

Free Church **Witness**



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New Perspective on Paul

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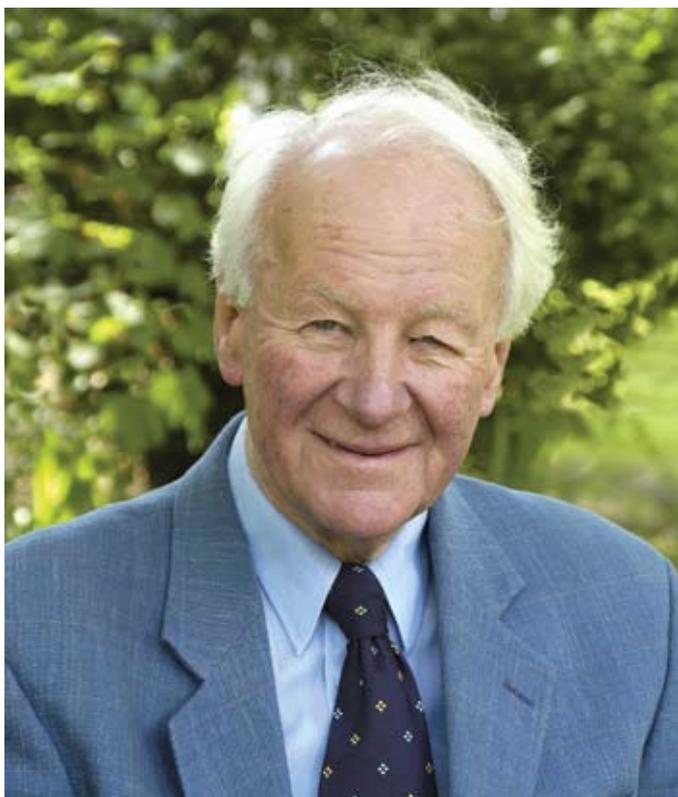
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Above: Rev John Wimber

Left: Rev John Stott

Gifts of Healing

Recently I read the large two volume official biography of John Stott written by Timothy Dudley-Smith. The books are interesting because of the account they give of many events, organisations and people in the British evangelical scene during the second half of the twentieth century. There is no doubting the huge impact Stott made in the cause of the evangelical party in the Church of England and also in world-wide evangelism, especially among students. In the early 1940s when Stott studied at Cambridge there were very few evangelical students and even fewer evangelicals in the ministry, but over the years their number grew and Stott under God had a major part to play in that. He had a tremendous ministry in the universities.

The downside of his work was his somewhat Arminian presentation of the gospel and his use of decisions. Especially in the early days he was fond in explaining the Gospel of using Holman Hunt's picture of the soul as having a door with the lock on the inside and Jesus standing outside pleading for an entrance. The problem with the illustration is that as far as Scripture is concerned the person behind the door is lying in a heap dead and totally dependent on God for resurrection. Without God's irresistible grace the door will never be opened.

Stott's attachment to Anglicanism led to his notorious conflict with Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones at the National Assembly of Evangelicals in 1966. It is good to note how he visited Lloyd-Jones at the end of his life and sought reconciliation. It is disappointing to see his ecumenicity, his willingness to talk to the Roman Catholics as brothers in Christ. Also his openness

to the annihilation of the wicked undermined the doctrine of eternal hell. He played a major part in the Lausanne Covenant. Sadly its statement on the inspiration and authority of Scripture was not as strong as it should be and he is held responsible for that. His emphasis on social action along with the preaching of the Word opened the way to the social action replacing the preaching. One area however where he stood against the trend was with respect to the Charismatic movement. He rejected the teaching which was becoming very strong as the century passed that there is an experience of the 'baptism of the Spirit' which is subsequent to conversion and which they say is evidenced by tongue-speaking.

Meeting with John Wimber

On this subject it is interesting to note Stott's meeting with John Wimber who was a leading Charismatic. Later he wrote down what Wimber had said with regard to miraculous healings. I found it fascinating, enlightening and I believe well worth considering.

Wimber said:

(1) *All I am asking is that people be open for God to do unique things occasionally, in confirmation of His Word.*

(2) *An ever-increasing number of people in our church (the Vineyard Church in Anaheim, California) are not healed. I myself am sick in my own body (I am on daily medication). More than about 400 people have come to me saying that the Lord has told them that if they lay hands on me, I will be healed. I have said to them 'OK, go ahead', but I have not been healed.*

(3) *We both agreed [Stott and Wimber] that we have two*



'Our God is not limited and is able to answer prayer in amazing ways. Many of us have seen in our own lives God do wonderful things which we thought impossible. We were desperate and God answered our prayers. Furthermore this has encouraged our faith.'

difficulties, (a) in defining what a miracle is, and (b) in proving a healing in a documentable way. His summary was that about 30% are healed, 30% are blessed but not healed, and 30% receive nothing.

(4) He said that he has never seen major deformities of the body healed, although thousands say they have been cured of conditions which cannot be seen.

John Richard Wimber (1934-1997) was a musician who was converted in 1963. He became a pastor and one of the founding leaders of the Vineyard Movement; a Charismatic, Evangelical, Christian denomination which began in the USA and has now spread to many countries world-wide. What he said is helpful in assessing where most Charismatics stand and also in measuring the movement against Scripture. To me this is quite a confession on Wimber's part.

Point 1

Wimber asks us to be open to God doing unique things occasionally. With that we have no problem. Our God is mighty and we do believe in miracles. Our God is not limited and is able to answer prayer in amazing ways. Many of us have seen in our own lives God do wonderful things which we thought impossible. We were desperate and God answered our prayers. Furthermore this has encouraged our faith. However this should not be seen as God doing something to confirm His Word. The Word is confirmed by the Holy Spirit witnessing to its truth. 'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God' (Rom.8:15-16). Just as we experience assurance that we are God's children through the witness of the Spirit, so we are assured of the truth of our heavenly Father's Word through the Spirit's testimony. When the New Testament revelation was being given, signs followed the word preached. 'The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following' (Mark 16:20). These signs were mighty, visible and verifiable. The Bible having been given, the signs ceased.

Point 2

Wimber recognises the fact that many people within Charismatic churches are not healed. Wimber himself was on daily medication. He died at the relatively young age of 63. More than four hundred people believed that God gave them the power to heal him; they tried and failed. God said in the Old Testament that if someone claimed to prophesy and if what he said did not come to pass he should be put to death because he had spoken lies in the name of the Lord (Deut.18:20-22). There are an awful lot of false prophets in Charismatic circles. Also Wimber here is acknowledging that individuals today do not have the power to heal all sicknesses.

Point 3

Wimber states some interesting percentages. He reckoned that around 30% received no benefit at all from the laying on of hands. Another 30% or so were spiritually blessed or encouraged through the experience although their physical health had not improved. So, of those who come for healing most do not receive it. We know of none who came to Christ for healing who did not receive it.

With regard to the 30% who claimed to be healed there was a problem. How is a miracle to be defined? Is it for example just some positive improvement? How could it be shown that a miracle actually took place? There could be healing without it being a miracle. Kindly hands, prayer made and concern shown could be of benefit without any special intervention of God. Generally what happened could not be documented eg by doctors or scientists.

Point 4

This is the most significant of all. Wimber admits that he has never seen major deformities of the body healed, although thousands say they have been cured of conditions which cannot be seen. When Jesus healed the man with the withered hand everyone could see the miracle. When He healed the man blind from birth even the sceptical Pharisees could not deny it. When Lazarus was raised from the dead after being

dead four days no one could deny that a miracle had taken place. Similarly when Peter healed the man lame from birth, a man who had never walked, it was clear that a miracle had taken place. The shape of the man's body must have changed greatly as his muscles grew. He did not have to learn to walk, indeed he was 'walking, and leaping' immediately (Acts 3:8).

The power of mind over matter is very strong. People given placebos often experience significant healing because of their faith in the drug. Many illnesses and symptoms disappear if the individual concerned is convinced that they are better. A positive attitude in illness is half the cure.

Some years ago, following a school assembly which I took, a pupil from a Charismatic background came up to me and in all seriousness suggested that if I took along someone who was sick and healed them before the assembly the pupils would really pay attention. Certainly miracle working is exciting. It does gather the crowds. Charismatic churches are often the fastest growing, though they are often the fastest dying too. It is important to remember the words of Christ in the parable, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead' (Lk.16:31). How many miracles were performed by Jesus and yet how few believed in Him!

Can miracles happen today? Certainly! Can God answer prayer in a dramatic way? Definitely! Do certain people have the gifts of healing? I, for one, have yet to be convinced. If such individuals really have the gift then why cannot it be scientifically verified? If such people have the gift of healing why cannot they give legs to those who have lost them (through amputation or accident), or eyes to those with no eyes? Would it be a problem for God to do that? Surely not! Jesus said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father' (Jn.14:12). If, as the Charismatics say, these greater works belong to the church today and refer to miracles then why are the 'healings' of today so inferior to the ones in Christ's day? Actually the greater works refer to conversions which are much more numerous today that they were in Jesus' day.

