Free Church Witness

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Salvation is all of grace yet I must...

There are two great dangers in the Christian life – legalism and antinomianism. People were led astray by them in New Testament times and they are still a problem today. Sadly, in current Christian circles, if you mention man's duty to keep God's commandments, for example to keep the Sabbath day holy, what you say is dismissed as legalism. We are told to rejoice in God's free grace. Amazing grace saves us and there is nothing we can do to add to our salvation. Lots of people, it is said, are unhappy because they fail to realise their own justification. Your sins are all forgiven - past, present and future, so just relax and enjoy the Christian life. Now there is truth in this but also the great danger of antinomianism lurks nearby. John 'Rabbi' Duncan called antinomianism the mother of all heresies. He said there is only one heresy and that is antinomianism.

Antinomianism

Antinomianism literally means against the law. There are many forms of it. Essentially it is the teaching that the Christian does not have to keep the moral law. We need not struggle to be holy. We are not duty-bound to keep the commandments. We can live the way we like and yet we will get to heaven.

Legalism

Legalism is the opposite danger. It is the idea that you can earn your salvation by good works. The Pharisees were great legalists and taught that by keeping the commandments a man was righteous in the sight of God. They had no gospel for sinners, only hell. This teaching fits in well with human thought, the natural religion of man. Generally speaking, people think if you are good you will be rewarded. Good people get to heaven. But the Bible tells us that it is only sinners who get to heaven. Christ taught, 'They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Lk.5:31-32). He came to save sinners. The righteous here are those who

think themselves righteous but Scripture says, 'There is none righteous, no, not one' (Rom.3:10). Man thinks he is good but the Lord taught, 'there is none good but one, that is, God' (Mt.19:17). Paul asserts, 'by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin' (Rom.3:20). Keeping the law will not save us because we are incapable of keeping it perfectly. Actually what the law does, is that it condemns us. It shows us our sin and therefore our guilt before God. In this way the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Gal.3:24).

There is however another form of legalism which can affect true Christians and that is the idea that somehow or other you can add to your salvation by keeping the commandments. It is the thought that you can earn points for yourself. Legalism is trusting in your law-keeping to earn God's favour. We cannot add to our righteousness before God. We are saved solely on the basis of the finished work of Christ.

Justification and Sanctification

When a sinner believes in Jesus he is justified. All his sins are pardoned. This is solely on the basis of Christ's finished work. There is nothing we can do to add to our justification or subtract from it. It is not of works lest any man should boast (Eph.2:9). God declares the sinner to be righteous. It does not change us, that is, our nature, but it changes our status. Sanctification, in contrast, changes us. It makes us holy.

There are two kinds of sanctification, definitive and progressive. Definitive sanctification happens when we become Christians. The sinner is transformed into a saint. There is a radical break with sin. The Apostle Paul can say, 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord…. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life' (Rom.6:11, 22). John states: 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God' (1 Jn.3:9). A huge change takes place with the new birth. Sin no longer has dominion over us and we will not sin the sin unto death.

Progressive Sanctification

Progressive sanctification is different. It is beautifully expressed in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: 'Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness'. It is ongoing. We are involved in it. We must work and struggle and be labourers together with God. Yet the glory must go to God for His grace. It is a work of free grace. We have to die to sin and strive more and more to mortify sin and to put it to death. We must live unto righteousness and exert ourselves to be holy and Christ-like. We must keep the commandments. It is not that we earn salvation but we show we are saved by the way we keep God's law. We express our love to God by obedience. Faith without works is dead (Jas.2:20). A good tree brings forth good fruit. It's not by bringing forth the good fruit that we become good trees. Rather, the good tree shows what its nature is by the fruit it bears.

People say, Rejoice, God loves you and you are saved. Feelings of guilt for sin are dismissed as a failure to appreciate one's justification. Any mention of law-keeping is dismissed by them as legalism. But how does Paul treat the question? 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' (Rom.6:1). Yes, it is true, the greater the sinner the greater the grace of God. Should we then continue in sin to glorify God and cause the display of His amazing grace? How could we possibly even think such a thing! 'God forbid'. If the professing Christian happily continues in sin, that simply demonstrates that he was never converted. If we have truly been regenerated we died with Christ to that old life.

Warnings

In the Scriptures there are clear warnings. One of the major temptations particularly for young men in our day is internet pornography. What do we say to someone who has become entangled in this addiction? 'Your sins are forgiven as a Christian. Don't worry; all will be fine. Rejoice, God loves you. There is no need to feel guilt. All your sins have been washed away with the blood of Christ'.

No, we must speak clearly as Christ did: 'But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Mt.5:28-29). These words are harsh but they are true. Better to pluck out your eye and go to heaven, than having both eyes and end up in hell. Drastic action is required. The wages of sin is death. To the church in Ephesus Christ writes: 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent' (Rev.2:4-5). To the church in Laodicea, which had become lukewarm, he writes: 'So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth' (Rev.3:16). What is He saying? Without repentance you will be cast into hell. These are no pretend threats but real.

"One of the major temptations particularly for young men in our day is internet pornography. What do we say to someone who has become entangled in this addiction? 'Your sins are forgiven as a Christian. Rejoice, God loves you'. No, we must speak clearly as Christ did."

Many more verses of Scripture could be quoted. The Christian is warned of perishing. Breaking God's commandments brings God's wrath. Scandalous sin could be an indicator that the individual was never converted and so will perish. However if the sinning individual is a true child of God he will be chastised and that is terribly painful: 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby' (Heb.12:11). Do you want God to chastise you? If not repent.

Encouragements

Thankfully along with the stick is the carrot. There are many incentives given to holiness. We are promised help. Strive to 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Phil.2:12-13). We are to strive but God will help. The Holy Spirit who came to live in our hearts at conversion will enable us and empower us to please God. We will not be left to ourselves. He will work in us. We are promised 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding' (Phil.4:7) and 'joy unspeakable and full of glory' (1Pet.1:8). We are promised 'the kingdom of heaven' and even that we 'shall inherit the earth' (Mt.5:3, 5). The obedient sincere Christian is told that your 'Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly' (Mt.6:4, 6, 18). Faithfulness will receive a great reward: 'Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods' (Mt.24:46-47). Malachi wrote, 'And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him' (Mal.3:17). We must fight against the world, the flesh and the devil. We must put on the whole armour of God. We must die to sin. We must keep the commandments. We must persevere unto the end. And Paul assures us 'we are more than conquerors through him that loved us' (Rom.8:37). We shall be 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' (1Pet.1:5).

You Must Be Baptised by Jesus

Rev Warren Gardner

The substance of a sermon preached at the opening of the 2014 General Assembly on the words: 'And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost' John 1:33.

Oh, how we long for the glory days of the church when people flocked to the Lord by the thousands! How we are grieved to see covenant children raised in the church for ten to twenty years now departed from the faith! Many remain in the church but live as captives to a religion that brings them none of the joy or happiness that Christ promised us.

In this regard, there is a part of the Gospel message that is often being overlooked or neglected in our day that is essential to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to Biblical Christianity—it is the baptism administered by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Though Jesus never baptised with water as we are told in John 4:2 ('Though Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples'), there is a baptism which Jesus must perform if He is to claim and transform us as His own. John's Gospel supplies that detail which must not be omitted. We find it in our text. That neglected message is the baptism with the Holy Spirit that is administered by Christ Himself.

1) When did Jesus baptise with the Holy Spirit?

Nowhere is there a New Testament event that is specifically described as Jesus 'baptising' an individual with the Holy Spirit. John who testifies of this only mentions that 'He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost' (John 20:22).

The most obvious answer to our inquiry is found in the testimony of the Acts of the Apostles where we are repeatedly told of people receiving the Holy Spirit. In these passages while the term 'baptism' is not used, the 'fillings' with the Holy Spirit which are described are generally understood as Jesus baptising with the Holy Spirit. So then, we find Jesus pouring out His Spirit on His church on multiple occasions:

a) The Day of Pentecost is an obvious answer to our question. Acts 2:1-4: 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance'.

b) Days later in Acts 4:31, many of those who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost were again filled with the Spirit and empowered with a supernatural boldness to be Christ's witnesses in spite of threats by the Sanhedrin.

c) Throughout the Book of Acts there are recurring accounts of people receiving the Holy Spirit.

Surely the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who believe is a fulfilment of John the Baptist's prophetic word that the One on whom the Spirit descended and remained would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

2) What is the distinguishing mark of someone baptised with the Holy Spirit?

a) What it is not.

Many without Biblical warrant assume that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is always distinguished by the recipients speaking in foreign tongues. While many of the occurrences of the giving of the Holy Spirit recorded in the Book of Acts make mention of this phenomenon (which was one of many supernatural 'signs of the Apostles' which confirmed their divine commission), the Apostle Paul makes clear that even during apostolic times not all who received the Holy Spirit spoke in 'tongues': 'Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues?' (1Cor.12:30). To which rhetorical question, the obvious reply is 'No!'

Possession of supernatural spiritual gifts is not a distinguishing mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Did not Jesus Himself indicate that there would be those who professed to have supernatural gifts of the Spirit who would perish on the Day of Judgment? 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (Mt.7:22-23).

b) What it is.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a display of supernatural spiritual gifts found in a few individuals, but

"The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit with whom Christ baptises. One does not belong to the Lord Jesus, if he has not been baptised with the Holy Spirit."

is the promise proclaimed to 'all' whom the Lord our God shall call: 'Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:38-39, italics added for emphasis).

Here at the conclusion of his sermon, Peter declares that those who receive remission of their sins through faith in Jesus would receive the promised Holy Spirit. The Scriptures make no mention that any of the 'three thousand' who believed on the Day of Pentecost spoke with 'other tongues'. The 'gift of the Holy Ghost' of which Peter speaks is not 'tongues speaking' but the fulfilment of OT prophecies such as that of Ezekiel: 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them' (Ezek.36:25-27). This is the true baptism with the Holy Spirit when cleansing and spiritual renewal supernaturally take place by the power of the Holy Spirit. The lives of the three thousand were transformed as they gave themselves to the preaching of the Word and prayer and genuine love for the brethren sharing all things in common with one another. This is true Holy Spirit baptism.

3) Why is Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit still important?

a) It is a necessary evidence of being in Christ.

Paul affirms to the church at Rome: 'So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his' (Rom.8:8-9) The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are one and the same Spirit.

The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit with whom Christ baptises. One does not belong to the Lord Jesus, if he has not been baptised with the Holy Spirit.

b) It is necessary for entrance into heaven.

Jesus told Nicodemus: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.… Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (Jn.3:3, 5) Without this baptism of the Holy Spirit by our Lord Jesus Christ no one will see or enter the kingdom of God.

c) It is evidence of being a child of God.

Truly the Holy Spirit testifies: 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God' (Rom.8:14). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to the child of God. Being led by the Spirit is not some mystical experience whereby we 'feel that something is right' or 'God told me to do this'. The true leading of the Spirit is only seen when one shows himself approved to God as a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth by the inward working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's leading is only truly found when He opens the human understanding to comprehend the clear meaning of the Word of God by which the justified sinner is able to prove in his or her life experiences of what the will of God is – what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. As John Owen testifies: 'There is no good communicated to us from the Father but it

is bestowed on us or wrought in us by the Holy Ghost'. How many of our children have been taught the ways of the Lord since early childhood and yet have no love for the Word or the will of God? Why is this so? The clear answer from Scripture is that they have not been baptised by the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit. They do not have the Spirit of Christ and are not led by the Holy Spirit. They are as we might say—NOT born again. How can we tell that anyone has received the Spirit from Christ? Is it not by some tangible evidence that our Lord by His Spirit's quickening work has written His commandments on the Christian's heart and is working His sanctifying ministry out in his or her life? Where love for Christ is not evident and where there is contempt for living out the expressed will of God, we have no reason to believe that the Holy Spirit is resident—and on the testimony of the Apostle Paul—that one does not belong to Christ.

Too many so-called disciples of Jesus today have never heard of the Holy Spirit. Among those who claim to have received the Holy Spirit's supernatural signs, many are strangers to the Spirit's sanctifying work. Some perhaps are convicted of their sins; others for a while desire to live a life consistent with repentance, but having never known the true indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, they have no power to the live the life to which they have been called. They have a form of godliness, but deny its power. They have no resident Holy Spirit to wage war against the lust of their flesh. Many quit the faith in disillusionment! Oh, for a tender conscience instructed daily by the Holy Spirit wielding the 'sword of the Spirit'—the Word of God! Richard Sibbes rightly testifies concerning the Holy Spirit: 'He makes us to be able to live and die, to do what others cannot do, just as He enabled Christ to do things that another man could not do'.

4) How does one receive the Holy Spirit?

Again we must turn to Biblical principle or example for our answer. Three different ways are described there:

a) As a spontaneous event during the proclamation of the Gospel.

In Acts 10:44 we read: 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word'. The Lord Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit on the hearers during the preaching of the Gospel message. Perhaps many present here have experienced the same—you received Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit spontaneously during the reading or preaching of the Gospel.

b) In response to the intercessory prayer of another.

In Acts 19 we read of those who were disciples following the teaching of John the Baptist who had never heard about the Holy Spirit. To these the Gospel was explained more fully and then 'when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied'. Similarly, parents of demon-possessed children interceded for their spiritually-dead children and their children were delivered from the power of the devil. Intercessory prayer for another person may gain them God's blessing of the Holy Spirit.

c) By personal persistent prayer.

