Free Church
Witness

DECEMBER 2012 ISSUE

Head-Coverings in Public Worship?

Rev Bartel Elshout

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

Price: £2.00

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Design and Layout: Alasdair Macleod
Cover: **Rainforest** (*JupiterImages, 2012*)

Subscription Details

Subscription rates (including postage) for a year's issues of the two magazines mailed to one address are:

U.K.	*£27.50*
Europe (Airmail)	*£30.00*
Overseas (Airmail)	*£35.00*

The congregational rate is £24.00.
We would like to encourage churches to make bulk orders. The *Explorer* may be ordered separately for Sabbath Schools.
Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to: *"Free Church Witness"*
Subscriptions and orders should be sent to:
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The Church is a recognised Scottish Charity (No. 030976).

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Published by

Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
25 Branklyn Crescent
Academy Park
Glasgow G13 1GJ

COMMUNIONS

January:-

20 Smiths Falls
27 Atlanta

Printed by

MMS-Almac Ltd.
Unit F Isla Bank Mills, Keith AB55 5DD
Tel: 01542 886409

Tithing is Worship

The first reference to tithing in Scripture is to be found in Genesis 14:20. Abraham returned victorious from battle having liberated his nephew Lot and many others and also captured a great deal of spoil. Melchizedek, the mysterious king of Salem and the priest of the most high God, met him with refreshments of bread and wine. Melchizedek blessed him, and said, 'Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand' (vv19-20). Abram responded by giving him tithes of all the spoil. A tithe is of course a tenth part. Here the payment of a tithe to the great priest is an act of worship and thanksgiving for victory. Abram who had a mere handful of soldiers knew that the victory was an act of God. When we pray, trusting in God, and receive an answer we are to respond in thankful worship, and tithing is part of that worship.

Jacob's Tithing

The next reference to tithing is in the account of the life of Jacob. Following his pretence to be Esau and his receiving of the blessing from his father, Jacob had to flee from the bitter hatred of his brother. He set off for Padan-aram from where his mother came. That first night he lay down in the open field under the stars with a large stone for his bed. He must have felt lonely, guilty, God-forsaken and very apprehensive of the future. But the God who loves to be merciful came to him in a dream. He saw a ladder reaching up to heaven, and angels, ministering spirits, ascending and descending on the ladder. The Lord stood at the top of the ladder and said, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed … And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of' (Gen.28:13, 15). What a huge encouragement and reassurance! Jacob responded: 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee' (vv20-22). Here again the tithe is an expression of thanksgiving and praise to God for His mercy, kindness and protection. We are not told to whom Jacob presented the tithes. Was there some godly priesthood in Padan-aram? Did he lay up the tithe, keeping it till he returned to Canaan? Was Melchizedek still around?

In both these instances tithing is a free-will offering to the Lord for His salvation. We are not told of God requiring a tithe just as in these early chapters of Genesis we are not told of God requiring his people to offer sacrifices and yet God must have made these things plain to the early believers. The animal skins as coverings given in Eden would be God's demonstration of sacrifice (Gen.3:21). Cain and Abel are then portrayed offering sacrifices (Genesis 4). Cain's sacrifice was rejected but Abel, by faith, was enabled to offer the animal sacrifice which was pleasing to God. Similarly God must have revealed tithing as pleasing to Himself and by faith Abram and Jacob and no doubt the other patriarchs worshipped God with their givings.

Mosaic Law

When we come into the Mosaic period the ceremonial law is laid down for Israel. All matters of worship are clearly regulated. A tenth of the produce of the land - grain, fruit, flocks and herds - was to be given to the Lord (Lev.27:30-33). The Levites did not get an inheritance with the rest of the tribes. The Lord was to be their inheritance. They were to be employed in the worship in the tabernacle and in the instruction of the people in the law of the Lord. They were to receive the tithe from the rest of the Israelites for their own maintenance. Of the tithe which they received, they in turn were to give a tithe to the sons of Aaron who were the priests (Numb.18:26-28). So the tithe was a thank offering to the Lord for harvest and was to be given for the maintenance of the full-time workers in the church. It was laid down now as the law but the attitude of the individual worshipper coming with his tithe was to be one of thanksgiving and worship.

Robbing God

Malachi asks searching questions: 'Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Mal.3:8-10). Israel was duty bound to pay the tithe to the Levites. Their failure in this is tantamount to stealing from God. Offerings are also mentioned. It was not merely the bare tithe that should be contributed, but also offerings over and above this. Thanksgiving was to be rendered to God by contributions to His service. If the Jews would repent and give to God the place He should have in their lives and worship God with their substance He promised them great blessings such as they could not contain. Their cup would run over. God is no man's debtor. They had suffered many troubles because of their failure to worship God with their tithes but now God says: 'And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts' (Mal.3:11-12).

Jewish traditions

Over the years Jewish traditions had developed to the extent that it was said that, 'Everything that is eaten and grows out

The great inspiration for giving is the example of Christ Himself: 'though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich'

of the earth must be tithed'. Jesus criticises the Pharisees for their legalism whereby they tithed tiny garden herbs and ignored much more serious matters: 'But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone' (Lk.11:42). Their self-righteousness is obvious in the Pharisee's prayer: 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess' (Lk.18:11-12). Tithing had changed from being a freely offered expression of worship and thanks to God to being a drudgery and a basis for merit.

Grace changes hearts

It is fascinating to see the change which came about following the day of Pentecost. The Spirit was poured out abundantly and this led to conversions, changed lives, enthusiastic worship and loosed purse-strings: 'And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need' (Acts 2:44-45). This is further expanded later: 'Great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need' (Acts 4:33-35). Deacons were appointed to make sure that the poor were looked after (Acts 6). When Paul was sent out to preach to the Gentiles he was encouraged to care for the poor: 'Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do' (Gal.2:10). God cares for the poor and His church has a responsibility to do so too. When kindness is shown to the needy it is shown to Christ: 'Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (Mt.25:37-40). The presence of saving grace in the heart is demonstrated in giving to the poor, especially to those of the household of faith.

Christian giving

Tithing is not stressed in the New Testament. Why is this? It is for two reasons. First, there were ceremonial aspects to tithing in the Old Testament. But secondly, it appears in the New Testament that believers who have such an abundance of the Spirit in the new dispensation are expected to give much more than a tenth. Jesus commends the widow who gave two mites into the temple treasury. She had two and so could have kept one for her own use but Jesus said, 'Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living' (Mk.12:43-44).

Dabney argues that tithing should not be practised in the New Testament. Rather we should view all we have as that which God has given us to use in His service. We are God's stewards and so are answerable to God for every penny we spend. So it is not a matter of giving one tenth to God and doing what we like with the rest. Rather we are responsible to God for all He gives to us. This is something well worth bearing in mind. All we have is from God and He has a right to claim it. However the tithe is of value as a good minimum in Christian giving. We should give much more and certainly no less. It is worth remembering that tithing was in existence before the ceremonial law was given to Moses.

Let us give as the Lord prospers us and we will discover that the Lord will reward us liberally. Unlike the so-called 'Prosperity Gospel' we do not give in order to get more. We give in worship and praise to God. And we view it as a privilege to give even if God in His inscrutable wisdom sends us a trial of poverty and financial hardship following our giving. At the same time we rejoice in God's blessing which normally falls on those who give generously.

The Example

The great inspiration for giving is the example of Christ Himself: 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich' (2Cor.8:9). He gave His all for us. 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift' (2Cor.9:15). We are warned and also encouraged: 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully' 2Cor.9:6). If we expect a harvest of blessing, sow plenty seed, give freely.

Of vital importance is our attitude in giving: 'Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver' (2Cor.9:7). Do we wish to be those whom God loves?

Giving to God is an act of worship. Paul exhorts the Christians in Corinth, 'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him' (1Cor.16:2). Here is something to be done each Sabbath. When we place our offering in the plate it is an act of worship. Standing orders are beloved by treasurers as it makes life simpler for them, yet it makes the weekly act of meaningfully and purposefully worshipping God with our givings that bit more difficult for us.

Retaining Faith and Confidence in the Gospel

Trevor Kirkland

The substance of a devotional address given at the 2012 School in Theology, based on 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Horatius Bonar once wrote: 'God's design is to glorify Himself, to show the whole world what an infinitely glorious being He is. This is His mighty end in all He does and says, to manifest Himself and to show forth His glory. Whenever we overlook this we go wrong'. Bonar then gives an example of what he means, with regard to the conversion of sinners. 'We think, if we can get sinners converted it does not matter how. Our whole anxiety is not, how shall we secure the glory of God, but how shall we multiply conversions'. What then is the consequence? Bonar tells us: 'We cease to look at conversion in the light in which God regards it, as the way in which He is glorified'.

