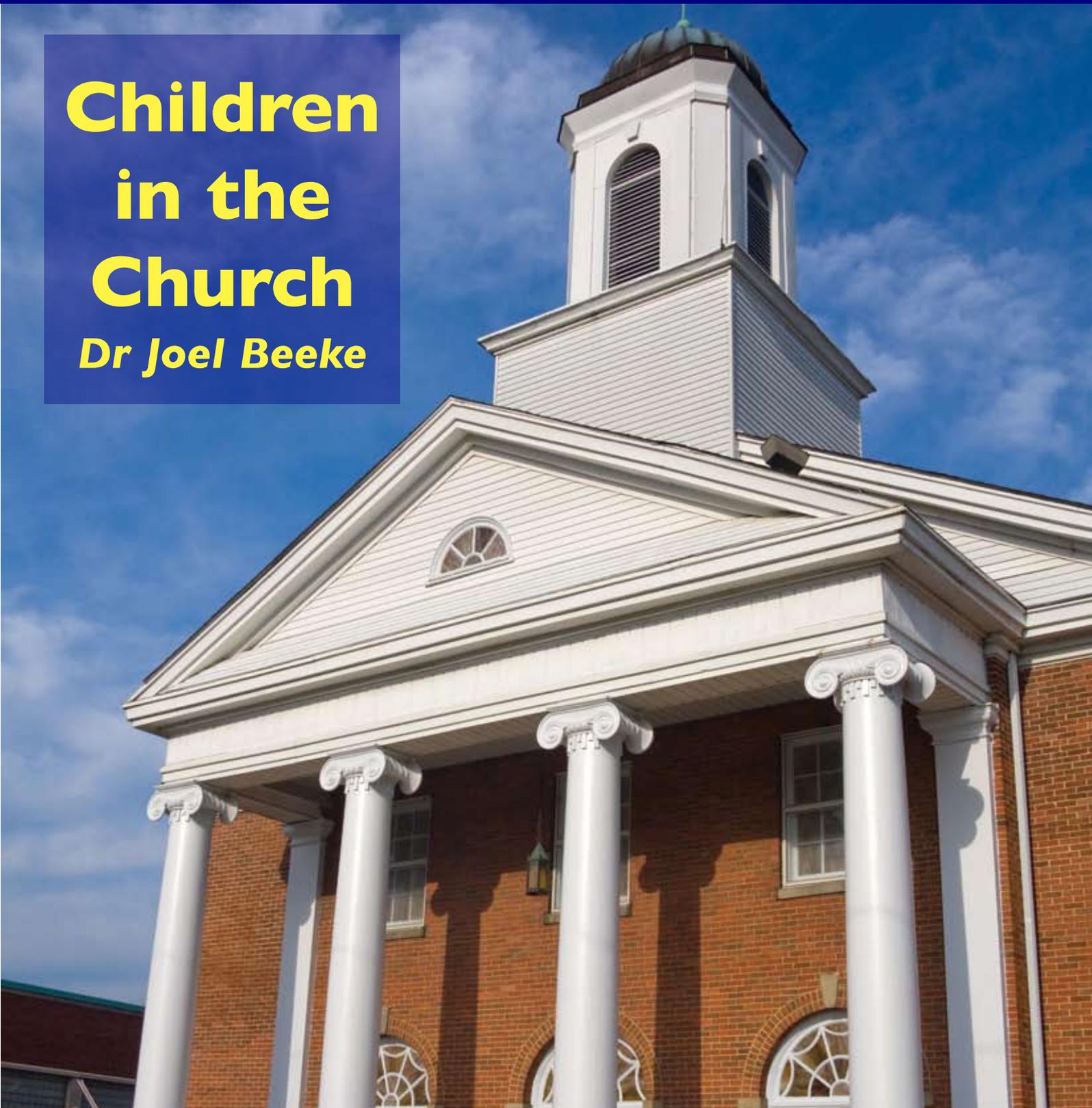


Free Church **Witness**



NOVEMBER 2013 ISSUE

Children in the Church *Dr Joel Beeke*





Editor

Rev William Macleod
B.Sc Th.M

25 Branklyn Crescent
Academy Park
Glasgow
G13 1GJ

Tel 0141 959 0292

williammacleod@fccontinuing.org

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Mrs Muriel Smith
1a Stewartfield
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HS1 2UW

from whom further information may be obtained. Cheques should be made payable to "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)".

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General Treasurer

The General Treasurer is:
Angus Macmillan, 46a Newmarket, Isle of Lewis, HS2 0DU
Tel: 01851 703965 (Home)
Tel: 01851 700235 (Work)
Mobile: 07786 296931
Email: generaltreasurer@fccontinuing.org

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Effectual Calling

Peter writes, 'give diligence to make your calling and election sure'. Why? Only the elect get to heaven, the rest end up in hell. But who are the elect? How can a person know if he is in the elect? Interestingly Peter links calling with election and puts calling first. The two in his mind are unbreakably linked and it is by recognizing that we have been 'called' that we can know with certainty that we were elected in eternity past. So the vital question now is, Have we been 'called'? What is this calling?

Two kinds of call

There are two kinds of call in Scripture. First there is a general call which is addressed to all: 'Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man' (Prov.8:4). Christ, who is wisdom personified, addresses all mankind demanding repentance, faith and holiness. Jesus states, 'Many are called, but few are chosen' (Mt.22:14). This speaks of a call much wider than the elect. It is addressed to many, to millions across the world and in every age. It is the call of the gospel, Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. The prophet Isaiah transmits it: 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else' (45:22). John ends the book of Revelation with it: 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev22:17). The Holy Spirit says to all, Come and drink of salvation. This first call is the universal call of the gospel from God through men to every human being to come for salvation.

The second call is addressed only to the elect and only at the point of conversion. To begin with they too hear only the common call, but then a time comes when that call becomes the effectual call. It is effective and comes with such power that it cannot be resisted. All who are effectually called are saved. Paul refers to it when he writes: 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified' (Rom.8:29-30). All whom God foreloved, whom He loved before they were created, He predestinated to be like Jesus. And all whom He predestinated He called, and all whom He

called He justified, and all whom He justified He will certainly glorify. He actually uses the past tense for that which is future to emphasise how certain it is. The chain from electing love to heaven is unbreakable. All who are in the elect are called in this way and only them. Peter also writes of this effectual call in his first Epistle when he encourages Christians, 'that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1Pet.2:9).

Narrower and broader effectual call

Theologians draw a distinction between effectual call in the narrower and in the broader sense. Strictly speaking the effectual call comes from God the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit and is limited to the beginning of the application of redemption to the soul. This powerful call starts the process. Jesus said: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live' (Jn.5:25). The immediate response to the call is regeneration, the new birth, the spiritual resurrection of the soul which was dead in trespasses and sins.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism however gives a broader definition of effectual calling, grouping together all that is involved in conversion: 'Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel'. The proof text given is the following: 'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began' (2Tim.1:9). 'Calling' refers to the change which took place not according to our works but by His mighty grace. Another passage also uses calling in this broader sense: 'For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called ... But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' (1Cor.1:26, 30). A calling which can be seen involves the response as well as the actual calling. So when Peter speaks of calling along with election he is referring to the whole change of conversion which is the evidence which proves that one has been elected.

In this article I would like to look at the Catechism

definition of effectual calling as I believe it will help us to understand how God usually works in the souls of those who are converted. Theology might sometimes give the impression that conversion takes place in an instant, with no preparatory work or process, so that a person is at one moment dead in trespasses and sins and then the next moment born again, justified, adopted and sanctified. Heaven suddenly seizes the individual and transforms them. However Scripture, as well as our own experience, tells that there is a process. Ezekiel's valley of dead bones illustrates what takes place. The bones are gathered, the sinews and flesh grow upon the bones, bodies are prepared though still lifeless, then the point comes when the spirit of life enters and they stand up.

1. Effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit

Much modern evangelical Christianity is the product of man's work alone. Following an address, or some words of witness, or the reading of a tract or book, a person is challenged to become a Christian. If the individual expresses an interest, however little, he is asked to repeat the 'sinner's prayer'. Typically that might be in the Billy Graham format: 'Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Saviour. In Your Name. Amen'. The Campus Crusade version is as follows: 'Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Saviour and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be'. Having prayed, the person is now told that he is a Christian. They are encouraged to read the Bible, pray regularly, attend church and not doubt that they are saved. This is something a man can do in his own strength and with his own power of will. Churches and evangelists can persuade thousands to do it simply by worldly means and persuasion. Evangelical churches are full of such. Many fall away but many keep on going in their own strength hoping that they are guaranteed heaven when they die. They are hypocrites who know nothing of the saving grace of God in their lives. The Bible makes plain that the unconverted are dead in sins (Eph.2:1). God alone can raise the dead. There are no examples in Scripture of evangelizing using the 'sinner's prayer'. Jesus said, 'Ye must be born again' (Jn.3:7) and that new birth is explained as being 'born of the Spirit' (v6). God has to come into a person's life: 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' (Eph.2:8). God must give the gift of faith. The mere reciting of a prayer changes no one. It is a work of God's Spirit.

2. Conviction of sin

The Spirit prepares people for conversion. He shows them their sin and guilt, impresses upon them the wrath of God against them, the hopelessness and misery of their situation and their need of salvation. Paul writes, 'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith' (Gal.3:24). It whips us out of every false refuge and shows us the uselessness of trusting in our good works, so that unless Christ has mercy upon us there is no hope. Paul gives insight into his own conversion in his letter to the Romans. He makes the fascinating statement, 'For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me' (Rom.7:9-11). It is hard to imagine Paul being alive without the law. He stated elsewhere that touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless (Phil.3:6). He trusted in his good works and he was a strict Pharisee and very good living. But then the commandment came with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, sin revived and his hope died. He writes: 'I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead' (Rom7:7-8). The law told him that coveting was a sin, so he tried to stop coveting but the harder he tried the more he found himself coveting. Keeping the law is impossible for fallen man and is no way of salvation for us though everyone to some extent tries it. Natural religion says that if you are a good person you will get to heaven. The Spirit convicts us that we are hell-deserving sinners. If we want true conversions ministers must preach the law, seeking the aid of the Spirit to convict the sinner of his sin.

3. Enlightening of the mind in the knowledge of Christ

Conviction of sin is good in itself but is not enough. Sometimes there is a measure of conviction of sin without conversion ensuing. This is called the common strivings of the Spirit and the classic Biblical reference is in God's words, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man' (Gen.6:3). This is a work of the Spirit warning the sinner and so leaving him without excuse. Faith is not granted. Some go through a time of feeling emptiness, meaninglessness, sin, guilt and danger and are troubled. Then they harden their heart and go on in their sins as before. Thank God for conviction of sin but don't stop there or you will perish.

Having shown the sinner his lostness and hopelessness, it is then the normal pattern for the Spirit to enlighten the mind in the knowledge of Christ. To the convicted sinner longing for deliverance the Spirit reveals Jesus Christ

dying on the cross to save sinners. Many have a general knowledge of this but it is another thing to have the eyes of the soul opened to it. There is a sacrifice for sin, a Lamb of God who took away the sin of all those whom the Father gave Him and rendered complete satisfaction to Divine justice for them. He who was without form or comeliness now becomes the altogether lovely One, the chiefest among ten thousand to the convicted sinner. The cross begins to make sense. The Spirit opens the eyes to the door and the only door to salvation.

4. Renewing of the will

Imagine a paralysed person. He has just had an accident in the desert and no one is around. The sun is beating down. The hours are passing. His water bottle is within reach but he can't move. A mobile phone is in his pocket but he can't move to get it and call for help. He lies there hour after hour and night follows day and day night and his thirst is all consuming and his life is ebbing slowly away. That is a picture of us by nature and even after we have been convicted of our sinfulness and enlightened in the knowledge of Christ. We still need our will to be renewed. Adam had free will to choose good or evil. Since the Fall mankind is bent to evil and cannot will to take one move towards God and salvation. Paralysed by our fallenness we need our will to be renewed by the mighty power of the Spirit. We are somewhat like an alcoholic who detests drink, longs to be rid of it, but is shaking and trembling for alcohol and the bottle in front of him is irresistible. By nature we are addicted to sin and rebellion and we need the Deliverer to set our will free to choose the Saviour.

5. Persuading and Enabling to embrace Christ

Salvation is of God from beginning to end. The Spirit

having convicted us of our sin and enlightened our mind in the knowledge of Christ and renewed our will, now persuades and enables us to receive Christ. 'What must I do to be saved?' asked the Philippian jailor, and he received clear direction: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31). Nothing could be simpler than faith to the Christian, the person in whom the Spirit is operating, and yet nothing more difficult to the dead sinner. King Agrippa was almost persuaded but that is not enough, and as far as we know he perished.

6. Freely offered

Some churches dispute the 'free offer' of the Gospel. The Westminster Shorter Catechism is quite clear on the matter. We are to 'embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel'. There was a dispute some years ago upon this issue in our own Church but thankfully there was a unanimous assertion of the 'free offer' as being Biblical. This is a wonderful truth. Christ is to be freely offered in gospel preaching. Whosoever embraces Him by faith will be saved. We put down no restrictions, but at the same time we know that none will embrace Christ but those whom the Spirit persuades and enables. Without this mighty work of God and His irresistible grace not one soul would be saved. But on the last day none will be able to say there was no gospel for me. It is freely offered to all. 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' (Heb.2:3).

Give diligence to make sure that you are in the elect. Give diligence to make sure that you are effectually called, because that will assure you that you are in the elect. In this way you will have a blessed and peaceful deathbed: 'For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2Pet.1:11).

We are somewhat like an alcoholic who detests drink, longs to be rid of it, but is shaking and trembling for alcohol and the bottle in front of him is irresistible. By nature we are addicted to sin and rebellion and we need the Deliverer to set our will free to choose the Saviour.





Revival in Belfast (Part II)

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'. Last month the 'Fallen' and the 'Careless' were considered.

The Formalists

Like most of my brethren in the ministry, I had too many in my church, who, whilst steady in their attendance on the means of grace, were, after all, but formalists in religion. Upon many of these the most marked change has taken place, and, as they themselves declare, 'they never knew or felt the power or peace of religion before'. One man up in years, moral in his character and well acquainted with the Word, whilst returning from the prayer-meeting in the Botanic Gardens, heard a number of lads singing one of our beautiful Psalms; God ordered that sound to reach his heart, and the deepest conviction seized upon his soul. I never saw or met with a more distressed mind. He had no rest day or night for weeks. He happened to meet me one day in one of the most crowded thoroughfares of Belfast, and stopped me to ask, 'What must I do to be saved? I have been a hypocrite and a formalist for nearly forty years; I have been walking through life with a veil over my eyes, and I feel such a burden of sin, that if I do not get relief I must die, and be damned'. For weeks no promise could give him peace. He knew his Bible well, but that only added aggravation to his guilt. Human counsels were utterly powerless. I could only pray with him, and for him. Nor was this in vain. I met him one day, and was delighted to see at once a gladsome countenance, the index of a blessed change. He told me God had shown him his mistake. He had wished God to mend his heart, but that would not do; and it was not until, on his knees, he had unreservedly resigned himself to the Lord, and asked the Holy Spirit to renew him in the whole man after the image of God, that the Lord Jesus had mercy on him, and had pardoned and accepted him. It so happened, that a few weeks after, I began my pastoral visitation for this winter with my friend John. When seated together at his fireside, he said, 'I think, Mr Johnston, the ministers are all preaching a great deal better than they used to

do'. 'Perhaps', said I, 'the people are hearing a good deal better than they used to do'. 'That may be', he replied; but I think they ought to preach a good deal better!' 'Why so?' I asked. 'Because', said he, 'the people are all praying now for their ministers; and before this revival, they left all the praying as well as the preaching to them'. John is now a living stone in the spiritual temple.

