

Free Church **Witness**



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Evangelistic Preaching

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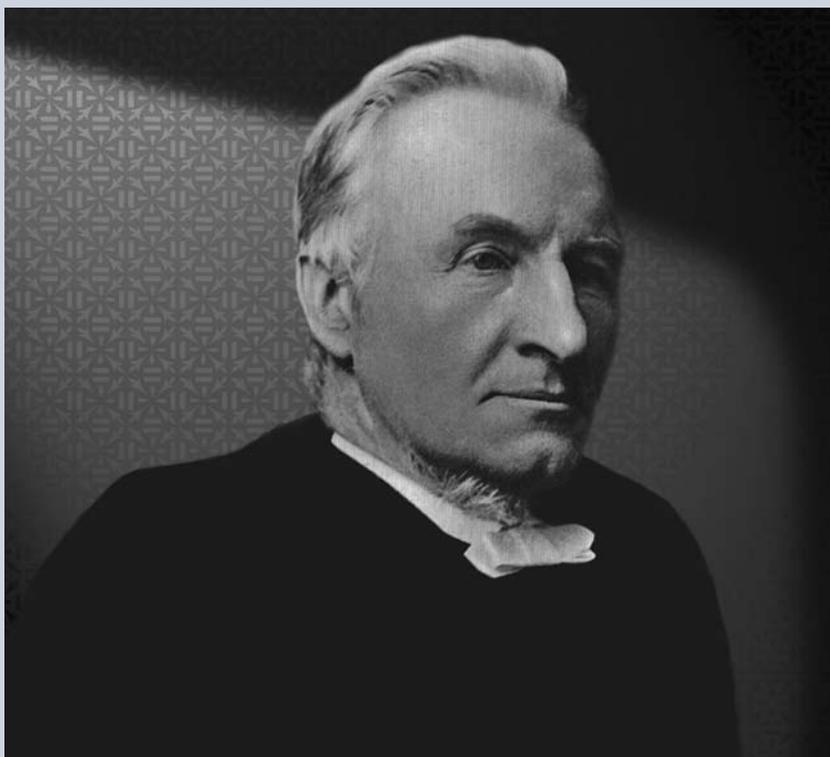
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Alexander Whyte

Lessons to Learn

What do we make of Alexander Whyte? His books, unlike those of many of his liberal contemporaries, are still in print and are popular with Christians all over the world. Christian Focus publish his famous *Bible Characters*. Other books of his in print include: *Lord Teach Us to Pray*, *Samuel Rutherford and some of his correspondents*, *Bunyan Characters* and *An Exposition of the Shorter Catechism*. He was a prolific writer and was widely regarded as the greatest Scottish preacher of his day. And yet there is something troubling about him. And it is to be found in his books.

I first heard of Alexander Whyte from my childhood minister in Stornoway, the Rev Kenneth MacRae. He warned us against using Whyte's *Exposition of the Shorter Catechism* which provides what is in many ways a helpful explanation of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. I have used it myself along with other books in preaching through the Catechism. Recently I read *The Life of Alexander Whyte* by G F Barbour which was first published in 1923 shortly after Whyte's death. To me it was a fascinating and yet shocking and disturbing book. There was so much that was good in the life of Whyte but at the same time there was so much confusion, lack of discernment and dangerous false teaching. It now became clear why Whyte repeatedly and approvingly quoted liberal and Roman Catholic writers in his *Exposition of the Shorter Catechism*.

Whyte's long active life (1836-1921) spans the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. It was a time of great change, tremendous confidence in man's intellectual and technological abilities and optimism in the advance of civilization and the church within it. This was the period when the theory of Evolution was published and became popular and when the Higher Critics undermined the authority of Scripture within the mainline churches and yet evangelicals like Whyte seemed totally unconcerned. It was also the time of the rise again in this country of the Roman Catholic Church following the Roman Catholic Relief

Act of 1829. The Tractarians or Oxford Movement within the Church of England developed into Anglo-Catholicism. In 1845 their great leader John Henry Newman converted to the Church of Rome. And then there was the beginning of the Ecumenical Movement with the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 which is universally regarded as the beginning of the World Council of Churches (WCC). His *Life* is interesting from the perspective that it gives on the changes taking place at that time in the church and society, in Scotland and beyond.

Youth and Training

Whyte was born in Kirriemuir to a single mother Janet Thomson. Though his father John Whyte wished to marry Janet she refused feeling that two wrongs wouldn't make a right and he then left for America where he married and spent his life. Janet had to work hard to bring up her son and he grew up in relative poverty with few advantages. She appears to have become a devout Christian and adhered to the Free Church in 1843. In his student days Alexander made contact with his father and received some financial help. They met up and later John Whyte's only daughter Elizabeth came to keep house for Alexander who was a bachelor in his first charge. She married one of his ministerial colleagues, Rev Thomas Macadam.

Alexander at the age of twelve, to please his mother, began to serve his trade as a cobbler. However from an early age he had felt that his calling was to be a preacher and no sooner had he trained as a cobbler than he sought means to enter Aberdeen University. He had a great love for books and learning. While employed in shoemaking he would have a book open on the bench in front of him. Having completed his arts training he went to New College in Edinburgh and graduated in 1866. He became an assistant to Dr John Roxburgh and shortly afterwards was ordained a colleague. In 1870 he was called to be colleague to Dr Robert S Candlish in Free St George's, Edinburgh.

Minister of Free St George's

Candlish was already suffering from ill-health and passed away in 1873. His deathbed is fascinating. He had been very keen on hymns and eventually got them introduced to Free St Georges. Interestingly on his deathbed he said to Whyte, 'Oh, man! I wish I had learned all the Psalms by heart'. God's words were the real comfort not the words of man. Whyte describes the final scene: 'The dying Principal sent for me to bid me farewell, and I found Dr Rainy already at Dr Candlish's bedside. I had no sooner entered the room than the dying man put out his hand to me and said: "Good-bye. I had hoped to be spared to help you a little longer but it was not to be. Good-bye". Then he motioned to Dr Rainy to kneel down at his bedside, when he threw his withered arms around Rainy's neck and kissed him and said: "I leave the congregation to Whyte and I leave the New College and the Assembly to you"'. Rainy shared Candlish's desire for the union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church and he was the leader in accomplishing this after having watered down the Confession of Faith by the notorious Declaratory Act of 1892.

So at the age of 34 Whyte found himself sole minister in charge of possibly the most influential congregation in the Free Church. His congregation had over 1000 members amongst whom were to be found many professors, doctors, lawyers and scientists. For years he held a young men's class on Sabbath evening after church which was attended by 500 students and young professionals and a similar meeting for around 500 young women on a Wednesday afternoon. He was in constant demand as a preacher and became Principal of New College, the most prestigious of the divinity colleges of the Free Church (by then the United Free Church), in 1909 and continued in that position until 1918. So here was a man in an ideal situation from which to be a huge influence for good in the Free Church and later in the United Free Church but sadly the Church he left behind when he died was rapidly becoming more and more liberal and he seems to have done nothing to stem the tide. Nor did he even seem able to see that there was a problem. What would he say today if he were to survey the scene? The union he longed for with the Church of Scotland took place in 1929 and the united Church is only a fraction of the size of the two individual Churches in 1921 when he died. He felt burdened to preach on sin and the need of repentance but how few Church of Scotland congregations herald that message now. Sadly ministers who live in open immorality are free to continue in the ministry. The congregation of St George's West which his church eventually became ended up with a liberal minister and a handful of a congregation. It was amalgamated with St Andrews and St George's recently and the massive, beautiful building was sold to Charlotte Chapel whose building had become too small for its congregation. Hopefully the gospel will soon be heard again within this building.

Liberal Theology

Many of Alexander Whyte's closest friends were liberal theologians and they had as one would expect a huge influence upon him. He met Marcus Dods at New College and for the next forty-six years they were bosom buddies and normally, when possible, met on Saturdays and went for walks discussing theology together along with a small

group of others who shared the same outlook. Whyte along with Dods edited Clark's *Handbooks for Bible Classes* series. Though Dods completed his training for the ministry in 1858 he had to wait six years till he received a call. Whyte could not understand why congregations would not call this clever, gifted minister but God's people, at the time, showed more discernment than Whyte did. Dods had accepted the Higher Critical theories which destroyed the authority of the Scriptures. In 1864 Dods became minister of Renfield Free Church, Glasgow, where he worked for twenty-five years. In 1889 he was appointed professor of New Testament Exegesis in the New College, Edinburgh, of which he became Principal in succession to Robert Rainy in 1907. His writings, and particularly a sermon on *Inspiration* published in 1877, rightly incurred the charge of heresy, and shortly before his election to the Edinburgh professorship he was summoned before the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, but the charge was dropped by a large majority showing how the whole church had become infected with liberalism. Other liberal friends belonging to the same inner circle were J Sutherland Black who edited the higher critical *Encyclopaedia Biblica* along with T K Cheyne. When William Robertson Smith was charged with heresy for his article on the 'Bible' in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and forced from his chair Alexander Whyte was his chief defender and dissented against the motion of Principal Rainy that he be removed from his chair. Whyte sought another heretic, George Adam Smith, to be his assistant minister and was very disappointed at his refusal. His biographer assures us that even in his last years he welcomed the writings of H A A Kennedy and James Moffatt which we would describe as liberal trash – treating the Bible simply as man's thoughts about God rather than God's authoritative revelation to man.