Paul addresses for us the same point. Here were believers who had been converted by the gospel yet appear to have adopted the idea that in order to reach their fellow citizens they needed to adjust and accommodate the gospel to the modes of thinking prevalent in their society - to embellish it with philosophical contours in order to make it more acceptable.

In other words they had lost sight of two things: (1) The glory of God, and (2) The glory of the gospel. How vital then is the argument of Paul, to convince us afresh that what men and women need is the gospel as it is in Christ Jesus without our clever embellishments.

1. Paul's Rejection (v1)

Paul rejected the idea that oratorical ability, excellency of speech was essential to the success of the gospel. He rejected entirely the idea that philosophical nuances were crucial to the gospel's acceptance. Paul set himself against all this; worldly wisdom had no part to play (1:17). Oratory and philosophy kill the gospel. To change the gospel to be similar to what people were already thinking and believing was to render the gospel ineffective.

The Corinthians were surrounded with philosophy: Jewish, Greek and Roman. What they didn't need was another philosophy but rather the gospel. Not the gospel dressed up in philosophy and presented as an oration using oratorical skills; just the gospel. But why? When it comes to spiritual things worldly wisdom is useless (2:7-16). The wisdom of this world, in relation to spiritual things is foolish (1:27), it is earthly, sensual, devilish (Jas 3:15).

2. Paul's Determination (v2)

Preaching Christ is the heart of Paul's labour. He declared Christ's Person - who He is. He made known His Coming - How He came; when, where and why? He proclaimed His Satisfactory Work; what He did, why, how and for whom.

Paul didn't go into the ministry with either vagueness as to the message, or any uncertainty as to the centrality of Christ. He was absolutely convinced in his mind that the only remedy for man's plight was Jesus Christ.

We see all this an Acts 17 when he preaches to the Greek philosophers at Mars' Hill. He begins with the doctrine of creation, moves to man's sinful plight and finally to the remedy in the light of judgment: the death and resurrection of Christ. And that is where we are always to get people to: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Man's problem is his blindness and darkness (John 1:5,10,11). When Christ came He said: 'I am the light of the world' (Jn.8:12). We as preachers are to be light. John bore witness to the Light that all men might believe. This is why philosophy is no use. This is why remaking the gospel into a philosophy is no use.

3. Paul's Experience (vv 3-4)

Paul anticipates these Corinthians saying: 'Well, it's okay for you to say that Paul, you are an Apostle, we are not'. So Paul turns to his own experience. In verse 3 he was emptied of all self-confidence. He knew that in himself he was insufficient. In verse 4 he maintained his position in every situation. Charles Hodge argues that the difference between 'speech' and

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'preaching' is that between informal conversation and public witness. If that is so, then Paul is stating that whether privately or publicly he aimed to bring sinners to Christ; without the aid of oratory or philosophy or, in the words of verse 4b, manipulative techniques. He preached Christ, and the Holy Spirit accompanied that plain preaching of the gospel. Paul is telling them and us, that he relied not upon himself, his gifts, his abilities, nor his learning. Rather he preached Christ, and God was pleased by His Spirit to convert sinners.

4. Paul's Reason (v5)

'That' - What is the thing that really matters? 'That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God'. This is of fundamental importance. What was true, says Paul, of you (Corinthians), must be true for everyone. There can be no deviation from this rule. Conversion must be all of God.

Everything about Christianity is supernatural: Scripture, salvation, the Saviour, saints AND the Gospel.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul confirms all that he said before. There is the treasure: valuable, precious and transforming. There is the vessel itself which is frail, human, weak and insufficient. There is the excellency of it all: God is glorified.

Could it be that the reason so many who profess faith see nothing really glorious in the Gospel is because they professed on the wrong grounds? They are the very converts Paul didn't want! The product of man-made techniques.

Application

1. Do we aim to be clever or faithful?
2. Do we still believe the Holy Spirit is crucial in preaching?
3. Have we retained our confidence in the gospel as it is?
4. Is truth central to our preaching or is it contemporary philosophy?
5. Do we still preach with a sense of weakness?
6. Does God truly get the glory in our preaching?
7. The success of the gospel thankfully rests with God.

Reformed Protestant Mission Trust, Sri Lanka

September-October Update

Dear Friends,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! I am glad to write about the Triune God's ministry in this part of Sri Lanka.

Family

By the grace of God we are doing well in Vavuniya. He has been merciful to us these last few months. We thank Him that my wife, Dino, received her transfer to Vavuniya. He has helped us through the entire process of her transfer. Now we are able together to plan and work better for the kingdom of God. We are slowly settling in. We are very thankful for those of you who remember us in your prayers. We are thankful to God who is using us to establish His kingdom.

Ministry

We find it hard to write about our ministry every two months. We feel we have no news which is worthy of reporting to you. However, I will try to give you a brief update. We continue to worship at the same venue and at the same time. Around 15 people attend, although there are only 8 who attend regularly. On occasions, visitors come and go. I have finished preaching a series on the 'Beatitudes' at the Sabbath worship, and have now started to preach a series on the 'Whole Armour of God'. Please pray for the preaching of the Word and the conversion of those who are not as yet saved. Our prayer meeting is also going well. I continue to teach from the Westminster Confession of Faith. We meet on a Thursday, and there are around 6 people who are coming now. We are planning, God willing, to start a Sabbath morning worship service and also an adults' Bible study. Please pray for wisdom as we start this new work. We are thankful that three friends of those in our church attended last Sabbath's service (4th November). Over the next few weeks, God willing, we will go and visit them. I have also written a gospel tract and printed 2,000 copies. I am planning to do outreach on the streets and door-to-door work in the coming weeks. Please pray for the outreach work. We need God's favour for everything.

Literature

Sovereign Grace Publications (in New Zealand) have given us permission to reprint one book titled *Without Church Membership*. This is a Tamil book written by Rev Bala. It is a very useful book for us. The book explains how important it is to be a member of a local church, and questions if it is possible for a healthy Christian not be a member of a church. The writer speaks of how the true Christian should love to be a member of a good, sound church. The printing of this book is almost complete. God willing, we will distribute it next week. We plan to print other books too. Please pray for this literature ministry. If anyone is willing to make a donation for the costs associated with printing good Tamil books, that would be much appreciated.

Donations

One of our family friends has donated 372,050Rs (approx £1,860). Of this we spent on the family camp 102,500Rs (approx £513), for the building fund 250,000Rs (approx £1,250) and also 19,550Rs (approx £97) for general expenditure. We are thankful to God for giving us additional support for our mission through this family. Please pray for this family who have cheerfully given. Pray for the salvation of their two young children, and that they may be protected from the world.