One other illustrative case is that of a young man, who, like Saul, stands out head and shoulders above most of his brethren; that fine manly body is the tenement of a clear mind and a generous disposition. He has maintained an excellent character, and is a person of very active habits. He has been for years a member of the church. He has been engaged in the spirit trade (selling alcohol), and managed his business with all due regard to propriety, and as well as that branch of business can be conducted. During last spring, a sermon which I preached on the sin and shame of the trade, so 'nettled' him, that for weeks and months he never entered our church. During last summer, the Spirit began to work deeply on his mind. The first serious awakening was at a prayer-meeting in Townsend Street, on an evening when a noble-minded elder of the Presbyterian Church, and a leading merchant in our town, was expounding the parable of the prodigal son. Reflection deepened into conviction, and that conviction, for several days and nights, was exhibited in agonising wrestling with God for mercy. That heavenly Father, who never said to any of the seed of Jacob, 'Seek ye my face in vain', heard his prayer, and, after a most anxious ordeal, granted him pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb. At one of our prayer-meetings he came forward and asked liberty to speak a few words. This granted, he proceeded to give us a most interesting statement of the rise and progress of religion in his soul. He told us that for years he had been a professor of religion, but only a formalist and a hypocrite, that he had never known what the peace of God was until within the last few days, and that if all there but knew the blessedness of religion, they would seek it at once in and through Jesus Christ, and they would not be disappointed. After an earnest appeal, he resumed his seat. Many, who had not much faith in the revival, remarked, that the address was all very well, but they would wait to see what of the whisky-shop. They

had not to wait long; the very next week the house was cleared of every vestige of the whisky trade; he had washed his hands clear of all inconsistency; he takes an active part in our religious meetings; his new business prospers beyond all expectation, under the blessing of God; he has just passed through a fearful ordeal of illness, rejoicing in tribulation; he has been the honoured instrument of bringing several of his relatives and friends to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and he is going steadily forward adorning in his daily walk the doctrine of God his Saviour.

The Backsliders

The Backsliders have not been forgotten by our gracious God. Of many I might report with holy joy, but one case only will I quote. He was a young man of prepossessing appearance, excellent character, reflecting habits, and religious profession. He was well educated in the Scriptures, and much liked. He was a successful Sabbath-school teacher, and a regular communicant in the church. After some time, he was appointed superintendent of a Sabbath-school, and all went on well under his management. By-and-by a striking change passed over him. He became dissatisfied with everything, and gave up the charge of the school - fell away from the communion of the church, and finally ceased to attend the house of God. The secret of all was, he had begun to read infidel (atheist) books, by which his faith was overthrown and he was unfortunately drawn into the darkness of Deism (the belief that God is far away and inactive), and openly avowed his contempt of Christianity. In this state of mind he continued for several months. When the Spirit of God visited our town and congregation, the manifestations of His power were treated by him with utter incredulity, and the whole movement was regarded as woman's weakness and nervous sympathy. The work of grace was denied; and when on one occasion the conversation turned on the power of prayer, that power was defied. 'Let any six men try and pray me down'. One humble fellow-workman, himself awakened at a prayer-meeting, and a reclaimed backslider, and at that very time anxiously alive about his own soul secretly accepted the challenge. There was one other heart which loved that erring brother through and through - a friend who had rejoiced in his rise, and now grieved over his fall, one who, 'since the day he heard it, did not cease to pray for him, and to desire that he might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding'. Whilst the prayers were being presented, the last case which I have detailed occurred, and that address at our prayer-meeting was reported to him by his companion. It was on a Saturday morning, and the earnest tone of that workingman, himself a monument of mercy, went to the heart of his erring friend. He went home that day in silent anxiety, and reached his home to retire at once to his closet. He took down his neglected Bible, and opening it at random, his eye fell on the 51st

Psalm, and as he read it he wondered. He closed it, and opening it again, his attention was drawn to the 39th Psalm, with all its solemn warnings. Melted down, he fell on his knees, and, casting himself on God in Christ for forgiveness and acceptance, all his difficulties vanished, he could not tell how, and there was no objection urged by Tom Paine (atheist) to which he could not have given a sufficient answer. The next Sabbath he was at church both morning and evening; and after the conclusion of the latter service, I invited any that were anxious about their souls to meet me in the vestry. About thirty came, of whom our friend was one. My heart bounded with joy as I took his hand and brought him into the vestry, where he told us the history of his fall, and how, in the bitterness of his hatred of Christ and Christianity, he had gone to school to learn grammar and penmanship, that he might be prepared to do his best to write down religion, and how, in the manner above described, he was brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. After this statement we all knelt together around the throne of grace, and thanked God that this His son, who was dead, was alive again, was lost, and was found. He continues a humble follower of Christ.

Children of God

In relation to the children of God, they, too, have been wondrously and blessedly revived. The first case of prostration which occurred in our congregation was one of my Sabbath-school teachers, a young man of quiet, consistent Christian character. I was for some time perplexed as to the reason of his being 'struck down' (collapsing under a state of conviction), but in a short time I found that with that visitation a most remarkable stimulus had been given to his mental powers and spiritual graces - that what Mr North very properly describes as 'the dumb devil', which possesses too many professing Christians, was thus thoroughly cast out of him - that those lips which shame and fear had sealed, were opened - and that, like Saul, he stood forth a new man under the filling of the Spirit which he was thus led to seek and receive. He now leads in prayer when asked, which he would not or could not do before, and is the active superintendent of one of our Sabbath-schools, besides being generally useful in the visitation of the careless and the sick. He stands out as the type of a large number, whose dormant energies have been thoroughly awakened and vigorously enlisted in the cause of Christ.

Some may deny the work of the Spirit, and some require the test of time. I can only say, that whilst a large amount of mere emotion has arisen and passed away, and whilst many have been awakened but not converted, many, very many, remain to testify to the saving work of grace which has passed upon them. Not one of those joining the church has lapsed into carelessness or inconsistency, but all stand fast in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Children in the Church (Part III)

Dr Joel R Beeke
(Grand Rapids, USA)



Involve the Children

Involve the children in the whole life of the church. Many Christian parents worship as a family on the Lord's Day, but do not bring their children to other church meetings during the week. Of course, some meetings would not be appropriate for children, but consider the prayer meeting. Corporate prayer is the lifeline of the church; in Acts, the members of the church devoted themselves to prayer meetings. They were serious about the calling of the church to be 'an house of prayer' (Is.56:7). Shall we exclude our children from this most essential dimension of our church's life? Bring your children to prayer meetings.

Bring the children to other ministry opportunities, too. Note the talents and interests of the children and teach them to use those gifts while they are young. Recruit children to stuff envelopes for mailings. Ask them to make cards for the sick or to residents of nursing homes. Take them on visits to shut-ins. One minister I know has several children who are gifted singers. He and his wife and family often visit nursing homes and move from room to room to sing to their church folk and other residents. The people love it. Put their gifts to work! Young men and women who can sing should glorify God in sacred concerts. Girls can join their mothers in making blankets for the poor or in cooking meals for the sick. Boys can help their fathers rake leaves or shovel snow for elderly people. Bring them with you when you visit a mission or work in a church nursery. Children will learn much about ministry by doing it with their parents. As soon as your children are old enough, involve them in one or more ministries in the church.

Talk to the Children

Don't just ignore children as you walk through your church building. Greet them. The Bible commands us to greet one another with warmth and brotherly affection. Would you ignore your nephews and nieces or grandchildren at a family reunion? The assembling of the church is a sacred family reunion. People who stand at the door greeting people as they come in should be trained to welcome children with the same kind of warmth. We should all greet the children around us. Stoop down to their level and look them in the eye.

Learn their names. Ask them what they are learning in school or what they did this week.

Try to put in a good word for the Lord when you talk to children. Lift up Christ. Let them see your joy in serving the Saviour. Commend them for carrying their Bible. Remind them it is the best of books for it tells us about the Lord Jesus. Talk to them about the sermon. Parents will appreciate this as well. Here's a short e-mail I received from a mother a few weeks ago: 'Pastor, I just wanted to tell you I think our son got a kick out of your questions to him and his friend about the sermon last Sunday. He was quite proud that he knew all the answers (at least he said he did). Thank you for questioning them. I think it's a good thing to do. Thanks for your truly pastoral spirit and attitude!' Let the children of the church see your joy in knowing and serving this wonderful Saviour.

Love the Children

To sum it up, God calls us to love children in the church. Children are very sensitive to emotions and attitudes. Don't be sour or stiff with them. Let your heart be warm and your face aglow for them. We have an elder in our church who makes it a point to speak with young children after every service. He gets down on their level, asks them what they learned from the sermon, helps them understand it better, and then gives them a piece of candy. Love permeates all that he says and does. No wonder the children love him!

Christ loves children! So should we. Why not befriend a teenager in your church and shower him with Christ-like love? It can be very rewarding. I take a young man in our church out to lunch every other month. He now opens up to me with his most profound fears and deepest questions, and asks my advice on all kinds of important matters. We can speak plainly about sex and other areas of danger and temptation. At our last meeting, he asked me: 'How can I get through college without falling into temptation?' and 'What do you think are the most important qualities to look for in a future wife?' I love this young man and enjoy our meetings immensely.