In Luke 11, we are taught about the importance of persistent prayer. The chapter begins with Jesus' disciples asking Him to teach them to pray. He gave them the model prayer which we know as 'The Lord's Prayer'. Then by a parable of a guest that arrived at midnight, Jesus taught them the necessity of persistence in prayer. Admonishing us to persistent prayer for the Holy Spirit, Jesus assures us: 'I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' (Lk.11:9-13). Luke's account in the original Greek emphasises the necessity of continuing to ask, seek and knock—'keep on asking', 'keep on seeking', 'keep on knocking'— as the 'man with the guest at midnight' pounding on his neighbour's door until he gained his petition. According to Luke, this instruction for prayer is to be specifically applied to asking for the Holy Spirit. Great encouragement is given for those who desire to receive the Holy Spirit! If imperfect earthly parents gave you good gifts, how much more will your perfect heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! What an assurance Jesus gives us!

Progressive sanctification by the Holy Spirit is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith, but it must not only be affirmed—it must be experienced! Only then will we regain the 'glory days' when thousands throng to Christ and embrace the Gospel with all of its power to transform and renew them in the image of God. Only then will our children lost to the world and held fast in the devil's power be liberated and brought to Christ by the power of the Spirit of God. We have desperate need in our day for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit—for Jesus to baptise with the Holy Spirit! Let us not neglect to proclaim God's promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Triumph of Christ over His Enemies

Rev Allan Murray

The substance of his moderatorial address to the 2014 General Assembly.

I think that most of us would agree that we, as Christians, are going through a time of some discouragement with the alarming moral decline in our nation. There can be no doubt that the enemies of biblical morality are in the ascendancy. There is a note of triumphalism among them. The latest issue of The Freethinker, the monthly magazine of the National Secular Society, opens with the words, 'Despite poll after poll showing that Christianity in the UK is heading for extinction....', and goes on to criticise Conservative efforts to maintain that Great Britain is still a Christian country. We know that these opening words are a gross exaggeration, but they hurt and they discourage the Christian. It is true that in a few short years the common perception of Christianity in Great Britain has plummeted from a position of something good and wholesome to a position of something bad and even degrading; and Bible-believing Christianity is now considered the very worst and the most dangerous kind of Christianity.

More and more legislation is being passed with high sounding buzz-words, such as equality, diversity and anti-discrimination, but which have the actual effect of curbing freedom of speech. These curbs will more and more affect the free preaching of the gospel.

Now, friends, I could go further down that road and add to the discouragement and depression, looking at the black side of things, but you will be glad to hear I am not going to do that. Rather I want to look at the bright side of things, though, in the process, I must of necessity refer to the black side. For the Christian there is a bright side of which we must never lose sight, especially at this time. There is the glorious and certain triumph of Christ over all His and our enemies. The future held out to us in the Word of God is bright beyond words; it is certain. In order for us to absorb something of this, I wish to consider with you 1 Corinthians 15:23-26: 'But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He (that is, Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death'.

The context is, of course, the resurrection. In verse 23 this is divided into two parts; the 'first-fruits', and what must necessarily follow. The 'first-fruits' is Christ Himself when He rose from the dead. Without the 'first-fruits' there would be no harvest; but because there is a 'first-fruits', a harvest must follow, namely the resurrection of all believers at Christ's second coming: raised to be with Him and enjoy Him for all eternity: what Jesus Himself calls in John 5:29 'the resurrection of life', in contrast to the resurrection of those who will be raised to 'the resurrection of damnation'. Every human being that ever lived will be in one group or the other. There will not be any 'middle' group. Let us now move on to v24.

Thankfully the commentators are more or less of one mind as to the exposition of this verse, although few go as far as we would like them to go. 'Then cometh the end'. The end of what? Surely it is already the end. Not quite. Still to come is the end of Christ's Mediatorial reign. What is Christ's Mediatorial reign? It is that reign which began when He ascended into heaven, and was welcomed in by the angels: that moment described to us prophetically in Psalm 24, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in...'. His work of atonement of course was finished and could not be added to, when He 'offered Himself without spot to God' (Hebrews 9:14). This was His great High Priestly offering of Himself. He now 'reigns' as the Mediatorial King, with all power given to Him in heaven and in earth, to bring the history of the world to a perfect God-glorifying conclusion. Now, let us be clear. His work of atonement was of a totally different nature to His work as the Mediatorial King. The former was done in humiliation, the latter is done in His state of exaltation, as the crowned Mediatorial King, crowned with glory and honour, and given a name above every name.

As He said after His resurrection, before His ascension, when He gave the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore...' Perhaps the most wonderful exercise of this power (as far as we presently are concerned), soon after the beginning of this reign, was to send the Holy Spirit into the world as 'another Comforter' for His people in His own place. He, the Holy Spirit, would apply the benefits of Christ's atonement on a world-wide scale to those whom the Father had given Him, and sanctify them in preparation for their heavenly inheritance. Christ now exercises His Kingly power to bring the whole of history to a full, final, God-glorifying and God-justifying conclusion.

We have a picture before us which is extremely encouraging. Let us grasp it, and let us be of good courage. Let us learn this picture, and let us use it in the present dark times to lift us up when the enemies of the gospel seem to triumph. The sure fact is this: that every single person and army whom Satan has been allowed to use to oppress us and discourage us, will be put down.

Notice 'put down', not destroyed or annihilated, but put down: disempowered, and permanently and irreversibly humiliated. We shall look at this putting down later, but for the moment we note that all His enemies will find themselves under the feet of the One whom they vilified, and denigrated to the limit of their abilities and with unbridled tongues. The order of this present world which they loved, and looked on as permanent and even inevitably strengthening with time, will be completely upended. They will find themselves in a position of humiliation that they could never have imagined: under the feet of Jesus Christ. Their whole attitude and demeanour had dripped with a confident pride, based on an assumption that one day they would have the final victory over Christ and His church. Now they are under Christ's feet.

These final things are not listed for us in our text in chronological order, but the tenses used give us the chronological order and it is in this order that we will look at them, in order to accommodate our time-bound minds.

There is a very slight difficulty of translation, but the translation we have in the King James Bible is, I believe, the best. It agrees with other Scriptural references and even with most of the modern translations, so we will not go into the matter further at this time, in case we lose our focus. It is on the final things in His reign as Mediator that we wish to concentrate. This is for our encouragement, and here there is great encouragement indeed for ourselves in the day we live in, as Christians in today's Great Britain.

Let us now look at the things that will be put down - all rule and all authority and power. These are the things that the enemies of Christ have wielded against the church. Now there is much overlapping between these three things, but I believe that we can with profit look at them separately in order to understand better what is going on in the world. Of course the reference is not to rule, authority and power in the abstract, but to the persons who are in positions to wield these things. Jesus did not say to His disciples when He sent them out, 'Beware of devils', but, 'Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake' (Matthew 10:17,18). Let us then look at the concluding things in Christ's Mediatorial reign, things that will take place at the end of the world.

Firstly, the putting down of all rule.

This includes all human government and all its tentacles, including the judiciary. I group the judiciary with government, because the two are now working together, especially against the Bible-believing church. The independence of the judiciary is now, at least, open to question. At the end of the world, all human rule will melt away before the authority of Christ, the Mediatorial King. All those leaders who used their position of rule to marginalise and isolate Christians will be put down. We value the freedoms we still have, but true democracy, which takes into account the will of the people, has been paralysed in Great Britain for a number of years. Recently we saw the sinister picture of the leaders of all the main political parties, who in all other circumstances would be fighting against one another, and so keeping a check on one another, totally united in promoting the most ungodly piece of legislation in history, the re-definition of God's holy ordinance of marriage, to change it, and to mix it with the most abominable of practices, defiling what the Word of God has declared to be undefiled, the marriage bed. This reminds us of the two enemies, Herod and Pontius Pilate, being made friends at the trial of Christ. This is the united rage of the heathen against the Lord and His Anointed (Psalm 2). Even public opinion did not matter. It was just swept aside. It was all so evil, so unjust, so anti-God and anti-Christ. The oppression and frustration we felt was intense and crushing. We were so powerless: but, the David Camerons, the Nick Cleggs, the Ed Milibands, the Alex Salmonds of this world will be put down, unless they repent. Yes, we should be praying that God would bring them to repentance, and that He would do all that is necessary to bring that about. But in the absence of repentance we must pray for their downfall; for their removal; and for a hastening of the day when they will be put under the feet of Christ. If we know our Psalms, then we will have no problems with praying for the removal of the enemies of God. We should be filled with a holy jealousy for the glory of the Lord our God, burning with a zeal for Him. One thing is sure, we will see our triumphant King, with His enemies under His feet. It will happen. 'He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet'. It is a certainty. It must happen. Take courage, my friend.

Secondly, the putting down of all authority.

Authority is a crucially important matter in this life. The ultimate authority is God speaking through His Word. He has given us His Word as the ultimate authority in all situations. Happy is the nation that is ruled by the Word of God. Sadly in our nation the authority of God has been usurped by human reason as the ultimate authority. We have sold out to unbelieving humanism. Our so-called 'progress' is driven forward by the twin engines of secular humanism or atheism, and unbelieving science. The scientific establishment is now founded on unbelief. This is the kind of science that gets all the publicity, gets exposure in the newspapers and gets on to TV programmes, especially the BBC. I would exclude from this the many sincere and diligent scientists who have

"This proud and arrogant science will not countenance any balanced examination of evidence if there is a possibility that that evidence might point to a Designer in nature."

done much to break the frontiers of our knowledge in useful ways. The problem with establishment science is that it will not entertain anything that is not material. It excludes the spiritual world, and any evidence of anything immaterial or spiritual. This has had a disastrous effect on science. It stunts its thought, narrows its horizons, and distorts its conclusions. It puts it into a restricted 'corridor' where certain conclusions are disallowed before the research begins. The walls of this corridor are restrictions disallowing any thought beyond the material, no matter what the evidence says. Any thought that breaches these walls will be condemned as nonsense by the establishment if it ever reaches the end of the corridor. This is hardly the free enquiry which should characterise true science. The conclusions are restricted from the beginning. The effect of this on our children's education is disastrous. This science demands that it be listened to as the ultimate authority. It demands that God be excluded. It is proud and arrogant and takes to itself the place of God as the ultimate authority in all things. God is not in all its thoughts; nor is humility, that greatest of all ornaments found among men. This proud and arrogant science will not countenance any balanced examination of evidence if there is a possibility that that evidence might point to a Designer in nature. Their grip over the educational system is such that they decree that Intelligent Design must not be examined side by side with evolution, and must be restricted to religious education classes. They do not trust our children to examine the evidence and come to their own conclusions. Again we feel oppressed. It is all so unjust. It is called science, but it is all so fundamentally unscientific. But they do have massive authority in Great Britain today; and they are proud.

Richard Dawkins has become the face of unbelieving science in this country. He claims that his motive in his science is 'disinterested enquiry'. Yet his books and articles drip with bias and pride. Even his own colleagues have raised grave doubts about his arguments in his book, The God Delusion. The problem is that he is so looked up to that multitudes believe everything he says, even though he is an enemy of Christ. He is the authority in Britain today, not just on scientific things, but on the relevance of religion. Again we feel so powerless, so frustrated, so oppressed, so jealous for God. Again we must pray that God will bring him to repentance, and if not, that God would remove Him. One thing is sure, if he does not repent we shall see him under the feet

of Christ: For Christ must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet. It will happen. It is certain. Take courage. There is a bright side; let us keep it before us.

Thirdly, He will put down all power.

What is the most powerful influence in our nation today? There can surely be no doubt: it is not government, it is not science - it is television. Not that the medium itself is evil. It is not. The problem is that most of the producers and presenters have an anti-Christian bias. They subvert our society and our children. They use their undoubted creative skill to promote immorality and perversions even in some children's programmes. It is a gross abuse of power, frequently used against Bible-believing Christians and the things they love. This comes out in subversive comments and innuendo, which subtly shape the minds of the people. We feel powerless, oppressed, grieved to the depths of our being. But let them just wait. Unless they repent Christ will put them down. Their power will suddenly melt away; it will disappear. Television producers and presenters and all those who have used their power in this world to vilify Christ and Christians will be put down. They will be under the feet of the One they mocked and vilified.

Let us then rejoice and be glad, 'Christ must reign, until He hath put all enemies under his feet'. For all these groups, as they lie under the feet of Christ, their loud mouths will be stopped; stopped by the realisation that they stand before The Ultimate Authority, and His perfect justice, and that they have been fools. Their humiliation will be most painful for them, and they will be silent. They will have no defence, nothing to say. They who rejected any possibility of a day of reckoning are dumbfounded. The Christians whom they laughed at are now vindicated while they themselves are put down; weighed in God's balances, and found wanting. But this leaves one enemy, death.

Fourthly, Death destroyed.

Let us then jump forward a little to v26: 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death'. This is not 'putting down', but destruction. It does not specifically say that Christ will do this. However it is often a good exercise to leave out the italics, as it brings us a little closer to the original. If we do that here, it is of some help: 'The last enemy will be destroyed, death'. The first three enemies are put down, but the last enemy, death, will be destroyed - a very important difference. The destruction, rather than the one who does it, is what distinguishes the fate of Death from that of the other three. Death will be destroyed. All human beings that have ever existed, the whole human race will have been raised from the dead. Revelation 20:12, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God'. They are all standing, they are alive. No one is left in any kind of grave, no matter what the nature of the final disposal of the body has been. After this there shall be no more death ever - for anyone. No human being will ever die again. Bodies and souls now reunited will never be separated again. Death is abolished. But how is it the last enemy? It is the believer's last enemy, because until the resurrection it was what prevented their bodies from being united to their souls in the full enjoyment of Christ.

Let us look at the consequences of this first of all for the believer. He will be with Christ forever. He will enjoy Him forever. There will never be an end to it. While in this world there was always that point ahead which stood between us and ultimate blessedness, death. But no more. There was always that parting with loved ones ahead. But no more. Death is abolished, there will be no end point. We will be with Christ forever.