The crowds gathered to Jesus after the feeding of the five thousand. They wanted to make Him king. He was not impressed: 'Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed' (Jn.6:26-27). Their whole attitude was worldly. He wished them to see the true significance of what He had done, recognize Him as Messiah and His kingdom as a spiritual kingdom. Though He could perform miracles as none other could or did, yet His concern was to be a preacher and He saw himself anointed for that purpose: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor' (Lk.4:18).

Charismatic churches are often large and outwardly successful. People love the drama rather than the serious study of the Scriptures. The worship is designed to entertain and to please man. Our concern must be with the directions given in Scripture and with what pleases God. The purpose of worship is to glorify God and to edify man. Better to be faithful than successful.

Praise for Redeeming Love

Let us love and sing and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's Name!
He has hushed the law's loud thunder,
He has quenched Mount Sinai's flame.
He has wash'd us with His blood,
He has brought us nigh to God.

Let us love the Lord who bought us,
Pity'd us when enemies,
Called us by His grace, and taught us,
Gave us ears and gave us eyes:
He has wash'd us with His blood,
He presents our souls to God.

Let us sing, though fierce temptation
Threaten hard to bear us down!
For the Lord, our strong salvation,
Holds in view the conqueror's crown:
He who washed us with his blood
Soon will bring us home to God.

Let us wonder, grace and justice
Join, and point to mercy's store;
When, through grace, in Christ our trust is,
Justice smiles and asks no more:
He who wash'd us with His blood
Has secured our way to God.

Let us praise, and join the chorus
Of the saints enthron'd on high;
Here they trusted Him before us,
Now their praises fill the sky;
'Thou hast wash'd us with Thy blood,
Thou art worthy, Lamb of God!'

Hark! the name of Jesus sounded
Loud, from golden harps above!
Lord, we blush, and are confounded,
Faint our praises, cold our love!
Wash our souls and songs with blood,
For by thee we come to God.

John Newton



Access by One Spirit (Part II)

A Sermon by Rev John Macsween (1910-1982)

Late Minister of the Free Church congregations of Toronto and Point

**'For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father'
Ephesians 2:18**

Last month we saw how salvation can be defined as access to God. We noted how man was cast out of the Garden of Eden. Man is at enmity with God, the God who expelled him, the God who cast him out on account of his sin. Man is at war with God and from man's side the angel with the flaming sword is still at the gate.

Through Christ

The angel is not, and can not be displaced by man, but nevertheless God has made peace and to make peace means, or implies, at least, coming to close quarters with the flaming sword. There was to be peace on no other condition; there was to be reconciliation on no other basis; there was to be a way of access in no other way but by coming to grips with the flaming sword that guarded the way to the Tree of Life, that is, that guarded the way to the presence of God. But we have access - therefore, someone must have come to grips with the flaming sword.

The Prophet Zechariah speaks in these terms, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered' (Zech.13:7). Now this sword is no other but the very sword of which we read when man was expelled from Eden. And when it is said 'Awake' it would seem that in some sense the sword lay dormant, although still executing its purpose, of course. Now, if that is a legitimate thought, we think of it as meaning that it lay dormant in this sense: that the blessing of God had come out and that the saints of God had come in, under the Old Testament dispensation. The sword did not bar Abraham from access to God, although the work of reconciliation was not yet effected. It lay dormant in this sense, that there was a way of access based on a coming reconciliation for in a sense the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, yet He was not actually slain until the fullness of the time had come, and when it did, there was the awakening of the sword. Its blade was as keen as ever, its fire as hot, and here we see one approaching and well might we ask: Who will ascend up to the hill of God? Who can meet the flaming sword? Who can abide His wrath? Who is this, indeed, that cometh from Edom travelling in the greatness of His might? (Is.63:1). And in what direction is He going? He is going towards the sword. He is to do business with that which turns this way and that, that which turns every way, guarding the way to the Tree of Life. And as He draws nearer, speaking with all reverence, He feels the heat - and it is the heat of the flaming sword that we see bringing out

His sweat in Gethsemane as great drops of blood, even when the night was cold. It was a cold night. John tells us that the soldiers made a fire of coals, 'for it was cold' (Jn.18:18), but the heat from this sword brought out the sweat of the Champion of His people as He drew nearer to do business with it, and nearer and nearer He comes. There is no turning back, He has set His face like a flint and as His disciples followed they were afraid; and they could only follow so far, then they turned and fled. But He went on. For Him there was to be no turning back, and He met the sword. 'It clave His Humanity', as Lachlan Mackenzie who was in Lochcarron used to say: 'It clave the Humanity until it hit the Divinity'. And then it turned back, it could go no further. He is our peace and that sword is sheathed forever. It is now not only dormant but out of the way for all who are in Christ Jesus, and in Him they ascend up to the hill of God, having received righteousness from Him who went before. We have access through Him and in Him, access into the very presence of God.

There is no place too holy for this peace to enter. There is no more a sign forbidding to come any further. There was a sign on the wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, 'No Gentiles must come beyond this'. There was a sign in the Temple and in the Tabernacle that beyond the veil none must come except the High Priest once every year, but this access is of such a nature that there is no limit set to it; it does not say 'so far but no further'. It is access into the very presence of the Most High - in the Most Holy place. We have access not up to a certain point merely, but access into the Holiest of all and it is through Him who made peace, who met the sword, who came back not without marks of the conflict, but who came back triumphant and as He is seen returning it is in garments rolled in blood. Who is this that cometh, who has been to enemy country and back again? 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel'. Who is it? It is He who speaks in righteousness - 'I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save'.

By the Spirit

Through Him we have access. But it is by the Spirit, that is, by the Holy Spirit of God, by one Spirit, who through Christ leads us into the presence of the Father. And how does the Spirit do this? He does it first of all by enabling the soul to draw near; that is, by imparting life to it. It is the living who have a way of access. A way of access, of course, is of no use to the dead; there might as well be no way at all. As long as they are dead, they cannot take the way, they cannot use the way. But

when it is by the Spirit, it is by the Spirit that gives life. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing' (Jn.6:63). He imparts life and not only does He impart life but He imparts instruction. It is by His Word and Spirit that Christ executes the office of a Prophet by revealing to us the will of God for our salvation - life and instruction.

In what does instruction consist? In this: in His receiving of the things of Christ and revealing them unto us. The immediate cause of the believer's approach to God is not (that is from the point of view of the consciousness of the believer) that the Spirit is leading him. No one draws near to God on this ground - that the Spirit is leading him. On what ground then does he draw near? On this ground - that there is a High Priest over the House of God. His encouragement to draw near is not derived from considering the qualities of the Spirit but is derived from considering the merit of Christ. It is the things of Christ that the Spirit receives to reveal them unto those who have a way of access to the Father. 'Having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart' (Heb.10:21-22). Having a High Priest let us draw near. But how can we say that we have a High Priest? Through the Spirit or by the Spirit. It is the Spirit that enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ. Through Him we both, that is Jew and Gentile, man as man, have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now, it is significant that he doesn't say that we have access unto God - that is true; he doesn't say we have access unto the Lord - that is true; but, we have access *through* the Son, by the Spirit unto the Father; God in the Person of the Father. But why call Him Father? Because, among other things, there could not be access to Him in any other way, nor from any other viewpoint; it is to the Father there is access, and access unto Him as Father. In the Catechism, what does the address in the Lord's Prayer teach us? 'Our Father which art in Heaven' teaches us that we are to draw near to God as children to a father - to the Father. That is access as based on the relationship, and without the relationship of adoption there cannot be access. It is those who are adopted who receive a right to all the privileges of the sons of God, and surely this is the highest of all privileges - to have a way of access unto the Father.

But we must remember that there is a great difference between the right of the child of God (that is the right of the believer) which he has to all the privileges of the sons of God and the conscious enjoyment of that right. The believer may oftentimes be in such a state that he dare not call God his Father; he could not use that relationship in his plea. But does that change the relationship? Not in the least. The right still stands unchanged and unchangeable. But the conscious enjoyment of it, of course, is something else, and this is exactly what we mentioned about peace - the peace made by

the blood of the Cross is never broken, it always holds good in Heaven. How then can the peace, the subjective peace of the believer, the peace he enjoys in his life, be broken? How can that be broken, if the peace, objectively considered, cannot be broken? There is a big difference between the two, although the one of course is based on the other, yet they are to be viewed differently, at least distinctly - with a distinction between them. The enjoyment of the peace in the heart is dependent upon God's gracious ministration of His Grace and that in turn reflects itself in the believer's walk and conversation. The believer can disturb his own peace.

