

Free Church
Witness



FEBRUARY 2012 ISSUE

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Rev William Macleod





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The Ten Commandments with regard to Marriage

Recently I conducted the wedding of our Sri Lankan minister Partheepan Shanmugam and his bride Dinoge. Prior to the marriage I was asked by someone if I was going to provide them with pastoral counselling. Personally I am not greatly enamoured with counselling. Nowhere is there more marriage counselling than in America and nowhere are there more divorces amongst evangelical Christians than in America. I believe that the faithful preaching of the Word, general pastoring and faithful Christian upbringing are the best preparation for marriage. After having had Parthee in my congregation for the last four years I felt he had no lack of teaching in this area. However, on reflection, aware that Dinoge came from a different ecclesiastical background and not really knowing her, I felt that it might be profitable to meet them both before the wedding and offer some words of advice. One night reflecting on what I might say the thought came to me that it might be profitable to apply the Ten Commandments specifically to marriage. Interestingly after speaking to them on this matter I discovered that Parthee had already bought his fiancée a wedding necklace with two little golden tablets on which were engraved the summary of the Ten Commandments – ‘Love your God’ and ‘Love your neighbour’. It is normal Sri Lankan practice to buy your new wife a gift which you give her on the day of the wedding. This confirmed how appropriate the words would be. Briefly I share them with you.

First commandment: *Do not make an idol of one another.* Remember to love God with all your heart and to give to Him first place. Seek Him first and all else will fall into its proper place.

Second Commandment: *Worship God as a family.* In Old Testament times there were the morning and evening sacrifices. Draw near to God each day – if possible morning and evening – read His Word, sing His praises and pray to Him. It was an old saying, ‘Those who pray together stay together’.

Third Commandment: *Fear God.* Give God the place of honour that is due to Him. Be aware constantly that His eye is upon you. Live out your lives in His presence. Fear His chastisement.

Fourth Commandment: *Remember the Sabbath day as a family.* This is vitally important for a happy family life. Spend as much of the day as is possible in the public, family and private exercises of worship. Talk together of the things of God and teach one another.

Fifth Commandment: *Wives submit to your husbands and husbands love your wives.* Husbands win the submission of your wives by loving them as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Wives submit to

your husbands as the church does to Christ (Eph.5:24-25). If your husband loves you so much as to die for you it should be easy to submit to such a husband. He will not oppress you.

Sixth Commandment: *Do not retain anger towards each other.* ‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath’ (Eph.4:26). Be sure to make peace at least by nightfall. Beware of sulking and keeping up resentment towards each other. There will be disagreements but they can be solved and the sooner the better.

Seventh Commandment: *Cherish one another and banish impure thoughts of others.* Of course adultery is wrong. But Jesus also said that it is wrong to look on a woman (or man) to lust after her (or him). We are all easily tempted but aim at the root of sin. Strive after purity of heart. Remember that the marriage bed is pure (Heb.13:4) and enjoy it together. A healthy marriage is a safe marriage.

Eighth Commandment: *Live within your means.* It is a fact that the commonest cause for quarrelling in marriage is financial matters. The husband or the wife spends more money than the other is happy with. One feels vulnerable because no money is being saved and the other feels that life is not worth living unless he or she has this or that. It is essential to agree policy and to stick with it.

Ninth Commandment: *Be totally honest with one another.* Do not keep secrets from each other. Spend time talking and sharing together. Be open with each other, frank and free, while at the same time courteous and encouraging to each other.

Tenth Commandment: *Be content with what you have.* God provides and give Him thanks. ‘Godliness with contentment is great gain’ (1Tim.6:6). Those who are jealous of others cannot be happy. ‘Having food and raiment let us be therewith content’ (1Tim.6:8).



Left to Right: Murray MacKay (Partick), Rev William Macleod, Parthee & Dinoge, Iain Bannerman, James Boyd (both Knightswood).

The Christian's Response to an Encroaching State (Part III)

Rev David Silversides

Last month Mr Silversides explained the current exaggeration of the role of civil government.



The Church's Response

Firstly, we should oppose unlimited government in principle

Big Government is bad news for Christian freedom. Emotional attachment to socialism, on the grounds that more remote areas of the country may seem less neglected under such, will not do now. The day could come when we would very much like the government to forget all about us!

Secondly, we need to be on our guard for Erastianism

Erastianism can be explained by looking at the four main views of the relationship between the church and the State. There is the Roman Catholic view that the church should govern the state. The Pope, as the supposed Vicar of Christ on earth and head of the church, is also viewed as the father of princes and ruler of the world and therefore a Christian State is one that submits to the Papacy. Then there is the Erastian view, named after Thomas Erastus (1524-1583) that puts it the other way round; that the State governs the church. Also, there is the view known as Voluntarism; that church and State have no obligations to each other and the State should not be involved in recognising and caring for the interests of the church. Finally, there is the Reformed view, which we regard as the Biblical view, that both church and State are to be subject to Christ, that Christ is King and Head of the church and King of nations. The two are separate in their government, but with duties to each other. The church is to bear witness to the State, as part of its testimony to the whole counsel of God, as to what the State's duty is and the State, in implementing the Law of God in the public domain, facilitates the church in its legitimate functions. Holding this Reformed view, we are obliged to resist Erastianism. We must resist the State interfering in the government of the church. We need to be 'on the ball' lest Erastian encroachment seeps in before we realise what has happened to us.

The situation regarding Gift Aid, for example, needs to be watched. Whilst we don't want to give more money to the Government than necessary, especially since they misuse so much of the taxes given to them, nevertheless the church must *never* re-invent itself or revise its mandate from Christ the King in order to fit in with State requirements. If Christ's definition of the functions of the church is not good enough for the Government to think that we provide public good, then so be it. Perhaps you think that if it came to abandoning Gift

Aid, the church could scarcely survive. The way forward is: we and all the Lord's people must love the Lord Christ and give as we are really able and commit the future of the church into His hands. He can look after His Church. We must be faithful to Him first of all. Meanwhile, we must be committed to never essentially altering His instructions to His church to suit any Government or pretend that our main work is something other than preaching a definite, Biblical, doctrinal Gospel rather than social work.

Thirdly, we must oppose State interference in family government

We must not allow the State to intervene in parents' obligation to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We must teach our children the truth and we must discipline them according to the Word of God whether the Government approves or not.

At this point, though probably hitting something of a raw nerve, we must face the fact that ungodly State schooling is already interfering with Biblical nurture. For the purpose of this address, let us suppose Knox and his colleagues were right in including in the First Book of Discipline a blueprint for a school system covering the whole of the country, not only initiated by the State, but under its long-term control. Do we really imagine that the present system bears any resemblance to what Knox had in mind? He did not regard education as neutral. He wanted schools for the instruction of children in 'godliness and virtue'. Will an ungodly Government organise godly education? Will a stream rise higher than its source to any great degree? No, and schools will not rise much above the ungodly government which runs them.

This is not to dismiss the commendable efforts of individual Christian teachers. We have Christians in many roles in life, but the presence of some Christians within an organisation does not make it a Christian body. There are Christian policemen, but we do not have a Christian police force. There are Christian teachers, but we do not have a Christian education system and we have to face that. If parents struggle with the idea of taking on the whole of their children's education themselves (though this is a completely Biblical option as Scripture makes no mention of Schools; they are not a Divine ordinance but a helpful arrangement and no more), then let us get on with establishing Christian schools where teachers truly do act on behalf of Christian parents by teaching the whole curriculum in a way which is compatible with a Christian viewpoint. 'Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the

words of knowledge' (Proverbs 19:27). How can we read these words to our children and then send them where they will hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge? We need Christian schools urgently.

Even the most ardent defender of the concept of a State school system should feel no obligation to remain bound to it when it is largely in rebellion against Christ any more than he should feel bound to stay in the Church of Scotland because he believes in an established church. Yes, we submit to the civil powers when they impose foolish and unnecessary regulations. We fill in their irritating forms as required if it is not sinful to do so. Nevertheless, when we are required to sin, then we must obey God rather than men. And when the State crosses the line into the divinely appointment government of the church or interferes with a Christian parent's duty to his children, we resist.

