too often wonder becomes the end point, and we are left like the Romanist giving credit to the person, building our pantheon of small gods who can and do only serve to divert our praise from the one Perfect Man, the Lord Jesus. A subject portrayed at length without identifiable fault borders on blasphemy in attributing to man what is true only of Christ. In terms of promoting emulation, which is surely the point of Christian biography, such leads only to despair. How can I 'be holy like McCheyne', when all I read of McCheyne is holiness, when in fact the 'McCheyne' we know is a fictional creation, gently sanitised by his loving biographer from the taint of everyday sin?

Two solutions present themselves. First, I intend to take my life in my hands, and diverge from virtually every biographer of McCheyne in drawing a couple of negative as well as some positive lessons from McCheyne's life-work as a preacher of the Gospel. And second, in drawing positive lessons, let us remember McCheyne's own remark on a saint of an earlier generation, Jonathan Edwards: 'How feeble does my spark of Christianity appear beside such a sun! But even his was a borrowed light, and the same source is still open to enlighten me'. Therefore let us attribute the qualities we admire in McCheyne to the sanctification of the Spirit, and pray for the same. Pray, if I may say so, even to want to love the souls of men as much as McCheyne, and pre-eminently, to love Christ Himself.

I. The Life of McCheyne:

The Development of a Preacher

McCheyne was born in 1813 into a prosperous middle-class family in the New Town area of Edinburgh. His father, Adam, was a Writer to the Signet, a Government law officer, and the family worshipped at the Edinburgh Tron Church, on the Royal Mile. The ministers there were Moderates, not radically unorthodox, but not evangelical: they failed to give the central place in preaching to the cross of Christ; rather, their message was primarily one of good works. Robert was educated at the High School of Edinburgh, and proceeded to commence his studies at Edinburgh University aged just 14, at the time quite a normal progression. There his abilities were regarded as only above average rather than exceptional, but he possessed a particular aptitude for poetic and literary study, gifts which are certainly reflected in his subsequent sermons.

Around the time McCheyne commenced university, the family changed churches, moving to St Stephen's congregation in the New Town, where the minister William Muir had a more evangelical reputation. This seems to reflect the increasingly earnest spiritual

interest of some of Robert's older siblings, which in turn influenced their parents. However, biographer Leen van Valen stresses that Muir is best described as a 'middle way' minister, not being fully Christ-centred in his message, as his extant sermons testify. Only later, after Robert became a minister, did the McCheyne family settle permanently under a robustly Scriptural ministry, that of his friend Alexander Moody Stuart, who pastored the new congregation of St Luke's from 1835 onwards, and subsequently led the majority into the Free Church in 1843. Indeed, Adam McCheyne became the first session clerk after the Disruption.

Robert joined the congregation of St Stephens, but though morally upright, remained a worldly young man, enjoying parties, dancing and card-playing, occupations which he later condemned as unworthy of the Christian's attention. He seems to have remained half-hearted in his commitment to spiritual things, until the crisis brought about by the death of his older brother David in 1831, when Robert was 18. David had become a decided believer, and frequently witnessed to Robert of the need for earnestness regarding the things of eternity. His death precipitated a spiritual crisis in which, over a period of a few months, Robert wrestled with the need to rest on Christ for salvation rather than his own upright life. He was helped to assurance by reading *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, a document reportedly authored by the great Scottish Puritans David Dickson and James Durham, usually bound with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, describing how to appropriate the blessings of Christ and the Covenant of Grace. *The Sum* is notable for its clear discussion of the Law as convicting of sin, and of the Gospel as proclaiming Christ the solution, and this crucial division is evident in many of McCheyne's sermons. McCheyne knew much of his own sin; especially in his diary extracts we find him repeatedly wrestling with his love of the praise of man, but he discovered what it was to cast himself on the righteousness of another.

Therefore the crucial early influence on McCheyne the developing preacher was not intellectual or moral, but spiritual, the power of the Spirit of God, and the reality of this experience remained with him throughout his life. He preached Law and Gospel with power and clarity precisely because he had personal experimental knowledge of them.

While still undergoing this spiritual crisis, Robert commenced his study of divinity at Edinburgh in preparation for the ministry of the Church of Scotland. This brought him into contact with a second great influence: the celebrated Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh, Thomas Chalmers. Chalmers was a brilliant intellect, but also a powerful spiritual influence, a Moderate minister dramatically converted to Evangelical faith, and now using the chair he had obtained to teach

the next generation of Scottish ministers the theology of reconciliation by the death of Christ, received by faith in Him. McCheyne was thrilled by his lectures, but was also challenged by the personal influence of Chalmers to consider the practical side of Christian work. He and some of the other students took on visitation work in the slums of the Old Town of Edinburgh, which horrified him by the extent of the need revealed.

But there was a third crucial influence on the young student. Following his conversion experience, he no longer had an appetite for the half-hearted evangelicalism of William Muir, and he settled for the rest of his student days under a more decided ministry, that of John Bruce at the New North Church, who unlike Muir would enter the Free Church at the Disruption. Bruce was a celebrated preacher, and the Free Church Annals give a gloriously Victorian portrait of Bruce's pulpit work: 'As a preacher, Dr Bruce had a success in some respects unique. His discourses, closely read with a strong Forfarshire accent, were pervaded by a Miltonic splendour of conception and majesty of diction. Students of the greatest intellectual power were attracted by his preaching, and his ministry proved helpful to men who otherwise stood in no friendly relation to the Christian church'.