But what are the consequences to the unbeliever of no more death? They are indeed solemn. It means no relief from the torments of hell forever. We read about them in Revelation 9:6: 'In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them'. It is as if they are grasping for it, longing for it, but it is not there. It is never going to be there. To them death was like a strange kind of friend, an escape from any consequences. The hope of many was that death was the end of all human consciousness. Now it is not that death is there and they are denied it for some longer or shorter time. Death simply is not there. It is forever an impossibility. Their proud, confident arrogance will seem so ridiculous to them. Once so big and haughty, now reduced to misery. Now under the feet of Christ. But the thing that will make it most painful for them is that they will have nothing to say. Their mouths will be stopped. They will know that it is all perfect justice and righteousness. There is no unrighteousness with God at any point.

Christ's triumph over His enemies will be consummately complete. He must reign until all this has been accomplished. 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ' (Rev 11:15). All that was promised to Him by the Father in eternity has now been fulfilled: 'The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool' (Psalm 110:1). We will indeed be, in the words of Romans 8:37, ' more than conquerors through him that loved us'. We do not know what we may still have to suffer in this world at the hands of the enemies of Christ. It is unlikely to get easier; but even at its worst it will be 'light affliction' when we see Christ in His glory, and our eyes shall behold Him. Our greatest joy will be to see Him crowned with glory and honour. In the amazing words of Job, 'In my flesh I shall see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another'.

Christ's Mediatorial reign

There now remains the final act of Christ's Mediatorial reign: 'Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father'. This cannot just be passed over just because it is difficult to explain: difficult but not impossible. Charles Hodge in his Commentary on First Corinthians puts the matter very clearly: 'It must be remembered, that the Scriptures speak of a threefold kingdom as belonging to Christ'. Let us summarise Hodge, and his explanation of Christ's threefold kingdom:

1. His Kingly Divine rule over all His creatures. This can never change.

2. His Kingly rule as the God/man over all His redeemed people. This also can never change.

3. That Kingship to which he was exalted after his resurrection, when all power in heaven and earth was committed to his hands. This is the Mediatorial Kingdom, which he exercises as the God-man, only until the things we have been speaking about today have been accomplished. He will then deliver up this Kingdom to God and His Father.

But let us see if we can clarify the matter a little further. It helps somewhat if we keep in mind that the word translated 'kingdom' can also be translated 'kingship', or 'rule'. Let us go back to the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. There the Father gives to the Son those appointed to eternal life so that, in time, He might save them from their sins, in a consummately God-glorifying and God-justifying way, and secure them in union with Himself, free of all sin, free of all oppression, free of all threat, for all eternity.

This was the work which the Father gave Him to do. Now He is ruling over the final stages of that work from His throne in heaven. The final aim is that He will bring His people into a state of indestructible security, peace and blessedness. This necessitates this period of Mediatorial rule, the final stages of which are described in the verses we are looking at. Here he is seen to totally deprive all the enemies of His people of all the power and influence with which they abused God's people while on earth. This is necessary as a demonstration of divine justice and righteousness, even though they will finally be cast into hell.

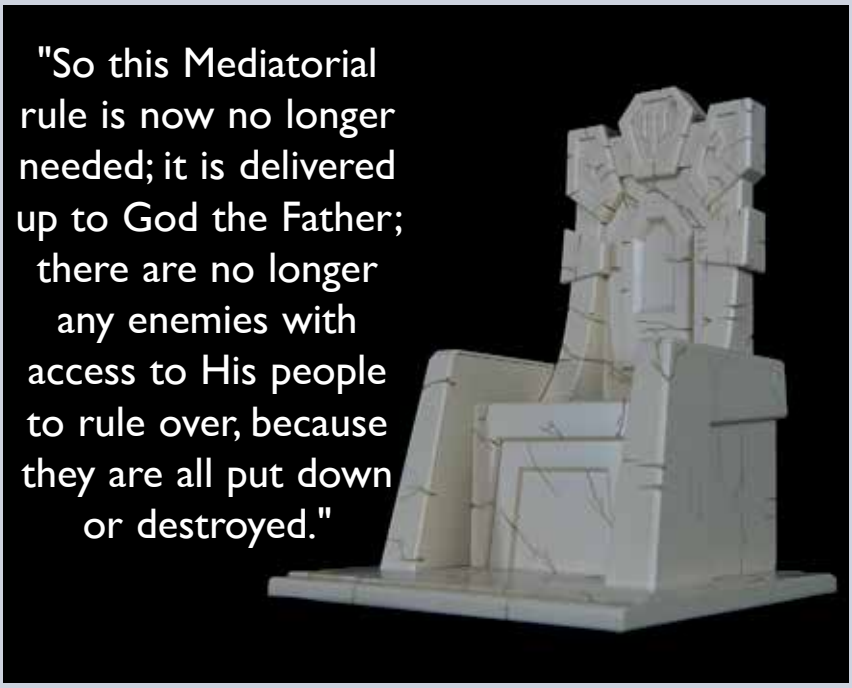
So this Mediatorial rule is now no longer needed; it is delivered up to God the Father; there are no longer any enemies with access to His people to rule over, because they are all put down or destroyed. But be clear on this. It does not mean His reign as King of His people and Head of His church will end. It never will. God 'hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church', (Eph. 1:22). The children of Zion will be joyful in their King (Psalm 149), for all eternity. We will always be united to Him, He will always be our Elder brother, our Head, our King, and our everlasting joy. 'He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet'.

So now He delivers the Mediatorial Kingship to God and His Father. Let us go back to the eternal covenant. The Father gave the elect to His Son that He might save them, sanctify them, and make them eternally and irreversibly secure, all in a God-honouring and God-glorifying and God-justifying way. Now the Son presents the elect to the Father with all that He was to do for them perfectly completed and impregnably secure. So the Father is glorified in the Son and the Son is glorified in the Father. This whole matter of the Mediatorial kingdom and its delivery to the Father has its roots in eternity.

Friends, let us never be despondent. Let us never let a day pass without spending some time meditating on the triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over His enemies and on the glory which shall be ours when we enter into His immediate presence and company, never more to be separated, never more to be oppressed. Let us then persevere unto the end. The last verse in this great chapter about the resurrection is: 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord'.

Yes, we will have tribulation in this world; Jesus has told us so. But He also said, 'Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy' (John 16:20). Our future rest is secure. Our future home is secure. 'In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore' (Psalm 16:11).

"So this Mediatorial rule is now no longer needed; it is delivered up to God the Father; there are no longer any enemies with access to His people to rule over, because they are all put down or destroyed."



TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

The Loyal and Dutiful Address of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

May it please Your Majesty,

We, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) met in General Assembly this 20th day of May 2014, humbly desire to express to your Majesty our continuing loyalty to your Majesty's person and throne.

We continue to admire the dedication with which, for over sixty years, you have carried out the duties of your high office. We are aware that your Majesty has always cherished a high view of the responsibilities of the Monarchy and we thank God that he has enabled you in such a measure to fulfil the commitment you gave at the start of your reign, and indeed as heir to the throne, when you pledged yourself to the service of God and of all your people. We assure your Majesty that you and the Royal Family are regularly remembered in prayer in our congregations.

At a time of continuing change and uncertainty your Majesty's throne is a symbol of strength and stability to the nations of the world. We believe that that strength derives above all from the Christian principles and values upon which that throne is established – principles which are rooted in the Reformation with which God blessed Europe in the sixteenth century. Here in Scotland we are commemorating this year the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Knox, who was the chief instrument, under God, for the triumph of the Reformation in Scotland. It was the Reformation that delivered the church in Scotland from the bondage of Roman superstition and won for it those rights which after much tribulation were confirmed by the Revolution Settlement of 1690; rights which were secured to perpetuity by the Treaty of Union in 1707 which also confirmed the Protestant succession to the Crown. Today, at a time of uncertainty about the future constitutional status of Scotland within the United Kingdom,we believe it to be of crucial importance that these rights remain inviolate and are passed down to future generations. We are mindful that at your Coronation in 1953 your Majesty pledged to uphold, to the utmost of your power in the United Kingdom, the Protestant Reformed religion established by law. Any action which may be construed as countenancing recognition or support for Romanism and its Pontiff grieves many of your Majesty's loyal subjects.

This year in common with many of your Majesty's subjects we remember the heroism and fortitude of those who responded to the call of King and Country in 1914. In no part of the British dominions was that call more enthusiastically responded to than in the Highlands and Islands, which has long been the heartland of the Free Church of Scotland. We owe it to the memory of those caught up in that great struggle that we should preserve the liberties for which they fought and for which many of them gave their lives.

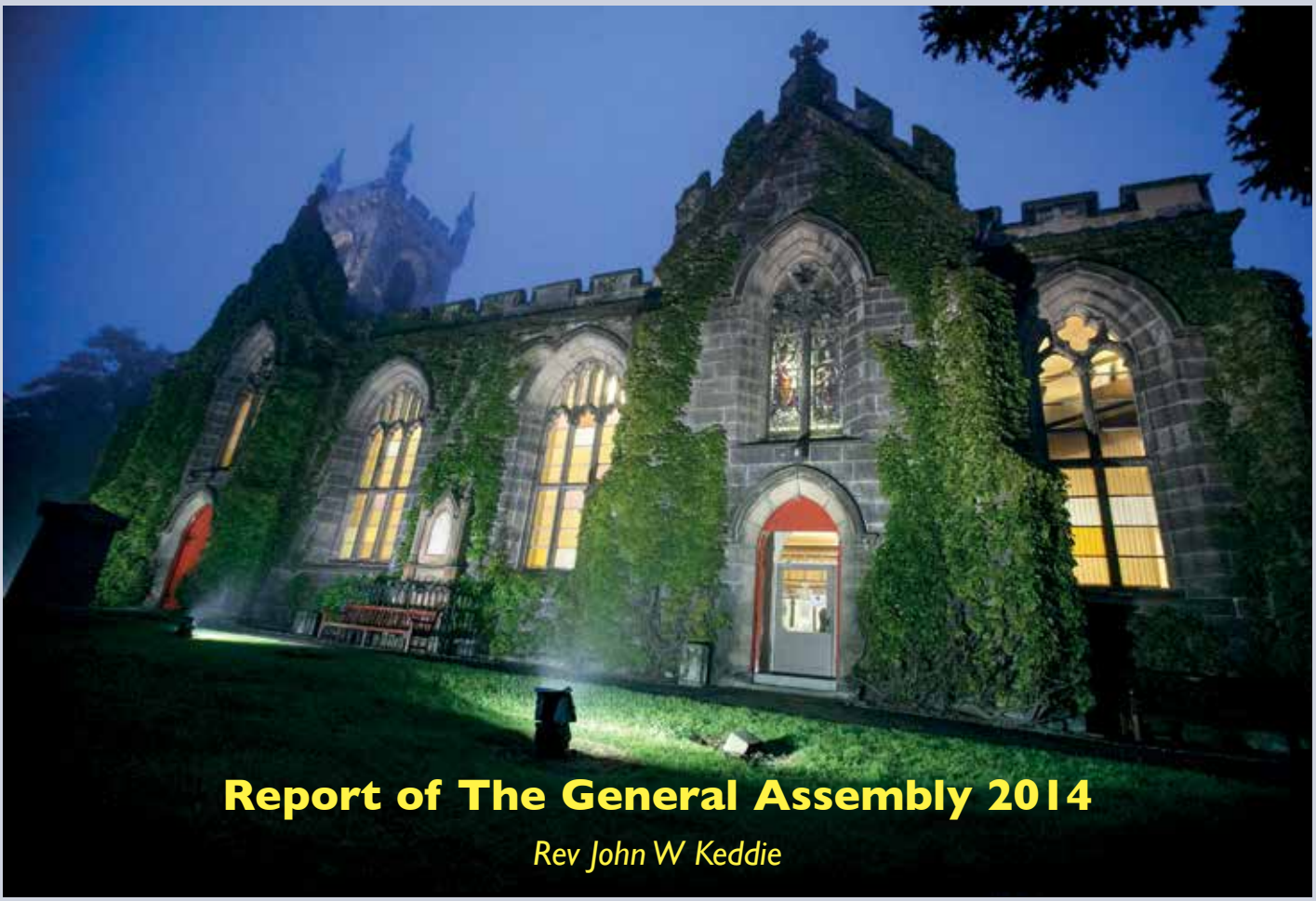
Though the issues may be different today, the threats to our liberties are no less real. We are concerned that the pursuit of ideals of equality and human rights should not be to the prejudice of freedom of speech on the part of those whose supreme allegiance is to the Word of God, and whose commission from that Word is to preach the Gospel. It is with concern that we see Christian values increasingly marginalised in our modern society. While we recognise your Majesty's position as a constitutional monarch, faithfulness to our duty compels us to convey to your Majesty our deep sadness that fundamental changes contrary to the express will of God are being made to the law of our land. We refer particularly to the changes in the law of marriage which have grieved many of your Majesty' s loyal subjects.

We continue to be concerned at the trouble and unrest in many parts of the world. It encourages us to know that traditional British skills in diplomacy are being applied to the solution of these problems and to help remove tensions and promote international peace. We continue to admire the skill and professionalism of your Majesty's forces in Afghanistan as they strive to combat insurgency and to contain the threat of terrorism. We pray that they may be preserved amidst all the dangers and difficulties they have to face.

We are pleased to note the increasing part being played in State engagements by younger members of the Royal Family. The recent visit to Australia and New Zealand by the Earl and Countess of Strathearn and their infant son, Prince George, has we believe done much to enhance the status of the Monarchy and to strengthen the ties which bind these countries to the Crown. It is pleasing to see a new generation carrying forward the traditions of dedication and service which have so distinguished your Majesty's reign.

May the blessing of Almighty God rest upon Your Majesty, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, and all the members of the Royal Family.

So pray Your Majesty's most loyal subjects, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in General Assembly convened.



Report of The General Assembly 2014

Rev John W Keddie

Monday, 19th May

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of 2014 opened with the strains of Psalm 149:

'Praise ye the Lord: unto him sing
A new song, and his praise
In the assembly of his saints
In sweet psalms do ye raise'.