Fourthly, we also need to watch for State interference in the workplace

The equality agenda turns up in all sorts of places. Not only those providing goods and services may be required to recognise and accommodate 'same-sex partnerships', which Christians must never do, but also contracts of employment are another hazard. Can a Christian responsible for taking on staff who will be working with young people agree to ignore the fact that a particular candidate is a known, practising homosexual, for example? Christians must always check a contract of employment before signing, lest they commit themselves to a sinful course.

Fifthly, keep in mind the historical Biblical benchmark of United Kingdom history

The nearest that Scotland has ever come to the Biblical ideal was the National Covenant of 1638. That is **the** high tide of Scriptural national acknowledgement of Christ as King. The Reformation was wonderful, but the National Covenant took things to an even slightly higher level than the Reformation under Knox. From then it has been a course of 'up and down downwards'. But is this relevant to today?

The Covenanters at the time certainly believed that what they were doing would be relevant for future generations. We tend to look rather selectively at Scottish church history. We look at the Reformation and see the marvellous work of God and rightly so, but then when we come to the Covenanters, we tend to narrow our vision down to individual, exemplary, sacrificial, godly lives: the two Margarets, Cameron, Cargill, Renwick etc. Certainly it is wonderful to see the power of God's grace in their lives. Their godliness, their devotion to Christ was marvellous. But we can overlook the specifics for which they contended and move on to the eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals and on to the Disruption and

admire the works of the Lord on a broader canvas again. Can we not pause for a moment and look more closely at what the Covenanter worthies were actually saying? Certainly, they were resisting State interference in the church, but that was not all. They were saying that the National Covenant of Scotland of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of England, Scotland and Ireland in 1643 were perpetually binding. This is a point that was maintained by those who subsequently made up the Reformed Presbyterian Church, but not only by them. It is true that the 'Cameronians' (later becoming the Reformed Presbyterians), after the Revolution Settlement, held this point with a peculiar rigour, but they were not the only ones who believed it. Alexander Shields (who entered the post-Revolution Church of Scotland) believed it. Those who later became the Secession Church (such as the Erskine brothers) believed it. And much more recently, the late Rev Kenneth MacRae of Stornoway Free Church, in an address on the propagation of the Reformed Faith, said that Scotland was the second guiltiest nation on the face of the earth after Israel because Scotland had been covenanted with God. The idea of the descending obligation of the historic covenants is not confined to the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The earlier Covenanters saw themselves as binding the nation perpetually to the acknowledgement of Christ's Kingship over church and State. Some will be familiar with a volume entitled *Sermons In Times of Persecution in Scotland* containing some wonderful sermons setting forth the glorious Gospel of Christ. In amongst them is a sermon preached in 1663 by John Guthrie of Tarbolton in Ayrshire, the youngest brother of William Guthrie of Fenwick and cousin of the martyr, James Guthrie. His text was Ezekiel 17:19, 'Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head'.

Guthrie contends in regard to the Covenants entered into by Scotland (the National Covenant) and then by the three Kingdoms (the Solemn League and Covenant) that no one on earth can release Scotland from their obligations and England and Ireland also in the case of the Solemn League. He points out that in the text, Zedekiah was held guilty for breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar that he had sworn in the name of the Lord, even though he was constrained to it. He also refers to Joshua 9 where the princes of Israel swore in the name of the Lord not to harm the Gibeonites. Though the Gibeonites were deceitful and the princes of Israel were rash, the oath stood, not only for the princes, but also for the whole people. Then centuries later in 2 Samuel 21:1 & 2 the house of Saul was being judged because Saul had slain the Gibeonites in breach of the covenant made all those generations before.

The doctrine that the Covenanters held was that the whole

'On top of all our national sins and guilt, this is added, that we are a Covenant-breaking nation. This is an important historical fact to take into account in any assessment of our present situation. It highlights the depth of our degradation and apostasy as a nation.'

nation was bound to all future generations of that nation by the covenants sworn by their own generation. This explains why James Guthrie, when he was on the scaffold with a rope around his neck, lifted the napkin and cried, 'The Covenants! The Covenants! They shall yet be Scotland's reviving'. Was he right or wrong? Was he carried away with the excitement of the occasion or was he speaking words of truth and soberness? Our Westminster Confession says, 'An oath cannot oblige to sin, but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance' (West. Conf. 22:4).

This means that, on top of all our national sins and guilt, this is added, that we are a Covenant-breaking nation. This is no denominational hobbyhorse, but an important historical fact to take into account in any assessment of our present situation. It highlights the depth of our degradation and apostasy as a nation. It should stir us up to prayer and to pray high. This is the benchmark that has been set for us and we should pray for the blessing of God to take us back to and even beyond that high ground of Second Reformation attainments.

It should also, however, encourage in the present, not despondency but a healthy scepticism about contemporary Government by any party. There is no room for naivety. The Government is not our friend. We can talk about the Establishment Principle and we believe it. But this does not mean pretending that a wicked Government is anything other than that. This must be acknowledged honestly and openly and the repercussions of this fact frankly faced. We must be vigilant that we do not allow dependence upon the State or the intrusion of the State to cause us to compromise the Crown Rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should be stirred to jealousy for His honour as our King and our Redeemer; our Beloved is the rightful King over all, and every thought ought to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ and therefore we must, by His grace, insist on His Crown rights over the individual heart and life, over the family, over the church and over the Nation. His glorious prerogatives are worth contending for because He is fairer than the children of men. Amen.

The Holy Spirit in the Church

Rev William Macleod

The work of the Holy Spirit is as needful as that of Christ. Perhaps this surprises you. But Jesus says, 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you' (Jn.16:7). That would be a terrible disaster. The ministry of the Comforter is essential. In Old Testament times the coming of Christ was promised and eagerly anticipated. When He did eventually come He promised and taught His people to long for the coming of the Spirit.

Having died for His people's sins and so satisfying the demands of divine justice, Jesus rose on the third day, ascending up to heaven on the fortieth day after His resurrection, and sent the Holy Spirit ten days later. The coming of the Spirit proves that Christ has gloriously completed His work of atonement. The Spirit carries on and perfects the work of salvation that Christ has begun. He does so as the arm of Christ.

The Baptist said, 'I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance but he that cometh after me is mightier than I. He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire' (Mt.3:11). Most of the studies on the Holy Spirit's work deal with His activity in the individual. The Bible, however, goes beyond the atomistic approach and also speaks of the corporate work of the Holy Spirit in the church and it is with this that we would like to deal in this article.

1. The Spirit in the Origin of the Church

There is a sense in which the church existed in the Old Testament. Stephen speaks of the 'church in the wilderness' (Acts 7:38). The church consists of the people of God, born again of the Spirit, and saved through faith in the Messiah. In Old Testament times as well as in the New, the Spirit applies the redemption purchased by Christ to individuals. There is

the outward church, Israel, and there is the invisible church, the true Israel, amongst whom there are no hypocrites.

Yet something special happened on the day of Pentecost. On that day the age of the Spirit began, and the church of the New Testament was born, a church for the whole world. Jesus' public ministry was inaugurated with His being baptised with the Spirit. In the same way His disciples must wait till they receive the baptism of the Spirit that will make them a mighty church ready to minister for God in the world. The Spirit came that day with the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, cloven tongues as of fire resting upon the faithful, and new powers to communicate in foreign languages given to them.

God's people became a church on fire for God, bold, wise, powerful and zealous. Sinners were convicted of their sin and converted in large numbers, 3,000 on the first day. Jesus said, 'Greater works than these shall he do' (John 14:12), and now this difficult saying of Christ becomes clear as far larger numbers are saved than were through Jesus' preaching. The parable of the mustard seed becomes a reality as the tiny group of followers grows into a great church. The vital ingredient in this spectacular development is the pouring out of the Spirit. Although He worked in the Old Testament church it was in a much more limited and restrained way. There were few outside Israel to whom God's grace came. Even in Israel many were obviously unregenerate. Now, however, Christ has died, redemption is accomplished, the gift of the Spirit has been given and the church of the New Testament begins, equipped for its great task of evangelising the world and preparing God's people for glory.