Why was Whyte so supportive of liberal theologians? He was greatly enamoured with learning and when he was a youth he read everything he could lay his hands on. He had a tremendous admiration for science. His own theology was pietistic and lacked the clear Reformed character which the first generation Free Church Theologians of 1843 had, eg Chalmers, Cunningham, Bannerman, Duncan and Smeaton. He believed in Christ and His atoning work and justification by faith alone in his own soul and heart and saw this as the way of salvation for his people but he was at the same time in awe of the academics and wanted them to have freedom to pursue their studies and investigations without interference from church courts.

Cardinal Newman and the RCs

Another strange influence in Whyte's life was Cardinal Newman who began as a Church of England minister and later became a Roman Catholic. Whyte loved a beautiful style of English and Newman's writings had that. He liked the way Newman put things and so quotes him extensively in his writings. He and some of his friends paid a visit to Newman and he had a signed portrait of Newman hung in his study. He was a voracious reader himself and often passed on books to students and young ministers and Newman's works were frequently among the first to be sent. Later in his life he came across Santa Teresa, a sixteenth century Spanish nun and would often quote her and pass on her writings. She

taught that people should strive for the 'devotion of union', a supernatural but an essentially ecstatic state – 'there is also an absorption of the reason in God, and only the memory and imagination are left to ramble'. He was attracted to mystics such as her. Latterly when on holiday on the Continent he would attend Roman Catholic mass with great appreciation.

Ecumenical Wooliness

Whyte became an ecumenist. He was very enthusiastic for the union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church. He went to London to hear first hand the House of Lords Judgment of 1904 and was deeply shocked by it and scathing towards those judges who supported the original Free Church (Continuing). Later he was a great advocate for the union of the United Free Church with the Church of Scotland. But he went even further than that, seeking the union of all churches. He stated in one of his sermons which was printed and published: 'The first step in a real union of Christendom will be taken when we come to admit and to realize that the Greek Church (Greek Orthodox) was the original mother of us all; that the Latin Church (RC) was her first child; and that through both these Churches we ourselves have our religious existence; through them we have the universal foundations of our Creeds and Confessions and Catechisms; our public worship also; our Christian character and our Christian civilization; and everything indeed that is essential to salvation... When we humble ourselves to admit that some other Churches have things of no small moment to teach us and to share with us, and things it will greatly enrich us to receive and assimilate; when we have a Christian mind enough to admit and even to welcome thoughts and feelings like these – then the day of a reconstructed Christendom will have begun to dawn at least for ourselves'. He told his wife that he hoped for 'the recovery of the Christian year (Christmas, Easter, etc), an optional Liturgy, the

simplification of the Standards (a reduced Confession of Faith), Superintendents who will have all the virtues and none of the faults of Bishops'. What confusion and denial of the 'faith once delivered to the saints'!

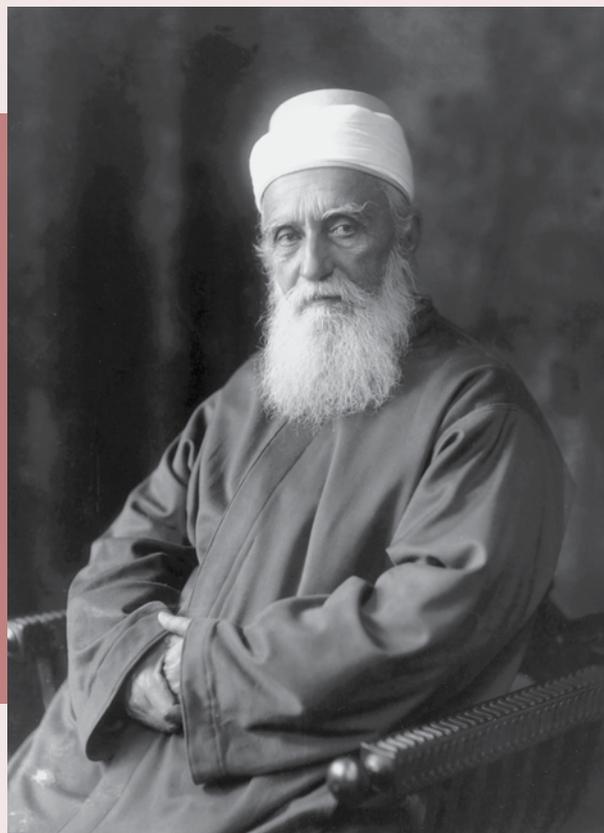
He was an enthusiastic supporter of the World Missionary Conference, the precursor of the World Council of Churches. He actually received the leader of the Bahais, Abdul Baha Abbas into his home and had him address a meeting in his home. Whyte's introductory words were: 'Dear and honoured Sir, I have had many meetings in this house, but never have I seen such a meeting. It reminds me of what Paul said, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men" and of what our Lord said, "They shall come from the East and the West, from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God"'. What happened to 'Ye must be born again' (Jn.3:7) and 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (Jn.14:6)?

Lack of Discernment

The lack of discernment of Alexander Whyte is shocking and especially from one who had purchased a set of Thomas Goodwin (the Puritan, *Works* in 12 Volumes) in 1861 and read and reread them making them his constant companions, one who had experienced the 1859-60 revival and had been used of God in it, one who delighted to preach on sin, on Christ and on the atonement. Whyte is a strange mixture and must be read with care. His lack of appreciation of the destructive nature of Higher Criticism, his ecumenicity, his appreciation for the writings of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox theologians and his confusion of mysticism with holiness and biblical spirituality should leave us very cautious in our handling of his books. But there is surely a warning in all this to us too. Take care of your friends and your books! Those who are your close associates will affect your life and beliefs.

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Revival in Belfast (Part I)

Rev William Johnston
(Townsend Street Church, 1859)

Mr Johnston describes the effect of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on different classes of people in his congregation. The impact was a deep-seated conviction of sin and though many may doubt or deride, for him it was obvious that 'this is the finger of God'.

The Fallen

The most hopeless class in our community is composed of those who have lost the virtue and the dignity of women, and who have sunk to the lowest level of degradation which any human creature can occupy. And yet, as in the days of our Lord, harlots are entering into the kingdom of heaven before some of our wretched and lifeless Pharisees. One humble but devoted Christian woman, a member of my church, has been honoured of God to rescue, during the last few months some twenty 'unfortunates' out of sin and misery; and one of the most difficult, as well as the most delightful portions of my ministerial work during the past summer has been to provide temporary support and permanent employment for those who, like the prodigal, were disposed to return. With the exception of one or two who have relapsed, by the treachery and diabolism of their own relatives and companions in crime, they are all doing admirably. Some are in good service; one has been married; and the rest are happy in active daily labour. Not the least interesting portion of our worshipping assembly on each Sabbath-day, and at our weekly prayer-meetings, are these Maries of the Church - these daughters of the revival - whose simple dress, marked attention, regular attendance, and steady walk, indicate the dawn of a brighter day, the foretaste of a better future.

The Careless

The Careless have been generally awakened; and in many cases, though not in all, or perhaps in most, the work of deep conviction has issued in saving conversion. In this class 'the bodily manifestations' seem to have been especially blessed. These manifestations have been far too much talked about, and regarded by many at a distance as if they formed the whole work, or the principal feature of it. This is a great mistake. In our congregation there were not many cases of the kind; but such as did occur, served, to my certain knowledge, very much the purpose of 'the rushing mighty wind' preceding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. They roused the slumbering mass; they startled whole streets; they called special attention to the deep conviction of the person affected; they awed and awakened the minds of many whom curiosity had brought 'to come and see'; and they were

used to send many back to their homes and closets to think of their own lives, to cry to God for their own souls, and to look to Christ for pardon and acceptance as they had never looked before. Of the many illustrative cases I might quote, I shall give but few:-

One fine but thoughtless girl, a pupil in the Sabbath-school, was asked to go and sing in the house where another person was in deep distress. She had not been many minutes in the room when the bodily manifestations so impressed her, that she went home to consider the question, 'Have I not as much reason to weep for my own sins, and pray for my own soul?' For days and weeks she continued in the deepest anxiety of mind, until, after a painful and protracted conflict, in which her judgment had well nigh given way, she shut herself up to closet prayer with God, until she found peace in the finished work and perfect righteousness of Christ. She is now a consistent member of the church, and an efficient teacher in the Sabbath-school, and these exercises of her mind have been blessed to the conversion of her sister, who is also adorning the doctrine of God her Saviour.