Pastors, loving pastoral care is particularly important for you to show to children, teenagers and students. You need to do more than preach to the rising generation

and teach them one catechism lesson per week. Get close to them. Ask them questions. Show them you care. Challenge them to godly living in a positive way both from the pulpit and in private. Curb the tendency to be negative about young people in your preaching and private conversations.

Elders, you have a special calling to love the baptised members of God's flock. If you love them habitually as they grow up, if the time comes that they may not be walking worthy of their baptism, you will be able to exercise effective loving discipline in their lives even when they have not yet made public profession of faith. We must love our young people so much that we dare not allow their status as non-communicant members to exempt them from the loving admonition of the church.

Parents and church members, we all need to build close relationships with our children so that when we talk, they will listen, and so that when they talk, we will be sure to listen carefully. Be more ready to hear than to speak or act, especially if anger is present (James 1:19–20). Hold children accountable for their conduct in the house of God in a fair, balanced and loving way. We must love them without catering to them; but neither do we want to crush the life out of them, turning the experience of worship into an endless succession of rebukes and exactions for every offence.

Church officers, members, and parents all need to work together and stand together in our work with children and youth. We must watch out for their bodies and their souls. We must be diligent to protect our children from sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation and predation in the church. We must be diligent to protect our children from spiritual abuse, seeking to inculcate

in their minds hatred against sin, love for Christ, and a longing to live wholly and solely for God and His glory.

Conclusion: Don't Give Up on the Children!

Sometimes Christian parents become discouraged about their children. You glance across the pew during the service and perhaps one of your children is asleep. Perhaps another is looking at everyone except the pastor. Perhaps one has escaped and is heading down the aisle! It's easy to start asking, 'What am I doing wrong?' Don't give up. Galatians 6:9 says, 'Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not'. Keep waiting on the Lord and persevere in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Be faithful in doing your duty and keep trusting the Lord. Bringing our children to Christ, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and seeking their conversion to eternal life are long-term endeavours of faith and the obedience of faith. Hebrews 10:38–39 says, 'Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul'.

Persevere in prayer for the children in the church. Remember when you were a child; did not God hear the prayers of your parents and your pastors for your spiritual well-being? He can do the same for your children. When teens go through troubles, intercede for them in prayer with the persistence of the importunate widow with the unjust judge. God will hear your prayers. Remind God of His promises to us. Our Lord Jesus spoke of all our conversions when He said in Matthew 19:26, 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible'.

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



We must be diligent to protect our children from spiritual abuse, seeking to inculcate in their minds hatred against sin, love for Christ, and a longing to live wholly and solely for God and His glory.



News

61st Free Church School in Theology

*Rev Alasdair Macleod
(See Group Photo on Rear Cover)*

The 61st Free Church School in Theology was held from 2 to 5 September 2013 at the usual centre, Carronvale House in Larbert. The conference was, as always, a lively few days of fellowship, worship, prayer and theological discussion, prompted by a number of papers well up to the usual standard.

The School opened on the Monday evening with an address on 'The Life and Sermons of Robert Murray McCheyne' delivered by Rev Alasdair Macleod, the heart-warming topic being chosen to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of McCheyne.

The Tuesday followed with a missionary presentation on the Republic of Ireland by Dublin-based church planter Rev Mark Fitzpatrick, who gave an encouraging report on some very positive developments in his home city, especially over the past year, in terms of gospel outreach. Thereafter, Rev Maurice Roberts gave a very practical and challenging paper on 'Sanctification', speaking as a late replacement for advertised speaker Rev Kenneth Stewart, who was unwell.

Later in the day, the brethren heard an exposition from Rev James Clark

on the difficult passage Romans 7:1-13 and a thoughtful and balanced paper on the New Calvinism from Rev Harry Woods. Mr Woods was careful to stress the many positive and encouraging aspects of the 'Young, Restless and Reformed' movement in the US, with its intellectual roots in the writings of Jonathan Edwards, while acknowledging that in some areas, especially in that of worship, he considered further reformation to be urgently needed.

The next day brought a very stimulating discussion on the preaching of Christ from Proverbs by Rev Greg MacDonald, and a soaring, profound paper on the imputation of Christ's righteousness by able theologian Rev Malcolm Watts. The School was concluded on the Thursday morning with a warm, encouraging reminder of the 'Privileges of Preaching the Gospel' from Rev Andrew Allan.

As always, the regular attenders from the Free Church (Continuing) benefited from the company and fellowship of brethren from England and Ireland. The talks were recorded, and are available on CD from Mr Bill McQueer, The Manse, Farr, Inverness IV2 6XF.

Rev David Murray - Induction

Rev David Murray, formerly of the Free Church (Continuing) in Stornoway, was inducted to the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids on July 7th. The congregation had been vacant since June 2010 when Dr L W Bilkes retired. Dr Murray will share the preaching and pastoring with Dr Jerry Bilkes, son of the previous pastor. He will also continue to teach at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. We wish Dr Murray God's richest blessing upon his extended ministry.

Kirk to stop church marriages?

Christian Institute

MSPs have heard concerns from the Church of Scotland that they may have to stop conducting wedding ceremonies if plans to redefine marriage go ahead. A representative from the Kirk told the Equal Opportunities Committee which is considering the Bill that the prospect of 'years of exhausting legal challenge' is 'very concerning'. Rev Alan Hamilton of the Church of Scotland Legal Questions Committee said the Kirk's General Assembly had asked him to look into whether it is worth them continuing to offer marriages in Scotland. He said they are 'concerned that this is an invitation to take religious bodies in particular through the court system'. He added: 'It gives us considerable problems internally and we're

Desk



deeply concerned about the threat externally'. MSPs were warned about churches being challenged through the Equality Act and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Who knows what persecution might yet come to churches as a result of this proposed legislation.

Gender Abortions

Christian Institute

The real reason why no prosecutions were brought for two doctors who approved gender abortions is that it would expose the reality of 'abortion on demand', commentators have said. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has faced widespread criticism after deciding not to charge the doctors – despite having enough evidence – because it would not be 'in the public interest'. And now the abortion provider BPAS has claimed that it would be 'wrong' in some circumstances to refuse to consider a request on the grounds of gender, despite the Government saying that sex-selective abortions are illegal.

Fraser Nelson, editor of *The Spectator*, said the issue has left us in a 'legal no man's land' and the CPS are not upholding the law. He said: 'In deciding not to prosecute the doctors exposed by *The Daily Telegraph*, part of the CPS's argument was that doctors are given "wide discretion" to "interpret" the law'. 'This is a polite way of saying that the law is almost entirely ignored. In theory, the mother's health should be at risk before an abortion is authorised. In practice, Britain

offers abortion on demand', he said in a piece for *The Daily Telegraph*.

Dominic Lawson, columnist for *The Sunday Times*, referred to his doctor friend who said that if GPs who approve gender abortions should be struck off, so should most British doctors. He said, 'once it is established that some abortions can

be prosecuted for not "really" being on the legally acceptable grounds of "injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman", the whole dishonest edifice of the law in this field will be exposed to the light'. He also said Keir Starmer, the director of public prosecutions, 'knows perfectly well that in reality we have abortion on demand' and is perhaps worried about this being revealed.

Lord Alton has accused the CPS of having 'double standards' when it comes to prosecutions involving abortion, as it is prepared to charge pro-life campaigners but not doctors who are clearly breaking the law. The cross-bench peer said a basic principle of all standing 'equal before the law' is being violated.

Remember that abortion is murder – one child is murdered because it is Down's syndrome and another because it is female.