Thank you for your prayers

Parthee

Obituary

Murdo Morison, Elder, Beauly

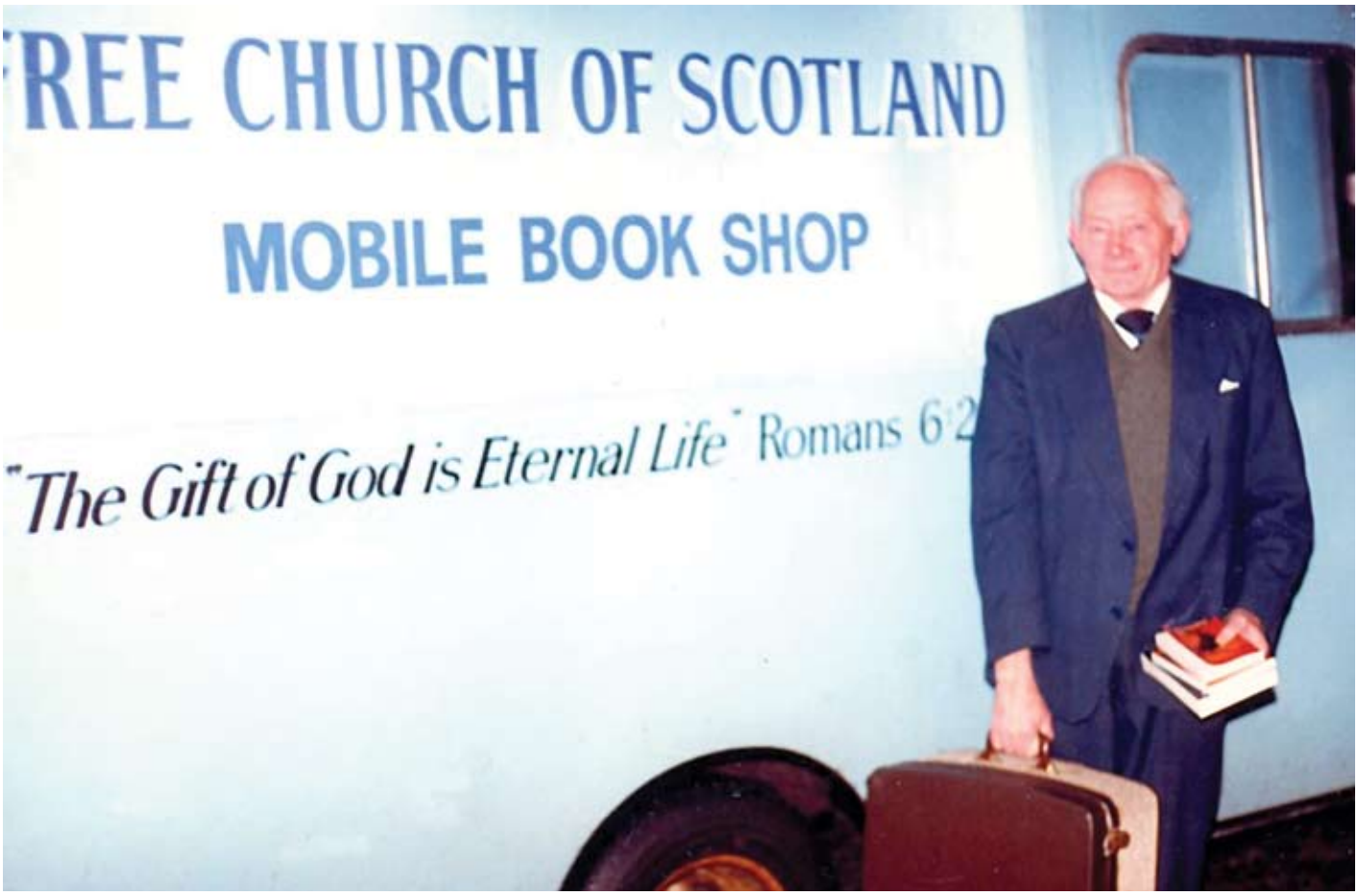
On the Lord's Day 9th September 2012 it pleased the Lord to take his servant Murdo Morison home to be with himself. Murdo had been taken into hospital after a fall but seemed to be doing well and we expected that he would soon recover. But the Lord's ways are not our ways and Murdo passed away quietly and unexpectedly late that evening.

Born in 1925, Murdo was converted in 1948 and made public profession of his faith the following year. He was made an elder of Urray Free Church in 1963. The previous year he had joined the Christian Literature Crusade or C L C as it was more commonly known and he served there until he took up the work of the Free Church Colporteur in 1967 — a post in which he served until his retirement in 1990. It was probably through this work that he became most widely known in the Highlands and Islands. Each year he would make his rounds in his van or caravan to these areas selling Bibles and Christian books from door to door and many looked forward to his visits in those pre-Internet days when folk in remote areas had little opportunity to obtain Christian literature locally.

Murdo was a man who had a wealth of experience dealing with people and possessed a deep and passionate love for his Saviour. When younger he would regularly preach and in later life he was tireless in lending a hand with any physical work that was needed around the manse or church. His removal from the congregation is a sorry loss to us and we miss him greatly but we know that he is in a much better place and beholds by sight the One whom he loved and longed for.

We commit his dear wife Mary, his daughter Ruth, Mrs Kirkwood his sister and the other relatives, to the care of the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.

Rev Harry Woods



If you were to meet yourself some morning…

James Russell Miller (1840 – 1912)

'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting' (Psalm 139:23-24).

It takes courage to pray this prayer, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart'! Not all men can do it. Many people fear to look into their own heart. If by some divine revealing, we were made to see ourselves as we are - all the evil that is in us, our face would blanch into deathly paleness. It takes courage to ask God to search one's inner life and show one one's sins.

God search me

The writer asks God to search him. He does not say he will search himself. Neither does he ask his neighbours to search his ways and thoughts. Men are often willing enough to judge their fellow men, to find and expose their faults, and to proclaim their sins. It is easier to confess other people's sins than one's own. The Pharisee was quite free in searching the publican and declaring his wrongdoings, though he saw no faults and sins in himself! The writer of the Psalm might have found men who would be willing to search him and try him and point out his blemishes and his wicked ways. But this, he did not ask.

Men's judgments

Men's judgments are imperfect. Sometimes they are uncharitable, even unjust. There are lives that go down under men's condemnation, whom love would have saved. At the best, men are only ignorant or partial judges. They cannot see our motives and often they condemn as evil that which is noble and beautiful, and approve as right and praiseworthy that which before God is unworthy and sinful. It is not enough for us to ask men to search us and try us, or say to a friend, 'Tell me of my faults and blemishes, that I may put them away'.

The story is told of a young composer whose work was being performed in a great music hall. A throng was listening and applauding. But the young man seemed to be indifferent to all these tokens of approval. All the while his eye was fixed on one man who sat at the centre of the hall. This was his old master, and the musician cared more for his opinion than for that of the thousands of other listeners; and was thrilled more by his faintest look or gesture of approval, than by all the thunderous cheers of the throng.

It will be worth our while to think seriously of the things in us that only God can see. There are sins which are hidden from ourselves, of which our conscience is not aware, our unknown errors. There is evil in us which lies too deep to be discovered. There is a self in us, which even we ourselves do not see! There are depths of our being into which our own eyes cannot pierce. You may say that you know of no sins, errors, or faults in yourself, and you may be sincere; still this is not evidence that you are sinless.

Our conscience

Our conscience is not the final court. It is not enough to have the approval of our own heart. There are errors and evils in the holiest life on earth, which only God's eye can detect. We must ask God to search us, if we would be made clean. We cannot see our own faults, even as our neighbours can see them. There is wisdom in the wish that we might see ourselves, as others see us - for it would free us from many a blunder and foolish notion. We are prejudiced in our own favour. We are disposed to be charitable toward our own shortcomings. We make all sorts of allowances for our own faults. We are wonderfully patient with our own weaknesses. We are blind to our own blemishes. We look at our good qualities through magnifying glasses; and at our faults and errors with the lenses reversed, making them appear very small. We see only the best of ourselves.

If you were to meet yourself on the street some morning, as the person God sees you to be, you would probably not recognize yourself! We remember the little story that the prophet Nathan told King David, about a rich man's injustice toward a poor man, and how David's anger flamed up. 'This man must die!' cried the king. He did not recognize himself in the man he so despised until Nathan quietly said, 'You are the man!' We are all too much like David.

Deceitful heart

If the true chronicle of your life were written in a book, in the form of a story, and you were to read the chapters over, you probably would not identify the story as your own! We do not know our real self. We do not imagine there is so much about us that is morally ugly and foul, that is positively wicked. But God searches and knows the innermost and hidden things of our heart! 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?' (Jeremiah 17:9).

'We do not imagine there is so much about us that is morally ugly and foul, that is positively wicked. But God searches and knows...'

Accounts of the 1859-60 Revival:

A Prodigal's Return

Rev Richard Smyth - a minister at Londonderry, Northern Ireland, at the time

A young man of loose character and habits, who never frequented the house of God, but was familiar with all the mysteries of an immoral life, was proceeding along the wall of Derry one night at a late hour, and, seeing light in a church, turned aside to investigate the cause of this unseasonable appearance.

Throughout the church there were groups gathered around individuals who had been 'stricken'. Among these, one group, larger than the rest, could not fail to attract an onlooker's attention. They surrounded a double pew where some eight or ten boys were on their knees beside one of their companions who was under conviction. Our careless visitor edged his way through the crowd until his eye commanded a complete survey of the kneeling boys.

At that moment the stricken boy was pouring out his heart in the most devout thanksgiving to God for the salvation that had been brought to him through the Holy Spirit. He had prayed for ministers, parents, companions, and for the godless and unconverted - some of his sentences being characterised by the most thrilling eloquence. There was something heavenly in the scene, and especially in the earnest pleadings of that youthful Christian, who had just found a Saviour precious.

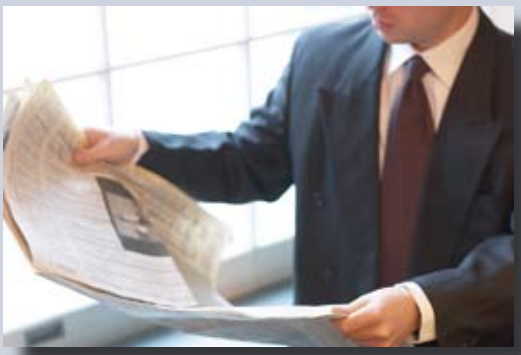
The eyes of the profligate visitor began to have a fixed look; the cheek turned pale as death, the knees shook and smote each other, like Belshazzar's at the sight of the handwriting of doom; and human strength being no longer able to bear the pressure of conscious guilt, gave way in the groanings of despair. His bent knees implored mercy of God. His cries were loud and bitter, and his long, neglected hair hung over the form against which he rested, as a wild symbol of his own frenzied heart.