2. The Spirit Equips the Church

What a difference the coming of the Spirit made on the

'God's people became a church on fire for God, bold, wise, powerful and zealous. Sinners were convicted of their sin and converted in large numbers, 3,000 on the first day. Jesus said, 'Greater works than these shall he do' (John 14:12), and now this difficult saying of Christ becomes clear as far larger numbers are saved than were through Jesus' preaching.'



day of Pentecost! The weak, frightened, confused disciples became mighty fearless preachers. In Old Testament times the Spirit equipped individuals for various tasks, judges to judge (eg Judg.6:34), kings to rule (eg 1Sam.10:9-10), prophets to prophesy (Ezek.2:2), Bezaleel to build the tabernacle (Ex.31:3), etc. In the New Testament the church is given the Spirit who equips individual believers for their function within the group. The whole church is compared to a body and the individuals are members or different parts of that body. 'To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit', etc. (1Cor.12:8-9). The 'Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will' (1Cor.12:11) ensures that the church is fully equipped for its task. The extraordinary gifts have passed because the Lord no longer sees them as necessary for His church, but all that is required for the good of the church and successful evangelism remains.

Paul tells us that Christ, having ascended to heaven, 'gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ' (Eph.4:11-12). He does this through giving His Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit gives the required gifts to individuals which they need to fulfil their vital role within the whole body.

3. The Spirit Teaches the Church

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2Tim.3:16). 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2Pet.1:21). The Scriptures are thus the product of the Spirit through which He teaches the church. However, the Spirit does not just give the Bible but also opens hearts and minds to its truths. God gives His church 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened' (Eph.1:17-18). Jesus declares, 'The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth ... He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you' (Jn.16:13-14). 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you' (Jn.14:26). 'He shall testify of me' (Jn.15:26). The Spirit assures the church of the truth of Scripture. He enables us to cry, 'Abba, Father' (Rom.8:15). John states concerning the people of God, 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things' (1Jn.2:20).

If every individual Christian knew all things there would be no

need for ministers or commentaries. This verse must be talking of the church collectively. The body of Christ as a whole and in all ages does not need an outsider to teach it. All it needs to know is in the Bible, and the Spirit helps the church to understand it. The Spirit has led the bride of Christ through the various controversies, Trinitarian, Christological, etc. The church today must not ignore what it has learned in the past but rather build upon it. We praise God that He has given a great teacher to his church.

4. The Spirit Governs the Church

Christ is the King and Head of the church. Christ, however, is in heaven. It is through His Spirit that He rules the church. The Spirit gifts and equips individuals for office and guides the church to appoint such individuals. As the prophets and teachers at Antioch ministered to the Lord and fasted, 'the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them' (Acts 13:2). Addressing the elders from Ephesus, Paul says, 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God' (Acts 20:28). The Spirit is also actively leading in the development of the work. Paul at one stage was 'forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia; after they were come to Mysia they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not' (Acts 16:6-7).

It was the Spirit's will rather that the gospel should be preached in Europe. The Spirit in those days governed the church by supernatural guidance. Today he works through the Bible, providence and the thoughts of God's people as they pray for direction. The Spirit is also active in the exercise of church discipline. 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven... For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt.18:18,20). We usually apply this 'presence' to worship, but its first reference is to discipline.

5. The Spirit Unifies the Church

The ecumenical movement seeks to unite churches but it only achieves at best an organisational unity which glosses over real differences. The Spirit, however, truly unites all Christians in one church. In this church there are no hypocrites. The entrance is through Christ the door. The Spirit works outside the fold irresistibly drawing people to enter. 'Except a man be

born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (Jn.3:5). This new birth or regeneration occurs when the Spirit enters into an individual and, dwelling in him as well as raising him from a state of spiritual deadness, unites him to Christ. Being all united to Christ we are all united to one another. 'By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit' (1Cor.12:13).

Just as the 'body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ' (1Cor.12:12). This unity which the Spirit produces is not a mental unity but a real unity. It is a mystical unity just like that within the Trinity. Jesus prays for such unity within His church, 'that they may be one, as we are' (Jn.17:11). Because of this essential unity Christians must endeavour 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit' (Eph.4:3-4). Individuals within the church 'as lively stones are built up a spiritual house' (1Pet.2:5), 'an habitation of God through the Spirit' (Eph.2:22). True unity is not increased by enlarging the size of the conglomerate or by mixing tares with the wheat. The Spirit unifies the invisible church and Christians have a duty to give visible expression to this by seeking deep unity in doctrine and life.

6 The Spirit enables the Church to Worship

Corporate worship is a vital part of church life. As Christians we must take care we are 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is' (Heb.10:25). In this gathering Christ is present by His Spirit (Mt.18:20). The congregation confesses Christ. No man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Spirit (1Cor.12:3). Praise is a vital ingredient of worship. The material to be sung is described as 'spiritual songs', ie, songs inspired by the Spirit (Eph.5:19). Prayer is also essential to worship. It must be 'always in the Spirit' (Eph.6:18), otherwise God will not listen to it. The role of the Spirit in the congregation's worship is expressed by Paul in the words 'I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the Spirit and I will sing with the understanding also' (1Cor.14:15). Thus 'thou shalt bless with the Spirit' and the unlearned present in the congregation will say 'Amen at thy giving of thanks' (1Cor.14:16). Similarly preaching must be 'in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance' (1Thess.1:5). Worship is dead without the Spirit. 'The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life' (2Cor.3:6).

At the time of the Reformation there was considerable debate about the nature of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The Roman Catholic church argued for transubstantiation, ie that the bread and wine became the actual body and blood of Christ. The Lutheran church taught consubstantiation, ie the body of Christ is in, with and under the bread and the wine. Because of this bodily presence of Christ wherever his people are partaking of the Supper the Lutherans must also argue for the 'ubiquity' of the body of Christ, ie that it is able to be present in more than one place at the same time. The Reformed position is that Christ's body is in heaven and being human it can only be in one place at one time. He is present at the Lord's Table by His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to worship God acceptably as a congregation of His people.

7 The Holy Spirit in Evangelism

Before ascending up to heaven Christ left the Great Commission with His church, 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (Mt.28:19-20). Christ promises to be always with His church. He is ascending up to heaven. The only way He can remain present is by His Spirit. In the account given in the book of Acts He tells them not to depart from Jerusalem but to 'wait for the promise of the Father which ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence' (Acts 1:4-5). The mission to evangelise the world could only be undertaken with the power of the Holy Spirit. When He came on the day of Pentecost 3,000 souls were converted. The 'worm Jacob' threshes the mountains and beats them small and makes the hills as chaff (Is.41:14-15).

The Holy Ghost convicts men of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come (Jn.16:8). 'The wind bloweth where it listeth' and when He touches people He raises the dead (Jn.3:8). The Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God: 'For our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance' (1Thess.1:5). Christ said, 'Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Mt.16:18). He does this by means of his Holy Spirit who is vital to the church's evangelism programme.

8 The Spirit Revives the Church

'It may be observed that from the fall of man to our day the work of redemption in its effect has mainly been carried on by remarkable communications of the Spirit of God. Though there be a more constant influence of God's Spirit always in some degree attending His ordinances, yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on this work always has been by remarkable effusions at special seasons of mercy'. This was Jonathan Edwards' conclusion.

In revival a dull, lifeless church awakens. The Holy Spirit brings about new repentance, prayer and zeal. Thus He stirs up the dying embers and sometimes starts, indeed, a forest fire. The Spirit is grieved by sin. He withdraws His felt presence because of the idols, materialism, worldliness and prayerlessness He sees in the church. He stays away till God's people repent. We will not repent until He returns as the Spirit of grace and supplications (Zech.12:10). Then the church truly repents and experiences 'life from the dead' which is the essence of true revival (Rom.11:15). Christians separate from the world. Evangelism becomes effective. The fear of God comes down on whole communities.

This is of course what we need today. We are in the second century since the Reformation during which there has been no wide scale revival in Britain. Our duty is to be aware of the need we have of the Spirit to revive the church, equipping it for its task, instructing, governing, unifying the body and bringing reality to our worship and success to our evangelism. The preaching of God's Word needs to be 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'.