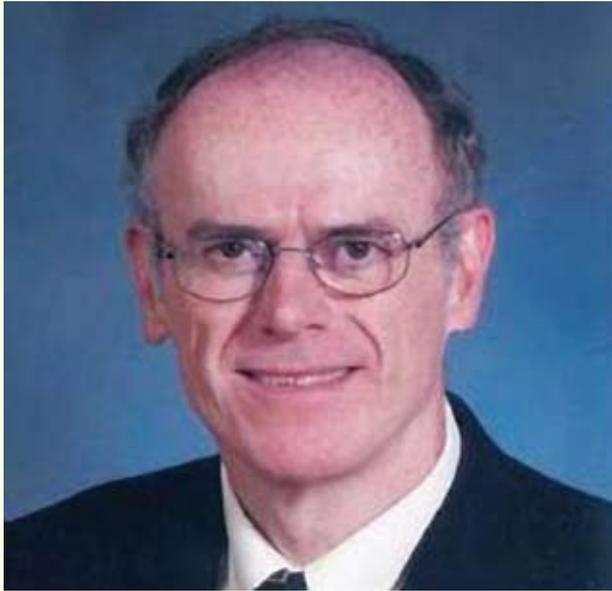
Greg Mulholland MP

Growing Intolerance in Liberal Democrat Party

Christian Concern

Liberal Democrat MP Greg Mulholland has warned that there is a 'dangerous drift' in the party towards a belief that faith should be kept private and not brought into politics. In a new book entitled *Liberal Democrats Do God*, he says that there has been a move away from 'tolerance, of acceptance of religions and faiths, alongside secular belief systems like humanism, towards a moral conformity' which believed 'certain views are part of who we are and that many faith-based Christian views are rather something to be reserved for private worship that should be firmly kept out of the political arena'. Mr Mulholland was one of a handful of Lib Dem MPs who didn't vote in support of same-sex marriage earlier in the year.

Lib Dem MP Sarah Teather voted against the same-sex marriage proposals but recently announced that she would not be standing again at the next election.



Dr Dale Ralph Davis

Lewis Christian Conference

David Murray - Knock

The Lewis Christian Conference committee has organised a conference to be held between Friday 8th November and Monday 11th November 2013. The speaker will be Dr Dale Ralph Davis, who is the retired Teaching Pastor of Woodland Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He is a respected conference speaker and is well known for his excellent Old Testament commentaries, and his book 'The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts'. Dr Davis was previously professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Three conference meetings will be held in the Stornoway High Church (kindly granted) and Dr Davis will preach in two local churches on the Lord's Day (DV). All are welcome to attend. Further details will be made available on the website www.lewischristianconference.com.

Egypt settling into a deadly cycle

The violence in Egypt is settling into a deadly cycle: (1) The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) challenges the military; (2) the military responds with force; (3) MB supporters react with violence against Coptic Christians (whom they blame for the coup). Then the cycle starts again. The military is exploiting sectarian violence for its own ends and cares nothing for Christians. With money coming from Saudi Arabia, it has no interest in protecting Christians but only in protecting itself. The military would kill Christians readily if it felt it were in its interests to do so. With the MB recruiting *jihadis* in Algeria and beyond, it has to be anticipated that terrorism against the State and genocidal violence against the Coptic Church will

increase. Egypt and its Christians need our prayers. Pray that:

* God, 'the hope of all the ends of the earth', will intervene in Egypt stilling 'the tumult of the people' (Ps.65:7).

* the Holy Spirit will move powerfully amongst Egyptian Christians, enabling them to stand firm in faith (Is.7:9), so they might live radically counter-cultural lives, loving their enemies and praying for those who persecute them (Lk.6:27-36).

* the Holy Spirit will bring awakening to Egyptian Muslims, convicting multitudes of 'sin and righteousness and judgment' (Jn.16:7-11); as Egypt is 'shaken' may Islam be brought down and the Lord exalted (Isaiah 2:7-21).

Kerey Thayananth ordained

Kerey Thayananth was our first Sri Lankan student at the Free Church Seminary. He has been involved in the last few years in church planting in the Trincomalee area. On 30th August, he and two others Jeyamoorthy who works in Hatton and Vijendran who works in another part of Trincomalee were ordained to the ministry. They belong to the Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church. Parthee's brother Vijay who ministers in that denomination in Colombo reports that it was a joyful event and about 240 people came to witness the ordination. Vijay requests prayer:

1. Pray for the maturity of the missions that are already established.

2. Pray for calling & training of new gospel workers.

3. Pray for children's ministry which is blessed with 250 children in all six missions. Pray that these children will be planted with truth and that the Lord will set them free by His Truth, and that they will be future pillars for His church in Sri Lanka.

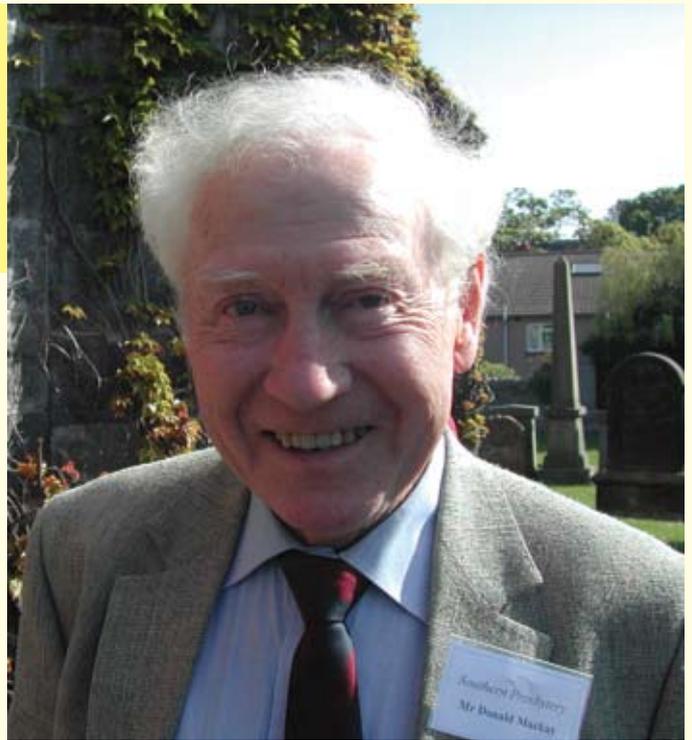
Let us especially remember Kerey that he will be mightily used by God in Sri Lanka

Persecution in Pakistan

E Kendal

On Sunday 22 September, as some 600 worshippers were mingling at the close of the service, two Islamic militants armed with automatic rifles and grenades stormed All Saint's Church, Peshawar. After slaughtering many, they detonated their explosive vests, triggering two huge explosions that blasted shrapnel through the believers. The death toll, presently 89, continues to rise; more than 150 were wounded, many critically. The internet images are shocking and deeply moving. Two different wings of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have claimed responsibility. A spokesman from TTP Jundullah claimed: 'They [Christians] are the enemies of Islam, therefore we target them. We will continue our attacks on non-Muslims on Pakistani land'. Later a spokesman from Junood ul-Hifsa claimed the attack was in response to US drone strikes. This was the most deadly terrorist attack on Pakistan's Christian community in modern history.

Obituary
DONALD MACKAY
Rev John J Murray



Donald Kenneth Mackay was born in 1933 in Partick, Glasgow of Lewis parents. They attended the Partick Crow Road congregation of the Free Church of Scotland, where Donald was baptised and which he attended until his death. He went to church with his parents but did not show an early interest in spiritual things. He was diagnosed with TB at the age of 22 and remained in hospital for several months. This setback turned out for his good as he met his future wife Betty who nursed him. She began to attend the Partick church with him and was converted there. Donald remained sceptical, with an interest in philosophy and reading the writings of such men as Bertrand Russell. It was while browsing in a library for more of the same that he providentially picked up a book on Christianity by Professor O Hallesby. This set him thinking about the Christian faith and he too was converted.

Donald became a member in the Partick Free Church congregation and later was appointed precentor (in 1962). In those days the position was an advertised one with a salary. He refused to take any payment and was to serve as precentor for a record 50 years. He was ordained an elder in the congregation on 28th June 1970 and served in that office with diligence and faithfulness for over 40 years. Shortly after his ordination he took up the duties of Session Clerk. His wise counsel made him a useful member in church courts, serving on Presbytery, Church committees and in the General Assembly. He was a diligent visitor of the housebound and sick and on many occasions took the midweek meeting, speaking with great acceptance.

Donald's occupation was in the printing industry. He was a useful contact in that field for the printing of books for Christian publishers, such as the Banner of Truth Trust and the Knox Press. The Lord prospered him and he became the Managing Director of his company. The Highland crofting instinct led him to acquire a house overlooking the Clyde estuary with sufficient grounds for keeping livestock. Donald and Betty were blessed with a family of one son, Kenneth, and three daughters, Marion, Ruth and Anne, who made a profession of faith in Christ in the Partick congregation. The home in Dunarbuck became a place noted for its welcoming hospitality to young and old. In later years the occasional presence of twelve grandchildren made it a very lively place.