At the first prayer meeting in my church which returning strength permitted me to attend, when leading in the first prayer, one of my petitions was that God would be pleased to convince and convert some poor careless sinner present. Immediately after, there burst forth a most piteous, plaintive cry for mercy. The person was carried out, and the prayer proceeded, when, shortly after, another cry was heard, and another person was taken away in charge of the elders of the church. When the services in the church were concluded, I went to the school-room to speak to these persons, and, to my surprise, I found that the first affected was one of the most hardened and apparently hopeless cases in the congregation. She was a grandmother, a strong-minded, active, worldly woman, one upon whom I had been calling for twelve years, and trying, without any success, to bring to a sense of sin or to the house of God. She seemed utterly indifferent to the salvation of her soul, and twice dead in sin. On the week before, her daughter had been awakened, and she had prevailed on her poor mother to come down that evening to the prayer-meeting, and then and there she was cut to the heart. 'That's me!' she exclaimed, and a sense of her sin burst upon her mind, under which she felt utterly overpowered. Her daughter and she are both rejoicing in Jesus, and are one with Christ in the fellowship of the church.

At our communion in October, one person came forward and asked admission to the fellowship of the church, who had been

for above twenty years a seat-holder. He was an honest, good-natured, worldly, godless man, and the father of a large family. His son had been awakened, and was also asking admission. The work of grace in the heart of his child had struck home conviction to his own soul; and with a most full confession of his sin, and a powerful statement of the thorough disgust and dread with which the manifold inconsistencies of others professing religion had often filled him, he told us how the love of Christ had been shed abroad in his heart, and that he now unreservedly, 'yielded himself to the Lord'. With him were seated twelve others, advanced in years, formerly

careless and dead, but now humble followers of Christ, and seeking, through His mediation, admission to the fellowship of the church. Their deep sense of sin, their humbling view of self, their strong confidence in Christ, and their clear views of truth were such that they were all welcomed into the fellowship of the church, and hailed as blessed fruits of the revival. Two of the men had been for years given greatly to drink, but they are now sober and consistent Christians, and stand out monuments of sovereign grace.

To be continued

Children in the Church (Part II)

Dr Joel R Beeke
(Grand Rapids, USA)



Practical Guidelines for Ministry to Children in the Church

Let us consider next how the church should minister to children in our midst. We will not focus upon Christian parenting so much as the church's ministry, although that ministry has many implications for Christian parents, since they play a unique role in their children's lives as their first evangelists, teachers, and guides. I will attempt to be brief rather than comprehensive in these guidelines.

Include the Children

Children should attend public worship with their parents to experience the corporate life of the body of Christ. They should learn how to worship by watching others worship. Don't discourage mothers from bringing young children into worship (Luke 18:15-16). The prophet Joel included 'the children, and those that suck the breasts' in the call to sacred assembly (Joel 2:16). Encourage families to bring their children to worship. You might reserve a section in the back or in the balcony for families with very young children. If they need an early exit, this can be done without distracting or disturbing other worshippers.

The Scriptures teach us to view the assemblies of the church as gatherings of the household of faith. God's children are called to be brothers to each other. When Moses commanded that the law be read publicly every seven years, he said, 'Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law' (Deut. 31:12). When the Israelites celebrated the feasts of the Lord, the law required them to

come to the sanctuary as 'households,' including sons and daughters and even servants (Deut. 12:7, 12).

Children were also present in the synagogues where Christ taught (Mt. 18:2; 19:13-15). Paul assumed that children would be present when his letters were read in the churches, and he even addressed the children directly (Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20). Jeremy Walker writes, 'The constant presumption of Scripture is the children were present in the worship of the people of God'. Don't separate children, teenagers, and adults into different worship compartments; bring them together as members of one family, and encourage them to sit together as families so that parents can make good use of the situation to train their children in godliness.

Including the children will influence how ministers of the Word prepare for public worship. When you offer public prayer in the worship service, include the children. Pray specifically for children and young people. Intercede for God to grant them Spirit-worked submission to their parents, regeneration, faith, repentance, and spiritual growth. If a child is sick, pray for him by name. Encourage them to sing by making frequent use of Psalms the children already know and love – and encourage parents, in teaching the children at home, to give priority to the songs used in the worship of the church.

In preaching, labour to speak with plainness and simplicity, but also with colour and vitality, in the way of a good storyteller, to interest even your youngest hearers in the sermon. If it is necessary to speak 'over their heads', stop and address the children directly, giving them explanations or applications at the level of their own understanding. Nothing is more off-putting than to have a preacher tag a statement with 'Boys and girls', and then go on to say things that no boy or girl could

understand or even care about. Likewise, with regard to the length of the service, think of the children, and take care not to prolong sermons or prayers to the point that they cease to edify and only become a trial to be endured.

Teach the Children

Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven'. We bring our children to Christ by presenting them for baptism and by bringing them to public worship; but we must also teach them the truths of the Christian faith, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In hearing the words of Scripture, little lambs of the flock hear the voice of the Good Shepherd who thereby calls them by name to follow Him (John 10:3).

Our children should be catechised. The Heidelberg Catechism presents Biblical truth with warm spirituality; the Westminster Shorter Catechism and Larger Catechism offer rich Biblical teaching in brilliantly condensed form. With such great resources at our disposal, it is a shame that many evangelical Christians fear that the word *catechism* implies Roman Catholicism. What a joy it is for many Christians now today to rediscover the beauty of Reformed catechisms! The question-and-answer format is ideally suited for children.

As G I Williamson writes, a catechism is like a map for a road trip. Someone might say, 'Why bother with a map? Why not just start driving to find where things are?' The answer, of course, is that you'll likely waste a lot of time speculating how far you have to drive to places or what route to take, and perhaps get lost. Other people carefully study roads and maps. No map is perfect, but they are generally accurate. So it is with catechisms. The Bible contains the riches of Christ. It is clear but also very deep. While we must read our Bibles, it is wise to use the maps others have provided to guide us through Scripture.

Make sure that your catechism teachers are well-trained members of the church, preferably office-bearers who uphold solid, confessional Reformed teaching with hearts aflame with the fear and love of God. Children under ten years old should memorise answers to questions, while children over ten years old should be pressed to explain what they have been learning. Use a good curriculum, such as that produced by Great Commission Publications, or the *Bible Doctrine* workbooks written by James W Beeke, or G I Williamson's study guides to the Westminster and Heidelberg Catechisms.

Catechism in the church should be supplemented by Christian education, whether at a Christian day school or by godly homeschooling. Never underestimate the impact of school teachers and textbooks on your children. Your child's education is not just about his future career in the world; a Christian education can have a profound influence on whether your sons and daughters persevere as active members of a biblically faithful church when they grow up.

Train the Parents

Ephesians 4:11–12 says the glorified Christ gives pastors and teachers to His church to equip its members. Verse 16 envisions the church as a body in which every member performs its God-designed function. Since the function of parents is to nurture their children in the Lord, the ministry of the church must equip them to do so. How should the

church train them?

1. Train parents to *lead as prophets, priests, and kings*. Teach parents how, by faith in Christ, we share in Christ's anointing by the Spirit and, in a limited way, are images of His offices and bearers of His authority. Train parents to be prophetic teachers of truth to their children. Call them to be priests who lift up intercessions for their families and lay down themselves as loving sacrifices. Remind them of their authority as servant-kings to defend their families from ungodly influences and to discipline them under the rule of Christ.

2. Train parents to *bring their children to Christ*. Just as parents brought their little ones to Jesus in Mark 10:13, we must continually bring our children to Christ. Doing so requires that we believe our young need more than polite behaviour and an outward form of godliness—they need Christ or they are lost forever! Bringing children to Christ also requires us to understand that conversion is not the mere recitation of a prayer. God must give every sinner a new heart so that he may know Him, love Him, and walk with Him.

3. Train parents to *conduct family worship*. In one way, family worship is a child's daily training for public worship. In another, something special and unique happens between fathers and mothers and sons and daughters when they open their Bibles and pray together. For how to conduct family worship, you might want to obtain James W. Alexander's *Thoughts on Family Worship*, Matthew Henry's *Family Religion*, and my *Family Worship*.

4. Train parents to *lead their families during public worship*. When parents are in the pews, they are both worshippers toward God and leaders to their children. Parents need to explain to their kids the importance of sitting together as a family. One mother said to her sons, 'It is much harder to pay attention to God when you want to pay attention to your friend. You will have time later to be with your friend; right now Jesus wants all of your attention because he has something to say to us'. Make public worship a rich family time.

Children should be taught that worship is not playtime. Children should not be allowed to turn the pew into a race track for a Hot Wheel, a library for reading secular books, or a nursery to play with toys. Teach your children, as God says, to 'be still and know that I am God'. If children cannot be quiet in church, remove them discreetly, discipline them, and then return them to the service. Give them a pen and paper to take sermon notes. Help the early-elementary age children to copy key words or sentences from your own notes. To encourage attentive listening, discuss sermons afterwards. Ask your children questions and listen to their responses. Knowing they will be questioned later will encourage your children to listen better now.