Two things are clear from that description. Under Bruce, McCheyne heard masterful preaching, but also experienced what a truly powerful influence the pulpit could have, even on those initially hostile to its message. There can be no doubt that his commitment to thorough, careful preparation of his sermons was rooted in the quality of ministry he heard in student days in Edinburgh. Now let us briefly outline McCheyne's ministry. In 1835, he was licensed to preach, and accepted an invitation to labour as an assistant to the Rev John Bonar of Larbert and Dunipace. For a year, he preached alternately in the two churches, and visited extensively throughout the parish. But a more extensive ministry was calling, and in

November 1836 he was ordained and inducted to the new parish of St Peter's, at that time covering the West end of the city of Dundee. Here he laboured in a vast parish with a large urban population, many of whom did not attend church. Even so, the gathered congregation frequently numbered more than a thousand people, a most demanding charge for a man of 23. He was methodical and diligent in his visitation, yet the quality of his sermons did not suffer, and he remained careful to prepare rigorously for the pulpit. McCheyne worked hard, but saw only limited fruit after two years of unrelenting labour.

By the end of 1838, he was exhausted and ill, and his doctors advised a complete rest, and he moved back to Edinburgh to stay in the family home. It was at this time that McCheyne undertook his famous journey to Palestine with Andrew Bonar and two other colleagues. Limits of space prevent us addressing that mission any further, except to note that McCheyne's thorough knowledge of the geography of the Holy Land was an evident aid to his preaching. He returned to Dundee at the end of 1839 to find that revival had blossomed under the young supply preacher, William Chalmers Burns.

The final stage of McCheyne's ministry was a three-year period of rich blessing and much fruit under his preaching, both in Dundee and elsewhere, even as the Ten Years Conflict between Church and State drew towards its climax. McCheyne signed the Solemn Engagement of 1842, and as one of the commissioners to the 1843 General Assembly, was ready then to honour that commitment in departing from an Established Church under the tyranny of the State, but the Lord had other plans. In March 1843, after months of ceaseless activity in connection with his ongoing ministry and the impending Disruption, he sickened, and after less than two weeks of growing weakness, he died on 25th March, to universal mourning. He was not yet 30 years old.

To be continued

'The crucial early influence on McCheyne the developing preacher was not intellectual or moral, but spiritual, the power of the Spirit of God, and the reality of this experience remained with him throughout his life. He preached Law and Gospel with power and clarity precisely because he had personal experimental knowledge of them.'





News



Pastor David Welch, Houston, Texas.

Pastors ordered to hand over sermons

Christian Institute

Pastors in Houston were ordered to hand over sermons that mentioned homosexuality to lawyers acting for the lesbian mayor of Houston, Texas. The demand for 'all speeches, presentations, or sermons' on issues including homosexuality and transsexualism came in the middle of a row over a local gay rights law. Following a religious liberty backlash Houston mayor Annise Parker conceded that the order was 'overly broad', but is still demanding some sermons from pastors in the city. On Twitter she said: 'If the five pastors used pulpits for politics, their sermons are fair game'.

One of the pastors affected, Rev David Welch, said the city's actions were a 'complete abuse of authority'. He likened Parker to a bully, but said the

pastors would not be intimidated. Another pastor described the demand as an attempt to stop church ministers speaking about the cultural issues of the day.

Alliance Defending Freedom, which is supporting the pastors, commented: 'City council members are supposed to be public servants, not "Big Brother" overlords who will tolerate no dissent or challenge'. The row stems from Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) – a law which aims to 'prohibit discrimination'. The ordinance would allow transsexuals to make an official complaint if they are not allowed to use toilets of their choice.

The world's attempts to gag the church and suppress the preaching of the law of God should not surprise us and are likely to become more common and lead to real persecution.

Named Persons

Christian Institute

The 'crucial' role of parents is completely denied under Scotland's Named Person scheme, according to the former head of public policy for a major children's charity. Maggie Mellon, who is now a social work consultant, said there is simply 'no evidence' for the need of the scheme, which will assign a state employee to every child under the age of 18 to monitor his or her wellbeing. Speaking at a roadshow event for the campaign group No to Named Person, Mellon said families are only seen as being 'caretakers on behalf of Government'.

'Children's rights have also been interpreted, almost exclusively, as something that's opposed to parents' rights', she added. The Named Person scheme is part of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which

doesn't mention family once, according to Mellon. She said the legislation 'as a whole does represent a complete denial of families and of the crucial role of parents'. She continued, 'families are the guarantee of children's welfare'. She also highlighted concerns about 'the nightmare scenario of indiscriminate information sharing'. Under the scheme, the designated named person is able to share information about a child without the parents' consent.

'The more information that's shared and can be accessed widely, the more at risk children are, particularly vulnerable children', Mellon explained. She predicts 'a lot of bureaucracy and training' alongside a 'huge misuse of resources'. 'We'll have systems set up to share information among people who have no resources to help but lots of power to interfere', she warned.

The Christian Institute, alongside other groups and concerned parents, has launched a legal challenge against the scheme.

We are grateful for the work the Christian Institute does to protect our Christian freedom.

Grassroots Challenge to PM

Christian Concern

A group of Conservative activists has written to the Prime Minister urging him to introduce protection of conscience for those who hold to a natural understanding of marriage. In his letter, Robert Woollard, Chairman of Grassroots Conservatives, highlights the damage that the same-sex 'marriage' policy has done to the Conservative party and asks that David Cameron now introduce measures to safeguard 'freedom of conscience'.

Sadly our Prime Minister is proud of his

Desk



Robert Woollard, Grassroots Conservatives

support for 'gay marriage' and seems oblivious of the damage he has done to his party.