This morning we considered a case of that - when David's peace was not only disturbed but almost vanished. But it didn't change the peace that was made on his behalf. That is something that is beyond the creature. It is not beyond him, alas, to disturb things in himself and fill himself with the darkness of sin, the darkness of unbelief and the darkness of ignorance. But that does not interfere with that which was made and which stands in Heaven, steadfast, unchangeable. So the believer has a right to all the privileges but it cannot be said that he always enjoys all the privileges. But it can be said that he will enjoy them. The time is coming, as someone has put it, when the experience of salvation, the joy of salvation, will be commensurate with salvation itself. As John Macrae (Big Macrae) used to put it, 'The time is coming when the cup of his enjoyment will be as full as the cup of his right'. The right he has to the privileges, his enjoyment of them will be commensurate with that. But that is not in this world. But even in this world he may be made so conscious of peace, of the blessedness of peace, and of the privileges which are his in Christ, that with the Psalmist he may be able to say, 'My cup runs over'. We fail to realise God is sovereign in His dispensing of His comfort as He is sovereign in His dispensing of His salvation.

Nevertheless, this is what holds true - we have access. It is not we ought to have it, but, we have it. So, says the Apostle, in the name of the church, 'We have access through him by one Spirit unto the Father'. And it is the duty, as well as the privilege, of the believer to use every means to possess his possessions, to be in conscious enjoyment of what has been done for him and on his behalf and it is for this reason that we read again and again, walk, 'not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil'.

Prayer

O Blessed One, grant us Thy favour; grant us to know in our hearts that which Thou dost declare to us in Thy Word; enable us to make use of what Thou dost so bountifully and freely set before us - the blessings of the Gospel of Thy Grace; undertake for us and take away our sins, for Christ's sake. Amen.

'It is the duty, as well as the privilege, of the believer to use every means to possess his possessions, to be in conscious enjoyment of what has been done for him and on his behalf.'



New Perspective on Paul

Rev James Clark

In 1977 the publication of E P Sanders' book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* began a series of publications which radically re-interpreted the Gospel, alleging that Paul had misinterpreted the Truth. A 'New Perspective' on the background and writings of Paul dominated the mind and writings of influential New Testament scholars. The result was a radical departure from Reformed theology, and a new Paul emerged, quite a different one from the Paul recognised by the church over the last 2,000 years.

The New Perspective (NP), represented by such men as Sanders, J D G Dunn and N T Wright in particular, taught that Judaism [which they mistakenly equated with the pure religion of the Old Testament] was not a religion of merit after all and that the Jews could be saved without having the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The NP also taught that Paul did not actually have a problem with his burden of guilt before his conversion in Acts 9 because [they say] the Jewish sacrifices were not typical but did in themselves literally take away the guilt of sin and confer forgiveness [again, without a Mediator]. The NP writers attempt to create an [invalid] opposition between the faith of Abraham and the faith of the [converted] Paul, denying that both led to the same 'justification by faith' [although Paul in Romans equates NT faith with the faith of Abraham in Genesis 15]. They imply that Paul added to the Object of faith, as if Abraham, David etc. did not believe in the same Saviour [who was to come] as did Paul. Dunn's writings, in particular, give the impression that the Gentiles [under Paul's influence] should not have attempted to abolish the 'vain traditions' of Judaism, but should have embraced them.

Individualistic

The NP also asserts that Paul unduly emphasized the necessity of individual faith for salvation, to the detriment and contradiction of the corporate life of the body of Christ, which they say is the NT emphasis. However, these two lives are not in contradiction, according to the NT. The NT order is that individual saving dependence on Christ is necessary first before the individual can participate in the life of the Christian community. The NP also repeats one of the criticisms launched against Paul almost 2,000 years ago, ie that Paul was antinomian in his teaching and that he overemphasized grace to the detriment of works. They use James chapter 2 to allege that other Apostles did not agree with his emphasis. No doubt Paul's doctrine, like all doctrines, can be perverted and abused, but the abuse of NT doctrine does not make it untrue. One can easily see from this why many followers of the NP find that they have so much in common with Roman Catholic doctrine, especially regarding Justification.

NP writers allege that Paul had much in common with Marcion, a second century heretic who opposed the OT

writings because he thought he saw there a different god from the one portrayed in the NT. NP writers seem to be teaching that salvation in the OT had been by means of the Law and that Paul, by emphasizing Grace, had thus changed the way of salvation. Clearly there is more than a taint of Pelagianism among NP exponents. They do not appear to accept that the Law, as a means of salvation, does indeed contradict salvation by grace alone. Salvation by works was a Judaistic tradition and not the teaching of the OT, which taught salvation by faith alone, as Paul demonstrated in Romans chapter 4 and in Galatians. Moreover, the NT does nowhere teach that grace abolishes our obligation to keep the moral law – Paul himself asserts this in Romans. True faith always seeks sanctification, and grace does not diminish this. The exponents of the NP are confused in their understanding of the purpose of the giving of the law and appear to be satisfied with the formula 'This do and thou shalt live' as the means of salvation. This is to forget that the law was given at Sinai to a redeemed people.

Criticise Reformers

This re-writing of the life and teaching of Paul presupposes that this can be done solely by using the methods of modern literary criticism and involves a critical re-editing of the sources. The spiritual presupposition that there is an inspired unity to the NT [having One overall Author] is sadly lacking. The NP writers add to their criticisms, however respectfully, that Luther, Calvin, etc at the Reformation were led astray by a false understanding of Paul's writings. N T Wright, in particular, suggests that the western world has been led astray in its thinking over the last 500 years because of a mistaken attitude to the Judaistic method of finding favour with God; ie the Jews were actually right in thinking that they could find favour with God by their law-keeping. And yet, the Jews [who are not Christians] to this day reject Christ as the divine and only Saviour. To support their thesis, the NP writers re-interpret the phrase 'the works of the law' to mean the 'works' of the ceremonial law, not the moral law. This, however, contradicts the NT doctrine in Romans, Galatians and Ephesians in particular.

Ecumenical embarrassment

The doctrine of justification by faith alone is an ecumenical embarrassment to the evangelical-liberals nowadays. For example, McGrath, in several of his writings, deliberately blurs the distinction between justification and sanctification, in order to agree with RC statements on alleged doctrinal unity on the doctrine of justification. We cannot agree with McGrath and his confederates that the doctrine of justification 'needs to be liberated from the forms of theological expression used in the sixteenth century'. Eveson justly comments, 'His arguments

for widening the meaning of justification are unconvincing and his definitions are actually dangerous to the evangelical or Gospel Truth ... Biblical terms are not like pieces of plastic that can be made to bend at will to suit a particular need'. He is also right in highlighting the danger in these writers prioritising the sinner's status and acceptance in the church and not firstly before God, '...and this is again something which Rome finds very acceptable'. The forensic dimension of our relation to God is minimised and also, by consequence, the substitutionary obedience of Christ and the doctrine of imputation.

RCs are happy to agree with 'justification by faith', but 'by faith alone' continues to bear the anathema of the Papacy. This doctrine continues to be, as Luther said, 'the article of a standing or a fallen church'. This doctrine will always divide genuine believers from others who rest in some degree upon their works. It is a doctrine which divides, dividing even heaven and hell. Contemporary Jewish scholars still reflect in their writings the pre-conversion theology of Saul of Tarsus, ie that Judaism is a religion of merit, of righteousness by human achievement. The NP 'theologians' are skilfully advocating a justification based partially upon human works, yet Romans 10:4 shows that there can be no middle ground regarding justification! The NP movement is a revisionist view of history and theology motivated by an unhealthy desire for unbiblical ecumenism. Venema does not exaggerate when he says that 'At stake is nothing less than the Gospel itself'.

Misinterpreting Judaism

In conclusion, the NP writers assert that Paul misinterpreted

contemporary Jewish traditions and practice, and favour a return to Judaism, which 'was not so bad after all'. They imply that the Apostle's NT writings were indeed fallible, and therefore not to be trusted. Moreover, Paul is indicted as having led astray the thinking of the religious world by misrepresenting the anti-Christian Jews. The implications of the new doctrines of the NP are far-reaching and they have much in common with the attitudes of liberal higher critics and RC theologians respectively. They cannot be identified as 'evangelicals' [with due respect to Thompson] because they support a 'grace-less moralism' and minimize the individual's relation to Christ. Because the NP writers do not wish to be so perceived, they accordingly wish to disguise their threat to the faith. To this end, they use caricatures of Christian doctrine and exaggerate abuses of Christian practice, while adopting a vagueness in defining their terms and re-interpreting Scripture in accordance with prejudice. This approach in seeking to overturn established Christian doctrine is not new; poison mixed with wholesome and healthy food will still kill you in the end. Waters adds two other important criticisms which confirm that we are confronted with another gospel. 'First, the NPP diminishes sin. According to its view, we are not so fallen that we are unable to contribute to the basis of our justification before God. Second, the NPP diminishes grace. In the NPP, Christ's work is not so sufficient that we cannot supplement it to be made right with God'. For all that the NPP claims to be 'new', it is in fact quite 'old'. It is a form of the semi-pelagianism that has been with the church for many centuries now.