Talk to your children before going to services and explain your expectations. To pay attention, they must sit straight and look at the minister or the page of the Psalm book or Bible to which the minister is referring. Talk to them in a quiet whisper during the worship service if they need further exhortations. Encourage them to be respectful and considerate of other people sitting nearby.

Leading children in public worship is more than a matter of their outward behaviour, however. Worship is about meeting with God! Build a sense of anticipation by praying together on Saturday night for God to visit His people through His means

of grace. Talk to your children about the wonderful privilege that through Christ we are entering into God's glorious, holy presence. Teach them to view worship as entering into the house and presence of God to appear before His throne of grace.

5. Train parents to *cultivate sober-mindedness in their families*. Titus 2:4 and 6 says we are to cultivate sober-mindedness. To be sober-minded is to be steady, like a ship with its anchor deep in the seabed, so that tides and currents cannot drag the ship to destruction. Cultivate this by talking to your children at an early age about what is in their heart. Talk to them of God, Christ, sin, the devil, heaven, and hell as awesome realities. Encourage self-discipline by limiting their use of television and other forms of media. Train them in personal and family devotions. Let them have times to play, but also engage them in serious tasks where you labour together for an important cause. Beware of letting them view life as an amusement park that exists for their entertainment; rather, give them something worth living and dying for.

6. Train parents to teach their children how to *build a sound, biblical library of great books*. Many families have vast collections of toys, clothing, DVDs, and music. But how many parents invest in solid Christian books for their children? Fill your shelves with good reading material. Some of the same publishing houses that produced Puritan writings like Cumberland Valley or Christian Focus Publications or Reformation Heritage Books also sell high quality children's books. Read them. Give them to your children to read. Take time to enjoy these books by reading them aloud as a family. As your children get older, introduce them to modern renderings of the Puritans, such as *Living by God's Promises* or *Stop Loving the World*, and then the easier Puritans such as Thomas Watson or John Flavel. If you want to know why we are experiencing a resurgence of Reformed theology and piety, one reason is the republishing and renewed reading of old Reformed and Puritan books. Do you want your children to share in this blessing?

7. Train parents to *teach their children to pray*. John Calvin

(1509–1564) considered prayer as a holy and intimate conversation with God, our heavenly Father. Calvin said we should cast our 'desires, sighs, anxieties, fears, hopes, and joys into the lap of God'. We are 'permitted to pour into God's bosom the difficulties which torment us, in order that he may loosen the knots which we cannot untie'. Therefore, an excellent way to train a child to pray is by putting them in Daddy's lap. Begin when the child is about three years old, gently setting him in your lap during family worship, whispering a few words at a time, and having him repeat those after you. Walk him through a very simple version of ACTS: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. This helps children to avoid getting stuck in supplication, which is natural, given their selfishness and immaturity. When a child is four, tell him to try a few sentences on his own. If he gets stuck, he can give Daddy a poke so that you can return to whispering and repeating. By about age seven, a child should be able to pray on his own. Children naturally view their fathers as an image of God, so it is beautiful to associate prayer with sitting on Daddy's lap.

8. Finally, remind parents that the teaching and training of their children begins with and depends upon *their own example* as children of God, followers of Christ, and members of His church. 'Do as I say, but not as I do', is no part of the law of Christ for His disciples.

Pastors and elders, if you want to reach the children in the church, train the parents. Parents who conscientiously implement spiritual training of their children are usually those who experience God's blessing of rearing stalwart sons and daughters for the church of Jesus Christ. Proverbs 22:6 then proves to be the norm, not the exception: 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it'.

(*Puritan Reformed Journal*, Vol.4, No.2, July 2012)

To be continued



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News



Solid Rock Club, Shettleston

Martin & Becky Fraser

The Solid Rock Club at Shettleston Free Church (Continuing) had a great 2012-2013 and is now beginning a new term! We really appreciate everyone who supports the club! Here is some of our news:

This year we have really seen Solid Rock flourish. We now run two clubs, one for P.1-P.5 and another for P.6-S.2. This has allowed us to specialise the sessions for each age group and spend more

individual time with the children. We love sharing our time with the children and feel very privileged that we have such a good relationship with them and their parents. Our aim is to support the children in all aspects of their lives, through mentoring and teaching.

This year we have taught a variety of topics including: 'A child of God is...', 'The Fruit of the Spirit' and 'What is Prayer?' We also created a topic called 'Animals in

the Bible', teaching the younger children popular Bible stories such as Noah's Ark and Jonah. This proved extremely popular and the children even broke into applause following the story of Rebekah and the Camels! It is very inspiring to teach children who are excited by the Bible! We also ran a series of interactive sessions exploring the children's views on prayer and answering their questions. This proved very useful for both leaders

Desk



and children!

At the end of each term we host a 'Family Day' where the children, their families and the church meet to celebrate the achievements made throughout the term. These occasions are very well attended and it is great to see the church and the community come together. We really appreciate the support from families, the church and friends of Solid Rock. We are supported through financial gifts, material donations and most importantly the faithful prayers of individuals.

If anyone would like more information about Solid Rock please find us on Facebook or email us at: martinfraser@shettlestonfreechurch.org.

Points for thanksgiving

- We are thankful for the prayers which keep us safe and support the leaders on a Friday evening.

- The club would also not be possible without the commitment of its leaders who dedicate their time and energy to leading the club throughout the school term. We particularly give thanks for Neil Smith who is an attentive and reliable mentor. We are also thankful for Mrs Fraser who shows such care for the children.

- We are delighted to announce we will have another leader starting in the new term: Joanne Macdonald. This is truly an answer to prayer and we are sure Joanne will be a huge blessing to us!

- Thanks to God for being with us over the last three years of Solid Rock.

Prayer Points for 2013-14

- The need for more leaders is an issue of concern as we plan for the future. Solid Rock is unable to reach its full potential without a new generation of leaders to assist in preserving the legacy of the club.

- Solid Rock urgently requires more indoor space for activities; at the moment the club is held in the church with only a small area of clear space. This limits the activities we can safely do with the children.

- For Edinburgh Free Church (Cont.) who are considering starting an Outreach Sabbath School for local children..

Egypt's Crisis

E Kendal

Egypt's population has exploded, doubling in one generation to more than 92 million. With a massive youth demographic, high unemployment (40 percent), high illiteracy (45 percent), critical food and fuel shortages and looming bankruptcy, Egypt is on the brink of becoming a failed state. Saudi money keeps Egypt afloat and the Saudis want their nemesis, the Muslim Brotherhood (which advocates republicanism), not just out of power, but crushed. In this, the interests of the Saudis, the Egyptian military and the Salafis (conservative Islam) converge.

The military staged their coup under the cover of anti-Morsi protests, ensuring that anti-Morsi elements would bear the blame and the brunt of reprisals. And no soft target so clearly represents opposition to Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) as the Coptic Church. The military's actions may have halted the Muslim Brotherhood's consolidation of power and guaranteed the flow of Saudi aid, but their actions are making the situation worse. Violence against Christians has exploded. The military may even exploit this, rather than prevent it, to legitimise military violence, military rule and requests for military aid. As the guardians of the Suez Canal and the Sinai, the Egyptian military is essentially a law unto itself,

something Morsi and the MB have failed to appreciate.

Meanwhile, the MB will do what it has always done best: play the victim. In late July terrorism analyst Yossef Bodansky reported: 'The Ikhwan's [MB's] spiritual guides are now calling for a violent *intifada* against the military: a confrontation where the military's superior firepower would create numerous martyrs, thus reinforcing and affirming the Ikhwan's own claim of victimhood'. This provides the context for the recent MB 'sit-ins'. According to Amnesty International, these protest sites were dangerous, violent places, where those who voiced objections were beaten, raped, tortured and killed. The sit-ins comprised bands of violent, armed MB supporters who provoked the military from behind a screen of human shields - thousands of women and children. What occurred on Wednesday 14 August, when the military went in as promised to disperse the sit-ins and clear the streets, was a massacre, a bloodbath. With some 900 dead it was doubtless much worse than the MB leadership imagined it would be, but a massacre was exactly what they sought, for propaganda purposes. [This is the very essence of Islamic asymmetric warfare.]

MB rage again fell on the church. Over the next few days, churches, monasteries and other Christian properties, including schools and businesses, were torched and looted by rampaging MB supporters in Sohag, Minya, Beni Suef, Fayium, Asyut, Alexandria, Suez and Cairo. Bible Society bookshops in Assiut and Minia were destroyed. Three nuns taken out of the Franciscan school in Bani Suef were paraded like prisoners of war through mob-filled streets, until a courageous Muslim woman rescued them and took them into her home. Two other Christian

women who fled from the school were observed being hit, groped and spat on as they fought their way through the mob.

Emergency Law has been established, military officers have been installed as governors and 14 governorates now have 7pm-6am curfews. A low intensity but extremely violent insurgency will doubtless ensue. There are no good options. Remember, this is the same military that drove tanks into Copts at Maspero in October 2011, killing 28, when the Copts led protests against sectarian violence. This is the same military that bulldozed the security walls of Coptic monasteries in the wake of the fall of Mubarak, removing their security so Arab raiders and *jihadis* could attack and plunder them. General al-Sisi is a Morsi-appointed, pro-Salafi Islamist. To use the language of Isaiah, the convergence of trends has culminated in a 'mighty flood' of trouble. These are days to weep and mourn for Egypt (Ecclesiastes 3:4) but above all - to pray!