Congregational Remittances - December 2011

	2011 Dec	2011 Total	2010 Total to Dec			
Presbytery of Inverness				Outer Hebrides Presbytery		
Aberdeen	1,900	15,788	14,140	Cross	5,186	26,659
Duthil-Dores	3,537	25,615	27,374	Harris - Leverburgh	1,500	17,434
Inverness	2,000	30,000	35,000	Harris - Scalpay	1,800	26,292
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,669	18,000	20,446	Knock & Point	1,125	16,418
Total Inverness	9,106	89,404	96,960	North Uist	1,336	14,500
Northern Presbytery				Stornoway	12,639	91,342
Assynt & Scourie	4,700	9,064	6,283	Total Outer Hebrides	23,586	192,645
Brora	400	21,915	22,309			181,062
Kiltearn	750	11,007	18,000	Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron		
Tarbat	7,722	19,200	17,767	Bracadale	1,809	14,000
Total Northern	13,572	61,187	64,359	Duirinish (Waternish)	785	7,000
Southern Presbytery				Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	18,481
Arran	263	8,718	7,794	Lochalsh	743	9,018
Ayr	5,235	8,372	4,660	Poolewe & Aultbea	2,400	13,114
Dumfries	0	0	600	Ullapool	0	102
Edinburgh	6,000	33,817	38,000	Portree	5,900	25,065
Glasgow - Partick	7,500	40,000	36,000	Snizort	1,200	25,752
Glasgow - Shettleston	1,500	25,205	19,585	Strath	450	2,235
Glasgow - Knightswood	2,970	27,749	29,228	Total Skye	14,587	114,767
Rothsay	0	639	293			103,011
Total Southern	23,468	144,500	136,160	Total Congregations	84,319	602,503
				Other Donations	2,119	28,827
				Legacy	0	18,153
				TOTAL	86,438	649,483
				Including Gift Aid		98,058
						91,090

Central Building Fund

Angus Macmillan, General Treasurer



At the Special Commission of Assembly, which took place on 21 November 2011, one of the findings was that 'The Commission of Assembly encourage all congregations to take up a bi-monthly retiring collection in aid of the Central Building Fund of the Church'.

A new Fund for this purpose is now operational and it is hoped that retiring collections will be taken in congregations every two months on the last Sabbath of January, March, May, July, September and November. Donations can also be sent directly to the Financial Administrator, Muriel Smith, at 1a Stewartfield, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HSI 2UW.

This will be a Restricted Fund ie for building purposes only, and will be reported separately in the Church financial accounts and in 'The Witness' magazine together with monthly congregational remittances. This new fund will be administered by a newly established 'Committee on Building Projects' made up of representatives from each Presbytery who will prioritise and allocate funds to congregational building projects.

Our Church and our people have suffered much over the past 12 years, having had to defend court actions initiated against

us regarding church properties in Broadford and in Partick, whilst also having had to suffer being forcibly dispossessed of properties in Tomatin, Kiltearn and most recently in Ardelve. Our congregations in Scalpay and North Uist have also now received notices to vacate church properties. We believe that these actions being taken against us to evict ministers and their families from manses and congregations from churches are unlikely to cease. For that reason we must now move on and look forward, trusting in the Lord, and ensure that in the years ahead we have our own places of worship and suitable accommodation for our ministers in each of our congregations. This is a great challenge for us to preserve the distinctive gospel witness of the Free Church of Scotland for future generations and it is hoped that all of our congregations and our people will unite together and be inspired to meet this challenge and support this new Central Building Fund. If we are faithful, the Lord will provide for us materially and spiritually. 'The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build' (Nehemiah 2:20).



News



The Gillies Family: Left to Right: (Standing) Joan MacKintosh, Hugh MacKintosh, Alistair MacKintosh, Mrs Morag MacKintosh, David Gillies, Derick Gillies, Norman MacKintosh; **(Seated)** Rev John Angus Gillies, Mrs Gillies, Mrs Maryann Gillies.

Rev John Angus Gillies Jubilee

Rev Harry Woods

The year 2011 marked the ministerial jubilee of Rev John Angus Gillies. This milestone of ministerial service was recognised on two occasions in the year. The first was a meal and presentations in July organised by the Inverness Presbytery which included representatives from other presbyteries where Mr Gillies had served as a minister

and to which contributions had been made from throughout the Church. The second was on Friday 11th November when a service was held in Dores Free Church (Continuing) at which Rev Harry Woods preached and presided. After the service speeches were made and presentations were given to both Mr and Mrs Gillies.

We are thankful to God for the consistent witness and godly example of Mr Gillies and pray that in his semi-retirement — it can hardly be said that any of our senior ministers are truly retired! — both he and his dear wife will know the Lord's continued blessing.

Desk



Missionary Meeting at Ardelve, with visitors from the Bracadale congregation.

David Lachman

Rev Andrew Allan

On the 15th November the Rev David Lachman spoke about the work of Covenant College, Zambia, to a group of people at Lochalsh Free Church, Ardelve, and on the following night in Bualnaluib School, Aultbea. All who gathered were brought up to date on the work there and how the Lachmans are settling in. It was a good meeting and was found to be very helpful.

Statement on Same-Sex Marriage

P Q R M Committee

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), through its Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee, has submitted a response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on the Registration of Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriage. The Committee feel that this subject is of such importance

that it warrants a further statement which in addition to being sent to the Government is being made public.

We wish to state that in contributing to the consultation we do not condone it. To seek approval for legislation favouring a lifestyle clearly condemned in the Word of God is irresponsible; it indicates a Government which has forgotten its calling as the servant of God (Romans 13:4) and a nation which though in covenant with God has badly lost its way.

The Government is proposing to redefine marriage to suit a vocal and aggressive minority. Yet marriage was not invented by man but appointed by God, who made us male and female. It is designed for one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31), providing mutual help, enabling procreation and preventing promiscuity. As a divine institution marriage is above legislation: no government has any

business in attempting to re-write it. Instead the Government should protect and promote it as God gave it to us, recognising it to be at the very heart of a healthy society as has been the case in Scotland for centuries.

We are of the view that what is being contemplated represents a further step in a scheme to 'normalise' homosexuality. First homosexual activity was legalised, then a law preventing local authorities from promoting homosexuality was repealed, next civil partnerships were introduced for same-sex couples and now the intention is to permit same-sex 'marriages'. For some the process will not be complete until every trace of our traditional, God-given values has been removed.

Behind the proposed change in the law is the Government's commitment to 'equality'. We submit that there can be no equality between heterosexual marriage based on a natural attraction and homosexual unions based on what the Bible terms 'vile affections' (Romans 1:26). Moreover if 'equality' is everything then why should the Government stop at same-sex marriage? What about incestuous and polygamous marriage? The logic being followed means that it will be difficult to withstand calls to legalise these too. This is the result when governments mistakenly adopt a secular or morally-neutral approach to such matters.

We respectfully point out that moral matters are not to be decided by popular or parliamentary majorities but by the unchanging law of God. The Holy Scriptures are the only authoritative rule of faith and life and they declare all homosexual conduct to be sinful. 'Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination' (Leviticus 18:22). Making same-sex unions

equivalent to marriage mocks the God who made marriage honourable and a symbol of the union between Christ and His bride the church (Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 5:32). Such unions will not bring happiness to those involved but sorrow and shame. We do not say this out of hatred but in love to our fellow men and with a regard for the truth, which we should all have an interest in.

Marriage ought to be about more than just the fulfilment of personal sexual desire. Same-sex marriage would result in unions where there is either no husband or no wife and where any children would have either no father or no mother. The complementary roles of loving headship and loving submission operating in traditional marriage for the mutual benefit of the couple and the good of the family would not be possible. To establish such a perverse arrangement in law could only destabilise our society and harm some of its most vulnerable members. The First Minister has pledged to do all that he can to make Scotland a better nation but the consequences for any country carrying out this experiment are frightening. Indeed history suggests that they could be fatal.

We are concerned about the possible repercussions for our religious and civil liberties if same-sex marriages are made lawful. From recent precedent we believe that the Government will enforce the acceptance of these unions as normal through the education system and in public bodies generally and that those who in conscience disagree will be penalised. Any safeguards in the legislation will not prevent complaints against those who speak out. The police will investigate and the courts will be involved.

If the Government attempts to coerce the church into accepting same-sex marriage in any way, shape or form then by the grace of God it will meet with strong resistance. The Free Church (Continuing) requires her office-bearers to uphold the doctrine and discipline of God's Word and expects her people to submit to the same. The Bible teaches unambiguously that sodomy is a sin worthy of divine punishment which needs to be repented of (Genesis 19:4-7, 12-14, 23-25; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). This we are bound to preach, come what may. It also teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church and is to be obeyed before men (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 7:23; Acts 4:18-20). This we are bound to practise, come what may. Thus we will never solemnise, bless, celebrate, register or otherwise approve same-sex marriages or civil partnerships.