It was a severe blow when illness suddenly struck Donald in early 2010. Then he was not expected to live more

than two years but in the providence of God and with the help of modern drugs he survived three and a half years. Latterly he suffered a lot and had plenty experience of hospitals. It was a great relief to him that he was able to spend the last two weeks of his life at home, lovingly nursed by Betty and the family and a wonderful team of carers.

Donald had a tendency to be hard on himself and many a conversation with him went on to the midnight hour trying to resolve difficult questions. Possessed with a keen analytical mind he loved debate. He liked to 'have a go' at ministers, making sure they did not have an inflated view of themselves. He was fair-minded, open-hearted and hated hypocrisy. When he saw it was required, he was ready to make a stand for truth and righteousness at some personal cost.

Donald was not easily satisfied with preaching and looked for an all-round pulpit ministry. Where he found such he was most supportive and encouraging. He was a keen student of human conduct and vastly experienced in what he referred to as 'the cut and thrust of life'. He had a good sense of humour and could tell amusing stories about the past days.

He has left a good testimony behind him. His passing leaves a gap in the Partick Free Church (Continuing) congregation which will not be easily filled. We pray that God will raise up men of his stature to fill the vacant place. We extend our deepest sympathy to his devoted wife Betty and Kenneth, Marion, Ruth and Anne and the twelve grandchildren, who will sorely miss their grandpa. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.' (Rev.14.13).



Books

Jesus on Every Page 10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ in the Old Testament

David Murray

**Thomas Nelson, pbk, 246pp,
£11.49**

Much of the usual preaching on the Old Testament is moralistic and detached from the gospel. Samson or David are held up for us as examples to be followed in some things and to be avoided in others. David Murray is concerned that all preaching should be Christ-centred. Paul said, 'We preach Christ', and Christ must be the message in New Testament preaching. Sometimes ministers, especially in the past, preached Christ from the Old Testament by means of allegory. Rather than using sound rules of Biblical interpretation the preacher's imagination was allowed to run riot and find Christ in the strangest places. Such preaching plays with Scripture and lacks Biblical authority. Here however we have a sound and helpful work which lays down the principles for interpreting the Old Testament. The style, especially at the beginning of the book, is quite racy, easy to read and typical of the author who has a natural gift of communication with old and young.

Dr Murray starts with Jesus and the two on the road to Emmaus: 'Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself' (Lk.24:25-27). From this Murray rightly deduces that Christ should be found by us throughout the Old Testament Scriptures.

The book is thorough. Christ is displayed in creation, in Old Testament characters, in the Christophanies, in the Law, the History,

the Prophets, the Types, the Covenants, the Proverbs and the Poems. Students and ministers will find much to stimulate their preaching of the Old Testament. Indeed all thoughtful Christians will be given edifying insights.

Dr Murray's approach to the Song of Solomon is interesting. Rather than interpreting it literally, typologically or allegorically he views it as Eastern love poetry to be viewed by the emotions and impressions that it creates rather than by dissecting each word and phrase. So he lists the various impressions created in him by the Song, eg passion, desire, sensory, joy, grace, etc. He sees a message for marriage as well as a message for Israel about its relationship to its Lord and the New Testament church or individual Christian to Christ.

Catching up with modern technology I bought *Jesus on Every Page* in electronic (Kindle) format and though I missed the feel of a new book it certainly makes storing a library a much easier proposition. This book will, I believe, become a standard work in interpreting the Old Testament.

Rev William Macleod

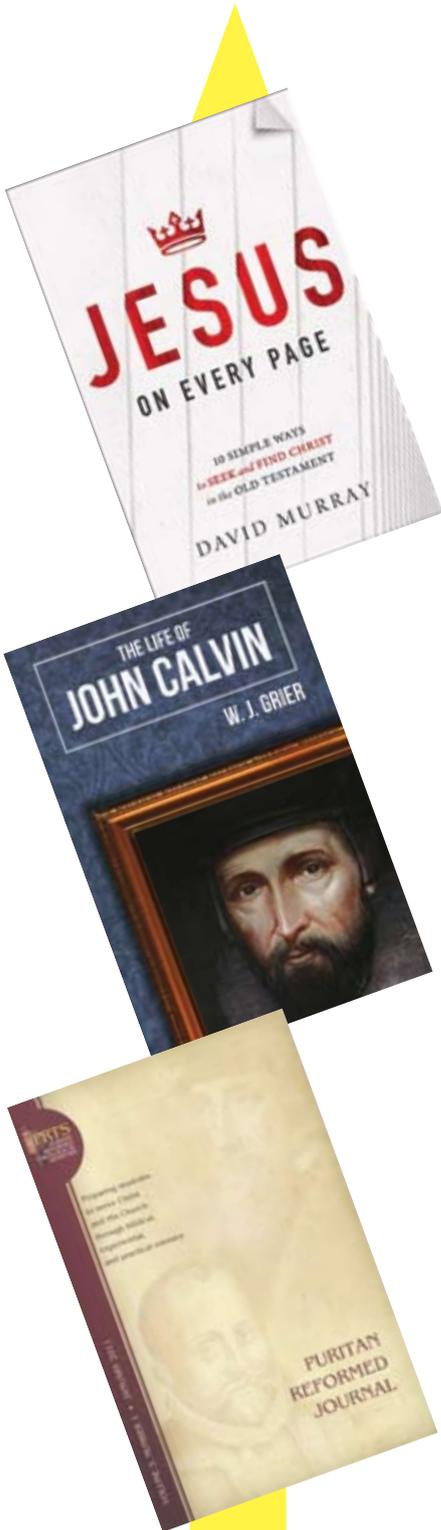
The Life of John Calvin

W J Grier

**Banner of Truth Trust,
176pp, pbk, £6.00**

This readable history of Calvin is an excellent introduction to the life of a man greatly used of God and whose teaching is so influential in the life of the Protestant Church even today. Sadly Calvinism is still despised by many and caricatured as a repressive, joyless way of life, and yet those who truly understand it know it to be the exact opposite.

This book is laid out in twenty-three brief chapters and while it shows what this godly man believed and taught, we also get great insight into the kind of man Calvin



was. He was born in 1509 and brought up by a devout mother 'in all the rites and ceremonies of the church of Rome'. His father, recognising his son's academic gifts, sent him to Paris at the age of twelve to further his studies. While there he became friends with Pierre Robert, a young man who has been called 'the Henry Martyn of the French Reformation' and was influenced by him. He then passed through a time of deep conviction of sin and so came to repentance and faith.

Eventually he came to pastor a flock in Strasbourg and was 'terrible against the wolves which troubled Christ's flock, but tender toward the doubting, weeping with those that wept'. He turned poet and composed a version of the Psalms, (initially seven of them) and so taught the people to sing them in their mother tongue.

Later in his life after many times of troubles and blessings in various places, the well-known initial reluctance to return to Geneva at the behest of Farel is here well-recorded. In this situation we get a glimpse of the humility, and to some extent timidity, of the man. He desired no glory for himself and was aware of the difficulties awaiting, but sensing his duty he returned to Geneva in 1541.

We then have an account of the great transformation brought about in that city and, though not without much opposition at times, Calvin continued faithful to the Word and sought to do all to God's glory. He desired no riches for himself though much was offered to him. At times he could scarcely make ends meet and when he died it was said that he 'did not own a foot of ground'.

There are two excellent chapters on the controversy between himself and Servetus and what lay behind the burning of Servetus including a different perspective from the usual of Calvin's perceived role in this.

The closing year of his life is set out and it is worth buying the book for this alone. The penultimate chapter 'Calvin as a thinker' shows him to have been a 'world moving force' and demonstrates why he was known as 'the theologian of the Spirit'. Words in the final chapter of the book sum him up well: 'Calvin the preacher of Geneva, moulding by his words the reformed soul of the sixteenth century'.

How much we owe this man of God we will never fully appreciate, but buy this little book and you will to some extent understand just a little of how God used Calvin in difficult and dark days.

Rev K Macdonald

Puritan Reformed Journal

Vol 5, No 2,

Edited by Dr Joel R. Beeke

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary,

July 2013, 288pp, \$10

This is now the tenth biannual issue of the Puritan Reformed Journal, and I found on this occasion that the demand of filling two substantial volumes a year may be starting to tell. The content is unquestionably good, solid, historical theology from a Reformed perspective, but there are fewer articles of real importance and striking interest

than I have found in previous numbers, and even one or two of quite limited interest.