Remember the Christians in Egypt caught in the middle of the violence.

Archbishop Tutu's Folly

Christian Observer

Retired South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu has provocatively declared that he would not worship a God who is homophobic, adding that 'I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven... I mean, I would much rather go to the other place [hell]'. The Anglican archbishop was speaking at a United Nations' Gay Rights Campaign function in Cape Town, South Africa.

In a rare move, another Anglican archbishop - Archbishop Yinkah Sarfo of Ghana - strongly condemned Tutu over his comments. 'Archbishop Tutu is respected in the Anglican Church and around the world but this time he has misfired and all Anglican Bishops from Africa, Asia and South America condemn his statement in no uncertain terms', Sarfo told Ghana's *Adom News*. Sarfo said Tutu's comments were not the stand of the entire Anglican Communion, which is increasingly led by traditionalist voices from the Global South that adhere to a more conservative theological perspective. 'We [other African bishops] suspect that retired Archbishop Tutu may have collected some moneys from some of the western governments or from gay rights activists to do their bidding but the Anglican Church condemns gay practice', Sarfo concluded.

Institute on Religion and Democracy's Anglican Program Director Jeff Walton commented: 'Tutu's declaration demands that God operate on his terms. Tutu's god is one that many will recognize - an idealized version of ourselves times 2 or 3. God operates on a whole different standard of holiness beyond this self-constructed deity. Tutu never speaks for the majority of Anglicans in Africa. The centre of Anglican leadership on the continent has moved to countries like Nigeria and Kenya. Apart from Tutu's dismissiveness, African Anglicans are very interested in spending eternity with God and want their neighbours to share in that, too. African Anglicans have quickly become the majority voice in the Anglican Communion. They focus on evangelism and discipleship, seeking to win souls for Christ rather than prioritise earthly political ambitions'.

What matters is not what Tutu thinks but what God thinks. On the judgment day every mouth will be stopped and none will argue with God. The immoral will not get into heaven and God in His word defines immorality: 'For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and

whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie' (Rev.22:15). Who can imagine the awfulness of a lost eternity?

Young Adults' Weekend

Calum A Mitchell

The first Free Church (Continuing) 20/30s Weekend Away was held on the weekend of the 28th June to 1st July at the Scaladale Centre, set in the spectacular Hebridean scenery of North Harris. The twenty-eight residential spaces were filled. The conference was attended by young people from various denominational backgrounds, some coming from as far as Loughbrickland, Northern Ireland. The speaker was Rev Raymond Kemp (Staffin) and the topic, 'Eschatology - The Last Things'. There were five addresses: Christ's Eschatology, Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

In the introductory talk we were guided through the definition of 'Eschatology' and shown how it features prominently as the focus of Christ's ministry on earth. We should be motivated by this teaching in our Christian living, as we live every day in the expectation of Christ's coming again - Revelation 1:7: 'Behold, He Cometh'. The Saturday morning talk was about Christ's teaching on 'Death', highlighting how the people of God are not a people who are to weep without hope because Christ has conquered death. The Saturday evening talk was on 'Judgment', how God will be glorified in that day and all will put their Amen to His final judgment - both the lost and saved. This highlighted the importance and urgency of praying for those who are not yet saved. The Sabbath morning service was about 'Hell'. This was a solemn service on a subject we all have difficulty in speaking to others about but it was very necessary to the theme of the weekend - Psalm 130:3-4: 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared'.

We were thankful to the Leverburgh congregation for warmly receiving us for the evening service. Here the series of talks came to an end with Mr Kemp preaching on 'Christ's teaching on Heaven'. This was a most refreshing culmination to the weekend. Our hope lies in seeing Christ face to face, 'The express image of the Father'. We are grateful to Donald Macdonald, Stornoway (Elder) for joining us on the Sabbath afternoon and taking us down to Leverburgh in the minibus.

Although it was a 'twenties to thirties' weekend, it was made open to anyone who wanted to come for the day. Families and young people attended and we were delighted to have some of the more experienced of the Lord's people with us too. Those who attended for a day added to the fellowship and contributed kindly. Throughout the weekend we could all happily put our 'Amen' to Psalm 133, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity'. There was also a great mix of talented male and female voices to add to our joy in heartily singing the Psalms.

Activities were fully attended on the Saturday. There were options of kayaking, a speedboat trip, or a hill walk. Although it rained shortly after we all set off, this in no way hampered the enjoyment, energy and enthusiasm of 'one of the most enthusiastic groups the Scaladale instructors had seen'. We are very thankful for the centre manager Sean Stephens' friendly welcome and assistance over the weekend. Our thanks go to those who offered their prayers for the weekend and to the Stornoway Free Church (Continuing) congregation for a



Young Adults' Weekend, Harris

plentiful supply of home baking and the Deacons' Court for their generous donation towards the cost of the weekend. Finally we would like to thank Sandra Mackay and Caroline Morrison for making sure we were all well fed and watered. A retiring collection was made on behalf of the Lewis Independent Christian School after the service on the Lord's day. The considerable sum of £347.70 was collected and we would like to thank all those who contributed towards this worthy work.

We are especially thankful to the Lord for a spirit of fellowship and peace throughout the weekend - Deuteronomy 33:29: 'Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord'. The talks can be heard on the Stornoway Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) site on Sermon Audio.

Multi-partner Marriages

Christian Institute

Introducing polygamy in the wake of same-sex marriage might not be such a bad idea, according to a writer who has criticised the 'tyranny of the heterosexual couple form'. Writing in *The Guardian*, Laurie Penny said she 'can't be the only one' who wonders if there are some positives to multi-partner marriage. And commenting on a recent BBC radio programme that predicted monogamy would lose its 'moral

monopoly' within 10 years, Miss Penny said: 'Bring it on'. She said: 'Personally, I started practising non-monogamy in my early 20s as a statement against the tyranny of the heterosexual couple form and the patriarchal nuclear family'. Miss Penny mocked warnings from opponents of same-sex marriage that polygamy could be next, and she remarked: 'I can't be the only one who wondered if that'd be such a bad idea'. Miss Penny, who describes herself as a 'journalist, author, feminist, troublemaker, utopian', made the comments in the wake of a BBC programme on polygamy entitled *Monogamy and the Rules of Love*.

The programme featured a number of interviews with people in polyamorous relationships, which are intimate relationships between three or more people at the same time. Presenter Jo Fidgen questioned whether there is still room for sexual fidelity in a 'society where choice is everything'.

What a desperate immoral world we live in! The Bible and our Christian heritage is trampled underfoot. Selfish lust governs the majority. Having wallowed in traditional immorality and finding that it cannot satisfy the cravings of their souls they indulge in increasingly outrageous behaviour. But that will not satisfy them either and will lead to meaninglessness, depression and despair. As Augustine said 'Thou hast made us for thyself and our souls are restless till they find their rest in Thee'.



Books

A Puritan Theology Doctrine for Life

Joel R Beeke and Mark Jones
hbk, 1054pp, \$60.00

Here we have a weighty book, both literally and in its content. It is a very large hardback and unless one has strong arms it has to be read resting on a desk. A lifetime of research has gone into it and it will remain for time to come a very important reference book on the Puritans. The many footnotes greatly add to its value. Although some of the chapters are difficult to read, others are much more accessible. Many, like myself, will read chapters here and there as our interest directs rather than reading from cover to cover. It is a kind of Systematic Theology of the Puritans dealing with such subjects as the attributes of God, the covenants of works, redemption and grace, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology and theology in practice. It is not a cold and abstract book but one which the reader will find heart-warming and challenging.

Here we find deep but sound and enlightening theology. For example Francis Cheynell (1608-1665) gives an excellent summary of the doctrine of the Trinity: 'We do believe that God is one, most singly and singularly one, and an only one: the unity of the Godhead is ... a most singular unity... All three persons have one and the same single and infinite Godhead, and therefore must needs mutually subsist in one another, because they are all three one and the same infinite God ... united in their one nature, not confounded in their distinct subsistences; nay though their subsistence is in one another, yet their subsistences are distinct, but the nature most singularly the same'.

Take the first chapter on Puritan preaching as another example. John Preston defines preaching as 'a public interpretation or dividing the Word, performed by an ambassador or minister who speaks to the

people instead of God and in the name of Christ'. This is why the Puritans often placed behind their names 'preacher of the gospel' rather than listing their degrees. They expected results to follow from their preaching, including, according to Nicholas Byfield, 'opening men's hearts, begetting faith, giving the Holy Spirit, imparting the childlike fear of God, trembling and humbling the proud heart, and speaking via the Spirit to the churches'. Biblical references are given for each point. The Puritans trusted that God's Word would not return unto Him void. They saw preaching as the minister's 'principal work' and the hearer's 'principal benefit'. Thomas Hall said: 'Ministers must be preachers. They not only may but they must preach. They must either preach or perish: this must be done or they undone'. They believed a 'preacher should ascend the pulpit each time as if it were his first time and might well be his last time, praying that it might be the best sermon he ever preached'. Baxter wrote, 'Speak to your people as to men that must be awakened either here or in hell'.