Worship was conducted by the retiring moderator, the Rev Warren Gardner (Atlanta, USA) who preached from John 1:33 on Jesus baptising with the Holy Spirit. The great need for the Church today is for a pouring out of the Spirit, something for which the people of God should constantly pray.

The Assembly of 2014 comprised 52 commissioners of whom 28 were ministers and 24 elders. At present our Assemblies are all 'plenary' Assemblies, that is to say, it could include all ministers in the Church, including retired ministers, and an elder for every congregation. Ideally there should be an equal number of ministers and elders. At one point an overseas commissioner commented on the wonderful variety of accents to be heard in the Assembly, revealing a happy cosmopolitan aspect to the Church!

Precentors were duly appointed for the Psalm-singing throughout the Assembly, Mr Alex Watt (Aberdeen) for the English and Mr Colin Crichton (Stornoway) for the Gaelic. The excellence of the precenting and the Psalm-singing in general was a feature of the gatherings.

New Moderator

The new Moderator elected for the Assembly was the Rev Allan Murray (Brora, retired) who duly took the Chair.

Assembly Arrangements (Rev A Murray)

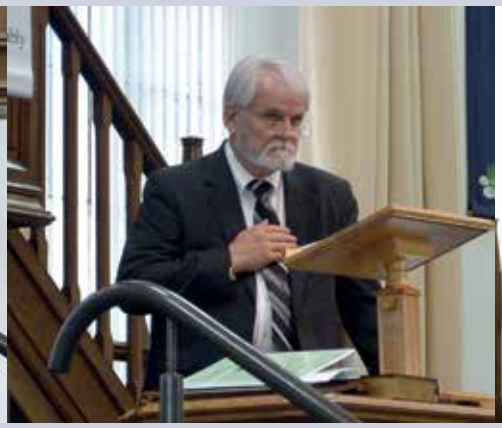
This Report on the management of the Assembly is normally a formality. This year there were several proposals designed to expedite the business of the Assembly in the future and hopefully cut down its length. However, there were many proposed amendments to what the Report advocated and it became quite time-consuming! One intriguing motion that carried was put forward by the Rev Richard Ross (Portree). This instructed the Committee in consultation with Presbyteries to receive suggestions as to how the workload and number of the Church's standing committees might be reduced.

Tuesday, 20th May

Moderator's Address

The newly installed Moderator, the Rev Allan Murray gave an address based upon 1 Corinthians 15:1-27. His concern was to focus not on the moral and spiritual declension so evident in Church and State, but on the

Rev Allan Murray



Rev Warren Gardner

Rev William Macleod

reality of the reign of Christ in putting down all rule (governments/judiciary), all authority (false science), and all power (media) exercised perversely but confidently in this world. Christ will exercise His kingly divine rule ultimately. This is a message of untold encouragement for a beleaguered Church in any and every age.

Ecumenical Relations (Rev William Macleod (Knightswood))

The Free Church (Continuing) enjoys the friendship and support of many denominations throughout the world. Many letters are received every year from such Churches world-wide. Several of these Churches regularly send delegates to our Assembly and invite our delegates to theirs. The pattern has been established in the Assembly to have speakers from many such Churches. They bring greetings as well as encouraging and challenging words. Such contacts are encouraged and nurtured through the Ecumenical Relations Committee. The Church is also a member of the UK wide 'Affinity' body (formerly British Evangelical Council) and the International Conference of Reformed Churches. There are some smaller denominations with which the Church has particular affinities confessionally and constitutionally. The Church would wish closer ties with the Free Presbyterian and Reformed Presbyterian brethren, as well as the Associated Presbyterian Churches, all still Psalm-singing Churches which avoid the use of instrumental music in public worship. The variation in the relationships with this wide range of Churches was referred to in the report and the Rev William Macleod's presentation of it. The Church is not isolationist and desires good relations with Reformed believers of a like mind, albeit some differences in doctrine or practice may exist.

An addition to the deliverance of the Report was moved by Rev David Blunt (North Uist & Grimsay) commenting on a Scottish Reformed Churches Forum which was encouraging unity between the Free Church, Free Church (Continuing) and Associated Presbyterian Churches. Whilst good relations with all Reformed and evangelical Churches were welcomed a question arose about whether there was the same confessional commitment evident. How could there be approval of a restoration of church unity without there being a candid examination of the reasons for disunity in the first place? The Assembly agreed with these points.

In seconding the amendment the Rev Raymond Kemp (Kilmuir & Stenscholl) stressed that we should be glad to welcome Free Church people who wish to join with us.

Finance and Sustentation (Dr A Naylor (Leverburgh))

It was reported by both Dr Andrew Naylor, who presented the Report, and Mr Angus Macmillan (General Treasurer) who spoke at length on the question of finances, that the Accounts for the year to December 2013 reflected an encouraging picture. It is a cause for thankfulness to the Lord that for the third year there is a surplus to report. In 2013 this amounted to £231,117, including legacies amounting to £133,353. Congregational remittances were up by 2%. It was stated as an aim for congregations that they try to remit at least 70% of their total ordinary income. To cover the ministerial stipend, including pension and insurance costs, some £25,000 per annum is required from congregations. Expenditure was up by 5%, almost entirely on account of increased costs of ministerial stipends. A practical and financial challenge facing the Church relates to the provision of church buildings and manses. Both Dr Naylor and Mr Macmillan stressed the importance of supporting the Central Building Fund. This enables the church centrally to help congregations looking to provide accommodation. Mention was also made of central funding from Stewardship Limited. This had made possible the purchase of four manses recently. It was necessary to provide at least 30% of funds up-front for this help to be received. Thanks were expressed for those who gave so sacrificially to the financial needs of the congregations and the Church in general and its mission. Challenge was given in four areas:

- Maximising the use of Gift Aid declarations by

donors

- Uniting in support behind the Central Building Fund
- Looking at ways ministry can be best supported by maximising remittances
- Developing a Church-wide strategy for central funds between competing needs

Minor amendments, to do with the operation of the Central Building Fund were successfully moved by the Rev Greg MacDonald (Cross) and the Rev Graeme Craig (Stornoway). All in all an encouraging report, but also a challenge to provide funds sufficient for ministry and fabric.

Prizewinners: Matthew Keddie (Shettleston) & Joanna Gillies (Stornoway)

Welfare of Youth (Rev Murdo A N Macleod (Snizort))

It was reported that there are 118 children currently in our Sabbath Schools with around 200 children in all in the Church.

The main areas of work of the Committee cover producing Sabbath School materials, maintaining the Shorter Catechism Diploma Scheme, running the All-Age Holidays and the youth camps, and administering the Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize involving Bible memorisation. There is also encouragement given to Christian education including help for home-schooled children within the Church.

Donald Robertson (Lochalsh and Strath) spoke appreciatively of the All-Age Holiday, and the Rev Greg MacDonald (Ness) reported on the Youth Camp speaking of the hope of running a senior as well as a junior camp this year. A call for the prayers of the Church was made for this work.

Presentations were made by the Moderator to the winners of the Sabbath School and Bible Class Prizes for the year:

Sabbath School and Bible Class Awards 2014
Bible Class winner: Joanna Gillies (Stornoway)
Junior winner: Matthew Keddie (Shettleston)

Special Committee on Psalmody (Rev Bill Scott (Dumfries, rtd))

This report was presented by the Convener the Rev Bill Scott who spoke of a renewed interest in Psalmody today. There is nothing better to fill the real silence in people's lives than the words of God, words that lead to the Saviour and to heaven. It was reported that the 10th of the double Psalm-CDs had been produced and there were just two remaining to be done to complete the project. Ministers were urged to let precentors have a note of the Psalms to be sung in advance. The Lord is to be honoured in our Psalmody.

Tribute was paid by the Rev David Fraser (Shettleston) and the Rev Richard Ross (Portree) to different aspects of the work of the Rev and Mrs Scott in connection with the encouragement of Psalmody in the Church.

Rev Bill Scott

Special Committee on Church Courts (Rev Graeme Craig (Stornoway))

It has become clear in recent years that on account of

the reduced number of congregations and consequently Presbyteries it meant that there are insufficient Presbyteries to sustain more than two Synods and two Synods are insufficient to sustain a higher court. A question arose about what to do with Synods, whether they should be abolished or be put into abeyance and whether the Assembly should become a General Synod, more realistically reflecting the state and bounds of the Church. The Committee made an interim Report which advocated that the Presbyteries consider the option of putting into abeyance the Synods, rather than making a General Synod and putting the Assembly into abeyance. Rev James Gracie (Edinburgh) maintained that though there were insufficient lower courts to sustain higher courts and that the Church's highest court could be a General Synod with the General Assembly in abeyance, such changes would not conflict with ordination vows, but were simply a reflection on the real situation in the Church at present. Principles of Church government affirmed would continue as previously maintained constitutionally.

The Committee after receiving comment from Presbyteries is to report to the next Assembly with firm proposals to resolve this issue.

500th Anniversary of the birth of John Knox

The Rev John J Murray (Edinburgh, rtd.) gave a stirring address on 'What would John Knox have to say to us today?' He gave eight points:

1. Where is thankfulness for the glorious Reformation?
2. Where is your sense of the glory/majesty of God?
3. Where is the light in the darkness?
4. Where is your aversion to Rome?
5. Where is your priority in preaching?
6. Where is your spirit of repentance?
7. Where is your unity in the truth?

The questions arose from what were seen to be challenges for our day from the features of the life and ministry of John Knox and the other Scottish reformers.

Reception of delegates

One of the encouraging features of the Assembly is the presence of delegates from other Reformed Churches and evangelical organisations. On the Tuesday evening the Assembly heard from three men:

Rev Bart Elshout (Heritage Reformed Churches (USA))

Rev Robert Robb (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland)

Rev Brian Norton (Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales)

It was an encouragement for the Assembly and Church that the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland had resumed full fraternal relations with our Church, something that had been suspended since 2000.

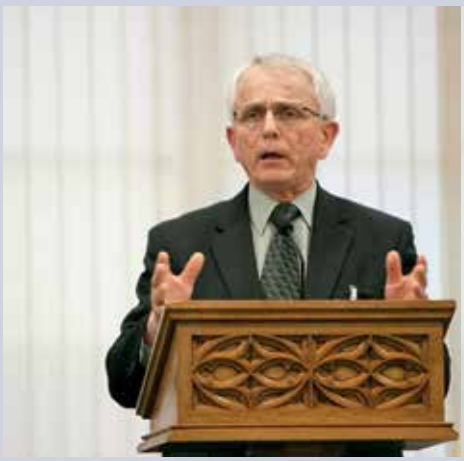
Wednesday, 21st May

It is usual for the Assembly to engage in worship and prayer for first hour on Wednesday morning. This is always a time of real encouragement and blessing to commissioners, delegates and public.

Public Questions, Religion and Morals (Rev David Blunt (North Uist and Grimsay))

For those who maintain as we do the authority of the Bible as the infallible and inerrant word of God there are many social and moral issues of deep concern to the Church. The PQRM Report highlighted several of such issues: same-sex marriage, approved by our Scottish Parliament in February; assisted suicide; state guardians for children; and the question of Scottish Independence, the subject of a referendum later in the year. It was this latter issue that was specially highlighted in the Report with a very long discussion of the issues. This ranged over historical considerations as well as political and spiritual matters. The conclusion to that part of the Report summarised the thinking of the committee in rejecting the current proposals for independence. It was felt that:

1. Independence as proposed would diminish the place



Rev Bart Elshout (HRC)

Rev Robert Robb (RPCI)

Rev Brian Norton (EPCEW)

of Christianity in our country;
2. Independence as proposed presented a threat to the Protestant throne and Presbyterian establishment;
3. Independence as proposed endangered religious and civil liberties; and
4. Independence as proposed could not be morally justified.

The Report on this topic deserves careful study as a well-worked discussion of the issues. However, it is true to say that it did not commend itself to all the commissioners. The Rev John MacLeod (Tarbat) moved that the report simply be received and not 'adopted'. He maintained that the issues were complex and it was his conviction that there were too many broad-sweeping statements not least in terms of supportive historical arguments. Besides this it was felt to be an area in which there might well be sincerely held differences of opinion within the Church on the matter.

Several Commissioners spoke in favour of adopting the Report though it was clear that some considered that notwithstanding strong arguments against independence it was unwise to commit the Church so definitely to a position on the matter, especially in view of the limited time commissioners had had to study the Report and weigh its content and ramifications.

Mr MacLeod's amendment (not to 'adopt' the Report but simply receive it) was not accepted by the majority in the Assembly. As a result there were some dissents from the final decision.

Reception of Delegates

Jorge Ruiz Ortiz (Iglesia Cristiana Presbyteriana, Miranda de Ebro) is a pastor in Spain who has come to distinct Reformed convictions and persuasion about purity of worship. He spoke of his small ministry and the difficulties faced in developing a full-orbed Reformed confessional and exclusively Psalm-singing Church. It is hoped that the Church might have closer ties with Mr Ortiz and provide some encouragement in his pioneer work.

The Assembly also heard from the Rev John Ferguson (Associated Presbyterian Churches) and the Rev Jason Tuinstra representing the United Reformed Church of North America.

Publications Committee (Lindsay MacCallum (Kiltearn))

The Publications Committee has responsibility for overseeing the Witness and Explorer magazines, other publications germane to the life and witness of the Church, the Church's web-site (http://www.freechurchcontinuing.org/), and the Spring Conference. Lindsay MacCallum in presenting the Report made reference to progress on the proposed book about the division of 2000, being written by the Rev James Gracie. Progress was being made and it was hoped that a draft would be ready by the end of the year. The concern was to state the facts of the case and provide a vindication of the minority in the division.