For example, one author gives 25 pages of learned exposition to some theological writings of John Knox on predestination, but really says nothing more for the general reader than that Knox is Calvinist on predestination, a conclusion so obvious it seems scarcely worth the effort. Much more interesting is Stephen Yuille's discussion of the Puritan concept of the preparation of the individual for faith, drawn from a valuable treatise by William Perkins. Perkins teaches that by four stages (hearing, seeing, sorrowing and despairing) the elect individual is prepared for the gift of faith in Christ. This gift is itself given by stages (stirring, desiring, hungering after righteousness, praying). Such steps cannot be made experiential requirements of course, as experiences of grace inevitably vary, but it is valuable to study how a seasoned Puritan pastor discerned the progress of 'the Spirit working faith' in the converts he saw in his own lifetime.

The one very important article in the collection is Ryan McGraw's review of the new systematic theology by Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*. It must be admitted that a good, modern, one-volume manual of theology, robustly confessional yet fully engaged with the tide of new literature over the last couple of decades, especially in the area of the Trinity, would be a huge contribution to the work of the Reformed Church worldwide, as the standard textbook by Louis Berkhof is now more than 75 years old. However, it is sadly clear from this review that this work simply will not serve as such a replacement. While finding aspects worthy of commendation, McGraw shows that Horton's theology is unduly influenced by categories from Eastern orthodoxy, which cause him to create a confusing and unwarranted distinction between the Essence and Energies of God, and from secular philosophy (speech-act theory), which lead him to give the predominant place in the *ordo salutis* to justification, leaving his position open to the charge of Antinomianism. This is illustrated in misleading statements like 'sanctification primarily involves getting used to our justification', against which McGraw sounds a timely warning.

On a more practical level, Joel Beeke discusses the role of 'the minister's helpmeet' from 1 Timothy 3:11. He reminds ministers' wives of the loneliness of the work their husbands engage in, that the very nature of it makes it difficult for him to share burdens with other members of the congregation, with the result that much of his social fulfilment must come from his wife. He therefore stresses the responsibility of the role.

FCC readers will also be interested in an engaging account of the pioneering Zambian missionary Olive Doke (1891-1972), by Baptist pastor Conrad Mbewe, who is one of the trustees of our own Covenant College.

Overall the PRJ will be valued by those with an interest and grounding in historical theology but otherwise is not indispensable reading.

Rev Alasdair J Macleod

Evangelistic Preaching (Part II)

Rev David Murray

Last month Rev David Murray looked at some of the reasons why evangelistic preaching is rare these days.

2. The Reasons for Evangelistic Preaching

The most obvious reason is Biblical warrant. The Old Testament prophets were passionate pleaders for the souls of their fellow men and women. Deuteronomy reads like an Old Testament evangelistic tract, as Moses expostulates with Israel and beseeches them to embrace the God of Genesis to Numbers. Study the weeping reasonings of Jeremiah and the powerful pictorial pleas of Hosea. Even apocalyptic and enigmatic Ezekiel contains the most beautiful calls to Israel to turn from their evil ways and live. In encounter after encounter, in public and in private, Jesus exhorted souls to seek salvation. The Acts of the Apostles show us Peter and Paul pleading with individuals, groups, congregations, and public gatherings. 'Teacher' Paul cannot resist tearful expressions of angst and desire in Romans 9-11, that most doctrinal of letters.

Then we could turn from the Bible to church history and consider the regular evangelistic sermons of Bunyan, Whitefield, Edwards, Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, etc. But I'd especially like to argue for evangelistic preaching by considering the effect of its absence.

Preaching becomes lecturely and academic

When sermons are almost exclusively aimed at teaching Christians, and rarely aimed at the unconverted, preaching begins to sound more like cold, objective, academic lecturing.

But, when a preacher has caught a glimpse of hell, when he really grasps the terrible spiritual predicament of the lost in his congregation, and when he is gripped by the urgency of the Gospel in the looming shadow of judgment and eternity, his preaching is transformed into present tense, personal, passionate preaching of the truth. The lecture hall is left behind as we enter the presence of God. The lectern becomes a pulpit. The 'professor' becomes a preacher.

Christians become forgetful, proud, inward-looking, and prayerless

It's not just the unconverted that are damaged by the

lack of evangelistic preaching; Christians are too. Why? Well, in the absence of it, Christians forget. We forget the pit out of which we were dug, we forget the debt we were in, and we forget the remarkable work of God in our life. In the absence of evangelistic preaching, the memory of saving grace fades, weakens, and disappears. In its place comes proud self-confidence and self-focus, which quickly drains prayerful concern for the souls of others. As the Gospel no longer grips our own soul, we have little motivation or desire to tell others.

But, if the Gospel is regularly preached to Christians, then they are re-humbled, re-convicted, and re-minded of what they have been saved from. They re-repent, re-believe, and re-ignite their first love. The contagious Gospel passion in the preacher infects the hearers, and the hearers become enthusiastic carriers, as they go out into the world with a renewed and prayerful vision and mission for the lost and the perishing all around them.

Christians do not bring friends to church

One of the reasons why Christians seem to have stopped bringing friends to church is that most preaching is directed largely towards already well-taught Christians. Many Christians feel that if they take a friend to church, the message will go 'way over their heads'. Many of us have taken someone to church, and to our disappointment and embarrassment, there was little or nothing that our guest could understand or relate to.

But, if Christians know that, say, every Sunday morning, or every second Sunday night, their pastor will preach 'simple' evangelistic sermons suited to the special needs of the unsaved, or even the unchurched, then they will be much more motivated to invite their friends, family, neighbours, etc.

Children growing up in the church assume they are saved

The absence of regular evangelistic preaching often means that children grow up in churches hearing teaching and doctrine addressed to Christians. Without being continually reminded that they must be born again, they presume they are 'just like the other Christians' and so never seek regeneration or saving faith.

But, if they often hear of their vile natural condition, their perilous spiritual state, their need for personal regeneration and conversion, the insufficiency of their own worth, words and works, then they will much more earnestly seek the Saviour. In the church of my childhood, I was reminded every Sunday night, in no uncertain terms, that I was not a Christian and that I needed to seek the Saviour. It was not comfortable or pleasant. It ruined many a Sunday night's sleep. But I knew without a shadow of a doubt that if I went to judgment in the same condition I was born in, I was going to hell ... forever. I also knew, although I wished I didn't, that Christ was calling me to turn, turn, why will you die?

Lost souls go to Hell

I'm not saying that lost souls can't be converted through teaching sermons. Of course they can, and of course they are. But evangelistic preaching is especially blessed to the conversion of souls. If you were to take a survey of the whole world, I'm sure that the vast majority of true Christians will say that it was an evangelistic sermon, a sermon specially directed to appeal to lost,

perishing sinners that God used to turn them from their idols to Himself.

Who knows what a revival of preaching, evangelism, mission and worship might result from a widespread return to evangelistic preaching in the Reformed church!

To be continued

'In the absence of evangelistic preaching, the memory of saving grace fades, weakens, and disappears. In its place comes proud self-confidence and self-focus, which quickly drains prayerful concern for the souls of others.'



Congregational Remittances - September 2013

	CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2013	ORDINARY REMITTANCES		
		2013 Sep	2013 To Sep	2012 To Sep
Presbytery of Inverness				
Aberdeen	0	3,752	15,301	13,027
Duthil-Dores	0	6,045	21,089	13,815
Inverness	0	2,000	20,000	18,000
Kilmorack	0	2,538	13,849	13,188
Total Inverness	0	14,334	70,239	58,030
Northern Presbytery				
Assynt & Scourie	530	2,112	4,785	3,277
Brora	465	3,273	17,481	17,294
Kiltearn	481	957	5,379	6,207
Tarbat	0	2,551	9,464	11,327
Total Northern	1,476	8,893	37,109	38,105
Southern Presbytery				
Arran	705	1,823	7,486	7,358
Ayr	0	1,776	8,614	8,855
Dumfries	0	0	0	0
Edinburgh	38	6,494	25,718	27,576
Glasgow - Partick	45	6,192	25,192	27,653
Glasgow - Shettleston	341	2,920	21,199	20,236
Glasgow - Knightswood	654	4,013	22,799	22,672
Rothsay	1,000	260	260	260
Total Southern	2,782	23,478	111,269	114,610

Outer Hebrides Presbytery

Cross	0	3,050	18,148	17,997
Harris - Leverburgh 309	3,200	14,452		13,872
Harris - Scalpay	0	4,596	22,168	20,894
Knock & Point	0	1,873	10,967	12,614
North Uist	1,359	1,304	8,197	10,540
Stornoway	4,145	7,367	59,761	61,678
Total Hebrides	5,812	21,390	133,693	137,596

Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron

Bracadale	375	937	5,770	9,172
Duirinish (Waternish)	0	0	2,000	4,500
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	903	1,462	13,384	12,273
Lochalsh	505	2,319	11,829	9,854
Poolewe & Aultbea	947	2,759	10,850	10,305
Ullapool	0	44	44	51
Portree	0	5,679	15,565	18,307
Snizort	1,000	6,022	23,898	19,424
Strath	65	793	5,918	7,058
Total Skye/Lochcarron	3,794	20,015	89,258	90,942

Total Congregations

Other Donations	1,018	3,176	23,979	27,308
Legacy			3,000	8,000

TOTAL	14,883	91,286	468,547	474,591
Including Gift Aid	2,799	52,443	101,652	96,214

Update from Sri Lanka

Reformed Protestant Mission Trust

Rev S N Partheepan

Dear friends,

Greetings from hot Sri Lanka! I would like to share what God is doing for His glory in Vavuniya and how He is using us in the work of His Kingdom. We are very thankful for the way that the Lord continues to bless us according to His perfect will.