This is a great mine of good things and specially to be recommended to ministers.

William Macleod

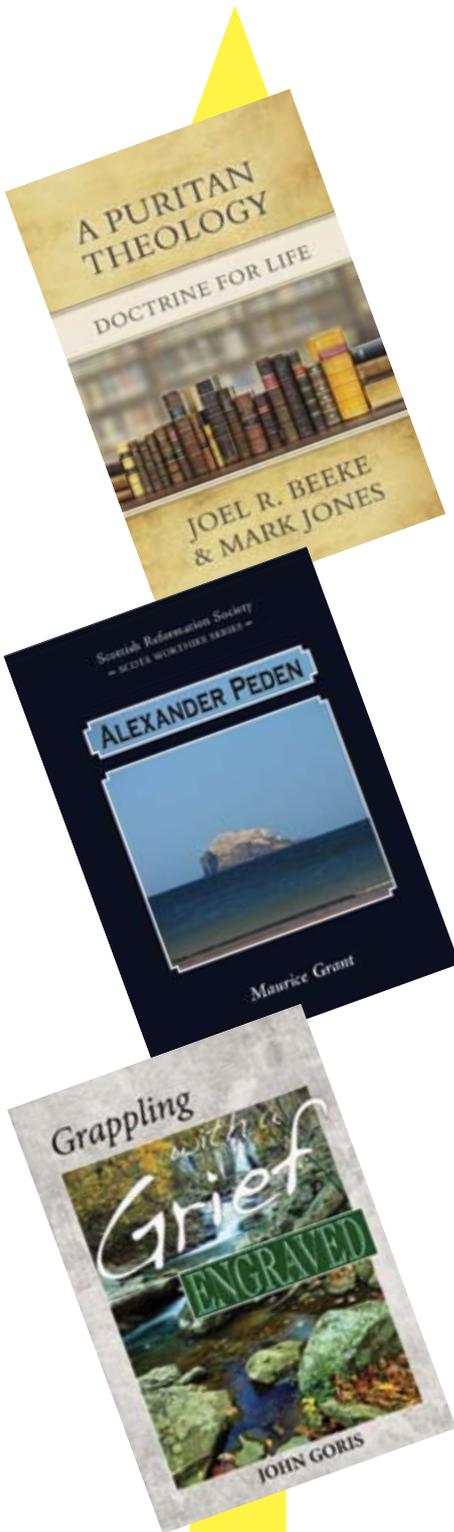
Alexander Peden

Maurice Grant

Scottish Reformation Society,
pbk, 53pp, £4.00

Covenanter biography is familiar territory for Maurice Grant, elder in our own Edinburgh congregation, whose three substantial volumes on the Covenanting martyrs Cameron, Cargill and Renwick grace the bookshelves of many Christian homes, and are already recognised as standard works.

This recent contribution to the Scottish Reformation Society's Scots Worthies series is a smaller affair, in recognition of the fact that Sandy Peden has left little by way of documentary remains, and is altogether a



more peripheral figure in seventeenth-century church history than the three names already mentioned. His fame rests on the popular accounts of the prophetic insights and supernatural escapes that marked his beleaguered ministry in the South of Scotland during the days of conventicles and dragoons.

Mr Grant traces Peden's career through education, his work as a schoolmaster in Tarbolton, and his all too brief settled ministry at New Luce near Stranraer from 1660 to 1662. Ejected with the other resolute Presbyterians from the Church of Scotland, Peden courageously ministered in barns and private homes, both in Scotland and Ireland, before finally being arrested by the Government troops, and imprisoned on the notorious Bass Rock. Miraculously freed in London, while apparently expecting to be banished to the colonies, Peden returned bravely to his peripatetic ministry, and remained a fugitive for the rest of his life, dying eventually just three years short of the Glorious Revolution.

Mr Grant roots Peden's courageous ministry firmly in his passion for the Headship of Christ over His Church, in defiance of the pretensions of the Stewart monarchy. He shows how Peden ploughed something of a lonely furrow, declining the call from the 'United Societies' who had rejected the legitimacy of the King on the one hand, but equally refusing to accept a Royal indulgence that would have permitted him to minister legally as a Presbyterian under certain restrictions. More moderate than his younger contemporary James Renwick, Peden's ministry focussed on Gospel proclamation rather than political action, but nonetheless he took a loving parting from Renwick shortly before his death.

The book handles the accounts of Peden's fulfilled prophecies judiciously, recognising with Dr Kennedy of Dingwall that a rejection of charismatic gifts does not necessitate a denial of genuine insights granted by the Lord as part of an intimate prayer life. Mr Grant also recounts the two occasions on which Peden escaped the dragoons by imploring the Lord to 'cast the lap of thy cloak over old Sandy', a prayer answered in the sudden descent of mist to cover his flight.

Sadly little record remains of Peden's preaching, which was mostly addressed to small congregations gathered in secret, but one quote stands out from the one source that we have, from a sermon in 1682, which really sums up his whole ministry: 'A poor believer never gets a bonnier blink of Jesus Christ than when the cross lies heaviest between his shoulders; for suffering is the ready way to glory, and this the experience of all the clouds of witnesses that have suffered for Christ can testify'.

The book is warmly commended as a fitting tribute to a faithful ministry in very difficult times.

Rev Alasdair Macleod

Grappling with a Grief Engraved

John Goris

Matrix Typography Ltd,
pbk, 52pp, £12.75 (including postage)

For order contact on email:
walter@matrix-typography.co.nz

This charming book, just published in 2013, contains almost fifty poems written by the author to express his tender sorrow on the death of his beloved wife Yoke Lan (known also

as Diane), who passed to her eternal rest in Christ early in 2012. The author has dedicated it to their children, Grace and Sam. John Goris was born in the Netherlands and emigrated with his parents to Australia in 1955. He entered the Christian ministry in 1966 and served as pastor in Reformed churches both in Australia and New Zealand. His late beloved wife was born in Malaysia and died after almost three months of hospitalisation and treatment for leukaemia. The author's poems reflect his deep sense of loss and yet also his assured comfort because of the gospel. Husbands and wives who love Jesus Christ must at their deaths part for a time; but in glory they will at last be reunited forever. In sweet poetic language John Goris weaves these two emotions together in a way that will bring help and comfort to other Christian believers who have gone through the sorrowful experience of losing their precious wife or husband.

Rev Maurice Roberts

Marriage DVD

Learn about God's Design of Marriage

Lovewise

£20.00 plus £1.50 p&p,

Order from - info@lovewise.or.uk,

Tel. 01912813636

With the subject of marriage so prevalent in the media right now, what better time to assess young folk's views of marriage and try to educate them from Scripture? My dad was asked to review this DVD but soon realised that I as a teenager might be better equipped, as I fall into the 14-18 year age group it is aimed at.

Aesthetically the DVD is not the sleekest in terms of transitions/ graphics, but it does the job well. The content is generally good, with clear concise points made on various subjects, although I feel that these could have been explored in more depth as some of the material will be familiar to children from a Christian household. The length of the clips is helpful for use with teenagers - there are four in total and all are roughly ten minutes long; enough to convey the necessary information well, but short enough to play before a youth group. They will hold attention. The use of real couples in the clips adds charm and a human element. They expound the messages in a genuine, insightful and warm manner.

Another helpful aspect of the DVD is that it comes with a Leader's resource Booklet filled with discussion questions and points which would be useful if you were looking to pursue the things said in the clips further, making sure they're fully understood.

This DVD is good as a starting point for further exploration of Christian marriage and courting, though at times the presenter could have engaged with the viewers better. I also feel that being aimed at teenagers/youth groups, the content could have focused more on them, or that the facts could have been presented in a way more relevant to that age group. This DVD covers a very important topic and precisely lays down the facts. I feel that it is a very useful resource for youth groups and clubs.

*Caitlin Quigley (15),
Airdrie RP Church*

Evangelistic Preaching (Part I)

Rev David Murray

There has been a welcome resurgence of expository preaching in the Reformed church over the last 20-30 years, and especially of 'consecutive expository preaching' – preaching through books of the Bible, verse-by-verse and chapter-by-chapter. But together with that resurgence of consecutive expository preaching, there has also come a decline in what I would call 'converting evangelistic preaching'.

Negatively

What do I mean by 'converting evangelistic preaching'? Let me give two negatives to begin with. I don't mean teaching sermons with an evangelistic PS; a doctrinal sermon with a brief concluding appeal or call to the unconverted to seek Christ, believe in Christ, look to Christ, etc.

Neither, at the other extreme, do I mean content-less sermons made up simply of repeated evangelistic imperatives, commands, invitations, and exhortations; sermons that have nothing for the head but are all addressed to the heart or will.