Guidelines on Assisted Suicide Relaxed

Christian Concern

Alison Saunders, the Director of Public Prosecutions, recently published revised guidelines for determining whether those who help others to kill themselves should be prosecuted. In a significant shift, a medical professional who assists someone to commit suicide is only likely to be prosecuted if that person was in their care in a professional capacity. The change means that doctors such as Michael Irwin (who claims to have helped 25 people kill themselves) would now be less likely to face prosecution. The move has been criticised for undermining the authority of Parliament and for endangering the vulnerable.

47th Anniversary of the Abortion Act

Monday 27th October was the 47th anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Act. Since 1967 around 8 million children have lost their lives in

the UK as a result of abortion.

We should pray seeking God's mercy on our nation and asking Him to end the wickedness of abortion. Now that it seems all right to kill the unborn child the focus has turned to the killing of the frail and elderly.

Cannabis Risk to Health

Christian Institute

Regular cannabis use increases the risk of mental and physical health problems, and may cause intellectual impairment, according to a review of studies over 20 years by a leading professor. Research published in the scientific journal *Addiction* examined evidence on the adverse health effects of the drug since 1993.

The review concluded that:

1. One in six regular cannabis users who start in their teens risk becoming addicted to the drug.
2. Regular cannabis users double their risk of experiencing psychotic symptoms and disorders.
3. Teenagers who regularly take cannabis double the risk of schizophrenia or other psychotic symptoms in adulthood.
4. Regular cannabis use that begins in teenage years and continues throughout young adulthood appears to impair intelligence.

The study reported that the number of cannabis users wanting help to stop taking the drug has increased over the last 20 years in the United States, Europe and Australia.

How foolish it is to be advocating the legalising of Cannabis!

Damage to Freedom of Speech

Christian Institute

Sweeping new Conservative proposals to crack down on 'extremists' could damage free speech, critics have warned. The Extremist Disruption Orders were outlined recently by the Home Secretary, Theresa May. She said she wants action to be taken against people who seek to 'spread, incite, promote or justify hatred' against others on a number of grounds, including sexual orientation and transsexualism. She said the Orders would be part of the next Conservative manifesto. However, former shadow Home Secretary David Davis described the proposals as 'quite incredible powers to limit democratic rights'. Dominic Grieve, the former Attorney General, also expressed concern: 'Any restriction on freedom of expression of individuals outside the criminal law is something that has to be approached with very great caution'.

Responding for The Christian Institute, Director Colin Hart said: 'These new proposals look set to far exceed even Tony Blair's notorious Religious Hatred Bill in their scope. This looks like a gagging order, triggered by anything deemed to breach the tenets of the Equality Act. There are already extensive anti-extremist powers available to the authorities, but they are not being fully used. The Home Secretary's proposals fly in the face of her very public espousal of "British values".'

Restricting freedom of speech might seem wise when dealing with Islamic extremists but it becomes persecution of the righteous when applied to Christian preachers' condemnation of sin.



Above: Reformist politicians Jokowi and Ahok, Indonesia

Troubles in South-East Asia

E Kendal

Two rulings in Malaysia have serious implications for the Church. In June 2014 the Supreme Court dismissed the Christians' appeal against the ban on Christians using the word 'Allah' (the Malaysian word for God). This ruling effectively makes all Malay language Bibles illegal. On 8 October the government confirmed that the head of a Malay-supremacist organisation who called for Malay language Bibles to be burned would not be charged because he was only defending the 'sanctity of Islam'. This ruling establishes a dangerous precedent of impunity. Please pray for the church in Malaysia.

In Indonesia, Jokowi (new reformist president of Indonesia) and Ahok (new Christian governor of Jakarta) are facing intensive opposition from the Suharto-era political establishment and from Islamists.

Please pray for the church in Malaysia and Indonesia.

North and South Korea resume dialogue

E Kendal

On Saturday 4 October a top-level delegation from North Korea visited South Korea and had lunch with their South Korean counterparts. The visit has been described by experts as 'unprecedented'. Further talks are being organised. The North Korean regime knows its situation is unsustainable as the trend towards openness is unstoppable. While seeking to improve conditions in the North, the regime is also escalating repression to restrain citizen anger. The visit provided propaganda for domestic consumption in the North, while also opening the way for talks aimed at getting South Korean sanctions eased. Whilst the obstacles appear insurmountable, the Lord is King and is in control.

Please pray He will break through, bind the 'strong man', transform North Korea and sustain its church.

Pray that the Lord will continue to build and sustain his repressed and imperilled church in North Korea; may the Holy Spirit move powerfully amongst the people: healing, saving and establishing believers at every level of society in readiness for the day of his deliverance.

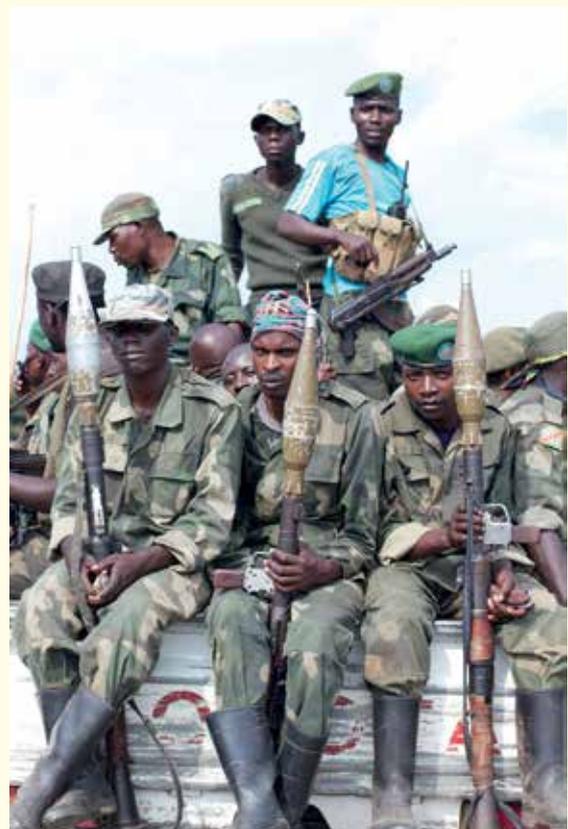
Pray that the Spirit of God will intervene powerfully in the hearts and minds of all involved, so that the next round of talks will be profitable in advancing the goal of easing the suffering of North Koreans, especially North Korean Christians who have so much to offer this desperately needy nation.