Rev John Murray (Edinburgh, retired) bemoaned the lack of appetite for reading good books and said that encouragement was required for such reading among our people. The Rev Harry Woods (Kilmorack & Strathglass) and the Rev Murdo Angus Macleod (Snizort) spoke of the Explorer and its development. One thousand copies of the Church magazines were printed every month and thanks are due to the Editors for the sterling work done to make the magazines edifying, informative, challenging and attractive.

Report of the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee (Rev Bill Scott (Dumfries, retired)

The Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee has responsibility to oversee the training of students for the ministry and the admission of ministerial applicants from other denominations into our ministry. The Report brought out the responsibilities attached to what the Convener described as the 'pure pulpit' ministry, the responsibilities in preparing men for it and the Church in carrying out its duties in that connection. This is perhaps

Rev John Ferguson (APC) *Rev Jorge Ruiz Ortiz (ICP)* *Rev Jason Tuinstra (URC)*

the weightiest responsibility of a Church in faithfulness to Christ and the advance of His cause among us. It was reported that there were presently three students under preparation, one of whom was expected to finish his studies this year and apply for licence.

Students:

Calum Smith (expected to complete studies 2014)

James Haram (expected to complete studies after a year of work attached to one of the Presbyteries)

Murdo Maciver (expected to finish studies 2015)

The prayers of the Church were sought for the Seminary and the students. Besides the students for the Church there are several other external students taking the Seminary course or parts of it by distance learning.

Rev Trevor Kirkland admitted to the ministry of the FCC

In speaking to the Report the Rev John Keddie (Bracadale, retired) drew the attention of the Assembly to the fact that there appeared to be no students from the Church coming in to the Seminary for the third year. Prayer was needed to the Lord of the harvest to raise up labourers amongst us.

The Rev Greg MacDonald (Cross) moved an addendum to the effect that the Committee investigate the possibility of some level of grant funding for divinity students and report with recommendations to the next Assembly. At present all support for students is by way of loans to be repaid and the concern was to provide some amelioration of possible student debt arising from their period of study. This addendum was supported by several speakers and was accepted by the Convener and his seconder.

Presentation to retiring Principal and the appointment of new Principal

Among the matters to be decided by the Assembly was the replacement for the Rev William Macleod who was retiring from the role of Principal from the end of the current session. Mr Macleod was thanked for his years of valued service and a suitable presentation was made to him in gratitude. The Assembly took up the matter of Mr Macleod's replacement as a result of which the Rev John Keddie, presently lecturer in Church History & Principles, was appointed to the position effective from the new session.

Admission of Trevor Kirkland and the congregation of Ballyclare & Doagh in Ulster

The Assembly considered an application from the Rev E Trevor Kirkland to be admitted as a minister of the Church. This came in to the Assembly with the support of the Southern Presbytery and the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee. Mr Kirkland had been a minister in Templepatrick, Ulster. He had been a convinced Baptist but had subsequently come to Presbyterian convictions, including the principles of purity of worship held by our Church. He felt that the Free Church (Continuing) was the body with which he was most comfortable and thus made his application. He had become increasingly well-known in our Church, not least through contacts in the annual School in Theology. His admission was unanimously accepted by the Assembly, as was the admission of his present congregation of Ballyclare & Doagh which had concurrently applied to be accepted as a congregation of the Church.

Mr Kirkland will be minister of the congregation under the Home & Foreign Missions Committee and he will be an assessor to the Southern Presbytery.

Report of the Home & Foreign Missions Committee (Rev Greg MacDonald (Cross))

In presenting the Report the Rev Greg MacDonald (Cross) commented on the developments in several areas:

1. Consideration was being given to a second Home Mission Worker.

2. Along with continuing support for Christian Witness to Israel further consideration was being given to our obligation for Jewish evangelism.

3. In Sri Lanka the support of Ceylon Christian Care allowed a charity support worker to be appointed as

Rev David Blunt addresses the Assembly

New Seminary Principal Rev J Keddie

Rev Andrew Allan

well as other developments.

4. In the forthcoming year there would be a doubling of the number of lecturers required for the teaching and training work with which the Church had become involved through the Hudson Taylor Ministries. The appointment of the Rev Andrew Allan (Partick, Glasgow) as UK Secretary for this organisation had strengthened our interests in that work.

5. Work was going on well in Covenant College, Zambia. It was decided to continue our support for Shanmugam Partheepan for another three years as our minister/missionary in Sri Lanka.

In seconding the report and deliverances the Rev Murdo Angus Macleod (Snizort) spoke of the Hudson Taylor Ministries, a Dutch/American venture to facilitate and finance the teaching of the Reformed Faith in China. The Lord had opened a wonderful door there.

St Louis, Missouri, becomes a fully sanctioned charge

It was encouraging that the Assembly acceded to a Petition from the Presbytery of the United States of America to raise the St Louis preaching station to a fully sanctioned charge.

Missionary delegates

One of the features of the Home & Foreign Missions slot at the Assembly is the opportunity to hear speakers from the various mission interests within the Church. At this Assembly there were four speakers:

1. Mike Moore (Christian Witness to Israel) spoke from thirty years experience in Jewish mission, a period of increasing encouragement.

2. Shanmugam Partheepan (Sri Lanka) gave a lively account of a brief three-year church-planting work for our Church in Vavuniya. So far there were three phases: start, difficulties and success in building. Parthee had begun with no congregation and now had a congregation of around 100, including 75 children and young people.

3. Andrew Allan (Covenant College, Zambia) spoke of his encouraging visit to Zambia in March/April and of the tireless on-going efforts of the Lachmans in the work at Covenant College.

4. Nearer to home Donald John Morrison (Home Mission Worker) gave an account of his work involving the widespread distribution of Christian literature, especially the annual Good News magazine. In his accustomed energetic and enthusiastic way he spoke of contacts made and some encouragements experienced. As always this was a spiritually stimulating session which heartened commissioners and public alike.

Report of the Home & Foreign Missions Committee (continued)

The Rev David Blunt (North Uist & Grimsay) put forward an amendment in relation to the need for another Home Mission Worker. The amendment instructed the Committee to consult with Scottish Presbyteries and liaise with the Finance & Sustentation Committee about the need and opportunity and affordability of such another worker. This amendment was accepted by the Assembly.

Of speakers to the Report, the Rev Raymond Kemp (Kilmuir & Stenscholl) felt the aim should be to plant a new congregation in Scotland. The Rev Richard Ross (Portree) encouraged the Committee to bring forward some proposals for our own Jewish mission work apart from continuing support of CWI. Christopher Reeder (Greenville, South Carolina) gave an update of the various congregations in America, some of them numerically small though there were some prospects of additional works.

Other speakers included Bert Pohl (Smiths Falls, Canada) speaking of his work in Smiths Falls, Andrew Allan providing an update on Hudson Taylor Ministries UK of which he was the General Secretary, Maurice Roberts referring to various contacts in different areas and opportunities lately for our men to be involved in Bridgeworld College, Nairobi, Kenya, and David Fraser who encouraged women's associations to support missionary works.

An excellent and encouraging evening all round.

Mike Moore (CWI)

Thursday, 22nd May

After the constitution of the Assembly and the agreeing of the Minutes of the previous day, the Trinitarian Bible Society representative, Paul Rowland, a well-known face at our Assemblies, addressed the Assembly on the work and witness of the Society.

Report of the Legal Advice & Property Committee (Rev David Fraser (Shettleston, Glasgow)

The burden of work engaged in by the Committee, Mr Fraser reported, was now very much less than hitherto on account of the cessation of any significant legal actions. However, there remained issues with disputed properties, though in many cases amicable agreements and satisfactory outcomes, in the circumstances, had been reached. There had been some interest in the Right of Continued Protest booklet. A study had also been prepared on Metrical Psalms in the Free Church of Scotland by Mr Maurice Grant with input from the Rev John Keddie.

Of speakers, Lindsay MacCallum (Kiltearn) spoke of the difficulties in Kiltearn over the status of funds expropriated by the part of the congregation which left to join the Free Church in 2010, and still unresolved. The Rev James Gracie (Edinburgh) spoke of the good relations between the two sides in Edinburgh and the happy outcome of a 50:50 share of the manse proceeds there.

One issue in the Report related to the position of the Church in relation to its claims since the division of 2000. To clarify this the following deliverance was accepted:

Declaration clarifying the position of the Church in its claims to being the 'Free Church of Scotland':

(1) The General Assembly reaffirm that they are the true bona fide successor of the Free Church of Scotland of 1843; and;

(2) The General Assembly hereby declare that legislation enacted by the Free Church of Scotland prior to 20th January, 2000 applies to the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in the same way as any legislation enacted by the said Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) after 20th January 2000.

Report of the General Trustees (John MacKenzie (Assynt))

At law Trustees are required by Churches in relation to legal transactions where property matters involve centrally-held properties. The present roll of Denominational Trustees is as follows.

Roll of General Trustees:
John N Gillies (Partick)
Maurice Grant (Edinburgh)
John MacKenzie (Assynt)
Donald Martin (Stornoway)
Alistair Mackintosh (Duthil-Dores)
Angus Shaw (Snizort)

The Trustees have increasingly been involved with transactions in the Church over congregational buildings where title-deeds will be held by them for the congregations until the full settlement of central loans over the properties.

Report of the Strategy Committee (Rev David Fraser (Shettleston))

The Strategy Committee was established with a view to the sharing amongst Conveners of Committees of various matters of interest or concern to other Committees so that problems may be identified early and settled efficiently. It was evident that views of what the Committee was intended to achieve varied, with some expecting this Committee to propose Church

Moderator greets the Partheepans

strategies for the building up of our Church. That, however, was never its remit. The discussion on this Report and an Overture from the Southern Presbytery

Paul Rowland (TBS)

recommending a 'Strategy Forum' (presented by the Rev James Gracie) clearly revealed a conflict between the former remit of the Strategy Committee and a desire

Mairi Woods (Beauly), David Keddie (Shettleston) and James Haram (Ayr)

for a Church-wide 'strategy' to encourage best use of resources and the strengthening of the cause of Christ throughout our Church. In the end the Assembly agreed to 'appoint a Special Committee anent Strategic Review to consult with all Presbyteries and Standing and Special Committees of Assembly so as to co-ordinate and document their vision and views on the future requirements of the Church within their own bounds and sphere of responsibility, the Committee to report progress to the 2015 General Assembly and submit a final report to the 2016 General Assembly'. The Committee will comprise a minister and elder from each Scottish Presbytery with the Principal Clerk and General Treasurer as advisers, with the Rev Timothy McGlynn (Aberdeen) as Convener.

An addendum moved by the Rev James Gracie (Edinburgh) which commended the continuing use of the King James Version in public worship services according to current practice was accepted by the Assembly. Some commissioners, while happily using the King James Version themselves, were unhappy at even a small step being taken to a position which would for ever bind the Church to one translation of the Scriptures. Some maintained that a recommendation based on 'current practice' was not actually a biblical statement but one based simply on tradition. For such reasons a number of the brethren dissented from the statement as it stood.

Deceased ministers and elders

Among the formalities which arise towards the end of the Assembly is the Report of the Committee preparing a Minute anent Deceased Ministers and Elders. In the year since the last Assembly the passing to their reward of three ministers – the Rev Allan I M Maciver, the Rev Hugh M Ferrier, and the Rev Ronald MacKenzie – was noted, together with that of five elders: Donald Mackay (Partick), Donald Fraser (Duthil-Dores), Duncan McAlisterr (Arran), Ian Fraser (North Uist & Grimsay) and Murdo Macleod (Scalpay).

After a vote of thanks expressed by Mr Donald Robertson (Lochalsh & Strath), the appointment of the next Assembly, Lord willing, for Monday, 18th May, 2015, and the final agreement of the minutes, the General Assembly closed with the singing of Psalm 122 and the Apostolic Benediction. So went into history the General Assembly of 2014.

Catering team thanked

What Would John Knox Have To Say To Us Today?

An address by Rev John J Murray to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) on Tuesday 20 May 2014

We are commemorating this evening the quincentenary of the birth of John Knox. We are doing it in a nation that has airbrushed him out of history. We are doing it in a church situation where people have long forgotten what Knox and the Reformation was all about. We are doing it in a Reformed context where there has been a significant shift in the attitude taken by ministers and others to the Pope and the Roman Catholic system. I could spend ages describing to you the tragic condition of church and nation in our day but you know it too well and I want to get on with the subject in hand: What would John Knox have to say to us today? I mention seven things and it is not a comprehensive presentation.

1. Where is your thankfulness for the glorious Reformation?

Less than two centuries after the Reformation Ralph Erskine complained :

'Where is the man that remembers duly the great deliverance that God gave to Scotland at the first plantation of the Gospel when He paid such an early visit to us when we were nothing but a pack of blind pagans, when we were worshipping nothing but stocks and stones and devils? Where is the man that remembers the great deliverance He wrought for us at the glorious Reformation, when He threw down the bulwarks of Popery, so many ages after He demolished the bulwarks of paganism? Where is the man that remembers the merciful deliverance wrought for us at the Revolution?

'Oh! ungrateful Scotland! How have we forgotten our solemn covenanted allegiance to our glorious Deliverer. This forgetfulness is the mother of apostasy. If we forget our duty we forsake our duty; if we forget God, we forsake God and depart from Him. This forgetfulness provokes God: and when the city forgets what He hath done for it, this provokes God to do no more for the city. It provokes God instead of works of deliverance and mercy, to work some work of judgment and to perform a strange work'.

In 1557 a group of Protestant nobles, with the guidance of John Knox, entered into a covenant to make Scotland a Protestant nation. In the mercy of God this came about in August 1560. It is mainly to John Knox under God that we owe the deliverance. In 1560 Knox led a great service of thanksgiving for the merciful deliverance. In 2010 there was a conference in Edinburgh organised by the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholics and opened by Alex Salmond to commemorate (so-called) the Reformation. It was simply undermining the principles of the Reformation and that is what the current outlook in church and state is busy doing.