Positively

What do I mean, then, by evangelistic preaching? Let me put it positively: *Evangelistic preaching expounds God's Word (it is expository) with the primary aim of the salvation of lost souls (rather than the instruction of God's people).* Stuart Olyott says it is to 'preach from the Bible with the immediate aim of the immediate conversion of every soul in front of us'.

So, what really distinguishes evangelistic preaching from all other kinds of preaching is its obvious and unmistakable aim – conversion. Its target is unconverted hearers. And its conscious and deliberate aim is to call, invite, and command needy souls to repent and believe the Gospel. It is this kind of preaching that has become increasingly rare in many Reformed churches – is it not?

I'd like to look at this subject from four angles. First, I'd like to examine the *rarity* of evangelistic preaching (as defined above): Why is it so rare? Then I will propose *reasons* in favour of it: Why should we engage in evangelistic preaching? Next I will survey the *range* of evangelistic preaching: the different kinds of sermons that come under this heading. And, finally, I will look at the *results*: What does evangelistic preaching look like and sound like?

I. The Rarity of Evangelistic Preaching

The great expository preacher, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, made sure that at least one sermon every Sunday was directed primarily to the unsaved in his congregation. That was also the practice in the Scottish Presbyterian churches I grew up

in. But most Reformed churches have no such distinction today. Both morning and evening sermons tend to be primarily teaching sermons for God's people. Why is this so?

The Preacher

We start by pointing a finger at ourselves. Many of us have to admit that we much prefer to be teachers than pleaders. It is easier to engage in explanation than application. It is more socially acceptable, it is more dignified and respectable to be engaged in calm reasoning and deduction, rather than in anxious weeping and beseeching. I think we'd all have to admit that it is easier emotionally and socially to be teachers than evangelists. And that prejudice, that bias, influences our choice of text and the way we preach our texts.

In addition to our prejudice, there is also our pragmatism. Let's get people in first. Get them used to our church. Then we will become more 'evangelistic'. After all we don't want to put them off by telling them they are sinners who need a Saviour; or that they must abandon their own works and trust in Christ's grace alone; or that without faith in Christ they will be punished forever in hell, etc. Surely it's much wiser to begin more slowly, more carefully, more diplomatically; and then once they are in a while, we can begin to be a bit more confrontational and demanding. But then more new faces appear, and so the pragmatic cycle begins again.

Presumption also lurks in the background of many preachers' minds. Some pastors dangerously presume that their hearers are already saved. Assuming that all is well with their souls, they teach, instruct, and give guidance on how to live the Christian life; but they rarely preach for conversion.

The Congregation

When we preach evangelistic sermons, some mature Christians in our congregations, those we often lean on for our encouragement and strength, might feel (or even say), 'Well there wasn't much for me in that sermon ... that's more like milk for babies than meat for the mature'. Of course, many mature Christians love to hear evangelistic sermons. They enjoy being evangelized all over again, and they especially love to hear sermons addressed to their unconverted family and friends. However, others may not respond so appreciatively as they do to our epic sermons on Romans. That lack of response can impact what we preach and how we preach.

Also, we might not have many unconverted people in front of us. My first congregation had only 20-30 people. Sometimes there were maybe only 3-5 unconverted hearers in an evening service. It's a lot harder to preach an evangelistic sermon in these circumstances, because everyone knows to whom you are directing your warning, wooing, and pleading words. Teaching messages are so much more comfortable than convicting messages – both to preach and to hear. That's especially true if our few unconverted hearers are very 'moral' or 'churchy' people.

There may also be in our congregation those who might view evangelistic preaching with a suspicious eye and ear, especially if they come from a hyper-Calvinistic stream of Christian upbringing. Maybe others have come out of Arminian easy-believism, hyper-emotionalism, and decisionism, and react against any kind of emotional appeal to the unsaved. We don't want to offend these people, we want to keep them on our side, and so again perhaps we hold back from regular, full-

throated evangelistic preaching.

The World

We are not pluralistic. We believe, surely, in the exclusive claims of Christ. That's what we swear to, sign up to, and state at our ordinations. But, we live in such a pluralistic, many-ways-to-God world, that it's extremely difficult not to be influenced by that, even subconsciously.

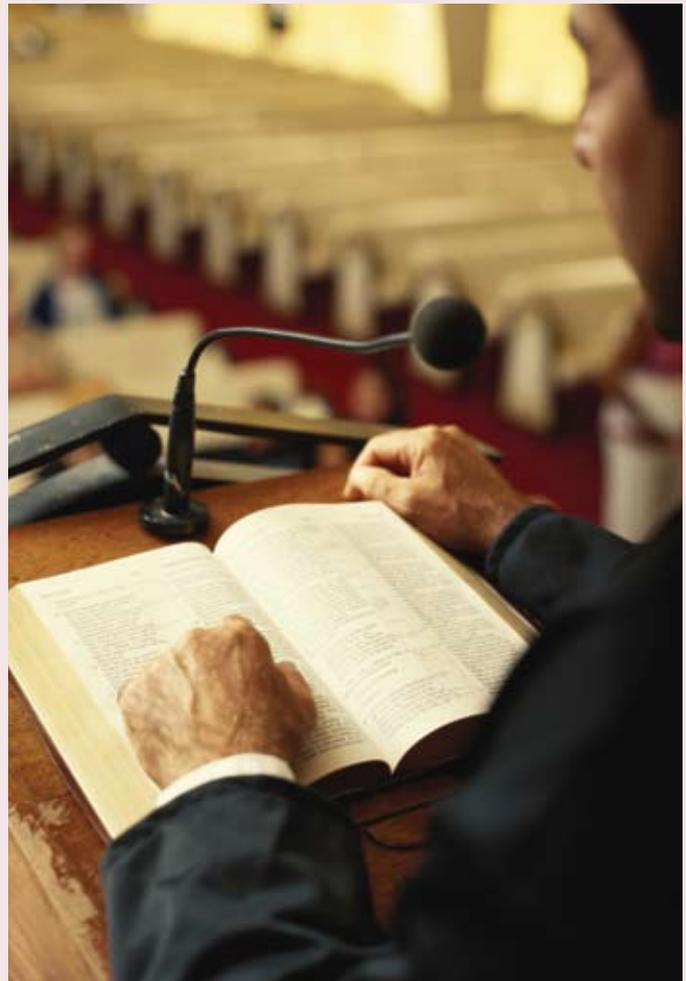
Maybe, in the back of many ministers' minds, the sharp edge of Gospel exclusivity has been blunted by worldly influence. They may not deny that Christ is the only way to heaven, and they may not preach many-ways-to-God. But they do not keep the believer/unbeliever distinction or the heaven/hell contrast constantly and vividly before their minds. And of course that's going to affect their preaching – both its content and tone.

The real test of incipient pluralism is, 'How do we really view the unconverted?' Is our first thought when we see them, 'These precious souls are hell-bound, without Christ, lost, under the wrath of God, however religious they may be?' I'm deeply afraid that a kind of incipient, subtle, often unnoticed pluralism has blunted the sharp edge of evangelistic preaching.

The Devil

Then, of course, there is our great enemy, the devil. If there's any kind of preaching that has been more successful in stealing captives from him and claiming them for the Lord, it is passionate evangelistic preaching. No weapon in the Gospel armoury has been so effective in rescuing souls. Of course, he's going to fight it, and he's going to supply every excuse not to preach in an evangelistic way.

To be continued.



Congregational Remittances - August 2013

CENTRAL ORDINARY REMITTANCES BUILDING FUND YTD 2013

Presbytery of Inverness

	2013 August	2013 To Aug	2012 To Aug
Aberdeen	0	1,200	11,549
Duthil-Dores	0	1,474	15,044
Inverness	0	2,000	18,000
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,400	11,312
Total Inverness	0	6,074	55,905

Northern Presbytery

	2013 August	2013 To Aug	2012 To Aug
Assynt & Scourie	530	0	2,673
Brora	453	2,000	14,208
Kiltearn	411	600	4,422
Tarbat	0	0	6,913
Total Northern	1,394	2,600	28,216

Southern Presbytery

	2013 August	2013 To Aug	2012 To Aug
Arran	484	256	5,663
Ayr	0	940	6,838
Dumfries	0	0	0
Edinburgh	13	1,800	19,224
Glasgow - Partick	45	2,000	19,000
Glasgow - Shettleston	291	2,000	18,280
Glasgow - Knightswood	591	4,700	18,787
Rothsay	1,000	0	0
Total Southern	2,423	11,696	87,791

Outer Hebrides Presbytery

	2013 August	2013 To Aug	2012 To Aug
Cross	0	1,625	15,098
Harris - Leverburgh	233	1,200	11,252
Harris - Scalpay	0	1,900	17,571
Knock & Point	0	915	9,094
North Uist	1,085	600	6,893
Stornoway	3,835	8,294	52,394
Total Outer Hebrides	5,153	14,534	112,303

Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron

	2013 August	2013 To Aug	2012 To Aug
Bracadale	235	0	4,833
Duirinish (Waternish)	0	0	2,000
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	840	4,350	11,923
Lochalsh	495	1,150	9,510
Poolewe & Aultbea	893	637	8,091
Ullapool	0	0	0
Portree	0	0	9,886
Snizort	1,000	1,200	17,875
Strath	60	760	5,125
Total Skye/Lochcarron	3,523	8,097	69,244

Total Congregations

	2013 August	2013 To Aug	2012 To Aug
Other Donations	851	2,063	20,954
Legacy			3,000
TOTAL	13,344	45,064	377,411
Including Gift Aid	1,709		49,209
			45,171

Sojourn in the Land of the Book

Mrs Marion Fraser (Shettleston)

We were happy together right from the start – all thirty-one of us. Tour leader, Rev Kenneth Macdonald, had made ‘Costa Coffee’ in Edinburgh airport our meeting place, at 1.30pm on Tuesday, 16th April 2013. Most of us were there early for our flight to Amsterdam. With such camaraderie, the time just melted away in fellowship and joyful anticipation. For my husband and myself it was the fulfilment of a life-time dream – to see where the Lord had lived His life on earth.