Islamic Rebels in the Congo

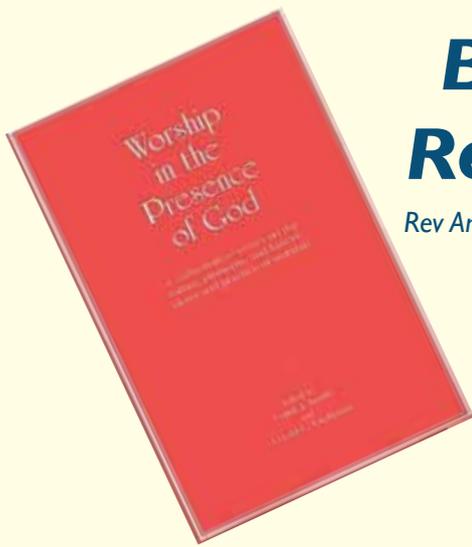
E Kendal

In 2002 the Ugandan military drove Ugandan Islamic rebels out of the country and into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which, like Uganda, is predominantly Christian. Since then the (Islamic) Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) has killed and kidnapped many

hundreds of Congolese civilians, with support from the Islamic regime in Khartoum, Sudan. Recently the ADF has forged links with the Somali terror group al-Shabaab and has escalated terrorism in its stronghold in DRC's North-Kivu Province bordering Uganda. Recently the Congolese Army has been making gains against the ADF, capturing several bases. The ADF is retaliating – at least 80 civilians have been killed, hundreds wounded and some 50 women raped by ADF fighters in the Beni region. Please pray for the church in DRC.



Above: ADF fighters, DR Congo



Book Review

Rev Anthony R Dallison

Worship in the Presence of God

Ed. Frank I Smith & David C Lachman,
Reformation Christian Ministries, pbk, 412pp, £21.11

As a student under Dr J I Packer in England many years ago, this reviewer recalls Packer's occasional 'asides' during his lectures, when he would strongly recommend a particular theological book by saying 'Sell your shirt to buy this book!'. Such a book is this fine collection of essays on the nature, elements and historic views and practice of worship, a symposium written by sixteen Reformed teaching and ruling elders who share the common conviction that worship is the highest activity that man can render to God and that all worship should be God-centred.

Today, therapeutic techniques, marketing strategies and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about how the church worships, how it functions and what it offers, than does the Word of God. There has been an alarming widespread introduction of dance, drama, mime and rock music into the worship of even 'Reformed' churches. In some churches it is now quite common to find 'sketches' slotted into worship services, while in other churches stages are being erected alongside pulpits as the gospel is being increasingly mixed with entertainment. All of these disturbing factors make this timely book even more timely and a sine qua non for all who in any degree acknowledge not only the importance of worship but that worship takes place, as the title reminds us, 'in the presence of God'.

We can never overlook the centrality of worship and its overwhelming importance in the life of the Christian and in the corporate life of the church. It is the purpose of man's very existence, that he might glorify God by worshipping and serving his Creator. The entire creation was called into existence with the sole purpose of magnifying and glorifying its Creator, and God made man as the apex of creation, in His own image, to head up creation's worship of its Creator. Moreover, worship

will be redeemed mankind's highest activity in heaven as well. That is surely the justification for the substantial and carefully reasoned volume we are reviewing, which deals with so many of the vital aspects of truly Biblical worship. The volume is divided into three sections: The Nature of Worship, The Elements of Worship and Historic Views and Practice of Worship. The two Appendices give brief biographical information on the contributors and the 'Majority Report of The Committee on Song in the Public Worship of God' presented to the 14th General Assembly (1947) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Helpful topical and Scriptural indices conclude the four-hundred-page volume.

The Nature of Worship

The first section on 'The Nature of Worship' is built around the argument that the church is not at liberty to determine apart from Scripture what constitutes the proper worship of God. Although the regulative principle (viz. 'with regard to worship, whatever is commanded in Scripture is required and whatever is not commanded is forbidden') may seem to restrict our freedom in Christ, this is really not at all the case. Indeed, to go beyond the requirements of Scripture in the matter of worship is really to bind men and their consciences with human traditions, rules and regulations. In this sense, historic Reformed worship, with its strict adherence to the regulative principle, is the most universal worship (in the sense of its being multi-cultural and cross-cultural) because of its adherence to only those elements found in Scripture.

There is an excellent chapter on the fear of God as an essential characteristic of the church's worship, along with a timely warning that 'in some instances today, worship has become so informal that one would think we are at an informal social gathering in which people chat about the everyday affairs of life' (p.26). Furthermore, a thorough and helpful examination of the worship of God in the Old Testament from man's creation through to the Davidic Covenant, reveals that the worship of God was defined and set out in minute detail with nothing left to man's devising.