Congregational Remittances - December 2012

CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2013	ORDINARY REMITTANCES			Outer Hebrides Presbytery				
	2013 Feb	2013 Total to Feb	2012 Total					
Presbytery of Inverness								
Aberdeen	0	1,100	2,200	0	1,754	3,551	3,773	
Duthil-Dores	0	955	2,351	60	1,200	2,375	2,350	
Inverness	0	2,000	4,000	0	1,800	3,600	3,600	
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,300	2,600	0	630	1,550	2,300	
Total Inverness	0	5,355	11,151	310	1,000	2,000	2,000	
				Stornoway	900	7,674	13,148	12,617
				Total Outer Hebrides	1,270	14,058	26,224	26,640
Northern Presbytery				Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron				
Assynt & Scourie	185	0	0	Bracadale	120	0	1,500	2,000
Brora	0	1,000	1,500	Duirinish (Waternish)	0	0	1,000	1,000
Kiltearn	0	500	500	Kilmuir & Stenscholl	240	2,600	2,600	2,600
Tarbat	0	0	1,000	Lochalsh	50	150	300	1,649
Total Northern	185	1,500	3,000	Poolwe & Aultbea	100	700	1,520	1,400
				Ullapool	0	0	0	0
Southern Presbytery				Portree	0	0	1,400	2,800
Arran	115	260	1,090	Snizort	0	1,200	2,400	2,400
Ayr	0	950	950	Strath	60	550	1,345	600
Dumfries	0	0	0	Total Skye/Lochcarron	570	5,200	12,065	14,449
Edinburgh	0	3,000	3,000	Total Congregations	2,140	35,023	68,830	68,974
Glasgow - Partick	0	1,800	3,800	Other Donations	0	1,928	2,625	11,256
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	1,500	3,700	Legacy	0	0	0	0
Glasgow - Knightswood	0	1,400	3,850	TOTAL	2,140	36,951	71,455	80,230
Rothsay	0	0	0	Including Gift Aid		0	0	0
Total Southern	115	8,910	16,390					



News



Arbroath Youth Weekend Away

Rev & Mrs M Roberts

The young people's Weekend Away at Arbroath was held from Friday evening to Monday morning, February 8-11. It was very encouraging to see nearly sixty young men and women in attendance, coming from our own and other Bible-believing churches from as far afield as Ness in Lewis in the north to Nottingham and Derbyshire in the south.

The five addresses were given this year by the Rev Maurice Roberts, retired minister of Inverness FCC. The first address was from Ecclesiastes 12:1, in which God urges young people to

'remember their Creator'. A reminder was given to those present that when we come to maturity we have reached a critical stage in life at which very serious decisions must be made. It is therefore of the utmost importance that God's Word be taken as our guide and God's will be sought prayerfully.

On Saturday morning the text expounded was 1 Corinthians 1:30-31. Here Paul affirms that Christ is all in all to those who find Him.

The Saturday evening sermon was on the conversion of the Samaritan woman (John 4). Christ delights to save souls,

and we who are Christians should likewise aim to be soul-winners as our Lord was.

The text taken for the service held on the Lord's Day morning was 2 Peter 1:19. It stressed the absolute importance of our believing the Bible to be our one sure source of light in this dark world.

The final sermon, given at the Sabbath evening service of worship, was on the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). Stress was laid on the fact that there is 'joy in heaven' over the conversion of one sinner.

One special highlight of our conference this year was to have an interview on

Desk



Skype with our dear friend the Rev Partheepan Nixon, minister in Sri Lanka. It was delightful to see our brother's face on the screen and to hear him telling about his work over there. What modern technology has brought to us!

A Question Box was made available for the use of all who attended the conference and this was opened on the Sabbath evening and was found to contain a healthy number of questions. These were put to the guest speaker after the evening service and a variety of issues, mainly theological and biblical, was handled for the benefit of those present.

A further helpful feature of the weekend was for us to listen to two of the young people giving their testimony and telling of their experiences leading to conversion. It is always profitable to hear how God has dealt with our brothers and sisters in His eternal plan to bring them to salvation. Every testimony has its own distinctive features.

All present were deeply grateful to the two ladies who acted as cooks this year: Mrs Isobel McQueer and Mrs Annette Campbell. It should be recorded with gratitude that Mrs McQueer has served the conference in this way for a number of years.

We came away feeling that it had been good for us to be there. We are all grateful to Mr Murray Mackay and his committee for the efficient planning and smooth running of the conference once again. Above all we wish to thank God for His goodness in making this opportunity for study and fellowship possible for us.

The sermons are available on Sermon Audio, thanks to the services of Mr Nathan Roberts.

The next Weekend Away, God willing, is due to be held from 18-21 October

2013. The theme is 'The Precious Blood of Christ'. The speaker expected is Pastor Achille Blaize.

Gilcomston Congregation leaves Church of Scotland

The minister of an Aberdeen church and its members have become the latest to leave the Church of Scotland in protest at the Kirk allowing the appointment of homosexual ministers.

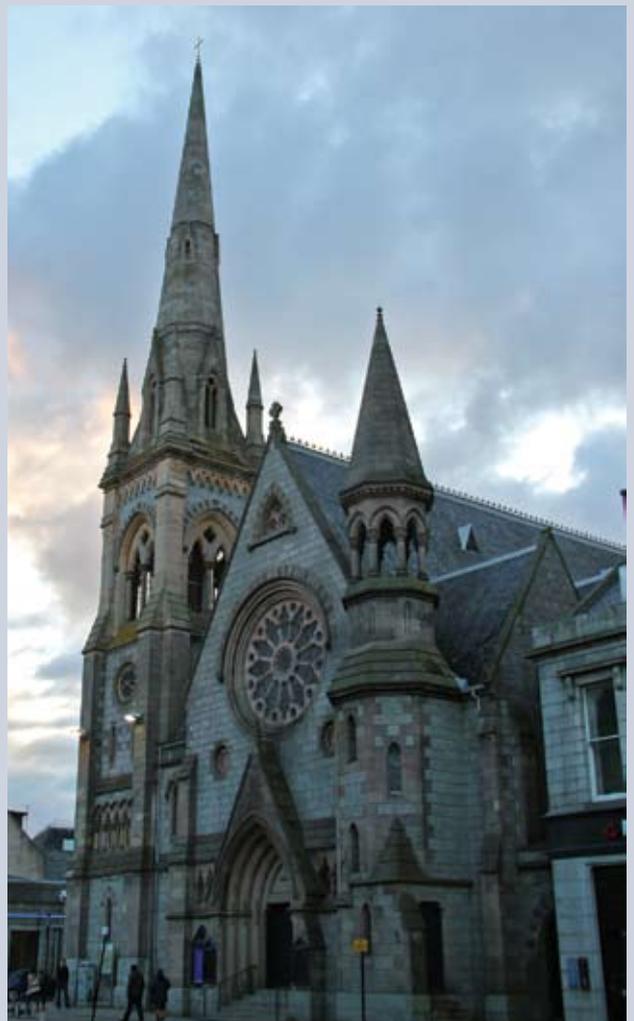
Gilcomston South's minister, Rev Dominic Smart and its membership of more than 300 have been discussing the issue for some time. The Church of Scotland said it was saddened by the decision. The congregation took issue with the General Assembly approving the appointment of the openly homosexual minister Scott Rennie to Queen's Cross church in Aberdeen in 2009. Mr Smart said: 'Our decision to leave was the culmination of careful study, sincere discussion and prayer over the past four years. We have weighed up many different options and believe the decision we have reached has the most integrity. We are looking forward to the first chapter in the life of our new congregation'.

It is hard for us to understand how ministers or even members can remain in a denomination where church discipline has sunk so low that flagrantly immoral men are accepted as pastors of God's flock.

Battle for Marriage Not Over

Christian Institute

MPs who oppose the redefinition of marriage have said the battle against the Bill is far from over. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill will now be considered by a committee of MPs, before a likely showdown in the House of Lords. David Burrowes MP



Gilcomston South Church, Aberdeen

led opposition to the Bill in the Commons and is expected to be on the committee. He said he would be 'constructive' as he sought amendments, but added, 'I am in it to win it'. There will be more votes in the Commons before the Bill reaches the Lords later this year. The Government is reported to be nervous about the looming battle in the Lords. One minister admitted: 'We are expecting problems'. The strength of the 'no' vote in the Commons surprised many inside Westminster and it could embolden the Lords to vote against the Bill. Mr Burrowes said: 'We succeeded in one objective – sending a message very clearly and loudly to the Lords'. The Bill is not expected to reach the House of Lords until May. Before then, the committee of MPs will hear evidence from supporters and opponents of the Bill.