Family

By the grace of God, my wife and I are doing well. He continually shows His abundant love and care for us. We are happily learning many things from God and every day He is teaching His truth to us. When we came to Vavuniya we had some human fears such as; How are we going to cope in this new place? But now we have an answer for this question - in Christ all works out well! We have grown to love living and working in Vavuniya and we have a love for the people here too.

Ministry of the Word

We worship our Almighty God every Sabbath morning and evening. Eighteen people attend the service in the morning and twenty attend in the evening. We thank God that the same people continue to attend the services faithfully. Two new people have started to attend in the morning recently. I would like to share one story with you. One of our friends from the Netherlands stayed with us during the first week in August. When they were with us we went to a restaurant close to our home for dinner. As usual we prayed before the meal. After the meal, a waiter came up to me and asked, 'Are you a Christian?' 'Yes', I said. I then asked him; 'Do you have any church connection?' 'Yes', he replied, 'my parents had - but I am not going to any church now'. I invited him to our worship services, and he has come the last three Sabbaths. How wonderful it is that even our praying in public places can be a witness used by God!

In the morning I am preaching from 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18, a series which I have entitled, 'The will of God in Christ Jesus for you'. In the evening I am preaching through the life of Elijah. It has been a great blessing for both our congregation and myself. In our prayer meeting we continue to study the Heidelberg Catechism. It has been a real blessing for us. I felt that God spoke to us very clearly and gave us encouragements through this study. Occasionally Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church ministers supply my pulpit, when I have needed a rest. I am very thankful to those who have come. Last week one pastoral assistant (Anton) from a Baptist

church preached for us. It was really nice to have him. He is a very good man and is willing to learn sound theology. Please pray for him and his wife Vinnu.

Pre-school Nursery

Mrs Maran continues to teach the children in Selvanagar where we run the pre-school nursery. Every month the number of children is increasing and some of their parents are showing an interest in attending our church. A Mr Bert from the Netherlands visited our school and they were really amazed at the way the children behaved. They were in a very poor state when we started, but now they are attaining a good standard of education. As some of you already know, five boys from this work already attend our worship services. Thank God for this and please also pray for Mrs Maran and the assistant teacher, Kasthuri. We would like to thank the Partick FCC Sunday school children for the priceless gifts they sent to the Bible class children in Selvanagar. What a wonderful way the Sabbath-school teachers have of encouraging practical Christianity in children from their youth!

Literature

We have printed and distributed good Christian books around several different places. We distribute a quarterly Tamil magazine from New Zealand called the *Bible Lamp*. This magazine has a lot of doctrinally sound truth in it. God willing, soon we hope to print a Tamil translation of *Duties of Parents* by J C Ryle. Pray for this ministry; that the truth would make the people free. Please also remember Rev R Bala who undertakes this wonderful ministry of translation. He is the editor of the *Bible Lamp*.

Practical ministry

As you all know Ceylon Christian Care (CCC) is greatly helping in the practical ministry in Vavuniya. This is a great work to be done in Sri Lanka. helping the poor and needy according to the word of God. I am sure the Lord will bless them according to His richness. CCC provides the financial support for the nursery school we run in the village of Selvanagar. They have also supported a nutrition project there. They provide money for the diaconal work of the church. We are very thankful for them. Last month we printed 1,000 copies of a book by Al Martin, and as mentioned already, next month, God willing, we hope to print 1,000 copies of a J C Ryle book. CCC are paying for all the costs associated with the printing of the books. We very much appreciate the wonderful support they are giving. Mr Bert (CCC) visited all the families who attend our church and helped them according to their needs. They also helped others outside the church. They donated a neck collar to the general hospital in Vavuniya and milk powder to poor children in hospital wards. It was a real testimony that the church seeks to practise what it preaches.

Other events

I. A youth outing was held on the 6th and 7th of

September. The focus of the weekend was on the youth who are unconverted. Five young people from our church attended and they brought their friends along. Also, some others whom we know who attend other churches joined with us. A bus was provided for our trip to Trincomalee (on the East coast). In all around 60 young people attended. The topic for the outing was, 'Do you believe you have a soul in you?' One young man has started attending since then, another who lives some distance from Vavuniya started attending a church I recommended there and four have begun attending our sister church in Jaffna.

2. God willing, we are hoping to start Bible class modules for local ministers and church leaders on the 9th and 10th of October and monthly thereafter. We have already advertised this ministry around our neighbouring districts. We are hoping that around seven students will come. CCC is supporting this work financially. I am begging you to pray for this ministry. This is a good way to spread the sound gospel and build up a Christ-pleasing bride in Sri Lanka.

General matters

1. As some of you are aware, the lawyer who was doing the registration work for the church here passed away. Now his daughter is trying to complete all the work of her father. Complications have arisen and this has required me making many trips to Colombo which is an overnight trip by bus. It has been costly in time, energy and money. We hope and pray that the registration work will be finalised soon.

2. We have come across an area of land for a potential future site for the construction of a church building. If God wills, He can make all things possible, even the purchase of this land. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the reasons why we are considering the purchase of land for the church:

- It would be better to have a permanent place to

conduct the worship services.

- At the moment some young boys come from Selvanagar where CCC is supporting the pre-school work. There are also some other young people who are willing to attend. However, the limited space and the location of our home is a constraint to them.

- The children's ministry is growing and we are planning and expecting to bring more children to Sabbath-school classes. If we have our own land with even just a roofed hut, it would be possible to do more work.

- When we gather at our home, we feel that some people find it inconvenient to come for worship. Furthermore, when we evangelise, it is difficult to invite people to come to our home to worship.

- This land is within 2 km distance from the town of Vavuniya and therefore it would be accessible to most of the people.

- The land appears to be reasonably priced.

- At the moment there are no Hindu temples close to this land and therefore there will be no noise interference during the Hindu festival seasons.

- If we even have just a small roofed hut to conduct worship, it would be a permanent venue, so that if we need to move out of our home due to our changing rental circumstances, the building where we worship will not have to change.

- The size of the land is close to half an acre, so with good planning it can be utilised for building a theological seminary too which CCC are willing to help with.

- When we discussed the potential of this with those who currently worship with us, they were all fine with the location of the land and some said it would be more convenient for them.

Please pray for this move.

Thank you,

Parthee



Above: Parthee teaching a class for local pastors and students



61st Free Church School in Theology, Larbert, September 2013.

Rear (L to R): Rev Malcolm Watts, Rev John Keddie, Rev Aaron Lewis, Bill McQueer, David Dunlop, Rev John J Murray, Rev James MacInnes, Joel Brooks, Sam Semmens, Rev Gavin Beers, Rev Graeme Craig, David Scott, Dr Andrew Naylor, Dr Donald Boyd.

Middle (L to R): James Haram, Calum Smith, Charlie Webster, Murdo MacIver, Rev Davide Ratti, Rev Trevor Kirkland, Rev Mark Fitzpatrick, Rev William Macleod, Campbell McBain, Rev Andrew Allan.

Front (L to R): Rev Harry Woods, Rev Alasdair Macleod, Rev Maurice Roberts, Rev James Clark, Rev Greg MacDonald.

“And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation,
because the cloud abode thereon,
and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

Exodus 40:35