Similarly, Sherman Isbell's chapter on New Testament worship presents a convincing case that, 'In passing from Old Testament to New Testament, God has not surrendered His exclusive prerogative' (p.63). He demonstrates that with the coming of Christ as the great High Priest of His people, the 'picture show' of Old Testament worship forms is abolished, so that the glory of our worship now is much less visible to the outward eye, nevertheless the power of the Spirit in the church and the freedom of access to the Presence within the veil far surpasses in glory anything known in the Old Testament worship forms. Why, it should be asked, has the modern church opted for worship practices not authorised in Scripture, when such glory attaches to the

New Testament worship ordinances of prayer, preaching, congregational singing of Psalms and the ministration of the sacraments? The answer is surely correct: 'Because men fear that the few and simple practices prescribed in Scripture will be insufficient to build the church' (p.63). We are reminded that our Christian liberty is given to us in order that we may worship, not as we please, but as He pleases, and that the non-Scriptural forms of worship so evident in many churches today are rooted in 19th Century revivalism in which 'worship' became oriented towards the worshipper ('seeker-sensitive' worship) rather than towards the One worshipped.

The Elements of Worship

The second section on 'The Elements of Worship', comprising eight chapters, finds its basis in the common conviction that only the specifically authorised Biblical elements of worship are to be included in the worship of God (WCF XXI: 3-5). There is a fine treatment of the importance of the public reading of Scripture, highlighting a much neglected truth in the modern Church, which seems to prefer 'snippets' of Scripture rather than the reading of lengthier sections: 'It will have an effect on each soul that hears it, each time it is heard. Such is the power of the Word of God. It should be publicly read with the recognition that it has such power' (p. 155). Again, how many of us today really connect preaching with worship? Yet, through God-centred preaching, a full-orbed worship comes to fruition, as such preaching opens up vistas of the true 'worth' of the triune God, inviting worship in the deepest way (p.157). The chapters on the place of prayer, the sacraments and 'occasional elements' (oaths, vows, solemn fasting & thanksgiving) are also stimulating and instructive.

The treatment of 'Song in Public Worship' (and the accompanying chapter 'The Singing of Praise') advocate the practice of exclusive psalmody in the worship of God. The first is Prof John Murray's Minority Report of the 'The Committee on Song in the Public Worship of God' in connection with the 14th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and it is surely the most succinct, if not the very best, short statement of the case for exclusive psalmody and it deserves to be widely read. The second chapter by Frank Smith advances the case for Psalm-singing by many telling points and by answering many of the common objections to singing the Psalms in worship.

Historical Views and Practice of Worship

The third section on Historical Views and Practice of Worship comprises two chapters, dealing first with the Reformed Creeds and Confessions and then with John Knox's special contributions towards the recovery of Biblical worship in Scotland. Gregg Singer effectively shows how all the Reformed churches at the Reformation 'swept the house clean' of the Romanist

accretions in worship and how the pure worship of God is reflected in their creeds and confessions, with the Westminster Standards being pre-eminent in the thoroughness with which they make the true worship of God a characteristic of the Biblical church. Dr Singer also reminds us that in Calvin's commentaries and Institutes 'we find the most Biblical treatment of the role of worship in the life of mankind and those principles which must govern the worship of the church' (p.278). Kevin Reed's treatment of John Knox's work in Scotland reveals an often over-looked truth, that the reformation of the church's worship took top priority in his labours as a Reformer. So thorough was his work that he left no room for man-made innovations and intrusions in the Reformed worship of the Church of Scotland, as witnessed by his typically blunt (but true!) statement: 'Man may neither make nor devise a religion that is acceptable to God' (p.296). He believed that it is not simply a Reformed doctrinal statement which identifies a church as Reformed, but whether these Reformed principles are being consistently applied to achieve Biblical purity in worship. In reading these things, one wonders with what unbelief and dismay these early Protestants would regard much of what passes as 'worship' today - especially in churches that call themselves 'Reformed'!

The concluding bibliography on 'Recent Writings On Worship' is very comprehensive, interspersed occasionally with scintillating comments and punctuated with memorable one-sentence rejoinders to 'offending' books and articles. And you can add a new word to your theological vocabulary, 'pot-rocking' (looking under every pot and rock of Scripture to find what you have predetermined should be there). Yes, some books of worship have indeed been written based upon that unfortunate principle!

Worship in the Presence of God deserves the widest circulation. It courageously exposes and condemns the welter of human additions and accretions that have steadily crept into the pure worship of God in this age. It reveals the astonishing depredation of true Biblical worship today, where the simple God-ordained means of prayer, preaching the Word, Biblical praise have been judged inadequate and insufficient by themselves to build the church. It points to the glory of New Testament worship and calls for its restoration again, in the conviction that if the Reformed Faith is most strict and narrow, it is also the broadest and most universal, because of its unwillingness to countenance or impose on people anything unless it is Biblical. This book humbles the reader. But it also lifts him up with the glorious vision of what the church once was, and so what it can be by God's grace again. It is a true antidote for the confusing and compromising times in which we live. Yes, 'sell your shirt' to buy it!



Christ and the Psalms

(Part III)

Dr Pieter de Vries

Part-time lecturer in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics at the Seminary of the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk of the Netherlands and a pastor of the church of Boven-Hardinxveld.

In the article last month Dr de Vries looked at several Psalms and demonstrated how they spoke of Christ.

10 Christ's life was a life of praying the Psalms

When we read the gospels we can also see that Christ Himself prayed the Psalms. Two of the seven sayings on the cross were explicitly words from the Psalter. The fourth saying on the cross is: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Ps.22:1). When we study the prayers of Jesus we see that He always addressed God as Father with the notable exception of His fourth word from the cross referred to here above.

Then the seventh saying is: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (Lk.23:46 from Ps.31:5). We know that already in the first century this phrase was used in a prayer before going to bed. Parents taught it to their children. We can say that Christ died with complete confidence in His Father. Having finished His work on the cross was for Him the same as a child going to bed. The words of Christ on the cross are a sign that Christ not only sang but also prayed the Psalms. In this He is an example for us.