2 Where is your sense of the majesty and glory of God?

The realisation of the glory and majesty of God shaped the lives of John Calvin and John Knox. They lived coram deo (in the presence of God). Calvin recovered and embodied a passion for the absolute reality and majesty of God. Knox 'cared supremely about the glory of God in Christ being worked into the very warp and woof of Scotland, which for Knox began in the heart of every man, woman and child'. It was this relentless orientation towards the glory of God that gave coherence to their lives and to the Reformed movements they inspired.

Says David Wells: 'It is this God, majestic and holy in His being, this God whose love knows no bounds because His holiness knows no limits, who has disappeared from the modern evangelical world'. The displacing of God from the centre of the professing Christian Church has been going on for more than a century. Out of this has come a Christianity harmonised with the religious aspirations of man and giving the glory to man. It is centred in man and his need of salvation. To quote David Wells again: 'The centrality of God is disappearing. God comes now to rest lightly and inconsequentially upon the church'. Where the centre shifts from God everything begins to shift everywhere.

3 Where is your zeal for the honour of God?

It was zeal for the honour of God that led Knox into confrontation. He says in his History of the Reformation: 'Thus did light and darkness strive within the realm of

Scotland; the darkness ever before the world suppressing the light, from the death of that notable servant of God, Master Patrick Hamilton, unto the death of Edward Sixth that most godly and most virtuous King that hath been known to have reigned in England or elsewhere.… Satan intended nothing less than that the light of Jesus Christ should have been utterly extinguished within the whole Isle of Britain (but the persecution under Mary scattered the Reformers, some to Scotland). Last came John Knox, in the end of harvest, in the year of God 1555'. The whole conflict of the Reformation was as Knox constantly affirmed 'a battle against the rage of Satan'. The Reformers began with the problem that had caused the Babylonian captivity. They were confrontational against error, false prophets and teachers. Knox took his stand against error. He risked everything for the sake of principles.

Knox would consider peaceful co-existence with a false religion inconceivable. Where a church is overtaken by unbelief and error there must be militancy. Truth carries with it confrontation. The conflict between light and darkness must go on. The church that ceases to be militant ceases to be the church. Horatius Bonar said in 1883: 'Fellowship between faith and unbelief must sooner or later be fatal to the former'. Union with unbelief was fatal in the Scottish church in the latter years of the 19th century. It was again so in the latter years of the 20th century. The Church of Scotland had a strong body of evangelicals in the 1970s and 1980s but ministers failed to fight against heresy in the church courts; as Rev Ian Hamilton confessed, 'we were too pragmatic, too unbiblical'. The cause was lost and worse errors have come in as a judgment on that church. The evangelical 'remnant' are being fragmented into various groupings with some fleeing to a Free Church of Scotland which seems to be on the downgrade.

John Calvin said 'A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent'. We are likely to be criticised as negative. This was true before. As has been pointed out recently, 'J Gresham Machen's engagement in the debates of his day points us to the value and necessity of controversy, as well as the inevitability and pain of criticism, even from our brothers. His colleague, Charles Erdman, publicly accused Machen of "unkindness, suspicion, bitterness and intolerance". When he voted against a church resolution in favour of the national Prohibition and the 18th Amendment, he was criticised as a secret drunkard and promoter of vice. Since he was single, he was criticised as being naive and unaware of the responsibilities of the family'.

4 Where is your aversion to Rome?

Romanism, said Calvin, 'destroyed the glory of Christ in many ways - by calling upon the saints to intercede, when Christ is the one Mediator between God and man; by adoring the Blessed Virgin, when Christ alone shall be adored; by offering a continual sacrifice in the Mass, when the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross is complete and sufficient'. Knox believed that 'the Mass is abominable idolatry, blasphemous to the death of Christ and a profanation of the Lord's Supper'. He regarded the Roman system as not only idolatrous and but also destructive of men's souls. He passionately hated that which destroys souls. He hated the system which blinded people to the necessity of faith and salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ. He stated that one Mass 'was more powerful to him than if ten thousand armed enemies were landed in any part of the Realm, of the purpose to suppress the whole of religion'.

The constant reference to the Old Testament prophets in Knox's preaching and writing was not a coincidence. Knox saw clear parallels between the spiritual adultery of Israel and that of his own time, so it was a small step to conclude that the same punishments would follow in his day as had occurred then. Those who attended Mass could expect to be rebuked by God through sufferings and persecution. Knox's view of history was that 'false worship had always led, could only lead, to one end: the destruction of the nation that practised it'. The celebration of the Mass was totally abolished in Scotland in August 1560. Our Free Church forefathers took the Knox and the Confessional view on the Mass as blasphemous and the Pope as the Antichrist. Alas what a change has come about! So-called Reformed men in the Free Church and elsewhere are quite happy to hold ecumenical services with Roman Catholic priests.

David Robertson of Dundee in an interview on BBC radio Scotland on 16 September 2010 said that he welcomed the Pope (Benedict) as a fellow Christian:

'I would disagree with the Pope about many things. I would disagree about it being a state visit. I would disagree on condoms and so on but I would like to welcome him to Scotland. I think the Pope himself is an intelligent, thoughtful man. I think he is right about secularism. I think most of all the Pope is right about Christ. Owen Dudley Edwards earlier this morning commented about the Free Church and the Pope's book on Jesus and I think it is one of the best books on Jesus that I have ever read, so I would like to welcome him as a fellow Christian. Personally I would love to meet him and hear him. I feel perfectly free to disagree with many things that he stands for and says but overall I think it is a good thing that he is here'.

A studio guest that morning responded, 'Isn't that amazing, John? That is a Free Church of Scotland minister. This could not have happened thirty or forty years ago. The Free Church would have come down on him like a ton of bricks. Thank you David for what you said because this is the voice of reason'.

5 Where is your priority of preaching?

John Knox was above everything a preacher of God's Word. He constantly referred to his preaching as 'blowing the Master's trumpet'. He could say: 'Without the preaching place I think few would have occasion to be offended at me; and there I am not master of myself, but must obey Him who commands me to speak plain and to flatter no flesh on the face of the earth'. It would be true to say that Knox's Bible-centred and Spirit-filled preaching proved to be the critical turning points in the course of the Reformation in Scotland.

Knox's first Sermon 1547 in St Andrews on Daniel 7.24-25 struck at the very roots of the Papacy and introduced the twin objectives that would mark Knox's preaching for the rest of his life He would rail against tyrants - ecclesiastical and political - who set themselves against the Most High and he would tenderly call lost sinners to repentance and faith in Christ.

Sermon 11th May 1559 Perth was 'vehement against idolatry' and had the effect of rallying Protestant sympathisers to break the yoke of Roman tyranny. Statues of Mary and the saints were toppled and crushed into rubble. Perth was the place where Cardinal Beaton had hanged four men for breaking Lent and had executed a young mother by drowning for praying in Jesus' name instead of Mary's.

Sermon 11th June 1559 in St Andrews on Christ cleansing the temple in Jerusalem. The thrust was that the church must throw off all vestiges of the old Roman religion. The Provost agreed to set up Reformed worship in the town, and no less than twenty-one priests made renunciation of the old faith and profession of the new.

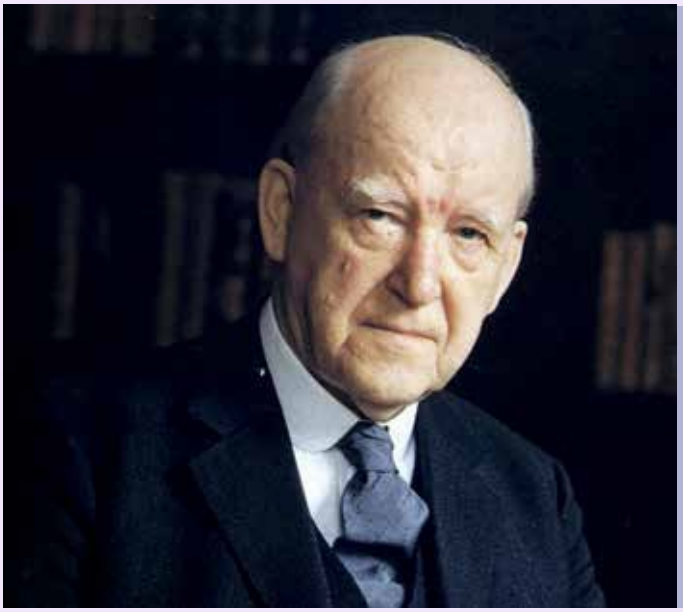
Sermon 8th November 1559 in Stirling on Psalm 80.4-6 when after a breakdown of morale in the Congregation he showed the need of complete dependence on God for victory. This became one of the great turning points in the history of the Scottish Reformation.

Sermons in the summer of 1560 in St Giles on the Prophecy of Haggai summoning all men to help in the rebuilding of God's temple. This was in the weeks when members were assembling for the meeting of Parliament that would repudiate the Pope's authority, abolish the celebration of the Mass and agree on a Confession of Faith.

No wonder Lord Thomas Randolph wrote to Sir William Cecil: 'I assure you the voice of one man is able in one hour to put more life in us than five hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears'. Dr Lloyd-Jones in his address in the Usher Hall at the Quater Centenary of the Reformation in 1960 said of the preaching of Knox: 'It was prophetic preaching, not priestly preaching. What we have today is what I would call priestly. Very nice, very ornate, sentences turned beautifully, prepared carefully. That is not prophetic preaching! No, what is needed is authority! Do you think that John Knox could make Mary, Queen of Scots tremble with some polished little essay?'

The crying need is for preaching to be restored to its pre-eminence again in our churches. Back in 1911 Archibald MacNeilage, editor of the Monthly Record, was bemoaning the backsliding in the Free Church since the stand of 1900:

'The future of the Free Church depends on her being given a Gospel ministry divinely called and divinely commissioned'. This was conceived as far more important than any benefits received from the House of Lords' decision. 'Man-sent messengers ruined the Free Church and the sure token of a divine gracious return will be the appearance among us of a Spirit-baptised ministry'. 'May a layman appeal to the ministry of the Free Church to magnify their office. The ministers who give their strength to pulpit preparation and pulpit ministration are the ministers who live in the memories of men and the ministers whose work has a measure of permanency in



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the lives of men!' In the same year Principal J D McCulloch in his address at the opening of the Free Church College spoke on 'The Church and Social Work' and said 'the social reform which was then being emphasised in so many churches as the best means of elevating the masses was no substitute at all for the preaching whereby man himself is changed'.

History is repeating itself. The pulpit is giving way to the lectern and the overhead. There has been a dumbing down of preaching. The minister as the preacher of the Word is disappearing. There is the 'preaching team', with men (who may not have signed the Formula), youth workers and administrators. There is the desire to make ministerial training more academic but Colleges are not producing preachers. David Wells says: 'If the spirit of Puritanism was best represented graphically by a preacher in an elevated pulpit, the arm raised in vigorous punctuation upon the truth of God, that of modern evangelicalism is probably best represented today by the ubiquitous happy face, a bright smile beckoning a smile in return. It wishes not to appear disagreeable'. Baxter put it in this way: 'All churches either rise or fall as the ministry doth rise or fall (not in riches or worldly grandeur) but in knowledge, zeal and ability for their work'.

6 Where is your spirit of repentance?

There are very few in our land who seem to want to discover what lies at the heart of the problem in the church. The real problem is the frown of God. God has departed from us. His Holy Spirit is withdrawn. Away back in the 1950s Iain Murray summed up the situation; 'Our witness was simple, but we were convinced it was true and urgent, so we spoke plainly: the ills of our land and the spiritual poverty of the church arose from the fact that we have offended God and that He has a controversy with us. Our problem is not in empty churches nor in indifferent multitudes but in our own disobedience to the Word of God. We have diluted the gospel by turning it into a man-centred message and we have ceased to make the Scripture the rule of all our practice. In short before everything else, we need to clear out of our lives and out of our pulpits and out of our churches all the things that have caused God to depart from us'.

There has to be a change of mood. We must discover where the problem lies. Let us humble ourselves before God. Knox reasoned thus: 'In our God there is strength to resist and confound multitudes … but when we join hands with idolatry, it is no doubt that God's amiable presence and comfortable defence leaveth us, and what shall become of us? Put away the idolatry. Let us come to an end of trusting in man and the arm of the flesh. Cease from man'. Prof John Murray asks: 'What is the strength of the church of God? History has demonstrated how ineffective the church becomes when it relies upon its own resources of wisdom and power. The strength of the church is in the realisation of its own impotence'. We need a recovery of the manifestation of the glory of God in His church. John Owen said: 'I believe truly that when God has accomplished some end upon us and has stained the glory of all flesh, He will renew the power and glory of religion among us again, even in this nation'.

7 Where is your unity in the truth?

Knox would deplore the proliferation of Presbyterian Churches in Scotland today. We are one of the many and we must plead a measure of guilt. We are regarded as schismatics. We identify with the words of Acts 28.22: 'We know that everywhere it is spoken against'. We are considered to be irrelevant. Yet let me dare say that in our testimony lies the secret of the uniting of the Reformed Church in Scotland. We can be united around concern for the glory of God and the restoration of the true Reformed church of God as it was envisaged by Knox and as it flowered in the 1640s. Some are calling the church to move forward and inviting others to join them. The desire is to be contemporary and to be accepted. History will show that there was an unhealthy change in the Free Church in the 1980s and 1990s. We are calling the church to move back, to re-discover its roots. It has been said that 'To destroy a people you must first sever their roots'. The Reformers moved back to Augustine and Paul to restore the true church in their day. We must rediscover the eternal truth which is always relevant and always contemporary.