A young man - one who had been a believer for more than a year - rushed out of the adjoining vestry to see who had been 'stricken', and, going to the place where he lay, lifted up the drooping head, glanced at the sorrowing face, and turning round with gushing tears of joy, exclaimed, 'Oh, it's my brother!'

That night the distressed soul found no peace, and the dawn of day failed to bring forth his 'righteousness as the light, or his salvation as a lamp that burneth'. Before the shadows of night gathered over the earth again, the candle of the Lord had begun to shine; he saw his way out of the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and rejoiced in the full and free possession of the 'glorious liberty of the children of God'.

Congregational Remittances - October 2012

	CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD	ORDINARY REMITTANCES 2012 Oct	2012 Total	2011 To Oct
Presbytery of Inverness				
Aberdeen	0	1,100	14,127	12,988
Duthil-Dores	0	3,304	17,119	20,397
Inverness	0	4,700	22,700	24,000
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,600	14,788	15,331
Total Inverness	**0**	**10,704**	**68,734**	**72,716**
Northern Presbytery				
Assynt & Scourie	510	0	3,277	4,364
Brora	785	2,400	19,694	19,515
Kiltearn	420	0	6,207	9,257
Tarbat	0	800	12,127	10,478
Total Northern	**1,715**	**3,200**	**41,305**	**43,615**
Southern Presbytery				
Arran	736	760	8,118	8,197
Ayr	5,000	1,216	10,071	2,937
Dumfries	0	0	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0	27,576	27,817
Glasgow - Partick	1,453	1,348	29,000	30,813
Glasgow - Shettleston	724	1,300	21,536	21,705
Glasgow - Knightswood	641	0	22,672	22,279
Rothesay	0	0	260	639
Total Southern	**8,554**	**4,624**	**119,233**	**114,387**
Outer Hebrides Presbytery				
Cross	0	2,398	20,395	19,745
Harris - Leverburgh	337	1,200	15,072	14,784
Harris - Scalpay	500	1,800	22,694	22,692
Knock & Point	0	1,540	14,154	14,168
North Uist	1,629	2,000	12,540	12,364
Stornoway	4,291	14,537	76,215	72,858
Total Outer Hebrides	**6,757**	**23,475**	**161,071**	**156,611**
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron				
Bracadale	125	1,500	10,672	12,191
Duirinish (Waternish)	445	1,000	5,500	6,215
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,001	1,300	13,573	15,881
Lochalsh	410	1,150	11,004	8,125
Poolewe & Aultbea	479	826	11,131	9,970
Ullapool	0	0	51	102
Portree	0	1,400	19,707	17,765
Snizort	1,000	1,200	20,624	18,352
Strath	55	345	7,403	1,453
Total Skye/Lochcarron	**3,515**	**8,721**	**99,663**	**90,036**
Total Congregations	**20,541**	**50,724**	**490,006**	**477,365**
Other Donations	3,537	12,888	40,196	25,486
Legacy	0	114	8,114	18,153
TOTAL	**24,078**	**63,725**	**538,316**	**521,004**
Including Gift Aid	909	0	96,214	98,057



News

Davide Ratti's Induction *(Rev Harry Woods)*

On Friday 14th September 2012 the Free Church (Cont) Presbytery of Inverness met in the Culduthel Christian Centre with a large congregation for the purpose of ordaining Rev Davide Ratti to the ministry and inducting him to the charge of Duthil-Dores.

Mr Ratti, a native of Tortona, Italy — a region close to the mountains where the Waldensians flourished — studied accountancy and music there. Later he moved to the town of Cremona where he married Debora and where his three daughters: Giulia, Linda and Anita were born.

Mr Ratti moved to Scotland to study theology in our denomination's Seminary and during his time there became persuaded of Reformed theology and ecclesiastical practice. Towards the end of his course of study he applied for and obtained recognition as a candidate for the Free Church of Scotland (Cont) ministry and graduated from the Seminary in September 2011. Thereafter having completed all the necessary Presbytery exams he became eligible for a call in 2012. He was unanimously elected by the Duthil-Dores congregation and the Presbytery agreed to his ordination and induction.

The service was conducted by Rev H. Woods who preached from Isaiah 40:9-11. At the close of the service there was a time of fellowship when refreshments were provided, presentations were made and speeches were given.

We wish Mr Ratti, his wife Debora and his three daughters a blessed and joyous time as he takes up the work of the ministry in his first congregation. May the Lord be pleased to give him many souls for his hire and open a window of heavenly blessing upon his ministry.

Desk

All-Age Holiday *(Stephen Campbell)*

The annual All-Age Holiday was once again held at Carronvale House, Larbert. As the attendees travelled from all over Scotland some arrived with tired faces, but all were greeted by Derick and Maryanne Gillies who have been the organisers of the holiday for the last few years. Soon we gathered in the dining room, eyes growing wide as the hungry travellers saw generous portions of dinner being served! Thus sustained in the body for the evening, we settled into a quiet first night in preparation for the Sabbath, with worship and a short address from the Rev Bill Scott, whom we had preaching to us over the weekend.

Day two and with it another blessed Sabbath dawned, beginning with a morning prayer meeting before breakfast. All agreed it was a most wonderful way to begin the day. As we were seated for breakfast the fire alarm sounded. Men in uniform came to the rescue. The problem was soon identified, rectified and the guests got back to their bacon!

So then it was time for the morning service which was conducted by Mr Scott. He spoke from the book of Ruth. Naomi took the name Mara or bitter, Boaz means strength, and Ruth means satisfied. He painted the picture of the Christian going through bitter experiences, then coming to lean upon the strength of Christ, and so to be fully satisfied. We enjoyed fellowship through the afternoon, before Mr Scott preached to us again on Ruth. The evening was concluded with testimonies, worship, and a talk from Mr Scott on his travels through Europe and the wonderful experiences he enjoyed serving God there.

The rest of the week went along with a rapid pace. Our annual sports organiser, Mr Murdo Macdonald, set up various competitions of badminton, football, golf, and table tennis, as well as relays for the younger ones.

Our speaker for the week, Rev Maurice Roberts, gave most edifying addresses throughout the evenings, which were a blessing to all gathered, including a wonderful exposition of Psalm 23, which the young ones paid particular attention to, as they had to answer quiz questions. We were also pleased to have very brief visits from the Rev James Gracie and Rev David Fraser. Mr Fraser gave us an excellent talk on what it was like being

a minister in the big city.
There were also day trips made to Go Karting and the Falkirk Wheel, as well as the famous Blair Drummond Safari Park which was enjoyed by young and old alike. As the competitions got to the semi-final stage, all matches were eagerly anticipated, especially the men's table tennis, where Mr Roberts gave a good showing in his semi-final, and made some returns that tennis player Andy Murray would have been proud of! The finals of all tournaments were played and enjoyed by spectators and participants alike, and the last full day of the holiday came to an end with a warm and very entertaining prize-giving!
As we left on the Saturday morning, we were thankful to the Lord for a blessed week, and knowing His presence with us, and indeed our prayer was that He would bless young and old, and that those still on the outside would come to a knowledge of Christ and 'taste and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed'.

Rev Hugh Ferrier

It was noted at the Inverness Presbytery on 29th October that the Rev Hugh Ferrier had completed 60 years in the ministry. A warm preacher and loving pastor, his long ministry has been a fragrant one. His first charge was Golspie where he was ordained and inducted in 1952. He had a brief ministry in Knockbain, before moving to Partick Free Church in Glasgow which in some ways was his best ministry. I was blessed to succeed him there, though I was often compared unfavourably with my esteemed predecessor. His final ministry was in the Free North in Inverness. Frail in health now but renewed in the inner man he awaits a higher call. We thank God for every remembrance of him and his dear wife.