We know that the life of Christ was a life of prayer: 'And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray' (Mt.14:23). Elsewhere we read, 'And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray' (Lk.9:28). We can presume that Christ when praying used the Psalms extensively as the book of prayer given by His Father and adding, just as we have for example in the last saying on the cross, the word 'Father'. Christ is the only begotten Son of God. Believers are God's adopted children. In the New Testament more than in the Old Testament the fatherhood of God is revealed. In the Old Testament there are only a few cases when God is addressed as Father. 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation' (Ps.89:26).

Because God is not as a rule addressed as Father in the Psalms we must not draw the conclusion that the Psalms are no longer a model for the life of prayer for the New Testament church. Christ Himself prayed in the words of the Psalms and, just as He did, we may add the word

'Father' in the Psalm when we feel an inclination to do so. However, more important than the use of the name of Father, is the fact that we must come to God in childlike trust.

11 Christ's teaching drew from the Psalms

Also in Christ's teaching we see the importance of the Psalms, eg in the Beatitudes. Just as in the Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount makes explicit that there are two ways, namely a narrow way leading to heaven and a broad way leading to hell. The persons who walk on the narrow way are called the righteous ones in the Psalms. They are people broken in heart who have humbled themselves before the Lord. Jesus sketches the same portrait of the true disciple in the Beatitudes.

When Jesus says in Matthew 5:3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven', we hear the echo of Psalm 34:18, 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit'. Matthew 5:5, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth' must be connected to Psalm 37:11, 'But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace'. In Matthew 5:8 we read, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. We must see that this reflects the words of Psalm 73:1, 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart'. In Matthew 6:33, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you' we see an allusion to Psalm 37:3-4.

Also in the teaching given by Jesus in His parables we see the influence of the book of Psalms. This is seen particularly in the two most well-known parables of our Lord, namely the parable of the Prodigal Son and that of the Pharisee and the Publican. In the parable of the Prodigal Son we read that when the son came to himself he said: 'I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee' (Luke 15:18). In this confession we hear the language of the Psalms where we read of the confession of sin. A notable example of this is Psalm 51:4. Behind the portrait of the father in this parable we see also a reflection of another Psalm: 'As a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him' (Ps.103:13). In the confession of the Publican (or tax collector) we have the

words: 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (Lk. 18:13). This is a quotation of Psalm 51:1: 'Have mercy on me, O God'. In the teaching of Jesus, what is striking is the emphasis that they who appear outwardly righteous can be inwardly unrighteous. The French seventeenth-century scientist Pascal said: 'On earth there are two kinds of people. The unrighteous ones who think that they are righteous; and the righteous ones who feel themselves unrighteous'.

12 Christ quotes Psalm 110 when He speaks about His own identity

Psalm 110, the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament, is one in which the divine identity of the coming Messiah is clearly revealed. Confronted with the criticism from scribes and Pharisees Jesus asked them, 'What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David' (Mt. 22:42). Jesus makes clear in His reply to them that their answer is only partially true. Here was their greatest problem. The Pharisees and scribes could not receive Jesus as the promised Messiah because they expected a Messiah who would be a mere man. Jesus made clear both in His words and acts (including the power to forgive sins) that He was both God and man. Answering the Pharisees He quotes Psalm 110:1: 'He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?' (Mt. 22:43-45).

This confrontation with the Pharisees happened in the week of His Passion. When Jesus had cleansed the temple the little children had hailed him with 'Hosanna' as the promised Son of David (Mt. 21:15). Hearing the criticism of the priests and scribes Jesus answered with a quotation of Psalm 8:2: 'And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' (Mt. 21:16). Jesus is the Son of man and promised heir of the whole universe as foretold in Psalm 8.

13 The Christ must suffer and die before He is glorified

Jesus referred to Psalm 118, when he told the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mt. 21:33-46). These

husbandmen finally murdered the only son of the owner of the vineyard. Jesus implied to them that they, the scribes, were the wicked husbandmen. The original context of Psalm 118 refers to King David who was once despised, but finally became king of Israel. It can also be seen as pointing to the oppressed people of Israel who were in exile but finally restored by God. Jesus is the representative of the people of God. He suffers and dies in their place for their sin. Those who are united to Christ are also called on to suffer for Him and with Him. Christ, their Head, has not only suffered but has also been glorified. Because He reigns in glory now, they will follow Him into the glory. When Christ comes back all who wait for His coming, shall, as Jesus Himself told us, welcome Him with the words of Psalm 118:26: 'Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord' (see Mt. 23:39).

When He was together with His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem during the Last Supper, Jesus quoted Psalm 69:4: 'But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: They hated me without a cause' (Jn. 15:25). If the psalmist could say that He was hated without a cause, it must be even more true of the Son of God. A Christian can also say this in a relative sense with respect to his sufferings as a believer. But the Son of God can say it absolutely. He never did any sin.

We have allusions to Psalm 69 in the gospels, although not from the lips of Jesus himself. In John 2:17 we read with regard to the cleansing of the temple: 'His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up' (Ps. 69:9). When Jesus was nailed on the cross and sour wine offered to him, this was a fulfillment of Psalm 69:21: 'They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink'.

In Christ the whole Mosaic dispensation with all its sacrifices came to its final fulfillment. Jesus could say: 'But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple' (Mt. 12:6). When the psalmist declares how he longs for the sanctuary, we can say that in this way a believer longs for the felt presence of Christ in his soul and life. This desire will be fulfilled when he will glorify Christ together with all the saints in the New Jerusalem. That will be a city without a temple because the Lamb is

"When the psalmist declares how he longs for the sanctuary, we can say that in this way a believer longs for the felt presence of Christ in his soul and life. This desire will be fulfilled when he will glorify Christ together with all the saints in the New Jerusalem."

its temple.