What can we do to reverse the trend? We are a remnant but if God is with us who knows but we will yet see a turn of the tide? David Wells speaks of the stream of historic orthodoxy that is now dammed up with worldliness. Let us unblock that stream. Through Luther God kindled that fire which all the world shall not be able to quench. Knox had that fire and it can burn again in our hearts and ministries. We are not here to praise John Knox so much as to exalt the God of John Knox. As Dr Lloyd-Jones cried in 1960, 'Where is the God of John Knox?' We re-iterate that cry today. Honour me, Knox would say, by honouring my God. Where is the God of John Knox? How we need that God to come in a mighty revival as he did at the Reformation. Says Doug McLachlan: 'The concern for revival, its central burden and most impassioned possession is the restoration of God's name to the exalted position which it deserves in our lives and culture. In revival there is no room for self-centred motivation, only hunger for divine exaltation'.

John Knox said, 'Whatsoever shall become of us and of our mortal carcasses, I doubt not but that this cause, in despite of Satan, shall prevail in the realm; for as it is the eternal truth of the Eternal God, so shall it once prevail, howsoever for a time it be impugned'.

Books

Finding Peace With God

Maurice Roberts
Banner of Truth Trust,
bklt, 43pp, £2.00

Big things sometimes come in small packages. Finding Peace With God by Rev Maurice Roberts is a good example of this. It is a booklet of just 43 pages but it addresses a momentous subject, an issue the author rightly calls 'the most important thing in life' – a right relationship with God.

He begins by opening up the importance of the question and introduces the reader to the key Biblical doctrine of Justification. Common false views are then discussed: Can our good works merit it? Can the church secure our acceptance with God? These are impossible because God requires perfect righteousness from sinners that they cannot give either individually or collectively. There is no hope for sinners apart from God's plan and provision. God sent His Son in our flesh, to live a life of perfect righteousness and to take the guilt of sin in His own death. The author echoes the simplicity of Scripture itself: 'The great Gospel is just this: that what we could not do to make ourselves acceptable to God, Christ has done this by living and dying for us'.

Having established the ground of Justification in Christ's work, attention is paid to the means by which sinners are justified. Again the answer is clear – by faith, without the deeds of the law. If the merit is Christ's alone, the means is faith alone which is the doctrine recovered by Martin Luther at the Reformation. The author then shows that Luther's epiphany was not of something new, but a truth that had been buried by tradition in the Middle Ages. He goes back further however to find the same truth asserted by the Early Church Fathers before going on to address the old error of the Roman Church (which confuses Justification with Sanctification and makes Baptism the instrument of the former) and the more recent error of the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul'. The penultimate section reviews the classic statement of the Westminster Confession of Faith on Justification which brings all the Scriptural elements together and this is followed with a final word linking the beginning of our salvation in Justification to its certain end in Glorification.

The church can never be too careful when it comes to the doctrine of Justification. If she is wrong here it does not matter what else she gets right; men will be eternally ruined. There are many theological and detailed defences of the Biblical doctrine of Justification we might wish were more widely read, but in an age when such works intimidate many Christians, this book and others like it serve a vital need in the church. It is simple and Scriptural and at the same time informative, evangelical and pastoral. The author does not merely aim to instruct the mind but to draw men to embrace the Christ in whose work alone sinners can be justified. There is indeed no greater issue in this life than to be freely justified by God's grace in Christ and this small package opens up and confirms this momentous truth. We commend it to all.

Rev Gavin Beers

Daily Prayer and Praise

Henry Law
Banner of Truth Trust, pbk,
2 vols, 304pp & 384pp, £12.00

These two volumes were written by a man who in the 18th century was an influential figure in the evangelical party in the Church of England. He has taken the book of Psalms and arranged them for daily reading so that every verse of every psalm is commented on; some individually and other times two or three verses together. This is a delightful read and Law seems to have an understanding of the

Psalms that in many ways is comparable to Spurgeon and his Treasury of David, although he does not comment as much as the great Baptist does.

As a flavour of what these volumes contain we read of Psalm 9:1-2, 'Heaven is unwearied praise. Earth would be heaven begun, if our whole hearts were wholly tuned to praise'. Of Psalm 22:1 we read, ' From desertion's lowest depth faith cried, My God, my God'. Of David's agony in repentance in the 51st psalm verse 15 he comments, 'When the grace of praise is freely poured into the heart, the power to give utterance must still be added. A channel must be opened for the stream to flow'. On Psalm 102:23-24, he states, 'To trust in self is to lean on emptiness'. Of the 'brook' in Psalm 110 referring to Christ's 'all glorious work', he declares, 'What brook can more invigorate the thirsty traveller. Streams of reviving joy are flowing by our side. The invitation has gone forth, Drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved'. On Psalm 118: 21f where the psalmist is aware at that time of not being given over to death, yet that the Lord would chasten him, Law comments, 'We are warned that, although our feet stand on the rock of salvation, we are not beyond the reach of trials'.

There is much more of similar sentiments in this excellent work which will have the reader drawn nearer to Christ and this reviewer highly recommends these volumes, not just for private daily reading but also, as the subtitle suggests, for 'Family Use'.

Rev Kenneth Macdonald

A God-centred Vision for Church and Nation

John J Murray

Scottish Reformation Society, pbk, 40pp, £3.00

This excellent little book was written to celebrate our debt to John Knox on the quincentenary of his birth. Rather than give a brief biography it deals in a challenging way with Knox's vision which should be ours today. The decadent times in which he lived are described and the influences which shaped him. His vision was for the glory of God. In submission to the supremacy of the Scriptures he sought to establish a Reformed Church, universal education and a nation ruled according to God's law. Mr Murray asserts that today we need to recover the glory of God as our chief goal, bow before the supremacy of the Word of God and strive to reform the church, recover Christian education and recover the kingship of Christ over our nation. Mr Murray concludes: 'Thank God that the fire that Luther kindled, and that then continued to burn in the hearts of Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart and John Knox, has not been entirely extinguished. May that fire be fanned once again into a great flame in our hearts and churches!

Rev William Macleod

A Lily from God's Garden

Memorials of Alexander John MacDonald

A MacKenzie

bklt, available from Mr William Murray, Lonemore, Dornoch, Sutherland IV25 3RW

Alexander MacDonald (1917-1941) was born and brought up in Bettyhill, Sutherland where his father was an elder in the congregation of the Free Church of Scotland. From very early life he gave evidence of true piety and of a keen intellect. He kept a diary in which he records the depth and extent of his reading. He was particularly fond of the Puritans. He studied at Edinburgh University where he graduated MA, with honours. In his final year he felt the call to the ministry and was accepted as a divinity student of the Free Church.

He combined with his studies visitation in the Edinburgh slums and supply preaching in the congregations of the Free Church, particularly in his native Sutherland. Having a rather weak constitution by nature, studies and preaching took a toll on his health and after a time in hospital he was brought home by his mother, who tenderly nursed him before he passed on to glory at the age of 24. There is an undoubted fragrance to the fragments of his letters, diary and sermons found in this little volume.

Rev John J Murray

Power in the Pulpit

Henry C Fish

Banner of Truth Trust, bklt, 30pp, £1.50

The best eras of the Christian Church have been characterised by great preaching. It was the means used by God in the early church, at the Reformation, in the Puritan Era and in the great revivals. But it was not any kind of preaching; it was preaching in demonstration of the Spirit and ofpower. The restoration of such preaching is a crying need of our day. Henry C Fish (1820-77) was a pastor in Newark, New Jersey and author of Handbook of Revivals. The object in this booklet is to ascertain, in its human aspect, what are the conditions of power in the pulpit and in so doing he deals with the matter of the sermon, the manner in which it was delivered and the character of the preacher. It is a challenge to all preachers.

Rev John J Murray

Growing up God's Way for Boys

Dr Chris Richards and Dr Liz Jones

Evangelical Press, pbk, 76pp, £7.99

Growing up God's Way for Girls

Dr Chris Richards and Dr Liz Jones

Evangelical Press, pbk, 78pp, £7.99

Many parents do not find it easy to talk to their children about the 'facts of life'. There is a huge emphasis today on sex education and a vast amount of literature which deals with the subject in a way which simply promotes immorality and the fallacy of 'safe sex'. Here are two books, one written specifically for boys and the other for girls, which deal in a sensitive and Biblical way with such matters as body changes at puberty, physical intimacy, marriage and the conception of babies. They are thoroughly biblical, promote Christian morality and give sufficient detail and not too much. The books can either be read by children (the print is large) or by parents to their children. I would highly recommend them.

Rev William Macleod

News

Murdo Macdonald, Rev Andrew Allan and Alasdair Mackenzie

Aultbea Presentation

Rev Andrew Allan

Around two dozen people gathered at Bualnaluib School, Aultbea, on Thursday 17th April, to formally say farewell to the Rev Andrew R Allan, who has been minister of the Poolewe & Aultbea Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) for the past five and a half years. Mr Allan had accepted a call to the Partick congregation and was inducted into his new charge on Saturday 3rd May.

The evening began when elder Mr Murdo MacDonald welcomed all present. Then followed the singing of Psalm 116:1-8, after which the Rev A James MacInnes, Lochalsh & Strath, who has been appointed the congregation's Interim Moderator, led in prayer. Elder Mr Alasdair MacKenzie read from Exodus 14:1-18 and brought encouraging words applicable to the congregation and departing minister from verse 15, where the Lord told the people of Israel to go forward and trust in the Lord despite their outward difficulties. Psalm 84:6-12

Desk

was sung and Resident Lay Agent Mr Donald Robertson, Kyleakin, closed the formal part of the evening in prayer and gave thanks for the refreshments provided.

After enjoying a sumptuous tea Mr MacKenzie presented a framed photograph of Aultbea, taken by local man Donald MacKenzie (the Post) and a handsome cheque to Mr Allan; Mr MacKenzie's wife Moira presented the minister's wife Debbie with a gift token and church member Mrs Katie Wiseman presented the Allans' daughter Katie with a gift to remind her of her stay in Aultbea.

Mr Allan thanked all for coming and for their generosity. He said: 'Some people might think it was an easy decision to leave a small rural congregation and become the pastor of a congregation in a large city, but it was not easy. It would be easy to remain in Aultbea and carry on my ministry here, but ultimately I believe the Lord has called me to a new sphere of work. All my life has been in the Highlands and to move to Glasgow and work there will be a major upheaval for me'.

The evening drew to a close with the singing of Psalm 133 and the Benediction.

Mr Allan formally concluded his ministry in Aultbea when he preached at both services on 20th April.

Britain's only Christian Fostering and Adoption Agency

Christian Institute

A Christian fostering and adoption agency have revealed plans to expand their services across the UK, despite facing closure a few years ago over their pro-marriage stance.

In 2008, Cornerstone Fostering and Adoption Agency came under scrutiny after new equality legislation came into force. They were subjected to investigation over their long-standing policy of only placing children with committed Christian married couples.

General Manager Pam Birtle describes how her time spent in care as a teenager inspired her to start the organisation and is shaping the vision for the future. Cornerstone say it was only with the support of the Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund that they have been able to continue their crucial work. They successfully defended their Christian ethos and are now seeking to expand their work across Britain.

With a distinctive approach, known as Forever Families, Cornerstone encourage carers to eventually adopt the children placed in their home and provide a permanent family for each child. We think that Cornerstone have taken a great Christian stand and we would commend them to you for your support.

In the UK, around 10,000 children are in need of foster families at any one time. Cornerstone seek to meet this demand by building a network of families who can provide a loving, Christian environment for these children to grow up in.

School in Theology

Rev Andrew Allan

The 62nd Free Church School in Theology takes place from 15th to 18th September 2014 (DV) at Carronvale House, Larbert. The 2014 speakers and subjects have now been set and include Dr Donald John MacLean, 'Calvin & Knox, A Comparison & Contrast', Rev E Trevor Kirkland, 'The Baptism of the Spirit – exegetically and theologically considered', Rev A James MacInnes, 'Theological Themes in Hebrews', Rev David Silversides, 'The Theology of Worship', Rev John J Murray, 'Biblical Attitude to Heretics in Churches', Rev Gavin Beers, 'Christophanies in the Old Testament', and Rev Richard Brooks, 'The Minister as a Man of God'. Also in the programme are daily devotionals, a Missionary spot when Victor Atallah of Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) is expected to speak and book reviews.

The school has a reputation of being a relaxed and informal gathering where men gather from all over the UK and beyond to enjoy a time of fellowship around the Word of God in a delightful and congenial location. It is open to ministers, elders and interested laymen from our own church and beyond our borders.

Bookings can be made online by visiting the School's website www.schoolintheology.org.uk and following the instructions. Alternatively, a Booking Form may be downloaded from the site or obtained from the

Secretary, Rev Andrew R Allan, 23 Kingfisher Drive, Glasgow, , G13 4QA, Tel: 0141 328 1707, secretary@schoolintheology.org.uk and returned to the Secretary to book your place.

Due to circumstances beyond the Committee's control this year's school is a week later than normal. However the date of the 2015 School has been set to 7th to 10th September 2015 (DV) reverting to our normal pattern.

Recent Election Results

Andrea Williams, Christian Concern

Thank you to everyone who contacted candidates in the European Elections. Such action meant that the candidates realised there was a strong Christian constituency who cared deeply about life, family and freedom. Thank you also to those who have sent us the responses from various candidates. We will be able to analyse this data and gather intelligence which will greatly assist us in mounting future political campaigns.

In the past weeks the political landscape has been shaken up. My view is that it is to do with something much more than European political integration or immigration. Christians and those that sympathise with Christian values have been taken for granted, disenfranchised and they have sought to let the establishment know. From the Liberal Democrats - increasingly appearing a spent force - to the lacklustre showing for Labour, not one of the three established Parties emerged with any positives. Indeed, Conservative central office must be asking: 'What next?' Mr Cameron has led his Party, and hence the country, into the governing 'world social liberal elite'. From eliminating safeguards on abortion, to redefining marriage, to failing to defend the freedom for Christians to manifest their faith in public and the workplace. He has seriously damaged his Party and our country and yet failed to convince the electorate of his cause. As for UKIP, it too will need to listen to the people on life, family and freedom. It cannot take the Christian vote for granted. Sadly, over the decades our Christian political parties have yet to make an effective impact on the electoral landscape. We are urged to pray for those that govern us. So must we pray. We have been asked to be salt and light in a world without taste and living in darkness. So must we love and serve whilst giving clear warning of the long-term consequences of abandoning God's truth and statutes on our brothers and sisters - the nation's citizens. What do we pray? For God to act. For Jesus Christ and His Truth to be put back at the heart of public life. For wisdom to know how that translates into the General Election in 2015.