It grieves us deeply to think that our MPs have voted to redefine marriage so as to include relationships which the Scriptures call an abomination to the Lord.

Highland Bible Conference

Rev James Clark

The next Highland Bible Conference will be held DV at Kingsview Christian Centre, Inverness on 10th August 2013 from 10 am to 3 pm. It is entitled 'Conscience, Guilt and The Blood of Christ'. Admission and a light lunch is free though a small donation is requested.

The programme is as follows:

10 am - '**Conscience**', Rev James Clark

11.15 am - '**Guilt**', Rev John Morrison

12.30 - 1.30 pm **Lunch**

1.30pm - '**Blood of Christ**', Rev Harry Woods

3pm - **Close**

There will be time for questions after each lecture before moving on to the next.

Kids in danger from Internet Porn

Christian Institute

Children who watch Peppa Pig or Sesame Street on YouTube are an average of just three clicks away from explicit adult material on the site, according to new research. Clips showing graphic footage such as nudity or violence were found in the recommended videos list displayed after popular kids' TV programmes had been viewed. Meanwhile campaigners have urged that children as young as five should be given lessons in how to use the internet safely.

David Emm, of Kaspersky Lab, which conducted the YouTube research, said: 'It's worrying to see just how simple it is for children to access videos of an "adult" nature on YouTube'. He said the research on YouTube, released to mark Safer Internet Day, highlights the potential danger of leaving children unattended when using the internet. 'The ease of access to inappropriate content online is part of the wider debate about whether the internet should be controlled or censored', said Mr Emm.

The children's minister, Edward Timpson, said: 'We know how important it is that young people are safe and supported while using the internet, and that parents are confident their children are protected from accessing harmful content'. Claire Lilley of the NSPCC warned: 'We are facing an e-safety time bomb', and commented that online abuse was one of the biggest issues facing young people today. ChildLine, which is visiting UK primary schools to teach about internet safety, said its helpline

took some 3,745 calls about abuse via the internet and mobile phones last year, with most callers aged between 12 and 15. Some 250 callers said they were being groomed for sex online. There was also a 70 per cent increase in calls about online pornography with 641 calls, some from children as young as 11 years old.

The readily available pornography on the internet is not just destructive and addictive for children but also for adults. It is undermining the morality of our generation. It is a clear breach of the seventh commandment and of the words of Christ who said, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart' (Mt.5:28).



FCC Camps

Rev Greg MacDonald

From Saturday 27th July to 3rd August, our annual youth camp returns for a fifth year! For 2013 we have planned our most exciting camp to date with extra accommodation, a lower price for campers, brand new activities and as always, a real focus on learning from the Bible. Designed to foster friendship between young people, the camps have witnessed an increase in campers year on year. Still based at Badaguish, but now in three lodges, with increased capacity, we hope that 2013 will see another rise in bookings. Coupled with a reduced price, we aim to make these camps as accessible as possible for those in our congregations and beyond.

Open to all children from those starting P7 to those finishing S4, camp costs £189 for the week which includes many great activities. There is an early booking discount as well as special pricing for families sending more than one child. For more information and a booking form, please contact Rev Greg MacDonald, greg@nesschurch.co.uk, or Tel: 01851 810037.

Accounts of the 1859-60 Revival
Eyemouth, Berwickshire
Rev John Turnbull
Individual Accounts of Conversion

F' said to me, 'Sir, Satan never had a more active and willing servant than I was. I used to sit at my fireside and plan mischief; and whatever evil thing came into my mind, I immediately rose up and ran to do it. I have torn every shred of clothes off my back in my fits of drunken madness. I once jumped from the top to the bottom of the stair of the house in which I live, and paid for my folly by the loss of the half of my teeth, which were forced out of my mouth by the fall. On one occasion I leaped out of bed, ran down to the pier, and threw myself into the sea to drown myself. There was no madness, no wickedness, of which I was not capable.

'At last I began to get a sight of my sin and danger. The revival came, and many became thoughtful, and I among them. Then, when Satan was about to lose me, he tried to bind me with a stronger chain. The struggle was fearful; but grace prevailed. Jesus came, and heard my cry and gave me deliverance. My arms, which felt as if they were pinned to my side during the struggle, I stretched out; and then my mouth was opened, and I praised the Lord for His mercy'. 'Do you see those distant rocks?' said this man to me yesterday, 'Well, I would rather swim out to those rocks than I would return to my drinking or to my bad ways! I love the Lord Jesus now, and every day I love Him more and more. I feel nearer and nearer to Him. Sometimes I dream that I am in heaven with Him. In place of running with my companions on Satan's errands of mischief, I love to go and tell my fellow-men of the love of Jesus - to entreat them to believe on Him, that they also may be enabled to rejoice in His salvation'.

'G' had the form of godliness, but did not know its power. He had several brothers, pious men, who often spoke to him of his carelessness and indifference about Divine things. They often prayed for him. One morning they were together, and prayed expressly for their brother's conversion. His son, a young man of nineteen, who had been brought to the knowledge of the truth, was with them. They told him that he must go to his father and say to him that he ought to have family worship in his house; and that if he did not wish to pray himself, that he (the son) would do it. The son mentioned the matter to his father, who received the proposal with great indignation; and told him that when he got a house of his own, he might do as he liked, but that he should do nothing of the kind in his house. Even then, however, it appeared the Spirit of God was working with him, and fixing in his mind convictions of sin. All that forenoon he had been uneasy. Now he felt that what had been proposed to him was his duty; that he had not done his duty in time past; that his son was right. He felt unhappy, and feared that in speaking as he had done he had spoken sinfully. As he worked at the net along with his son, these thoughts

crowded upon him, and he became more and more uneasy. At length the tumult of his feelings became so great, that it fairly overpowered him, and he sank down on the floor. His family gathered round him in great alarm, when he called out, 'Pray for me'. His wife knelt down and prayed for him. He then said, 'Bring me the hymn-book (the United Presbyterian hymn-book) and read the 48th hymn, 'Oh! for a closer walk with God', - which was done. He was put to bed, where he lay for nearly three days, deeply agitated and distressed. At last it pleased God to visit him in mercy. On the morning of the third day, he awoke and found he could lay hold of Christ, and as he did so, his heart was immediately filled with peace and joy. He aroused the family out of bed, and at two o'clock in the morning G. offered up his first family prayer. Surely one may say, 'This is the doing of the Lord, and it is wondrous in our eyes'.

'H' On one of the Sabbaths immediately preceding the revival, I had preached a sermon to young men and young women. I spoke of what I had seen as a boy - of our servants on a Sabbath morning bringing their Bibles out of their chests and wrapping them round with a white handkerchief, ready for being carried with them when they went to worship. I said, I feared that if they had been opened, they would have been found as clean as the handkerchief in which they were wrapped - no stain upon the page which contained the words, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned', to tell that the tear of a sin-stricken soul had lighted upon them while reading. A few days after, I found 'H' with her Bible lying open upon her knee. I took it up and found the whole of both pages blotted with the tears which her sin was causing her to shed. She was kept in this burdened and sorrowing state for about a week. At last, while I was reading and explaining to her the 55th of Isaiah, she got a glimpse of Christ, and of the freeness of His salvation. She got relief from her pain; and that evening, in company with a young married woman, who had had an experience as painful as her own, she came up to me and grasped my hand, and both, with joy painted in their faces, told me that they found Christ - that they had found peace.

'I' and his wife were great sufferers. It was a sad sight to see them day after day sitting 'dumb, and not able to open their mouths because of their shame'. At last, at one of our prayer-meetings, his wife found relief from her sorrow. She ran home immediately and told her husband, and asked him to sing the 40th Psalm. Not then, nor for some days after, could he sing with all his heart that song of thanksgiving. At length, he also was brought through the waters. As he never opened his mouth to tell me even of his griefs, I asked him what he felt during that time of silence. 'Sir', said he, 'to me the burden was so heavy, that if it had lasted another day, I believe I would have died'. If the burden of sin is so terrible when it lasts but for a few days, what must it be when it lasts forever. Awful thought! Everlasting burden! - everlasting woe!

'J' had felt the burden of her sins for months. When the revival came, she felt that burden still more; she mourned, and wept, and prayed. At last, one Sabbath afternoon at worship, she was enabled to lift up her soul to God and cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner', and like the lightning flash, the peace of God entered into her heart. 'I came into the church sorrowing', she said; 'I went out rejoicing'.



Books

Sermons on Genesis

Chapters 11:5 to 20:7

John Calvin,

(translated into English by Rob Roy McGregor),

Banner of Truth Trust,

hbk, 888pp, £20.00

This volume is a collection of 48 sermons delivered by Calvin in Geneva between 24 January and 15 May 1560.