The small hours of the next morning saw us landed safely in Tel Aviv. Paula, our guide, was waiting to welcome us: a short, well-spoken, knowledgeable Jewish lady who was to become like a friend to us. We all took to her from day one, along with Gabby, our reliable, patient bus-driver. Paula understood our peculiar group for whom shrines and relics held little interest. She had a good grasp of both the Old and New Testaments making her a very special guide for us.

Jerusalem

We piled into our bus and sped off in the darkness of night toward Jerusalem. An hour or more later, ascending the hill into Jerusalem about 3am, Mr Macdonald announced the singing of Psalm 122: ‘Jerusalem, within thy gates our feet shall standing be’. I found the singing most moving as the night lights of the ancient city came into view. The Psalm finished, then came over the coach speakers the song: ‘Jerusalem, sing for the night is over ... hosanna to our king’, sung by a powerful soprano. Christ is indeed our King. He of whom the prophets spoke, whom we have embraced in the Gospel.

Wednesday 17th April - Opening the curtains of our well-equipped hotel room to see Jerusalem in the morning light was a special moment. After a rich breakfast we all climbed into the bus, Mr Macdonald counting heads to ensure all were on board. Paula, in her place at the front with the microphone, announced her plan to keep us all together: each person was allocated a ‘chicken’ to look after for the duration of the tour. The historical sites were busy so it meant that each one of us was accounted for and not left behind. (I must say I enjoyed being Pat’s ‘chick’. She, being a tall lady, could usually track me down.) First stop was the Mount of Olives. As we filed out of the bus one by one we were clutching our jackets and zipping them up because the wind gusted around us. What a treasured moment for us to be standing on the mount from which our Lord was ‘received up into heaven’. There are more than seventy-thousand graves around the Mount of Olives. Some are very old, dating back to our Lord’s time. Some were new as Paula pointed out as she led us, on foot, down the mountain. We passed by the Dome of the Tear Drop and on to the garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the mountain where His sweat was ‘as great drops of blood’. The river Kidron ran near by. Gethsemane means the olive press. Ancient olive trees

are still there and are said to be a thousand years old. Out of the old, dead-looking, gnarled tree-trunks new leafy branches had sprung. The garden was neatly kept. Red geranium flowers were swaying in the breeze beside the paths that ran through the garden. Paula pointed out that there would have been no geraniums in the garden at the time. Gardens were kept for food rather than for decoration. Nearby stood the ‘Church of the Agony’ where we remembered the galling hours spent by our Saviour. We also visited the Pool of Siloam, a long reservoir lodged under a rock in a gully below the city in the Kidron valley.

Wailing Wall

Later we were taken to the Wailing Wall which was part of the retaining wall for the temple foundations. Orthodox Jewish men were standing saying prayers, many wearing black coats and tall black hats. Some threw little notes of paper up into the wall with amazing perseverance. (I imagine prayers were written on these notes.) The notes had to find lodging in some greenery that grew in cracks in the wall. A wooden fence divided this area from where the ladies could offer their prayers. Some ladies, with expressions of extreme devotion on their faces, sat on chairs near the wall. Our ladies joined them for a few minutes and had our own reflections.

New excavations have uncovered evidence of a grand house which is thought to have been the home of a chief priest, possibly the Palace of Caiaphas (Lk.22:54). There was a dark, harrowing dungeon suggesting the place of custody of our suffering Lord until he was handed over to Pilate. From there we visited what was thought to be the Upper Room and the tomb of King David.

Next day we were off to the Jerusalem Museum. There we saw a minutely detailed model of the city as it was in the time of Jesus. Our expert guide pointed out the grandiose temple of Herod, incorporating Solomon’s porch where Peter and John healed the lame man (Acts 3). The walls that stand today belong to a later date – the time of the Crusades in the 13th century. Adjoining the model was a display of a number of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Before our eyes were striking evidences of the accuracy and integrity of our own Scriptures in the original!

The Holocaust Museum

A visit to the Holocaust Museum was a sad and solemn experience. One and a half million Jewish children perished at the hands of the Nazis. Illuminated portraits of the children who lost their lives hung in the darkened auditorium. As we filed silently through, the names, nationality and ages of those who died in the gas chambers were called out. ‘Weep for yourselves and for your children’, comes to mind. There were housed there every possible reminder of that awful atrocity. A large glass container with varying sizes of little shoes which had belonged to the children sat in the middle of the floor. Heart rending! In side rooms we listened to eyewitnesses’ videos and poignant stories of loss and survival. A garden with plaques contained trees planted in memory of ‘righteous Gentiles’ who aided the escape of Jewish individuals.

In the Judean hill-country we climbed a steep ascent to a monastery which housed monuments to the birth and life of John the Baptist. His parents were brought vividly to mind. The hills had been painstakingly cultivated by gathering stones to

build terraces as breaks for the cascading water so that vines could grow. In Bethlehem where we had a Christian Palestinian as our guide. Our first stop was an extensive craft-shop owned by Christians where the ladies (and gents too) had a heyday! From there we were taken to the Shepherds' Fields. One of the many caves had been turned into a place of worship with a lectern and chairs. This, we were told, could have been the place where Jesus was born. Houses were built on top of the caves on the hillside slopes. When there was 'no room in the inn', Mary and Joseph would have been directed to a cave underneath. The animals were kept there. As we left, we were pointed to a shepherd, deep in the valley below, leading his sheep home to the fold as he rode on his donkey. The lambs for the sacrifices of the temple were reared on these hillsides of Bethlehem.

On Friday 19th April we went to see recently excavated foundations which are supposed to be the house of David, built with gifted cedar from Hiram of Tyre. From there David could have viewed on the roof-tops below, that fateful sight of Bathsheba bathing. Down many steps we found ourselves in a tunnel. This was likely the access that Joab found to overcome the Jebusites and capture the ancient stronghold for David's capital. We could dip our hands into the gushing spring of Gihon and taste its clear waters – the supply which Hezekiah (2Chron.32:30) later diverted by tunnel to the west of the city. We walked to the pool of Bethesda (Jn 5:2). It had been excavated so it was lower than where we stood but one could still see the porches standing by and imagine what it used to be like with the many sick people lying around it. That day too we walked the way of the Cross. It was uphill. In our minds we remembered the One who walked there carrying His cross. We sang verses from a Gaelic Psalm and an English Psalm in the magnificent Crusader Church of St Anne. The acoustics were

fantastic and the sound kept echoing around the vaulted roof after the singing stopped.

Garden Tomb

Words are inadequate to express the moments that we spent at the Garden Tomb. Visitors were taken by appointment only, it being privately owned land. Our guide was a grandfather of Swedish descent named Bertil who was a true Christian. He told us of the one and a quarter million visitors he had there each year. One year they counted sixty nationalities represented. 'What other man on earth had drawn such attention?' he asked. Bertil explained that the most important thing is not where Christ's grave was, but to have Christ in our hearts and to know Him. 'Many have not seen but yet have believed'. Bertil emphasised how Christ's work was 'completely complete' when He said, 'It is finished'. As we sat there we had a good view of the place of the Skull where the Holy One may have been crucified. Bertil explained how that very hill used to be part of Mount Moriah before erosion set in. Moriah was the place where the 'Friend of God' consented to offer his son. Jesus Himself said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad' (Jn.8:56). Bertil's parting words were, 'We shall meet in the new Jerusalem'. Two by two we were allowed to go inside the tomb which was a cave cut into the rock. There was an area on the left where the body was prepared for burial with the final resting place on the right side. My husband and I stood on the left side. He put his hand on my left shoulder and said in a hushed voice, 'He did it for us'. These were precious moments. Across from the tomb there was a mosaic plaque sitting on the ground among green shrubs on which were the words: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him' (1Cor 2:9), and the echo came from within our hearts, 'He is not here, He is risen'!



“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine,
receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:
for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

2 John 10-11