We hereby call upon the Government to cease from a move which would further erode our nation's Christian heritage, won for us at great cost by the Protestant Reformation and secured to us by the Treaty of Union. We hereby warn the Government that if it continues on its present course then the prospect is increasing moral disorder, family breakdown, disrespect for authority, conflict between church and state and divine judgment upon our land.

We hereby request a meeting with representatives of the Government to take this matter further. Meanwhile we pray that the Lord in His mercy will so guide those who handle our nation's affairs 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty' (1 Timothy 2:2).

Statement on United Christian Witness

P Q R M Committee

On 8th December a group of Christians gathered outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh for a rally under

the banner of 'United Christian Witness'. Their purpose was to protest against proposed legislation in favour of so-called 'same sex marriage'. The event had been planned several months previously by our Home Mission Worker Mr Donald John Morrison and took place the day before the Government's consultation on the subject closed.

Christians from various denominations took part in the witness and ministers from different parts of the country had the opportunity to proclaim what the Bible has to say on the subject of marriage. It appears that the witness was orderly, the police having been briefed beforehand, but that it was met with a noisy and provocative counter-demonstration organised at short notice by the Equality Network and the Humanist Society of Scotland, among others.

Many will be aware that as a result of statements he made at the witness and also during an appearance earlier in the day on 'Call Kaye', a live BBC Radio Scotland programme, a number of complaints have been made to the police concerning Rev James Gracie, minister of our Edinburgh Congregation. We do not as yet know the precise nature of these complaints. What we do know is that speaking on the radio programme Mr Gracie said that homosexuality was a sin and warned that any law approving same-sex marriage would be 'a direct attack on the Christian faith and the Bible'.

We understand that a homosexual guest on the programme, Tom French of the 'Equality Network', raised the issue of orientation by stating that homosexuality was 'genetic'. When he was asked if same sex marriages should be allowed on the grounds of equality Mr Gracie replied: 'The difficulty with that argument is that people are not treated equally. If the homosexuals, and these people, want to be treated equally then what about

paedophiles? What about polygamy?' When Tom French disagreed Mr Gracie replied: 'Even if you were to take that view, there are people who steal, people have tendencies for all sorts of things'.

It appears that these comments in particular have upset some who want same sex marriage to be legalised. Mr Gracie has indicated that he stands by his comments, although he believes that because he was not allowed to finish his points this may have left them open to misinterpretation.

To us it is quite plain that Mr. Gracie was seeking to show that if, as some maintain, the ultimate justification for any sexual union is the 'orientation' of the people involved then it is difficult to see why one sort of union, namely a homosexual one, should have the approval of the law while others, such as those proceeding from a paedophilic or polygamous inclination, should not. According to this thinking people may plead their 'nature' or 'instinct' as a justification for all sorts of conduct, however damaging that conduct is to themselves or to society. This is the confusion which results when the moral law of God is no longer regarded as normative.

As a Committee responsible for representing our Church's views on moral matters we wish to indicate our wholehearted support for Mr. Gracie in his biblical stand. We commend him and others involved in United Christian Witness for their boldness in using a lawful means of witness to challenge the Government's ungodly proposals and pray that the Lord will assist them and all like-minded brethren who are involved in the ongoing campaign against same sex marriage, and grant it success.

Anti-sectarianism Legislation

Christian Institute

The Scottish Government's controversial anti-sectarianism legislation was passed on 14th December, but it includes a robust clause to protect freedom of speech. The Scottish National Party used its majority to force the legislation through by 64 votes to 57.

Colin Hart, Director of The Christian Institute, welcomed the addition of a free speech clause to the Bill but expressed reservations about future changes to the legislation. Mr Hart said: 'We are absolutely delighted that the Scottish Government has moved to protect freedom of speech in its new religious hatred law. This major victory follows a huge letter-writing campaign. We remain concerned that Ministers have awarded themselves the ability to add additional grounds to the religious hatred offence at a later date. Such amendments would not be subjected to thorough parliamentary scrutiny. We will be watching this area closely'.

We thank God for continued freedom of speech.

Tesco Back-pedals

Christian Institute

Tesco is rethinking its decision to support homosexual pride festivals in the future following complaints from customers. Earlier this year Tesco dropped its support for Cancer Research's 'Race for Life' and announced shortly after that it would become a headline sponsor of Britain's largest homosexual festival, Pride London. The move prompted a storm of controversy with one critic questioning why the retailer had chosen to align itself to such an 'aggressive political organization'. But now the supermarket giant has indicated that it will not in future sponsor homosexual pride events, and will instead look for other ways to support its homosexual staff support group, Out at Tesco. In an email to those who have complained, Tesco insisted that its support for London Pride 'implies no moral, philosophical or political stance'. It added that most of its charitable and community support is 'focused on delivering practical benefits, rather than on funding awareness-raising events. We will therefore discuss with Out at Tesco how we can support them in future years in ways that will not include sponsoring events'.

Tesco has also moved to distance itself from comments made by one of its executives after he branded Christians who oppose the redefinition of marriage as 'evil'. The Christian Institute had revealed that Nick Lansley, Head of Research and Development at Tesco.com, had said that Christians are 'evil' if they seek to protect traditional marriage. The 'evil Christians' comment, which has now been removed, appeared on Mr Lansley's profile page on a photo-sharing website, where he listed his employment as 'Head of R&D at Tesco.com'. He wrote: 'I'm also campaigning against evil Christians (that's not all Christians, just bad ones) who think that gay people should not lead happy lives and get married to their same-sex partners'.

In response Colin Hart, Director of The Christian Institute, said: 'I won't be shopping at Tesco this Christmas, and I am repeatedly hearing from other Christians who have already come to the same conclusion. Mr Lansley is entitled to his opinions, and Christians are entitled to choose not to shop at Tesco'. Now Tesco has moved to distance itself from Mr

Lansley's controversial comments, and insisted that it abhors criticism of religion. A spokesman for the retailer said: 'Mr Lansley's comments, made in a personal capacity in 2008, in no way reflect the views of Tesco'.

It is good to see that even giant companies like Tesco will listen to protest letters from Christians. It is not often these days that we see victories. Praise the Lord!

Death of Francis Nigel Lee

(Theologian)

Dr Francis Nigel Lee died on 23 December 2011 after a long struggle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Dr. Lee's daughter Johanna Lee wrote of her father's passing:

'It is with great sadness that I need to inform you all on behalf of my family, of the passing of my father, Francis Nigel Lee. Dad died peacefully after a prolonged struggle with Motor Neurone Disease. Although the disease gradually robbed him of his speech, mobility and ability to write, he conducted himself with dignity and grace to the end. When I took him to a neurology appointment in October, he was already wheelchair-bound. The panel of specialists sympathised with his condition and remarked that it would be natural for him to be angry or hope for a less devastating diagnosis. He calmly replied, "Whether I die in two years or two months, is in God's hands. My hope is in the next life". On December 5th, Dad celebrated his 77th Birthday. Two days later marked my parents' 48th Wedding Anniversary. My mother, Nellie, who was his full-time carer during his illness, was at his bedside when he died. Her resilience and selfless commitment to Dad's needs were inspirational. Thank you to all who have expressed their concern for his health and well-being in recent months. His suffering is over now'.

Nordskog Publishing wrote of Dr Lee: 'The world has lost a giant of a Christian man with the death of the Reverend Barrister Professor Doctor Francis Nigel Lee. The Christian world will dearly miss this husband, father, passionately Calvinistic Christian, ponderously accomplished theologian, eminent gentleman, and devoted friend. Francis Nigel Lee dearly loved His Triune Saviour and Lord'.



Dr F. Nigel Lee



Books

John Knox

John J Murray
Evangelical Press
pbk, 112pp, £5.99

Rev John J Murray has produced a valuable brief biography of John Knox. It is edifying, informative and readable. It is produced in the series of 'Bitesize Biographies' edited by Dr Michael Haykin.

After a brief look at the ancient history of the Scottish church, Murray focuses on the ministry and martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton in 1528. From there the story moves to George Wishart and his death at the stake in 1546. Knox had accompanied Wishart providing him some protection with a great two-handed sword.