14 Praying and singing the Psalms with Christ

The book of Psalms is of special importance in the life of Christians. Christ is portrayed there. We hear Christ praying to His Father, giving praise to His Father, telling His Father all His needs and sorrows. We are called to pray and sing the Psalms united to Christ in faith. He prayed and sang the Psalms as Saviour, Surety and Mediator. His work as Saviour is unique. We are not called to make addition to it. Faith is resting in the finished work of Christ.

The Lord often uses sufferings and sorrows to draw us near unto Him. In his sufferings and anguish the Christian can feel and experience in a very special way the presence of Christ who suffered for him. Christ as

the Head first suffered and is now in glory. His saints on earth are suffering for Him and have communion with Him. In their anguish and sufferings they feel His presence, so that they can be glad even in the midst of sufferings and sorrows.

We praise Him with the words of Psalm 45:1-2: 'My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever'; and Psalm 72:17: 'His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed'.

In the Psalms we have both a portrait of Christ and of His saints. Let us use the Psalms as a model for our life of prayer. Let us sing the Psalms.

'One Shall Be Taken And Another Left'

G D Buss

Sometime during the 1950s two people entered one of our chapels and sat at the back one Lord's Day morning. One of them was a person who had some connection with our chapels, but the other was very evidently not used to our form of worship. Dressed in a very low-necked blouse, and a very short skirt, with long earrings and bright coloured makeup, she stood out amongst the other soberly-dressed worshippers. The Lord's servant, the pastor, thought they would not last the service out, but they did, although they slipped out as soon as the Benediction was pronounced. As so often such people rarely return, the pastor thought that he would not see them again, especially the worldly-dressed girl.

However, much to his surprise, this one did turn up the next Lord's Day, without her other friend. In fact, she became a regular hearer on Lord's Days, first in the morning only, and then all day. Not only that, without any prompting, her head was now covered according to Scripture and the unseemly clothes replaced by those which properly covered her body as it should be, especially, of course, in the Lord's House. Gone also was the make-up but what was most apparent was the earnest look of seeking on her face. Evidently the Word was having a sanctifying effect in her heart, changing her life outwardly. At the end of every service she slipped away before anyone could speak to her.

One Lord's Day morning the pastor said to his wife: 'I really must speak to this stranger who keeps coming'. So as soon as he had pronounced the Benediction he hastened down the pulpit steps and just managed to catch the young person before she vanished down the chapel path. He asked her name and where she came from.

This was her response. For some years she had been one of the lead-singers in a pop-group which performed on Saturday nights in the various town halls in the area. On the evening before her first visit to the chapel, she with the friend who first accompanied her to chapel were passing along the road which leads to the chapel, on their way to one of these concerts.

Seeing the pastor walking quietly down the street she enquired of her friend who he was. His whole sober demeanour made him stand out from the milling crowds around. 'Oh, he is only the pastor of that little chapel down the road', was the reply. To the astonishment of her friend she then said: 'I would like to hear him preach!' When she realized that she was serious her friend promised to take her there the next morning. It was on that morning she first appeared in the Lord's House.

She then went on to relate to the astonished pastor that on that very first occasion the Lord had opened her eyes to see her sinful state, and now she was seeking pardon through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom she came to hear each Lord's Day. In due time the Lord raised her up to a good hope in His mercy and she became an honourable member of the church of Christ there. Sadly, the friend who brought her on that memorable occasion never darkened the doors again. How true are the words of the Saviour: 'One shall be taken and another left!'

Friendly Companion, February 2013

Congregational Remittances - October 2014

	CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2014		REMITTANCES 2014		2013 To Oct
	2014	2014	2014	2013	
Presbytery of Inverness					
Aberdeen	269	4,164	18,891	16,501	
Duthil-Dores	108,255	4,697	22,850	21,089	
Inverness	0	5,770	24,340	24,000	
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	3,736	19,621	15,249	
Total Inverness	108,524	18,366	85,702	76,839	
Northern Presbytery					
Assynt & Scourie	441	2,930	5,975	4,785	
Brora	600	3,101	17,058	17,881	
Kiltearn	188	997	7,212	6,379	
Tarbat	0	1,423	11,414	9,464	
Total Northern	1,229	8,451	41,659	38,509	
Southern Presbytery					
Arran	529	1,828	8,127	7,486	
Ayr	0	2,235	8,395	9,614	
Dumfries	0	0	0	0	
Edinburgh	251,097	6,854	27,742	27,718	
Glasgow - Partick	104,956	5,144	25,244	26,500	
Glasgow - Shettleston	115	4,033	24,400	23,699	
Glasgow - Knightswood	550	6,565	27,177	24,844	
Rothsay	0	0	1,000	1,260	
Total Southern	357,247	26,659	122,085	121,122	
Outer Hebrides Presbytery					
Cross	0	3,235	22,816	20,558	
Harris - Leverburgh	335	3,550	16,694	15,627	
Harris - Scalpay	500	5,658	25,233	24,068	
Knock & Point	0	2,248	13,411	12,343	
North Uist	37,755	3,864	11,449	8,797	
Stornoway	4,361	13,580	93,338	72,797	
Total Outer Hebrides	42,951	32,134	182,942	154,189	
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron					
Bracadale	33	6,152	15,788	5,770	
Duirinish (Waternish)	0	0	3,000	2,400	
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	35	4,838	17,466	16,284	
Lochalsh	375	2,709	16,368	12,979	
Poolewe & Aultbea	443	2,500	10,713	11,525	
Ullapool	0	0	0	44	
Portree	0	8,495	19,295	16,965	
Snizort	1,000	4,508	23,443	25,098	
Strath	45	1,364	7,299	6,183	
Total Skye/Lochcarron	1,931	30,566	113,372	97,248	
Smiths Falls			2,000		
Total Congregations	511,882	116,176	547,759	487,907	
Other Donations	1,230	2,136	23,249	25,840	
Legacy		0	111	133,353	
TOTAL	513,112	118,313	571,119	647,100	
Including Gift Aid	1,527	70,537	130,773	101,652	