It is a remarkable work that shows Calvin was not only a great theologian but also a skilful preacher and pastor. Reading through his sermons it is easy to imagine yourself within the congregation of the time, receiving exhortations, warnings and nourishment for your soul.

The sermons are for all who desire spiritual growth and not only for the academics or students. Calvin was preaching bearing in mind that his dear people were in need of being fed with Gospel truths and of applying them to all aspects of everyday life.

Here are the introductory words of the translator regarding Calvin's preaching: 'Calvin did not preach as one who lived in an ivory tower, but as one who experienced the persistent struggles and battles of daily existence. He preached as one who deeply cared for his people, analysing for them and warning them of the wiles of Satan, the temptations of the world, and the traps hidden in their human nature'.

The content of the sermons varies from justification (four sermons on Gen.15:6), baptism and election to subjects like wealth and poverty, patience, fear, marriage and sexual immorality. Reading through this material, it is difficult to believe that all this was said more than four hundred years ago. Most applications and comments on texts preached are so relevant and full of insight even for our own society today.

One clear example is the words of Calvin describing the people in Sodom when they confront Lot in Gen.19:6-9: '...the devil has blindfolded them and put them in such a state of mind that they are like madmen

and do not know what they are doing. All the more must we keep ourselves bridled in and pray that God will not let iniquity gain such a foothold in our midst and allow us to imitate the wicked and ally ourselves with them in such a way that equity is perverted by common accord...'

We may be thankful that these sermons are now available in the English language and that they can be a blessing and an encouragement to all who will read them.

Rev Davide Ratti

The History of Providence as manifested in Scripture

Alexander Carson,

Banner of Truth Trust,

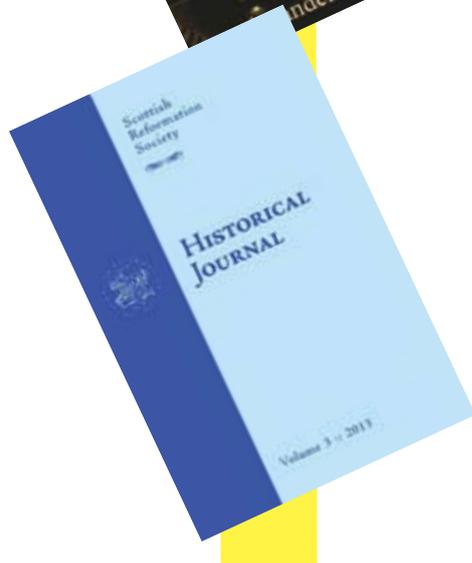
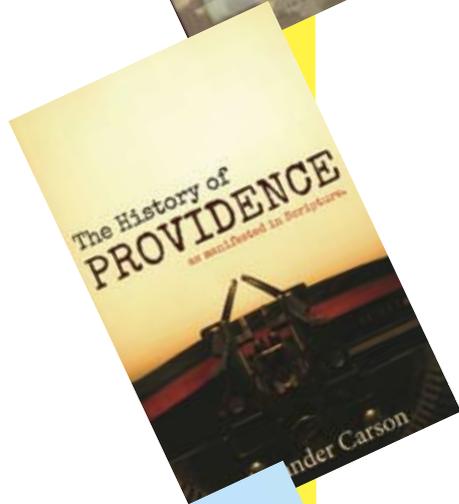
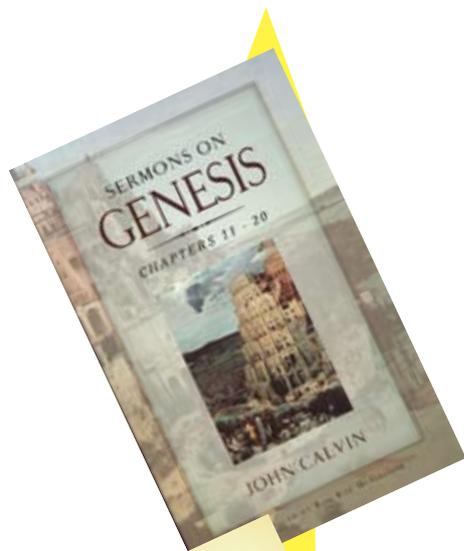
pbk, 264pp, £7.50

Originally published in 1840, this book traces instances of the Providence of God in the fulfilment of prophecies, restraints of enemies and guidance of saints. The notices of each incident in Scripture are short, usually one or two pages, but taken as a whole the book is a comforting reminder that God is in control.

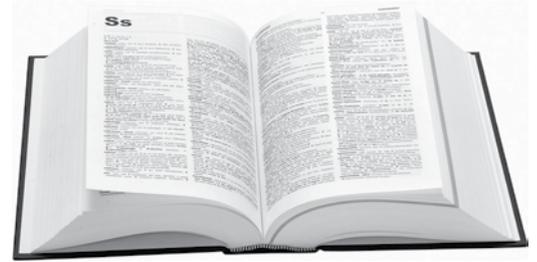
In his comment on Matthew 27:42 he writes that 'adversity is no evidence of providential disapprobation.... Let not the Christian doubt that God will look to His own cause. But let him ground his belief of all revealed truth on the Word of God. The cause of God, no doubt, will in all things ultimately triumph, but God may give Satan a temporary victory, and suffer him to trample on His cause and on His people. Success, when men use nothing but the means appointed by God, without any mixture of their own wisdom, is evidence of the cause of God. But the friends of Truth, like their Master, may suffer shame, loss and death'. (page 149)

The book is not as theological and experimental as Flavel's, but Sabbath-school teachers will doubtless find it useful.

Rev James Clark



Books



Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal, Volume 3, 2013

Edited by Douglas Somerset,

**Scottish Reformation Society,
pbk, 313pp, £6.27 plus p&p from www.lulu.com**

The reinvigorated Scottish Reformation Society are building a reputation for rigorously researched and professionally presented publications in the field of Scottish church history, and the third annual issue of the Historical Journal is a solid example. The volume brings together eight substantial papers, well-balanced to represent the different periods of church history from the Reformation to the twentieth century, and pleasingly varied between studies of particular local interest, and those of crucial national questions. It is also good to see new contributors included, such as Jeffrey Stephen and Robert Dickie.

Two of the papers address areas where modern academic history has been inclined to criticise the Reforming and Covenanting movements. Dr Somerset defends the reliability of John Knox's account of the iconoclasm at Perth by the 'rascal multitude', and of the subsequent decision by the Reformers to raze the town's friaries in an orderly manner. He refutes the allegation that Knox's accounts of the incidents cannot be truthfully reconciled with the consequent suggestion that Knox himself was implicated in the outburst of violence, and offers a helpful and convincing account of the incidents themselves in context, and of their presentation in the Reformer's subsequent writings. Apart from anything else, this account helps to bolster the impression of the Scottish Reformation as a broadly popular movement.

Dr Stephen offers a similarly learned defence of the Covenanters against the charge of desiring to coerce the other nations of the British Isles into Presbyterianism. At a more popular level, Dr Dickie and Norman Campbell give valuable profiles of individual but historically interesting congregations, respectively the Scots Church in Rotterdam in the seventeenth century and the Kames Free Presbyterian Church in the twentieth, placing these well within the context of broader Presbyterian history. Mr Campbell also more briefly discusses the protest against Sabbath-breaking at Strome Ferry in 1883, and shows the sympathy and practical help given to the men accused of rioting by the Constitutionalist leaders James Begg and John Kennedy.

Three papers have particularly direct relevance to the present day. John Keddie discusses the trajectory of the main-line Presbyterian churches into the union of 1929, with the resultant weakening on key doctrinal issues evident ever since.

Andrew Middleton addresses the development toward the Scottish Education Act of 1872, particularly in terms of the sadly ineffective opposition of Dr Begg, with the tragic result that the Free Church handed over its schools to the state with minimal reassurances regarding the ongoing place of religious instruction on an evangelical and Protestant basis. This paper is particularly important in showing the appalling attitude of the Victorian voluntaries in opposing all religious education in schools altogether, and of the contrasting insistence of Dr Begg, on the basis of the establishment principle, that Parent, Church and State are all responsible to ensure that children are truly and Scripturally educated.

Perhaps of most significance, Matthew Vogan contributes a thoughtful study of Alexander Shields, carrying on from a previous essay (in SRSHJ 2), addressing his attempt, in a posthumously published work entitled 'On Church Communion' to persuade his erstwhile brethren in the incipient Reformed Presbyterian movement to re-unite with the Church of Scotland. It is significant that Vogan answers the criticism of Iain H Murray that under the establishment principle view of the Church (one denomination remains the true bearer of the testimony of the national Reformed Church) re-union is impossible because one party must be considered schismatic. Vogan shows from Shields' writing that this is not so, that union need not condemn the previous testimony of either party, and in fact that such a union was effected in 1690 between the Church of Scotland and the three Covenanting ministers and their supporters. Union rather is on the basis of present circumstances, with the past faults and failings of individuals and denominations, even where not acknowledged, being irrelevant. Rather, says Shields, the true sin of schism is committed where union is refused by a denomination despite barriers being removed. Such issues require sober consideration in our day.