Following Wishart's death he joined other like-minded reformers in St Andrews. There he was persuaded to preach his first sermon. Following the capture of St Andrews castle by the French he became a slave in the galleys. The trials of these days played their part in developing the character which he required for his life's work.

When he was freed he moved to England and ministered in Berwick, Newcastle and London while Edward VI was king. When 'bloody' Mary came to the throne and began to kill the reformers he fled to the continent. He ministered to English exiles in Frankfurt and later in Geneva. Here he benefited greatly from contact with Calvin. Back in Scotland Walter Mill was led tottering to the stake in 1558. Overcoming weakness from the flames he exclaimed, 'I am fourscore and two years old, and could not live long by the course of nature; but a hundred better shall arise out of the ashes of my bones'. His words were true. His burning rang the death knell of the papacy in Scotland.

By 2nd May 1559 Knox was back in Scotland leading the movement for reform. Murray relates his struggles with the Queen Regent Mary and later with Mary Queen of Scots. His wisdom and uncompromising

convictions as well as his powerful preaching, thorough grasp of Reformed theology, and organisational ability led to a Reformation taking place in Scotland second to none for its clarity and purity.

We live in a day when the great gains of the Reformation are being lost. We need to return again to the great truths and practices of the Reformation. It's a great story worth reading and is well told by Mr Murray.

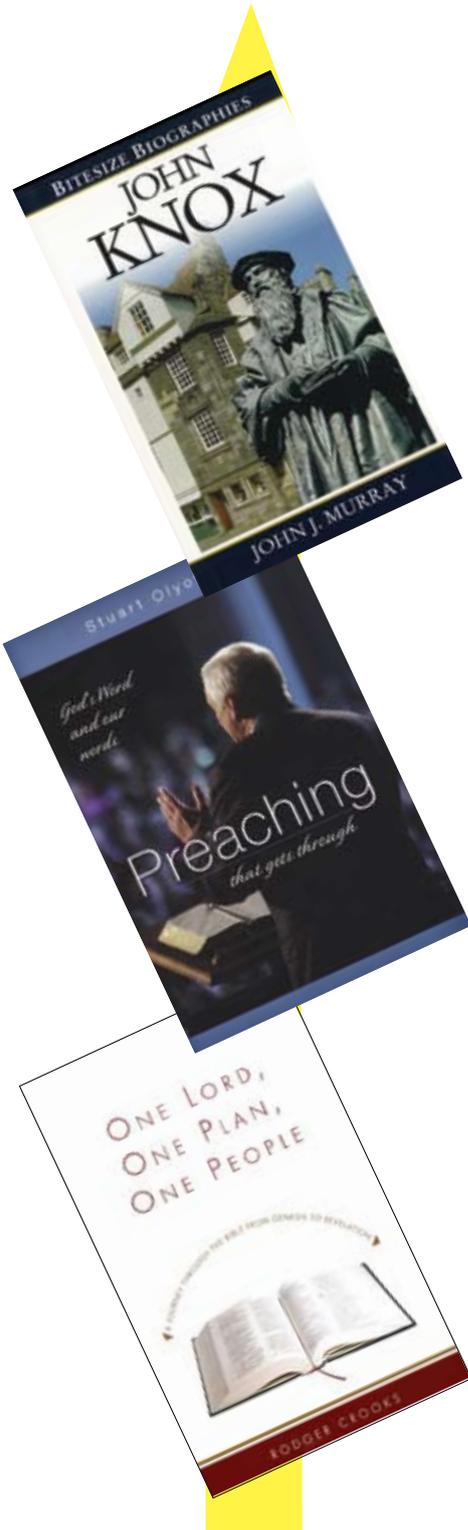
William Macleod

Preaching that Gets Through: God's Word and our words

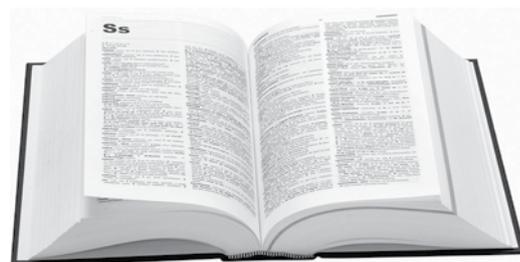
Stuart Olyott
Banner of Truth Trust
bklt, 40pp, £2.00

Books on preaching are best written by good preachers and that is what we have here. The booklet contains the substance of an address which was delivered in September 2010 as the Martyn Lloyd-Jones Memorial Lecture. Stuart Olyott draws on Aristotle's book – *The Art of Rhetoric*. For Aristotle and Olyott three things are essential for persuasive public speaking. Firstly, 'ethos' is required. This is the authority and character of the speaker. Does he command a hearing? Secondly, 'pathos' is required. He has to be passionately concerned about his hearers and deeply interested in their good. Thirdly, 'logos' is required. He must have something to say. There must be substance in his address. To these three essentials of which Aristotle speaks Olyott adds a fourth. The preacher must have 'dunamis'. The word must come in the 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (1Cor.2:4). Olyott completes his booklet with some rather humorous yet edifying upside-down thinking. What sort of preaching should one have in order to be a failure as a preacher? Be the opposite!

William Macleod



Books



One Lord, One Plan, One People: A Journey Through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation

Rodger Crooks
Banner of Truth Trust
pbk, 467pp, £8.50

One Lord, One Plan, One People sets a goal of informing the reader of the reason behind and content of the entire Bible. It accomplishes this by devoting a chapter to each book of the Bible (1 & 2 Chronicles considered together), and discussing the period between the close of the Old and start of the New Testament.

By boiling down each book and drawing the reader's attention to the presence of Christ and the consistency of the message, this volume is a benefit to Christians both old in the faith and new. In addition, the book considers a variety of issues relevant to modern day Christians – the Biblical account of Creation; the question of spiritual gifts, and even the inspiration and authorship of Scripture. It also indicates and explains texts which point to Christ.

Perhaps the best contribution Rodger Crooks makes is to show that the Bible is the consistent and complete Word of God, and that Christians need not be troubled reading any particular book. He shows that even those books which seem the hardest to open, or most troublesome to read, are a great benefit.

I thoroughly recommend this book for being both an encouragement to read the Bible and for being littered with a collection of interesting facts surrounding the Scriptures. Most Christians will benefit from this book.

Alastair Manderson (Knightswood)

The Mighty Weakness of John Knox

Douglas Bond
Reformation Trust Publishing
hbk, 151pp, \$16.00

Douglas Bond has written a number of excellent children's historical fiction books, and I bought this wondering whether it would be a good read for teenagers. Instead, I found it to be a treat for myself. Being so accustomed to hearing Knox maligned in our country, it was a joy to find that he is loved and respected by this American author.

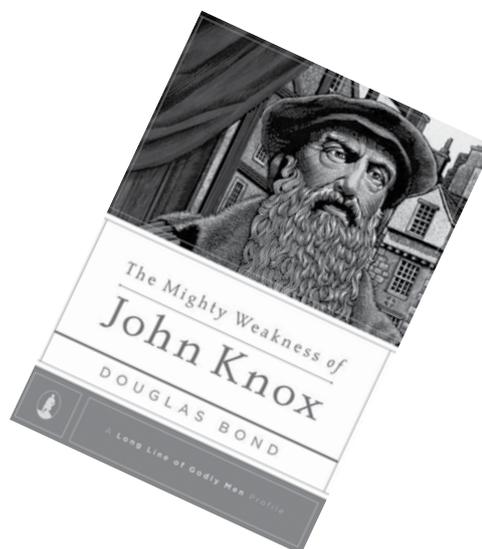
It is a short book. Most of the biography is contained in the

first chapter, with just enough detail to be fast-moving. As the book's title suggests, the other seven chapters seek to show where his great strength lay, and particularly where we too can obtain the same strength. Weak in himself, he depended entirely upon the Lord. In submission to Christ, in prayer and doctrine, in preaching and pastoring, in writing and contending, his focus was not himself but the glory of God.

Well written, the book makes compelling, memorable reading. 'We have ... fabricated a low-calorie Calvinism ... Knox however taught undiluted high-protein predestination'. It quotes extensively from Knox's own writings and his two remaining sermons. 'Dear Brethren, ... exercise yourselves in the book of the Lord your God. Let no day slip without receiving some comfort from His mouth'. 'The doctrine of God's eternal predestination is so necessary to the church of God that, without the same, can faith neither be truly taught, neither surely established'.