Pro-life protesters cleared

Christian Concern

A District Judge sitting at Brighton Magistrates' Court announced on 17 September that all charges were being dismissed against Christian pro-life campaigner Andy Stephenson. The case against his fellow campaigner, Kathryn Sloane, had been dismissed on 13 September during the same trial. Andy and Kathryn were supported by the Christian Legal Centre and were represented in Court by human rights barrister Paul Diamond and Mr Michael Phillips. Andy and Kathryn, members of the campaign group Abort67, were arrested in June 2011, whilst demonstrating silently in the vicinity of Wistons Clinic, operated by leading abortion provider BPAS, in Brighton. As part of its public education project, the group, which has held peaceful protests outside the establishment for five years, displays images of aborted babies but does so silently and without harassment. Andrea Minichiello Williams, Barrister and Chief Executive of the Christian Legal Centre, which represents Andy and Kathryn, said: 'The dismissal of these charges will be welcomed by all who value freedom of speech and expression. It is especially important in the context of the continuing debate about the role of independent abortion providers and the information made available to women. This trial exposed the fact that not all who attend the clinic considering abortion receive counselling. Through the work that they do, Andrew and Kathryn seek to give women access to the truth about abortion which although unpleasant is nonetheless true. If women are to make informed decisions about abortion, they need to be aware of the full impact of it. Flowing from their Christian faith, Andrew and Kathryn are motivated by their concern for women considering abortion and their conviction that all life is precious in God's sight and needs to be protected. They seek to be a voice for those who have no voice'.

It is a cause for thanksgiving when decisions come out in favour of those who stand for what is right.

Home-Schoolers' Register in Wales?

Christian Institute

Parents in Wales who home-school their children could be forced to register with their local council, under new Welsh Government proposals. Outlined plans include putting a legal duty on parents to tell councils they are teaching their children at home. There were close to 1000 pupils home-schooled in Wales last year. Critics have hit out at the plans, saying local authorities will use this compulsory register to stop home education. Mike Fortune-Wood, editor of the journal Home Education, said local councils will 'simply impose their standards'. He also said: 'This would fundamentally change the nature of the relationship between parents, children and the state. Education is primarily the right and responsibility of parents. This will remove the right of parents to decide. They are essentially saying the state knows better than parents'.
Secularists want to control the education of our children and that does not fit well with home-schooling.

Lib Dems support assisted suicide

Christian Institute

Delegates at the Liberal Democrats' annual conference in September passed a motion in support of assisted suicide and euthanasia. But one cancer specialist, who is also a Lib Dem councillor, told delegates that her patients are desperate to live, not die. Dr Wendy Taylor said that neither she nor her colleagues want to be involved with helping patients end their lives. The motion reaffirmed the Liberal Democrats' support for a debate and free vote in Parliament on 'medically assisted suicide'. It also called for safeguards. Earlier in September a *Guardian* writer said that if assisted suicide were allowed, proposed safeguards could not ultimately be trusted. Andrew Brown said the 'changing interpretations' of the law on abortion 'show how little legal safeguards are worth when the sentiment behind them evaporates'. He did not agree with claims that 'the right kind of legislation, with the clearest possible safeguards, will stop unwanted grannies being liquidated for their asset value'.
Man in rebellion against God wants to be in control of death but he will have to face the Judge.

Victory for Christian Evangelist

Christian Concern

A Christian evangelist has been cleared of criminal charges by Dartford Magistrates Court after being arrested for distributing leaflets outside a Tesco supermarket. Mr Raj Bhachoo was temporally imprisoned and charged with public order offences in January after handing out leaflets disapproving of Tesco's decision to fund the 2012 Gay Pride parade, outside its Metro store in Gravesend. He was due to stand trial on 24 September for allegedly using 'threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour' under section 5 of the Public Order Act but magistrates dismissed the case after the prosecuting barrister failed to give evidence.
Responding to the decision the National Director of Christian

Voice, Stephen Green, said: 'Christians just keep winning these Section 5 freedom of speech cases. It is not against the law to preach against sodomy, to tell the public the facts about homosexual lifestyles, nor to display graphic images of the effects of abortion. These things might upset people, but they are not threatening, they are not abusive, they are not insulting and they are not against the law'.

Australian Parliament Against Gay Marriage

(Christian Institute)

The Parliament of Australia has overwhelmingly rejected attempts to legalise gay marriage in two decisive votes. MPs voted against redefining marriage by 98 votes to 42. And a similar measure was defeated in the Australian senate by 41 votes to 26. Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, was personally opposed to redefining marriage but she allowed her Labour party members to vote according to their conscience. The leader of the Australian Christian Lobby, Jim Wallace, said the Parliament has now expressed a decisive view on the matter. 'Everyone has had enough of this debate', Mr Wallace said. 'It has been one of the most vitriolic campaigns I have ever seen and it has demonised so many good people out of the public square, such as Victoria's chief psychologist Kuravilla George, who lost his job as a member of Victoria's Equal Opportunity Commission because he supported marriage'.

Thank God for this victory in Australia. If only our Members of Parliament were like them!

Protest letter from Irish Reformed Presbyterians

The following excellent letter was written by our friends in the Reformed Presbyterian Church against the opening of an abortion clinic in Belfast.

As ministers and elders of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, we wish to express our opposition to the opening of the Marie Stopes abortion clinic in Belfast. Our reasons include the following:

We believe God, not man, has the ability to declare when a human life begins. The futility of men endeavouring to determine a starting point for human life in the womb, without reference to God's word, is all too apparent in current debate.

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are clear that human life begins at conception. Those Bible passages that refer to life in the womb make no distinction between a supposedly impersonal foetus and a human baby (Psalm 51:5 & 139:13-16, Luke chapter 1 etc.). Such a distinction is an invention of convenience to justify the killing of unborn human beings. Such criteria as 'viability' could be applied equally to many human beings outside the womb, such as the sick and elderly.

Compassion for an expectant mother in very distressing circumstances can never justify attributing to her a right to take the life of another human being: the child in her womb. When a pregnant woman is ill, the doctor has always two patients under his care and needs to monitor the health of both.

Marie Stopes International has a long track record of supporting expectant mothers' supposed 'right' to decide whether to kill their child or allow it to live and has contributed significantly to the infanticidal holocaust that has taken place in the UK as a whole. The number of abortions carried out to save the life of the mother is minute. There can be no doubt that the opening of a Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast is an attempt to promote the sexually permissive 'advice' and convenience-driven abortion practice for which this repugnant organisation has become notorious.

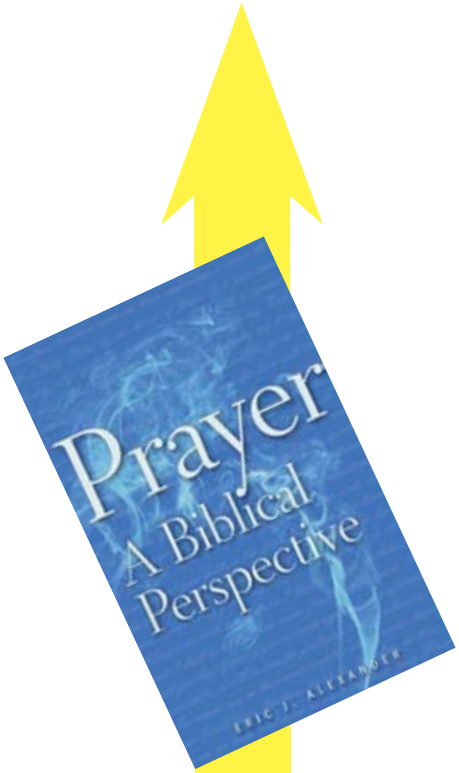
It is the duty of all those in authority, North and South, to ensure that this institution is not allowed to kill infants in the womb of mothers in their midst. The Church of Christ must declare plainly the State's duty in the sight of God. Our prayer to God is that Northern Ireland will not add to its sin and guilt before God by welcoming this death clinic among us, but rather that we will be turned again to the living God and the Gospel of saving grace through Jesus Christ. 'Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people' (Proverbs 14:34).

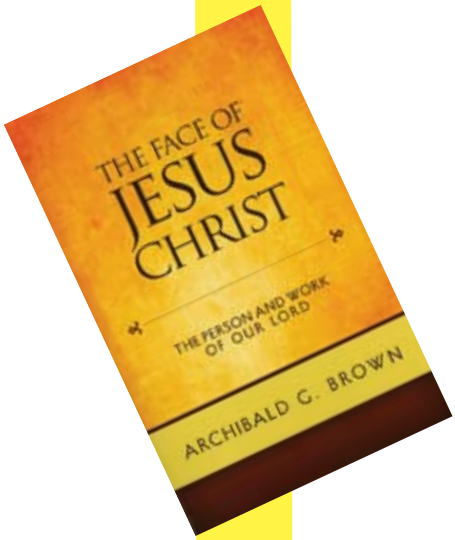
New AV Study Bible

Reformation Heritage Books is excited to announce the planned publication of a new study Bible. Amid the vast array of study Bibles written in the past century, there has not been a single Study Bible using the beloved and trusted King James Version written from a sound Reformed perspective. The KJV Study Bible for Personal and Family Worship (KJVSB) will promote the preservation and use of the KJV while leading the reader into a deeper and richer understanding of the Word of God. One of its unique strengths will be its focus on personal and family worship. Each book will begin with an introduction that will give not only a clear synopsis of the book, but also will explain how the book fits into the redemptive history of Scripture. In addition to highlighting key interpretational issues and explaining archaic words, the KJVSB will strongly emphasise the application of the Scripture to the heart and life. This 'head-heart-hand' focus will speak to both the intellectual as well as the experiential needs of the reader. Unique to the KJVSB are the recommendations and pointers for personal and family worship at the conclusion of every chapter. The planned publication date for this quality Study Bible is the autumn of 2014. Dr Joel R Beeke will serve as the General Editor, Dr Michael Barrett as Old Testament Editor and Dr Jerry Bilkes as New Testament Editor. The following contributors are committed to write on various Bible books: Dr Mark Allison, Rev Geoff Banister, Dr Charles Barrett, Dr Michael Barrett, Dr Joel Beeke, Dr Jerry Bilkes, Rev John Greer, Rev Pooyan Mehrshahi, Rev Andrew McIntosh, Dr John McKnight, Rev Alan J Macgregor, Rev Gerald Procee, Rev Maurice Roberts, Rev David Silversides, Rev John Thackway, and Rev Malcolm Watts. All of these men are Reformed in their theology, appreciate the experiential tradition of Reformed theology, and use the KJV in their own pulpit and teaching ministries.