Sri Lanka Update

Dear friends,

Greetings from Sri Lanka. It is always good to report on what our almighty God is doing in our homeland. It should encourage you (and us with you), the way in which the Lord is working in our land through His church.

Ministry

I always remember my ordination service where one minister commented: 'Parthee, the ministry is not yours but God's'. God has sent us to build up His kingdom and we believe that the Lord is using us in His sovereign work of saving lost souls. We are very thankful for the way that the Lord is helping us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. HIS ministry, as seen on the ground, is growing in quantity and quality.

In the morning service, we have around 25 in attendance, whilst we have 85 in the evening (including children). One new family have begun to come regularly. There is also another single young man who has started worshipping with us faithfully and attends both our evening service and also the prayer meeting. All those who attend our morning service, also regularly attend our prayer meeting, and that is a great encouragement to us. Please do remember our people; that they will

continue steadfast in their faith.

I am preaching through the Epistle to the Colossians in the morning service and I have a more simple gospel message in the evenings. At the prayer meeting we are currently studying the necessary qualifications of those in the eldership. We are very thankful that all the congregation are very keen to listen and also ask questions as well. Please do remember us in your prayers; that there will be spiritual growth in us.

The Sabbath school is going very well, and the teachers are very keen and capable to teach. The teachers are also bringing the gospel to the children's homes as well. Please do remember the children; that they might receive the salvation of their souls.

The youth ministry is also going well, by the grace of God. Three of the youth are wishing to be baptised. This is a great encouragement to us.

Three families have also expressed a desire to become members of the church too. God willing, we hope Rev William Macleod (one of the assessor elders of our congregation) will come and visit us in November 2014. Our intention and prayers are that Mr Macleod will assist in determining the suitability for membership, and undertake the baptism and communion season services during his visit. Please do remember these services in your prayers.

Several opportunities have opened for further gospel work in the East of Sri Lanka (two villages near Baticaloa

where Ceylon Christian Care have supported the building of community projects) and also the North East coast in a town called Mullaittivu. We have visited these places and it would seem that there is a potential to begin some Bible study groups, with a view to determining the potential for starting worship services there. God willing, I plan to visit these locations once a month and lead some Bible study sessions in the evenings during the week. Please do remember this new gospel work, that there may be many converts.

Our Bible teaching program for the local ministers is also going well. We have successfully finished one semester and, God willing, the next semester begins in October 2014. We have recently received new applications from more interested students. Please do remember this ministry; that God would prepare fruitful men for the furtherance of His kingdom.

We have also undertaken evangelistic gospel work in the highways and byways. Our evangelist Pritheepan continues to work and visit door to door with gospel tracts. Please do remember him and this marvellous work in your prayers.

Thanksgiving

Ceylon Christian Care (CCC) and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) are assisting on a regular basis with the financial needs for the running costs of the mission work. I am very thankful to them both.

I am also very thankful that we now have a kirk session and deacons court in place, consisting of William Macleod, Harry Woods, Greg MacDonald and myself (ministers) and Mr Donald John Morrison (ruling elder). This is a real blessing to our mission.

We thank all those who remember us in their prayers. Be assured, God is listening and answering your prayers and is blessing His work in Sri Lanka.

We also wish to thank all those who showed us hospitality and generosity during our visit to Scotland. It was a really refreshing time for us.

We also express our gratitude to the FCC Scaladale 20s/30s weekend, as their donation helped our mission in a practical way. We used their financial gift to help build a kitchen for a poor widow.

Finally, we thank all of you who would not want your names mentioned, but who help in many practical ways as well: may the Lord bless you all according to His richness.

Charity work

The pre-school work is going smoothly and has a very good reputation and testimony in that village. This work has been a great provision of educational help to those who had previously no opportunity of such. CCC is very supportive of this project. CCC continues to be willing to support us with both our

spiritual and physical needs, in the extending of God's kingdom in Sri Lanka.

Upcoming events (Oct - Nov 2014):

- 8 Oct - National holiday - Bible class
- 6 Nov - National holiday - Bible class
- 21 Nov, 5pm: preparatory service: Rev. SNV Partheepan
- 22 Nov, 5pm: preparatory service: Rev. W Macleod
- 23 Nov, 8am: communion service: Rev. W Macleod
- 23 Nov, 4:30pm: thanksgiving service: Rev. W Macleod
- 23 November: baptism and membership meeting
- 24 and 25 November: ministers' conference: Vavuniya, Rev. W Macleod

All of these are subject to God's will. Please do remember these events in your prayers.

'Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.'

In His service

Parthee

Part of the Free Church of Scotland (Cont), 195/1, Station Road, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka. Tel. 0094 777577766 – prmission@gmail.com

Parthee Support Fund

Remember the Parthee Support Fund which provides finance to cover expenses related to the mission work in Sri Lanka. Donations should be sent to the Financial Administrator: Mrs M Smith, Kenfollart, Dunvegan, Isle of Skye IV55 8GU.

Email: financialadministrator@fccontinuing.org.



“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Galatians 6:14