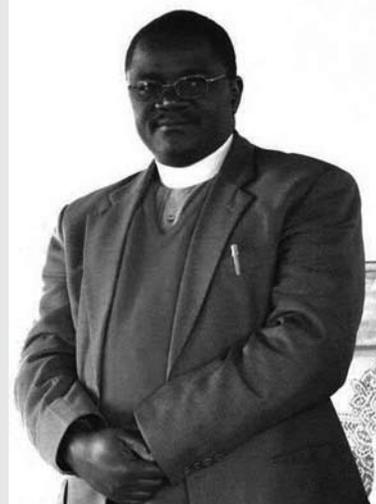
It includes a time-line of Knox and the Reformation, and the text of the Scots Confession, penned by Knox and four others, and ratified by the Scottish Parliament in 1560.

I feel the following paragraph sums up the spirit of the book: 'Knox's insecurity in himself gave him the most profound confidence in the power of God to accomplish great things using ordinary men. Hence, small men throughout the realm were raised up by the grace of God and the power of the Gospel to exercise their God-given gifts in the advancement of His kingdom. And what was true in the church became increasingly true in politics and culture, to the extent that it has been said, "Under God, John Knox was an architect of a Scotland enfranchised, intelligent, self-governing"'.
Mary Gillies (Stornoway)



Letter to the Church of Scotland

Recently we received a letter from Rev Levi N Nyondo of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) – Synod of Livingstonia, containing a letter addressed to the Church of Scotland and asking us to publish it in the Free Church Witness. While the letter is too long to be published in full we thought that extracts would be of interest to our people. This African church traces its origin to missionaries from Scotland but now finds itself in a stronger and more biblical position than its founding Church and required by the Word of God to testify against its condoning of immorality.



Preamble

The CCAP Synod of Livingstonia has been in existence for 136 years since the coming of the first Scottish Missionaries in 1875. These pioneers were moved by a divine call to which they responded positively. Currently the Synod is an overseer of 25 Presbyteries and over 180 parishes and ministers who tirelessly work together as they serve the Lord and build His church to His glory. The CCAP Synod of Livingstonia would want to highlight some significant points in relation to the Church of Scotland's recent resolution on issues pertaining to same-sex marriages.

General Overview of same-sex Marriage

Issues of same-sex marriages and homosexuals have in recent years triggered controversy across the globe. Governments, civil societies, churches and para-church organizations have responded differently on the same. A clear-cut line can be seen dividing churches as well as religions where some have unanimously lined up against same-sex marriages and homosexuality describing such a practice as immoral as well as sinful, while others are in support of it.

Malawi as a country has not been spared from issues of homosexuals, lesbians etc. All along Malawians have never had a concept of same-sex marriages till recently when two men came in the limelight claiming they are a couple. The media, both print and electronic, were awash with coverage on the same almost daily. A cross-section of people, including religious leaders, traditional leaders, politicians, and civil society spoke against such a practice describing it as alien to Malawian culture, immoral, abomination, taboo and sinful. According to the laws of the land, section 156 cap 7:01 of the penal code states: 'any male person who, whether in public or private commits any act of indecency with another male person or procures another male person to commit any act of gross indecency with him, or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any male person with himself or with another male person whether in public or private shall be guilty of a felony and shall be liable to imprisonment for five years with or without corporal punishment'.

Such acts whereby people of the same-sex have an affair are categorized as unnatural offences. Sodomy and all other forms of same-sex activities are not only punishable by law but also unusual and remain a taboo in Malawian set up.

The Synod's View and Resolution

The CCAP Synod of Livingstonia is one of the established Churches in Malawi, enjoys a large following and has influence on a cross-section of issues of national importance. The Synod has a prophetic role and derives its mandate from the Word of God. This biblical mandate through the guidance of the Holy Spirit empowers the Church to point out what is evil and at the same time encourage its followers to uphold what is good in the eyes of God.

The Synod also recognizes natural, cultural and traditional moral standards which act as acceptable guiding principles surrounding people's way of lives. This the Synod does in comparison with the Scriptures, which it believes have final authority on human race, regardless of colour, cultural, geographical or any other differences. In view of these sentiments, the Synod after a careful and wide consultation and believably under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is convinced that anyone who engages in homosexual, sodomy or same-sex marriage, without any doubt, acts immorally and against the Creator's design for such sexual activity and does the same contrary to the creative wisdom of God who founded the institution of marriage between man and woman who upon leaving their parents become one flesh (Gen.2:24). In light of this and many more biblical as well as cultural references and citations the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia feels same-sex marriages, homosexuality and any form of love affair between individuals of same-sex is evil and unacceptable.

Paul in his letter to Romans (Romans 1:18-32) describes such acts as indecent (v27) wicked sinful desires, impurity and unnatural. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, the word of God is clear and points out that homosexuals just like other sinners shall NOT enter the Kingdom of God. In the Old Testament we read from Leviticus 18:22 that it is detestable for a man to indulge in sexual activity with another man. Having explored the Scriptures as well as cultural norms, the Synod still believes it is duty bound to propagate the gospel truth and denounce any form of sinful act, irrespective of its architect.

The Synod shall however continue providing pastoral care, in accordance with the teachings of the church, to all those involved in sinful acts, including homosexuals or lesbians once they are discovered. The Synod believes that gays, just like any other sinner, need to experience the love of Christ and eventually mend their lives by accepting Jesus Christ as their

personal Saviour.

Conclusion

The CCAP Synod of Livingstonia as highlighted above strongly believes that same-sex marriages, no matter how tactful one attempts to justify their existence, are evil in the eyes of the Creator. The Synod believes it is lethal to compromise the gospel by accommodating practices that are not in agreement with the Word of God. It is because of this and many other contributing factors that the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia has joined hands with others to uphold the fundamental principles of morality and not to accept homosexuality, lesbians and same-sex marriages in all Christian Churches in Malawi. The Synod shall therefore remain obedient to the Scriptures by siding with the truth of the gospel on all matters, including those surrounding same-sex marriages. Jesus Christ said, 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free' (John 8:32).

It is in this spirit that the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia has

decided to write the Church of Scotland as a response to the latter's recent resolution on same-sex relationships. It is the hope of the Synod that at one point issues raised herein will be of some help as together we strive to portray a good image of the Church at large and preserve its dignity. The Synod also strongly believes that based on the biblical truths together we can protect the fundamental principles of the Christian faith and beliefs Christ suffered for, rather than compromising the gospel truth in order to achieve selfish goals. It is therefore our prayer and that of many other Christian churches for God's intervention specifically for the reversal of moral decay. May we together join hands as we engage in prayer and fasting so that morality may be restored, and that the devil should not be given a place in our churches. This will surely restore sanity in the church which seems to be replaced by secularism.

Rev C M. Baloyi, (*Synod Moderator*)

Rev Levi N Nyondo, (*General Secretary*)

The Talking Pew

Rev Anthony Dallison



I am a pew. I don't often have the chance to speak - usually I have to listen - but don't think I'm complaining! The things I listen to are the sweetest words, and form the grandest story one could wish to hear, the story of God's love to lost sinners. Besides, listening is an art; it takes concentration and effort but over the years I have learned to love listening. Listening is terribly important. The craftsman who put me together had to listen before he learned how to do it, and listening reflects the purpose of my Maker. Did you know that it reflects the purpose of your Maker also?

My task in life is to be sat upon. You might think this is a very humiliating job - I've heard some people say that no - one will sit on them - but I think otherwise. I once heard a sermon in which the minister said that to enter the church of heaven we must all be sat upon. We must all be humble enough to let people step on us. He told us we could never do this until we had humbled ourselves before God and submitted to His claims on our lives. We must recognise that God takes us to heaven on his terms and not on ours. So, I suppose, in a way we must all be willing to be sat upon. Salvation will only come to those who are humble enough to know this and to realise that we have to depend entirely on the saving work of Christ to get to heaven. There's no room in God's redemption for anything we might want to add.