The financial undertaking to produce this study Bible is substantial. To bring this massive project to reality will require the constant prayers and financial support of God's people. To launch this project we need to raise $250,000 in donations; the remainder of the needed money will come from the actual sales of the Bible when it comes out. We are grateful to report that a generous anonymous donor—for whom we thank the Lord—is willing to match your gift. Thus, if the Lord enables us to raise $125,000, the remaining $125,000 will also be given. In other words, if you give $100 it is as if you are giving $200. If you would like to be a part of this worthwhile project through your donations, please send your gifts to Reformation Heritage Books, 2965 Leonard NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525.

Books





Prayer
A Biblical Perspective

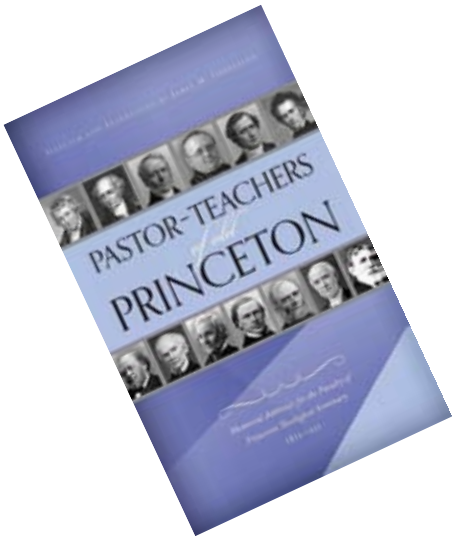
Eric J Alexander
Banner of Truth Trust,
pbk, 106pp, £5.75

We all need to pray and we need to pray more. There are many books on prayer, but this is one which I found both helpful and challenging. It is written by a preacher and pastor who has had more than fifty years' of experience in the ministry, and in explaining what the Bible says on prayer he draws on what he has learned personally. There are twelve brief chapters dealing with for example the teaching of Jesus, the example of Jesus, the prayer-life of Paul, the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit and common difficulties in prayer. The chapter on thirsting for God which is based on Psalm 63 convicted me of my failure in not desiring more of God's presence in the secret place and in the public ordinances.

However for me the most helpful chapter was that on 'The Priority of the Apostles'. He deals here with the words of the apostles when they recommended the appointment of deacons to look after the distribution of aid: 'But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4). He points out that we commonly speak of 'praying for the work' and fail to see that 'prayer is the real work and apart from it all other work is in vain'. He speaks of an uncle who got lost on horseback in France in the First World War looking for the front line. The front line in the war we are engaged in is prayer. He states, 'One of the primary functions of the church is prayer, and the greatest need of a needy world is a praying church, and the greatest need of a moribund (nearly dead) church is praying leaders'. There are many things we can do. We can intellectually convince people, we can emotionally move them and we can materially improve them but only God can resurrect them to spiritual life. The conversion of sinners is God's work. So, he concludes, 'That is why the primary evangelistic method is prayer'.

Warmly recommended!

Rev William Macleod



Pastor-teachers of Old Princeton

Ed. James M Garretson
Banner of Truth Trust,
hbk, 565pp, £17.00

This book has been published to mark the 200th anniversary of Princeton Theological Seminary. It spans the years from the appointment of Archibald Alexander as the Seminary's first Professor in 1812 to the death of BB Warfield in 1921.

The book comprises a series of memorial addresses and articles in honour of thirteen leading members of the Faculty of the Seminary over this period. These are derived from contemporary sources and were written in the main by former students whose respect and affection for their teachers shines through at every point. Full-length lives of these men have been published over the years, but these brief biographical sketches have a freshness and intimacy about them that give them a particular appeal. We learn much not only about the massive accomplishments of the

men of Princeton but are given some fascinating glimpses into their personal lives and into their varied spiritual experience. Over the period covered by the book, Princeton was blessed with a succession of teachers who achieved a prominence second to none as exponents of Reformed theology and masters of Reformed exegesis. Many of their theological works have become standard texts in colleges around the world and their Bible commentaries have been prized by generations of Christians. The story of old Princeton is largely a story of the Alexanders and the Hodges. The subjects of the book include Archibald Alexander (1772-1851); his sons James Waddell Alexander (1804-59) and Joseph Addison Alexander (1809-60); Charles Hodge (1797-1878); and his sons Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-86) and Caspar Wistar Hodge (1830-91). The sons sadly did not share the longevity of the fathers, but in their teaching and literary abilities they were fully their equals.

The founders of Princeton – the Presbyterian Church in America – laid down two basic requirements for those who were to train their future ministers: unswerving loyalty to Scripture and to the standards of the Church, and the cultivation of personal holiness. The book reveals how these values were worked out in the lives of the original Faculty and their immediate successors. The effects were to be seen, in turn, in the lives of the students. We are told that 'thousands of graduates made their way through the Seminary's hallowed halls, many of whom distinguished themselves as faithful pastors, teachers, and missionaries. The devotion that characterised their Christian service was fanned into a flame by the godly and learned example of the Faculty from whom they were taught the responsibilities of the preacher's calling'. As the editor of this collection puts it: 'The founders wanted belief and behaviour to go together; knowledge of the truth was to lead to godliness. While the acquisition of intellectual knowledge about the truths of the Christian faith was encouraged, the appropriation of those truths to one's life was considered essential for fruitful Christian life and service. The founders were insistent that intellectual knowledge of the truth was never to become a substitute for the experience of the truth in one's soul'.

From a collection of this kind it is almost invidious to select any one of the Princeton men as pre-eminent among the others. However, a prime candidate for such an honour must surely be Joseph Addison Alexander, whom Charles Hodge himself described as 'certainly the most gifted man with whom I have ever been acquainted'. Says a contemporary: 'His fame was in all the churches as a brilliant writer, an accurate, varied, and profound scholar, a luminous and sagacious commentator, and a preacher of marvellous power'. Alexander died at the early age of 50. We learn with amazement that 'at the age of ten he was pursuing the systematic study of Hebrew and other Oriental languages; before he was twenty he read easily and for the sake of their literature Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, Italian and German; and in the prime of his life he was a thorough master of all languages worth knowing'. But along with this vast erudition we are told: 'His crowning gift as an exegetical instructor was a devout and reverent love for the Bible, that influenced his whole life as a Christian and as a teacher'. Unqualified loyalty to Scripture was the hallmark of all the men of old Princeton.

Sadly, by the early 20th century the testimony of Princeton was falling into decline, and the doctrinal liberalism that had prompted its formation in 1812 was eventually to overtake Princeton itself. It was left to J Gresham Machen and a few others with him to continue the testimony in the newly-formed Westminster Seminary. But the legacy of old Princeton lives on in the written word. CH Spurgeon professed: 'I value every morsel about the Princeton worthies'. For those who share Spurgeon's tastes, this book is a feast to be enjoyed.

Maurice Grant

The Face of Jesus Christ

The Person and Work of our Lord

Archibald G Brown

Banner of Truth Trust,

pbk, 296pp, £8.00

Archibald Brown spent most of his ministry preaching at the East London Tabernacle while Spurgeon was ministering at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In his youth he had attended the ministry of Spurgeon and was baptized by Spurgeon. He entered Spurgeon's College in the second year of its existence. All his life he was a great friend of Spurgeon's and they had much in common. He stood firmly with Spurgeon in the Downgrade Controversy. When Spurgeon died his son Thomas took over but when he had to retire due to ill-health Brown became the minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

This book consists of 22 sermons preached by Brown. They are shorter than Spurgeon's sermons but have the same direct, warm content. They are very readable and very fresh. I picked up the book intending to pass it on to someone else but was gripped by the content. The chapters make an excellent devotional. You may easily read them one a day. I have enjoyed several so much that I have read them twice. They provide an excellent model for textual preaching. The Gospel is clearly preached. It is reckoned that thousands were converted under Brown's preaching.