As in previous issues of the Journal, the high academic standard is maintained throughout. Inevitably, the odd mistake creeps in: the title 'Count' is never used in the Scottish peerage, the correct title should read 'Earl of Buchan' (p74); a misprint in the dates for the Dutch minister Uytenbogaert has him living to the patriarchal age of 107 (p81); also, text is omitted between pp113-14. But it would be invidious to stress these in comparison with the huge amount of careful research evidenced by the detailed footnoting throughout, and the good use of pictorial sources.

The SRS are warmly commended for another fine publication, of broad interest and value.

Rev Alasdair J Macleod



Fighting the Good Fight (Part III)

Rev Maurice Roberts

**The substance of an address given at the School in Theology,
Larbert, 2012**

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing
(2 Timothy 4:7-8)

My text says, 'I have fought a good fight'. That implies enemies. You do not fight except with your enemies. What then are the enemies against which we must fight? Of course we know very well: the world, the flesh and the devil.

The World

The 'world' first – let us look at that. The world is society organised against God. The world is a hater of God. If mankind could make a rocket big enough and strong enough, they would send it right up to heaven and blast the Almighty off His throne. That is the spirit of sinful man. Man is by nature a hater of God and society is organised against God. That is the world we live in. 'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed' (Psalm 2:1-2). This is why they put the prophets to death in Old Testament times. This is why they crucified the Lord of glory.

When you read history it is not simply that it is full of wars. Anyone who studies history quickly sees that wars have always occurred all through the history of mankind. But it is not wars of man against man. More terribly, it is man fundamentally at war against his Maker and his God. We must as Christians mortify this spirit of enmity to God in our own hearts. Listen to Christ, 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold' (Matthew 24:12). It is very hard to fight against the world; it creeps insidiously into the soul. 'But if the salt have lost his savour', says Christ, 'it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men' (Matthew 5:13).

Now, what is this salt and what is this savour? The salt is godliness. You know, churches always decline in three generations. The first generation is spiritual: they have heart-knowledge. The next generation is intellectual: they have head-knowledge. The third generation is worldly. They have nothing more than a formal religion. It is always the same. You look at any church declension you want to name and that is the way it happens. So the best kind of religion is that which is in the soul and in the heart – the felt religion of godliness. That is why the Puritans set such excellent examples for us to follow.

If the salt loses its savour Jesus comes and He says this, 'You are very busy doing many things but I have one thing against you, you have left your first love'. A terrible verse we get in the book of Revelation (2:4), isn't it? 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead' (Revelation 3:1). What a word! What a terrible thing! Wouldn't we shiver if that was said about us?

So real, genuine, Christianity is spiritual in the first instance. What we long to see is reviving of spiritual religion. This is what God does from time to time. When Whitefield (in the 18th Century) was about to be an open air preacher, he went to Bristol. He started to preach to coalminers in the open air. The only indication he had they were listening was when he saw the tears running down their cheeks, washing away the coal dust on their faces. He knew then they really were listening. This is real heart religion.

I know that John Wesley was a good deal of an Arminian and we don't make him an ideal theologian, but when he went to places like Cornwall and preached the gospel, the whole place was shaken. They lined the streets at the end of his ministry to praise God that he came and told them of Christ. Before that their religion consisted of praying for shipwrecks that they might get the spoils off the seas. The same was true in Lewis I am told before the great revival of 1828. That is the way society always is until the power of godliness comes.

O my dear friends, it is a good fight that we must fight against the world. And part of the spirit of the world is to be afraid to stand up for God. You all know the name of John G Paton. John G Paton was a missionary to the New Hebrides, or Vanuatu as we call it now. As a young man in the Reformed Presbyterian Church he felt called to go to Vanuatu to preach to these terrible ignorant savages. So he went to his professor in Glasgow. 'Sir', he said, 'I feel called to go to Vanuatu and preach to these people of the New Hebrides'. His professor, Andrew Symington, said, 'Young man, do you know they are cannibals? They will eat you!' The young man said, 'Sir, with respect, you are an old man and soon you will be in the grave and eaten by worms. I am happy enough to be eaten by cannibals'. It takes a bit more than ordinary courage to talk like that, doesn't it?

He went to the New Hebrides. Then he started to teach them God's Word and the whole island was completely transformed. This pattern is reflected again and again in the faithful labours of missionary men and women.

The Irish missionary Columba came to Iona in 563 AD and then travelled to Inverness. He spoke to King Brude, the king of the Picts. King Brude made a profession of faith and in these days if the king said he was a Christian, everybody else had to agree with him. What difference did it make? Was it just a change mentally? No! The change was tremendous. Before that these Picts were always killing one another and fighting with one another. But now this message of Christ changed and utterly transformed them. To fight the good fight of faith is to bring society into a new condition of blessing, peace, love, well-being and harmony.

The Flesh

That is one enemy. The second enemy is the 'flesh'. That comes closer to home. It is an enemy within our own soul. We are all totally depraved, as we confess. Martin Luther dismissed the authority of the pope but he was well aware of the power of 'pope-self', as he put it. We are all proud and wicked creatures by nature. We would all love to rule the universe and dictate to everybody else. That spirit is in us all. 'We are the rubbish of an Adam', said Jonathan Edwards. Says Christ, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children...' (Luke 11:13).

So then this indwelling sin is in us and the fight of faith, this good fight, is partly concerned with fighting what is in our own hearts. We must do so by looking at the five faculties of the soul. The soul has five faculties and if we want to make progress in the battle against sin in ourselves, we have to take account of these five faculties: the mind, the will, the emotions, the memory and the conscience. There are these five faculties in every human soul.

The *mind*, first of all, must be taught and instructed in theology. Theology is what shapes the Christian mind. The mind is the locomotive of the soul. As we think, so we are: 'As he thinketh in his heart, so is he' (Proverbs 23:7). So then the mind is first.

Secondly - the *will*. Our willpower must be subjected to the Ten Commandments. That is what we are to do. We are to study to keep these Ten Commandments. This is unpopular in some circles today. There is a movement associated with New Covenant Theology in which the Ten Commandments are not regarded as binding on the conscience without qualification. But Jesus makes it clear that the Ten Commandments are to be our rule of life in New Testament times. He says, 'One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law [that means the Moral Law], till all be fulfilled' (Matthew 5:18). So until the end of time the Moral Law will be binding on our conscience because it is a transcript of the very character of God.

The Moral Law is that level of holiness that God requires of every man and our willpower must seek to be subjected, by the grace of God, to those Ten Commandments. This is why the unconverted man cannot keep them: he has no love for God, but we do. Our love for God must be translated into a deliberate intention to subject our will to these Ten Commandments. I want to mention just one of the Commandments because a lot of good Christians, even Reformed Christians, go wrong I think, sadly, at this point.

Commandment number three: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' (Exodus 20:7). Some Christians fail to realise that this Commandment forbids the use of what we call Mild Oaths, or Minced Oaths, such things as 'Gosh', which is a minced form of 'God'. 'Good Heavens' and 'Goodness me' and similar exclamations are a breaking of this Third Commandment since they do not refer with reverence to Heaven where God lives, and they do not honour the God of Goodness. People often do not stop to think that Goodness is one of the great attributes of God and must only be referred to with respect and love. We must do our best to teach our people to get all of these improper exclamations out of our minds and mouths.

Then the *emotions*. The emotions of a minister and a servant of God are very important. You will hardly believe it but

I am told by people who serve the Lord in America that they have to spend time sometimes counselling Christians these days against internet pornography. I am talking about professing Christians who are ensnared by watching internet pornography. Can you believe it? All they have to do is switch it off but people are not doing that. The reason why not is that their emotions are getting carried away with the seductions of Delilah. My friends, we dare not say we will never be guilty of this sin but we must by all means keep these things well out of our lives. Our emotions must be kept pure.

The *memory* has to be stored with the Word of God: 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee' (Psalm 119:11). It is a very practical thing, so that in every situation of life we ask ourselves what is right in any given situation. Should I speak or keep silent; should I do this or do that? It is only as we have memorised the Word of God and keep it in our memories, that we are able to apply it to ourselves in this way. This is what is called fighting the good fight within ourselves. And all this applies of course to *conscience*. We must keep a 'conscience void of offence', as the apostle says (Acts 24:16).

So mind, will, emotions, memory, conscience; all of these have to be looked after very carefully. We have to apply the Word of God to them as our duty in fighting the good fight of faith. An unholy minister is a great tragedy in this world. Many churches have declined and been pulled down by ministers who have not lived godly lives. A minister who does not live a godly life will not love the whole counsel of God – he cannot. That is how preachers drag churches down. They get caught up in sin and then they cover up their sin. The church tries to believe it was not there but the church is all the time feeling a drag on its spirituality. We must fight this good fight in ourselves.