Who sits on me? Men and women who love God and consider it is a duty and a privilege to occupy me and to worship God in His house. And children (I'm near the back!) they scuff me up a little with their shoes, but I don't mind a bit, in fact I love it. God planned me for them: His salvation includes them. Maybe if more children sat on me we would have more model citizens and fewer juvenile delinquents. Hypocrites sit on me too. I

don't deny it. But I don't mind it either, because our minister says that he's seen some terrible hypocrites get soundly converted. This is the really thrilling thing about being a pew. I've seen the most wonderful change in some of the folk that have sat on me. I feel I've had a real part in changing grumpy people into pleasant ones, and lazy ones into busy ones, and proud ones into humble ones, and bad ones into good ones, and religious ones into Christians (dear me, my English is slipping, what would the minister say!) - and all this through coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. What a difference a true faith in Christ does make. I always think these transformed lives are the very best proof the world can have that Christianity is true.

There is something I don't like. Sometimes when God's Word is being preached, I'm empty and I hate that. So long as I am empty I am a vote against God and against the Lord Jesus. Sometimes I hear talk about increasing unemployment and the moral landslide in our nation and I always feel that things will just get much worse if I must join the ranks of the unemployed. When I'm empty too, I always feel that I make things more difficult for the minister because his voice just booms off me and goes straight back at himself and that makes me feel awful.

Can I invite you to come and sit on me? You won't get to heaven simply by sitting on me. I'm afraid some people have sat on me all their lives and it has not profited them. But by sitting on me, you can worship God and you can hear about how to be saved and if you really become earnest about your soul you will be saved because God says that when you seek Him with all your heart you WILL find Him. Now, I better stop or you'll think I'm more of a pulpit than a pew! But do come along and sit on me and let me help you find a wonderful Saviour.

Commended to All Worshippers

We commend Pastor Peter Masters and the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for requesting new worshippers to observe the following:

'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness' (Ps.96:9).

Recognising that the Lord's Day Worship in God's House is a joyous foretaste of our eternal rest in Heaven I hereby covenant before God to keep the Lord's Day for Holy Service; to treat God's House with due reverence; to regard the

worship services as sacred. For this cause, I shall endeavour my utmost to keep early night on Saturday; to abstain from needless work on Sunday; to prepare early on Sunday for worship; to arrive and to be seated in services well before time for quiet meditation in the Sanctuary; to subdue all conversation and noise; to direct my children to do likewise. So, help me, God!

'But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord' (Josh.24.15).

Letter from Zambia

Dear Friends,

During this past year much has happened and many changes have occurred, but one thing stayed the same: Jesus Christ is Lord. He is Lord of Covenant College and we pray that together we can always shine the light of His gospel in Zambia and the rest of the world. This letter is an update of the work we were enabled to do through the Holy Spirit during the last part of 2011.

Covenant College Farm – Phil Bailey

It's a myth that farming in Zambia is just for the five months of the year when the rains are with us. The last season's harvest was brought in during May, shelled and bagged in June, and sold to the Food Relief Agency during July for which payment was received in August.

A little time to rest? Just a few weeks! Early September we were back in the fields preparing the holes and by the end of the month putting in the lime and the fertilizer or one of the organic alternatives such as manure, compost, sunflower cake or maize bran. The students who stay over for the weekends were busy helping in this preparation work. It's a great way for them to put into practice the 'Farming God's Way' that we have been teaching them in the classroom.

We have about 12 acres to prepare, which is a large amount of work as we have always done this by hand to provide work for the men in the villages around us. But things have changed, harvests in the area have improved, people have more money and this year we have struggled to get enough people to come and help us. This is a good sign and we must adapt. We have therefore adjusted one of the ploughs to make a 'ripper' which rips open a furrow in the soil into which we place the fertilizer/lime etc. This is much quicker than digging holes as it is pulled behind the oxen but the important thing is the principle remains the same, we are NOT turning over the soil (as with ploughing) which damages the soil structure and layers within the soil which leads to killing off the living organisms and bacteria which God placed there to keep our soils healthy.

During August we received our new Farming God's Way shirts and caps. A friend in the UK organized these for us and at the same time designed a new logo for FGW.

Christian Education Ministry (CEM)

Marjanne Hendriksen

How happy and thankful you can be when you visit a school and find the teachers always in class, able to show their lesson plans and hearing them telling a Bible story! When you walk through a village and you hear in a hut a child singing: 'Let the children come to Me, for theirs is the Kingdom of the Lord!' your heart rejoices. But how sad and painful to visit a school and tell the staff that after some years of training and support we will not visit them again, because the teachers are not willing to be serious in Christian education. Together with my colleagues Mwenya and Lungu we are able to visit about ten schools every week. Some schools need a visit every week, because they just opened this year. For others, once a month is enough to keep in touch with the teachers and their programme. As you understand already from the beginning of this small sharing of CEM experiences, we have both encouraging school visits and discouraging ones. It shows how dependent we are on our Lord in all that we do. Only He can change hearts of teachers so that they really see the importance of teaching the children daily in a Christian way. Only He can change hearts of parents so that they see the same importance and also the need of supporting the teachers. And we hope He will give you the burden on your heart to pray with us and work in this way together in the Kingdom of the Lord to reach out to children, teachers and communities in this part of Zambia, so that His name will be glorified worldwide!

Covenant College Graduation – Katie Lachman

On 30 September 2011, Covenant College Zambia Trust held its 9th graduation ceremony and marked the closing of its 12th academic year. This year the College had 31 students, 7 of whom graduated on this special day. The occasion

was attended by over 200 people, including the District Agricultural Coordinator (DACO) and the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS). The guest of honour was the District Commissioner. The programme was presided over by Pastor Lovemore Banda, himself a graduate of the College and a member of CCZT, as Master of Ceremonies, with Dr Heinrich Zwemstra and Rev David Lachman officiating as College President and Vice-President, respectively. We also noted with pleasure the presence of Rev Cees Molenaar who was able to return to the College to join the day's celebration. There was a heart warming and joyful atmosphere as we celebrated the hard work and achievements of our 7 graduates over the past 3 years. Special music was provided by a choir of our own students. Pastor Richard Mwenda, one of our local Trustees, opened with a brief devotional. Speeches were given by the District Commissioner and the College President. The graduating students each received either a diploma or certificate acknowledging the completion of their respective courses of study, and a hardcover copy of Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible as a gift. Mr Phil Bailey and the DACO also addressed the students and presented each graduate with a certificate acknowledging completion of the Farming God's Way course. The other students were each presented with their annual academic reports and a gift. In closing, graduate Richard Tembo gave a speech on behalf of the graduating students. Afterwards a lunch was served to the guests.

We give glory to the Lord for sustaining the work of the College through another year, and look forward to what He will do in the future.

Zwemstras called to a church in South Africa

Joseph Pettitt (trustee)

The College principal, Heinrich Zwemstra, has been called to pastor the Reformed Church Pretoria-Annlin, in South Africa, starting on 15th January 2012. We are very sad to no longer have him and his family at the College, but glad that God has provided them this new avenue of service. Please pray that God would give Heinrich all that he needs to honour Christ by preparing God's people for works of service (Ephesians 4:12). Pray also for the whole family as they settle into a new home and a new area.

The Zwemstras arrived at Covenant College in 2008, and very quickly seemed to be at home among the staff and students, who appreciated their Christian character combined with friendly personalities. We are very thankful for all Heinrich's devoted and competent work as lecturer, vice-principal, and more recently as principal. We are also very grateful for all the ways Jacomien has helped the College, not least by her support of Heinrich and management of the College accounts. Of course their friendship and support to

others at the College, as well as their children, Cobus, Nelrie and Anel will also be greatly missed.

Please urgently pray for the future of the College as we look for new lecturers and staff and consider how best to provide for our future.

Prayer & Thanksgiving – from the Team

We commit the Zwemstra family to the Lord in their new calling.

We pray that the Lord will send lecturers to work at the College, especially now that the Zwemstra family is leaving.

We thank the Lord for the graduates who successfully completed their studies.

We pray for the health of Bilison Mwanza, the farm manager.

We pray for a good rainy season so that the Farm and the people of Zambia will have a good harvest.

We thank the Lord for committed churches who work in community schools.

We pray for the Lachman family and their new baby Ketzia Anne born 18th December.

We thank the Lord for good health at the beginning of 2012 and the privilege to serve at the mission.

We thank the Lord for so many fellow-believers who participate in the work of the mission in different ways.

Greetings in Christ,

The Covenant College Team



The Zwemstra Family, now returning to South Africa

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it:
if a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
it would utterly be contemned.”

Song of Solomon 8:7