Some examples will give a flavour of his sermons: 'Oh Jesus Christ had to face a driving storm of slander, shame and cruelty! I wish I could make you see Him as I saw Him in my study only yesterday. Oh, do you mark that face? It is gentle but there is no weakness about it. It is blood stained but there is no timidity in it. It is a face that would win a child, but it is a face that could make an angel tremble. It is a face that would make a baby smile, but it is a face that could make demons despair. "I have set my face as a flint". And He went right through all that driving storm'.

'Bear in mind, dear child of God, at what price your Master bought you… Why He desired to have you, you cannot tell, nor ever will; but He outbid all, for He offered His own life, and you were given over to Him – purchased not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of incarnate God. I ask you to come into Gethsemane for a moment or two. Look at your Master, wrapped about in such a scarlet robe as mortal never wore. It is His own blood forced by mental agony through every pore of His sacred person… By all the sighs and tears and groans of thy dying Lord, I ask thee, canst thou withhold anything that He shall ask at thy hand?'

Rev William Macleod

The Wearing Of Head-coverings By Women During Public Worship

Rev Bartel Elshout
& HRC Consistory of Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada

Paul uses some important theological arguments when he exhorts the women in the congregation of Corinth to cover their heads and men not to cover their heads during public worship. As the majority of Bible commentators from the past and some from the present explain, the wearing of an appropriate head-covering by women during public worship is not optional. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 that this is divinely mandated, and that failure to do so is an act of disobedience toward God's revealed will.

Some state, however, that Paul teaches in verse 15 that the woman's hair is her covering, and that therefore no physical covering is required. Others claim that Paul says in verse 16 that the wearing of a physical head-covering is only a custom, and that we have no such custom in the church of God.

It is not just a custom

These interpretations are seriously flawed for the following reasons:

First, such an interpretation of verses 15 and 16 ignores what Paul has written in verses 1-14. To hold to such a view would create the impression that Paul has been arguing about something that does not really matter and that in verses 15 and 16 he apologizes for any confusion he may have created. Such an argument would mean that 1 Corinthians 11:1-13 has little or nothing to say to the New Testament church today. This obviously cannot be the case! Paul, who so brilliantly lays out his points, being inspired by God, in all of his letters, is not suddenly theologically inept here by contradicting in verses 15 and 16 what he has convincingly stated in verses 3-13. He makes clear in verse 2 that he wants the Corinthian church to keep the apostolic ordinances he has delivered to them, and then proceeds in verses 3-13 to explain that the wearing of the head-covering by women (and the not wearing of it by men) is one of these ordinances. In other words, verses 15 and 16 can only be properly understood by taking into account that which has been stated in verses 3-14. To explain verses 15 and 16 divorced from the context in which they are found is to take Scripture out of context.

Hair cannot be the covering?

Second, if one believes that a woman's hair is her covering, and if one would consistently apply that interpretation to verses 3-7, 13, it would render these verses ludicrous. What happens if we substitute 'hair' for the verb 'to cover' or the noun 'covering'? The passage would then read as follows:

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, *having hair on his head*, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth *without hair on her head* dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman *have no hair on her head*, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her *have hair on her head*. For a man indeed ought not to *have hair on his head*, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man… Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman prays unto God *without hair on her head*?

Thus the insistence that hair is equivalent to head-covering would render what Paul is saying in these verses nonsensical. This leads to one conclusion: Paul, as the divinely inspired writer of 1 Corinthians 11:15-16, cannot negate or contradict what he has argued compellingly in verses 3-13.

Also, if 1 Corinthians 11 simply meant that women should have long hair and men short, there would be no need to specify that this should be when they meet for public worship (to pray and prophesy) as this command would apply to all times and places, not just to church worship services.

Female insubordination

Therefore, before we address what Paul is saying in verses 15 and 16, we must address what he is teaching in verses 3-13. To examine this passage in its proper context, we need to understand the following:

•First, in the larger context of 1 Corinthians 11, Paul is dealing with issues that pertain to public worship. Specifically he is addressing two problems that had surfaced in the public worship of the Corinthian church:

1. Insubordination of women to divine (male) authority in public worship (that is, when the congregation is engaged in public prayer and public teaching); and
2. Abuse of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Second, Paul deals with the female insubordination problem by addressing a sin that reinforced this insubordination, namely, the failure of the Corinthian women to wear a head-covering in public worship - the visible symbol of submission to divine authority in public worship. Paul recognizes that addressing the head-covering issue will assist in resolving this insubordination, for the wearing of the head-covering will be a visible and physical reminder to the women of their divinely appointed place in public worship. He addresses this issue also in 1 Corinthians 14:35-36, when he writes: 'Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church'.

Third, when Paul uses the words 'cover' or 'covering', he uses a Greek word that means 'veil' - a word that refers to a cloth covering. It is noteworthy that in verse 15 he uses a different Greek word for the word 'covering', referring to a much more generic type of covering. He does this because he is talking about two different kinds of covering. In other words, when he talks about the hair being a covering in verse 15, he is talking about something very different from the veil or cloth covering

he is referring to in verses 3-13.
Let us now consider the theological arguments Paul uses to convince the Corinthian women that by refusing to wear a head-covering in public worship they are disobedient to God's revealed will for public worship. Paul, consistent with his position and skill as the master theologian of the New Testament church, advances three weighty theological reasons why women must have their heads covered during public worship.

Argument 1: A Divine Hierarchy

The wearing of the female head-covering in public worship visibly reinforces God's authority structure in the community of the church - a community that recognizes and submits to divine authority. Paul teaches us here that there is a divine hierarchy that must be observed. That hierarchy is as follows: God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the man, and the man is the head of the woman. Or to put it this way, the divine order is God, Christ, the man, and then the woman.
Paul tells us in verses 3 & 4 that if a man engages in public worship with his physical head covered (his hair is not the issue), he dishonours his spiritual head, Christ. In a sinful way he would be challenging God's established hierarchy.
However, to emphasise that the woman's place in this divine authority structure is not the same, but that her place is one of subordination to the man, she must cover her head in public worship, for by not doing so she would place herself on the same level as the man, and thereby would challenge and defy God's hierarchy. Thus Paul is teaching that it is God's revealed will that the woman's head be covered in public worship as a visible reinforcement of His, the Creator's, established hierarchy. It was the failure of the Corinthian women to understand this divine hierarchy that led them to engage in what only men may do in public worship: engage in public teaching and prayer. To counter this serious problem, Paul goes to great length in explaining why the head-covering must be worn, for he viewed it as the divinely appointed antidote for such disobedience to God's revealed will.
Paul reinforces this argument in verse 7 when he emphasises that the man's head may not be covered since he is 'the image and glory of God'; that is, he is the divinely appointed representative and bearer of authority in the church. Since the woman is the glory of the man, that glory must be veiled, so that only God's glory be visible in His house. Since that glory is symbolised by her long hair (v15), this glory must be veiled or covered in public worship. In public worship only God's glory (reflected in the man) must be visible, and man's glory (reflected in the woman) must be veiled.
Therefore, when a woman engages in public worship with her head uncovered, it is a symbolical statement that she views herself as being on par with the man in terms of God's hierarchy. Paul teaches us here, as he does elsewhere in the New Testament, that such equality is contrary to God's created order.
As we read these verses, let us keep in mind that it is the Holy Spirit who moved Paul to address this issue in detail. He (the Spirit) did so in anticipation of the resistance there would be to this divine hierarchy in the New Testament Church - including the church today.

Argument 2: Creation Order

Recognising that his argument would meet with resistance, Paul advances another argument that is rooted in creation itself. In theology an argument that is rooted in God's original creation order is always one of the most powerful arguments that can be made, for it recognises that in redemption God restores and enhances His original created order. To reinforce that in God's created order and hierarchy the role of the woman is subordinate to that of the man, Paul stresses the following:
The woman was made from the man; not vice versa (v8).
The woman was created for the man; not vice versa (v9).
Paul is emphasising that the woman's position in God's order of things, also in the church, is rooted in the order in which God created the man and the woman - and in His purpose in creating them in this order. God created the woman to be the man's helpmeet (ie, a help suitable for him) and his 'completer'. Therefore to allow women to have a position of equality in public worship is contrary to God's creation ordinance. This challenge to God's order cannot be permitted in the public activity of the church, for it defies God's revealed will. Also in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 Paul uses the creation argument to establish this position when he writes, 'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to

'Men and women are equal and yet they are not equal in the roles which God has assigned to each of the sexes. In God's order the woman's role is one of subordination rather than leadership, and to challenge that order is an abomination to God. In recognition of that, Paul explains why women must have their heads covered in public worship.'

usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression'.