The Devil

A third great opponent of course is the devil: 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' (Ephesians 6:12). We need to know a great deal about the devil. What does the Bible tell us about him? First of all he is a liar. He deceived Adam and Eve. He is a thorough liar. Never believe a word he says.

Second, the Bible tells us he is a murderer. He is the greatest murderer in the universe: he murdered the whole human race. We would all be going to hell today were it not for the blessed Jesus, the second Adam, who came to deliver us; but it is no thanks to the devil. The devil is very powerful like a lion. Can you imagine the wickedness of a spirit who would whisper into the mind of a person like Adolph Hitler – to wipe out all the Jews on the face of the earth? Was not that Hitler's great scheme? He wanted to destroy every Jewish man, woman and child. He succeeded in killing six million of them. But the interesting thing is, within three years of shooting himself in his bunker in Berlin, Israel was back in its own country. The Lord confounded his wickedness. He was inspired by the devil, that old lion, who wishes to do great wickedness.

The devil is very crafty. There is nowadays the snare of the Ecumenical Movement. Many evangelical people are being drawn into the Ecumenical Movement. It is a most serious mistake to make. My beloved friends, if we mean business in fighting for God, one thing we must absolutely do, we must

never associate with Rome. Let us pray in earnest for the beloved people of Southern Ireland as there is a new openness, it would appear, towards the gospel of Christ.

The depravity of the devil knows no bounds. How he deceives the unbeliever! Some unbelievers have been heard saying this when they have heard a good sermon about punishment and hell and judgment. Ignorant sinners and worldly people might be tempted to say, 'I'm not worried about hell. In hell I shall have my old friends with me. We have been drinking in pubs for years. We can go on drinking and laughing our heads off in hell'. What such people do not understand is that in hell there is no such thing as fun. In hell nobody has the slightest love for anybody else. In hell everybody hates everybody else with perfect hatred. If a husband in hell were to see his wife in hell, he would rip her eyes out in hatred. In hell they are not only totally depraved they are absolutely depraved, like the devil himself. There is not the slightest spark of common grace restraining the wicked sinner in hell. That is the way the sinner is and that is what hell will be. We must not hesitate to warn people about hell, my brethren. I do not mean that we should talk endlessly about hell. We cannot conceal the truth of hell from people. The Lord Jesus Christ did not keep it from the people. We have to warn every man and teach every man the seriousness of hell. And then also show them the loveliness of Christ.

The Armour

God has provided seven pieces of armour for us (Ephesians 6:10-17). First of all, the 'girdle of truth'. Truth. This shows the immense importance of truth and doctrine. We are back again to what we said before – the very great importance of theology. That is why in training men for the ministry, Systematic Theology is crucially important. It is not enough just to know some Hebrew and Greek, and then some history. All that is useful but we have to know the system of theology God has given to us. That is why the great commentators like Matthew Henry and Matthew Poole are exceedingly good and better than so many modern commentators. They lived in an age when people were imbued with Systematic Theology – the theology of God's Word.

The 'breastplate of righteousness'. There are two aspects of justification: the active obedience of Christ and the passive obedience of Christ. We have to explain both aspects of this wonderful righteousness. The whole righteousness of the God-Man is imputed to the believer. What an unspeakable privilege! All sin pardoned and yet we are not simply in a negative situation. We are credited with all that Christ has done in keeping the Moral Law.

Then we are told about the 'sandals of truth' – or the footwear. That surely implies we should be ready to travel to spread the gospel. You put shoes on, not for comfort, but for going on a journey. May I say, dear friends, wherever we go as ministers and Christians, we should school ourselves to tell people who may be in conversation with us about Christ. If we are sitting next to someone on a bus, or a train, or a plane, a café or restaurant; try to turn the conversation to the gospel.

What encouragement have you and I got today? We know the state of society. What have we got to encourage us to fight the good fight? The answer is that we have God. And God can alter a situation for good in a moment. Let us remind ourselves of one great event in the history of the church of Christ in our own land.

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland of 1860 in Edinburgh was able to give the following report. He said, 'Two years ago our Assembly was deeply disturbed [aroused] by the intelligence of what God is doing in the United States of America [revival]. One year ago the impression was deepened. The pregnant cloud [of God's blessing] had swept on and was sending down upon Ireland a plenteous rain [that was especially Ulster]. This year [1860] the same precious showers have been, and are even now, falling within the limits of our own beloved land of Scotland. We as a Free Church of Scotland accept the revival as a great and blessed fact. Numerous and explicit testimonies from ministers and members alike tell us of the gracious influence upon the people. Whole congregations have been seen bending before it like a mighty rushing wind.' That is what God can do. So we must never lose this hope and this vision.

I love what John J Murray has done in encouraging us all to pray. I try to do this myself from timeto-ime, not every day of

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course. But I do recommend it in view of the situation; why not try it from time to time? Forget your breakfast for this morning. Go into your study and until lunchtime cry to God for two hours or so. Cry to God that He will help in the situation. Why not? Is not that what the great men of old did? Take Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel – they cried to God in the crucial situation in which they were.

You say that you do pray sometimes. Well let me say something else about prayer. We should try to pray in secret until we have tears running down our face. That is the way McCheyne was. He went from his vestry into the pulpit, we are told. He put his hands over his face while in his vestry before preaching and he prayed until the tears ran down his face.

I could add a further encouragement in this dark hour. The nation of Israel is now back in their own land and the hope

we have from Scripture is that God will one day turn Israel back to Himself. But on this occasion I do not have time to elaborate on this wonderful subject.

But let us fight on. God's purposes are ripening. In our sermons let us say something in every sermon which will help the sinner to Christ. Let us in all our sermons have something for the children. In all our sermons let us have something which indicates we love them and wish their highest good.

I wish you all rich and wonderful blessing and encouragement in coming days. I close with these words of the apostle Paul: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing'.

The Lachmans leave once more for Zambia

Rev David Fraser

The Lachmans are of particular interest to the Shettleston FCC congregation because David became a member in Scotland first in Shettleston. Later he was elected an elder there and then Katie brought her membership there when they returned, a married couple, from the USA. We saw their two children, Elijah and Ketzia, baptised into this congregation. David and Katie remain in membership in Shettleston though for most of the year they are in service in Zambia. They continue the work begun at Covenant College by the minister of Shettleston, Rev David Fraser and his wife Marion Fraser (from 2001 to 2003).

A Week's Visit

After a short furlough in Leverburgh, Isle of Harris the Lachmans began their move back to Zambia for a new session at the beginning of January. They arrived with us on the 11th and were here until their early flight out by KLM on the morning of 17th January. Of course, it was convenient to be here for settling affairs and making preparations for the year ahead in Africa. They had a very busy week. In the process we were able to have them in church on Sabbath morning and, after service, question them on the way forward. This was followed in the evening by a fellowship over in the west end when David shared some of the challenges of raising primitive Christians up to an understanding and practice of the Reformed Faith.

Farewell

As we do not expect to see Katie and David for two years, we were glad of the opportunity to join Knightswood Congregation for their mid-week meeting. There David spoke about his work and looked forward to the year ahead as he returns to Covenant College. He spoke aptly from 1 Corinthians 3:12-13, 'Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest...'

This is the difference that Covenant College is making: pastors without training have only wood, hay and stubble but we are there to supply gold, silver and precious stones from the whole counsel of God which is 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' (2Tim.3:16). This immense work needs to continue that the kingdom of God will flourish in East Zambia. God has given this work to the FCC in co-operation with others.

Support

Obviously, this work lays a burden on us in the Free Church (Continuing), which we have bravely to take to heart. Especially so since others have moved support elsewhere (support for Rev Cees Molinaar has moved with him to Malawi). Some congregations have found that filling in phials regularly brings in good help. But, above all, earnest intercession is the priority. Monthly meetings, sometimes in co-operation with neighbouring congregations, and particularly, gatherings of the women-folk, are a lively way of stirring and maintaining interest. These are already held in some areas to great effect.

Parting Gifts

On the night of the 16th, and after Mr Lachman's address, Rev J J Murray brought forward a donation from the four congregations in the Glasgow area to cover expenses and meet future needs. Rev D S Fraser then offered prayer for safekeeping and blessing upon the minister, family and work. Small token gifts were also fondly offered from Shettleston. At the close, a warming cup of tea gave opportunity for fellowship and personal good wishes to the missionary couple.

*'All ends of th' earth remember shall
and turn the Lord unto;
All kindreds of the nations
to him shall homage do' (Ps.22:27).*

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?
Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?
Thou hast the words of eternal life.
And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ,
the Son of the living God.”

John 6:67-69