Seminary Closing

Rev William Macleod

The closing public lecture at the Free Church Seminary was given by Rev John Morrison who spoke on 'Providence'. It was a most helpful and interesting lecture, delivered with his usual enthusiasm.

Mr Calum Smith

Mr Calum Smith, following his four years' study, graduated with a Diploma in Theology. He also received the Margaret MacLeod Memorial Prize awarded to the best final year student.

Rev William Macleod who retired from the Seminary having been Principal since the Seminary began in 2003 was given several presentations. The students presented him with a beautiful clock and picture; the staff gave him a valuable set of Wilhelmus À Brakel's The Christian's Reasonable Service, and the Church as a whole gave him a generous cheque which along with that given to him at the Assembly has allowed him to buy a new iMac computer to replace his ancient eMac.

Rev W Macleod receives presentation from Rev J Keddie

As editor I would like to thank the Church warmly for their generous gifts and tokens of love.

Work in Spain

Rev W B Scott

The Rev Dr Jorge Ruiz from Northern Spain spoke at the Assembly. He has three little congregations, one in Bilbao, one in the north of Barcelona and one in Miranda de Ebro. The Bilbao section of the congregation moved into new premises on the first Lord's Day in June. On Saturday the 28th of June they held the first baptisms in Terrassa, North of Barcelona, some six hours drive from where Pastor Ruiz lives in Miranda. The work has been supported by the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. Now that our brother is on his own he must register the congregation as a new church to comply

with Spanish law. A new legal constitution has been compiled from the Confession of Faith and from our own Blue Book which sets out the practice of our Church. This has involved considerable work. The other two ministers of the denomination he belonged to have separated themselves from him because of his stand for the full Westminster Confession of Faith. They cannot agree to exclusive Psalm-singing without instruments.

The Scotts left on Wednesday 4th June with two very large and heavy boxes of good books in Spanish which have been kindly and thoughtfully gifted by the Banner of Truth to be distributed to pastors and students for the ministry. These books printed by the Banner include such authors as JC Ryle, Hodge, M'Cheyne and Gurnall. Their trip has taken them to Spain via France where they continue to visit small groups, and indeed individuals, seeking to encourage them in the Lord.

Support for Reformed Spain

Dr Ruiz needs support for himself, his family, for this Reformed work in Spain and for the online one-man seminary which he runs to train Spanish-speaking men for the ministry. He has students in Spain and in several Latin American countries. He support which he has received from the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster will stop at the end of July. A few have agreed to covenant to give monthly by standing order and others as a one off gift. A committee has been formed which includes Rev Harry Woods (Chairman), Rev John MacLeod, Shawbost, Rev Raymond Kemp, Rev James MacInnes along with several elders and Mrs Donna Morrison (Treasurer), Mrs Isobel Scott and Rev Bill Scott (Secretary).

If you would like to support Dr Ruiz and his ministry, the bank account details are as follows:

Bank.....Bank of Scotland
Branch sort code.....80-22-60
Account Number.....12432867
Account Title.....Support for Reformed Spain

Dr Ruiz who is organising a small conference in August to bring the scattered congregation together under one roof, from a Friday until a Monday. Rev Harry Woods and Mr Scott hope to attend.

By The Still Waters CD

Rev W B Scott

Within a very short time of this helpful, instructive and encouraging CD falling on the mat courtesy of Royal Mail, we were listening with avid attention and heartfelt gratitude to our Lord for it, and for the young folks of Scalpay and their many friends for their zeal and love to their Saviour in seeing this project through to fulfilment. The CD carries 9 Psalms sung in the Community Hall, Scalpay (6 in English and 3 in Gaelic) and 8 Hymns sung by soloists and small groups (4 in English and 3 in Gaelic) with a paraphrased version of Psalm 23 in English. The recording is of a high standard.

The singing of the Psalms is thoughtful and reverent. Those in English betray their Gaelic background in that in most of them, but not in all, the congregation, so used to their precentor giving out the line, come in after the beginning of each verse. But that is looking hard for a negative voice. The words are distinct and clear in each, and we can only presume the same in the Gaelic singing which to our non-Gaelic ear still brought us to a deep sense of awe and worship of our God. In these portions of 9 Psalms with carefully chosen tunes we are left in no doubt that we are listening to the Word of God.

There is a lovely freedom in the singing of these well-known and well-loved hymns which is difficult to bring out in the recorded singing of a congregation. They are so beautifully sung with great sensitivity to the words, both in Gaelic and English, and we are thankful for them being expressed in this way by these young voices. And yes, the best was kept to the last.

What a great gift to obtain for any shut-in person, old folks' home, a friend who may or may not profess Christ, or just to listen to yourself. But don't just listen, think hard and prayerfully on what is said of our great God and Saviour. I'm sure that is the heart wish of those who worked so hard to complete it.

The CD can be obtained from Rev K Macdonald, 3 Ardnakille, Scalpay, Harris, HS4 3YB. Cost £10.00 (including postage), profits to Barnabas Fund.

Scottish Independence

Rev David Blunt

The General Assembly welcomed the Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee's examination of the Scottish Government's proposals for Scottish independence and commended this work to our people and the Christian public in general. They instructed the Publications Committee to place the text on the Church website and also to make it available in a suitable printed form for wider circulation.

The text is being printed as an A5 booklet of 76 pages. Copies of the booklet may be ordered from Mr Bill McQueer (tel: 01808 521474 or email bill@mcqueer.com). The price is £3.00 per copy for 1-9 copies and 2.50 per copy for 10 or more copies: postage and packing are included in the price. A free copy of the booklet will be sent to ministers and congregational correspondents to enable them to publicise it in their congregations as they see fit.

Congregational Remittances - May 2014

	CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2014	ORDINARY REMITTANCES 2014 May	2014 To May	2013 To May
Presbytery of Inverness				
Aberdeen	0	1300	9527	7949
Duthil-Dores	0	1368	11487	10948
Inverness	0	2000	10570	10000
Kilmorack	0	1400	10285	7212
Total Inverness	**0**	**6068**	**41869**	**36109**
Northern Presbytery				
Assynt & Scourie	166	1499	3045	673
Brora	20	0	6457	8808
Kiltearn	123	1000	3715	2622
Tarbat	0	0	6191	3913
Total Northern	**309**	**2499**	**19408**	**16016**
Southern Presbytery				
Arran	386	1063	4520	4214
Ayr	0	1000	4560	4998
Dumfries	0	0	0	0
Edinburgh	242,599	1500	11888	13424
Glasgow - Partick	101,520	1741	13250	13500
Glasgow - Shettleston	14	2000	12967	12480
Glasgow - Knightswood	118	1000	14312	12587
Rothesay	0	0	0	0
Total Southern	**344,637**	**8304**	**61497**	**61202**
Outer Hebrides Presbytery				
Cross	0	1986	12125	9173
Harris - Leverburgh	174	1200	8094	7652
Harris - Scalpay	0	1900	11975	11871
Knock & Point	0	1343	6249	5966
North Uist	1,011	600	4585	5093
Stornoway	2,718	6339	52020	33700
Total Outer Hebrides	**3,903**	**13368**	**95048**	**73456**
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron				
Bracadale	0	1006	6364	4833
Duirinish (Waternish)	0	1000	3000	2000
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	35	2900	8477	7573
Lochalsh	270	1450	7859	6160
Poolewe & Aultbea	208	500	5878	5837
Ullapool	0	0	0	0
Portree	0	1200	6000	8486
Snizort	0	1300	10735	9275
Strath	20	350	2649	3415
Total Skye/Lochcarron	**533**	**9706**	**50962**	**47580**
Smiths Falls		2000	2000	
Total Congregations	**349,382**	**41944**	**270784**	**234361**
Other Donations	547	1038	14658	7926
Legacy		0	111	3000
TOTAL	**349,929**	**42982**	**285553**	**245287**
Including Gift Aid	761		60236	49209

Update from Zambia

Rev Andrew Allan

I arrived in Lusaka, Zambia on Friday 28th March and was met by the Rev David Lachman. We stayed overnight at Old MacDonald's Farm with Lewis-born couple Don and Christine MacDonald (Don's parents worship in our Inverness congregation). The farm is a home provided by the MacDonalds for several of Lusaka's many orphans. Currently the MacDonalds are building a new school on site. Leaving on Saturday we made our way to Petauke, travelling for around five hours and arrived at Covenant College just before 7.00pm, met Katie and Elijah and Ketzia, had refreshments and then went to my chalet (named Troas) where I stayed during my time at the College. On Sunday morning we worshipped in a local church where the preacher was Kenany Zulu, one of the College students.

Schools

Monday 31st March being a College free day, I was able to visit four local pre-schools with Marjanne Hendriksen, from the Covenant College Zambia Trust's Children Education Mission. It was good to see firsthand the sterling work undertaken by Marjanne in very challenging and primitive conditions. I took out a batch of cards that were given to me by Isobel Ann Macleod, Snizort, and gave them to Marjanne. These are used greeting cards which then have a text of Scripture in the native language printed on them. Some of them were distributed while I was there and the children eagerly received them.

Preaching Class

On Tuesday morning 1st April I began a Practical Preaching Course with the students. I gave a couple of lectures and preached from Luke 23:42. There are seven students and they each preached four times from texts selected by me. Following the preaching the lecturer and the other six students critique what has just been preached with a view to help the student become a better preacher of God's Word. I believe the Practice Preaching class was well received and the seven students did benefit from having their preaching critiqued in a manner only designed to help them and their hearers.

On several nights I heard the jungle drums beating at a nearby village. It may be just social dancing, but more likely the witchdoctor will be involved. This land, like our own, needs the light of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On Saturday 5th April I travelled a round trip of about 20km with the Lachmans to the Bona shopping market, Petauke, to buy food. According to the Lachmans it was not a busy day but to me there was plenty of activity and lots of people buying and selling. I heard car horns hooting and saw cars travelling in convoy signifying local

wedding celebrations. This happened on at least two occasions during our shopping trip. It is good to see that the Zambians still believe in marriage between one man and one woman.

Children's Mission

On Saturday afternoon Marjanne Hendriksen along with her willing helpers runs a Children's Mission for the local children. Attendances vary from week to week but it is not uncommon to have around 100 children present. They sing Bible verses put to song, hear a Bible story and take part in creative crafts. Finally before their departure they receive something to eat.

Preaching

On Sunday 6th April I attended Grace Baptist Church, Petauke, along with the Lachman family and Marjanne Hendriksen. I attended this church last year when the church building was under construction and it was good to see the structure complete and operational. Having being asked a few days before I preached from Acts 2:42. It was the first time I have preached in Zambia and through an interpreter. I enjoyed the experience and I hope the brethren were edified as I sought to bring four marks of a true Christian from the text.

Students

The students gather for worship morning and evening during the days when they are at the College. In the morning session they begin by singing a Psalm from our Scottish Psalter. It is good to hear them sing in their deep African voices. However their range of tunes is limited. I offered my services to seek to help them learn a couple of new tunes. They readily agreed and I tried to teach them Psalm 36:5-10 (London New) and Psalm 80:14-19 (Morven). I'm not sure how successful I was, but they are keen to learn and I do hope I was able to broaden their range of tunes, albeit in a small measure. Sad to report, some of the students and others on the campus have been affected by malaria.

Trust Meeting

The principal reason I was in Zambia was to attend the AGM of Covenant College Zambia Trust, being our denomination's trustee. The meeting began on Thursday 10th in the evening and continued until Saturday at noon. Friday was a particularly long day beginning at 7.30am and not finishing until after 9.30pm. Representatives of the College, the Farm and the Children's Education Ministries each highlighted important factors in their respective ministries. A number of important decisions were made including the Trust's intention to seek to appoint both a new Principal and Administrator for the College.

On Sunday 13th I attended worship at the Confession Church Zambia, Petauke, with the Lachman family. The order of service is broadly along the pattern of the Dutch Reformed Church. This congregation is a church plant from a church in South Africa and was started by a missionary, the Rev Charles Zulu, who is also one of the full-time lecturers at Covenant College. The current pastor is Musonda Mwenda, a former college graduate, but Mr Zulu does some of the preaching and has pastoral oversight of this congregation among others. Normally about 16 attend worship. However their number was much depleted for various reasons with only around six locals attending. Mr Zulu preached from Galatians 5:26-28. They meet in a school classroom in Petauke along with around six other churches at the same time. When I was there at least one noisy Pentecostal church did not stop singing and playing loud amplified music during the total duration of Mr Zulu's service. I was invited to give a word of encouragement to the brethren towards the close of the service and I informed them that their setting and paucity of numbers reminds me of my former congregation at Aultbea.

Tuesday 15th April was my last day in Zambia and Covenant College Farm's Open Day. Many local and influential people attended. The positive benefits of farming God's way were presented to them by Phil Bailey, Farm Ministry Tutor, and Jackson Kasola, Farm Manager.

Please do remember the Lachmans in prayer and, if you can, make contact by email or any other means. I know they greatly appreciate interest being shown in their gospel work by their friends and acquaintances. I thank God for travelling mercies, the Lachmans for their hospitality and the Home & Foreign Missions Committee for appointing me a Trustee.

Mr Allan with some of the students

General Assembly 2014 outside Liberton Kirk

(Courtesy of Rev Bert Pohl)

"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth."

Micah 4:13

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