This is what Paul is also teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9. Here he presents the theological argument as to why women must cover their heads in public worship, and why men may not. The observance of this divine precept becomes all the more important in a culture that rebels at all levels of society against God's created order and authority structure.

Lest there be men, however, who would abuse their God-given position of headship, Paul hastens to add in verses 11-12 that in their status before God, men and women are equal and are fully dependent upon each other. And yet they are not equal in the roles which God has assigned to each of the sexes. In God's order the woman's role is one of subordination rather than leadership, and to challenge that order is an abomination to God. In recognition of that, Paul therefore spends a great deal of time explaining why women must have their heads covered in public worship.

Argument 3: The Angels

As Paul presents his argument from creation, he inserts another supporting thought. In verse 10 he says, 'For this cause [that is, the woman being created for the man] ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels'. The Greek word translated here as 'power' is the word frequently translated as 'authority'. We find this word in the well-known words of Christ when He says to His disciples, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth' (Mt.28:18). With equal justification this could be translated as, 'All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth'. The connection is obvious: authority is inextricably linked to power. One who has authority over others can exercise power over them.

What Paul is therefore telling us in verse 10 is that in order to reinforce God's creation order, the woman must have authority on her head, thereby confirming what we have already concluded: the head-covering is a symbol of divinely instituted authority. It is by wearing the head-covering that the godly woman confesses her willing submission to this divine authority, and that she knows her proper place in God's hierarchy. Therefore, the wearing of the head-covering in public worship is a public statement by the church, as well as by the woman who wears it, that they willingly submit to God's authority structure.

Why does Paul mention the angels in this connection? In the context of verses 8-12, he does so to reinforce his logical and theological argument. First, the angels themselves are the perfect example of willing submission to divine authority. They know and honour their proper place in God's order, being ministering spirits who are ever ready to do God's bidding. We read of this in Psalm 103:21: 'Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure'. That is why Christ teaches us in the Lord's Prayer that we should pray that God's will may 'be done in earth as it is in heaven'. In other words, we should be as ready to do God's will as the angels are ready to do God's will in heaven. So the angels are set before us here as the ultimate example of unquestioned and unconditional submission to God's will. Consider also the sin of the angels that fell; they were not content with their God-appointed position.

Second, Calvin argues that the angels are always present when God's church worships. They are the unseen guests. Since they are the ultimate example of whole-hearted submission to God's authority, they are most pleased when the church in her public worship displays her submission to this authority - a submission that is also visibly displayed by women veiling their heads in public worship (cf Calvin's comments on 1 Cor.11:10).

Having supported his teaching that it is God's revealed will that women cover (or veil) their heads in public worship by way of three theological arguments, Paul then asks, 'Judge in yourselves: is it comely [ie, proper] that a woman pray unto God uncovered?' (He is obviously not talking about women praying without hair.) In light of his arguments, there is only one logical answer: It is not proper for women to pray in public without their heads being covered.

Hair length

It is only at this point, after Paul has rested his case, that he refers to the woman's hair. After having made his point theologically, he now uses an argument from nature for any who might still not be persuaded. Paul is saying in verse 15 that not only is there a theological difference between men and women, but there is even a visible difference - a difference reinforced by the length of hair. It is the long hair of the woman that sets her apart from the man, and Paul here argues that this natural difference simply underscores that there is a well-defined theological difference. It is as though Paul is saying, 'If God has given the woman a natural covering (not the word 'veil' or 'cloth covering' of vv3-7), then I should not have to argue about the fact that in public worship God requires a physical covering whereby her glory is veiled'. Therefore, verse 15 is really Paul's fourth argument in support of the divine mandate that women cover their heads in public worship.

Only now will we be able to understand what Paul means in verse 16. He is saying, 'If any man, after all the solid arguments I have advanced, still wants to argue (be contentious) about something that is God's revealed will, we (the churches) have no such custom; that is, we do not debate endlessly about something that is taught in Scripture. In the churches, God's truth is not up for debate'. In other words, Paul is saying, 'If anyone still wants to argue about this, I will not be a party in this debate. I have made my point, and I now move on to the next issue'.

Do not be argumentative

Elsewhere Paul also warns against such a contentious spirit toward biblical teaching, when he writes, 'If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth' (1Tim.6:3-5).

And so it is with apostolic (and thus divine) authority that Paul teaches that one of the ways in which godly women display their godliness is by willingly covering their heads in public worship. Failure to do so is disobedience, and therefore dishonouring to God and grieving to His Spirit.

It is for this reason that there are a growing number of churches in evangelical North America that have reinstated the biblical practice of women wearing a head-covering in

public worship. These churches have come to believe that Paul's use of theological arguments in support of this position makes it clear that women wearing a head-covering in public worship is a divine ordinance taught in God's Word and not a result of legalism or tradition.

There are a number of Reformed denominations in North America and the Netherlands who now endorse women in church offices. The disturbing fact is that it appears that in some cases the pathway toward this unscriptural position began with the rejection of the teaching of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 regarding the divinely mandated use of the woman's head-covering in public worship. Once the symbol of the head-covering was rejected (along with all of its theological implications), a first step was taken that could ultimately lead toward teaching that women should also be permitted to hold positions of authority in the church as office-bearers.

This down-hill trajectory underscores the fact that the head-covering issue is more important than some deem it to be. A careful study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 teaches that God's precept regarding head-coverings is binding for the New Testament church until Christ returns. Therefore a disregard for this divine precept governing public worship can produce will-worship - a worship of God according to our notions rather than the teaching of His Word.

And thus also regarding this issue we are to remember that we are forbidden to add to or subtract from Scripture (Rev. 22:18-19), for in doing so we will make the Word of God of none effect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what is at stake here with this head-covering issue is the teaching of God's Word in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 regarding God's revealed will for public worship. To deny that Scripture here requires that women wear a head-covering in public worship and men do not, has serious implications; it would mean that:

1. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 is such an ambiguous passage of Scripture that it cannot be determined with certainty what the Holy Spirit is teaching here.
2. Paul in this passage writes as an inept theologian, who uses various important theological arguments, and then basically tells us to ignore what he just said.
3. We cannot know with certainty which portions of Paul's writings are applicable for the church today. If 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 is only applicable to the Corinthian setting, then it can also be argued that other portions of Paul's writings are only applicable to the circumstances of his day.

Given the fact, however, that Paul expresses himself in a clear and logical fashion (as he does in all of his epistles), devotes one half of a chapter to this subject, and supports his argument with fundamental biblical principles, the only sound conclusion is that Paul's explicit insistence that women wear a head-covering in public worship is because in God's wisdom the head-covering represents biblical truths that are of fundamental importance.

It also needs to be understood that Paul's instruction was not merely intended for the Corinthian church. The opening words of this epistle make clear that Paul's instruction was intended for the entire New Testament church: 'Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord' (1 Cor.1:2).

We conclude therefore that it is important to take a stand on the head-covering issue. We need to do so in order to defend the integrity of God's Word and of Paul's writings, and as a component of public worship that visibly reinforces God's authority structure and created order in His church.

May God give us the wisdom both to understand every part of His inspired Word correctly and the courage and steadfastness to submit to it - also 1 Corinthians 11:1-16.

The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth July/August 2012

Tribute to a Lovely Christian Woman

The recent passing of Mrs Annabella Matheson, widow of the late Calum Matheson (elder of Barvas), a lovely Christian lady, caused one of her gifted fellow-travellers on the road to heaven to write the following Gaelic poem. It could equally be applied to others whom we have known and loved and miss.

Dh'fhag thu sinne g'ad ionndrain
'Sa sileadh nan deoir air do sgàth
Ach fhuar thusa dhachaidh
Far 'eil Cuspair 'us Comunn do ghràidh.

Far nach eil àmhghair, na mulad,
Na peacadh, na mallachd, na bàs,
'S far an 'ol thu gu siorruidh
As a chuan tha gun iochdar, gun tràigh.

Oir tha do gheamradh nis seachad
'S do shamhradh cha teirig gu bràth,
'Sa chaoidh do grian cha teid sios ort,
Se siorruidheachd tomhas do là.

'S co a dh'iarradh gum pilleadh
Gu talamh thu rithisd chum tàmh,
Seadh, co idir a dh'iarradh
Do spionadh a uchd Fhir do Graidh.

Banacharaid

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good. Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."

Ecclesiastes 9:18-10:1

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)