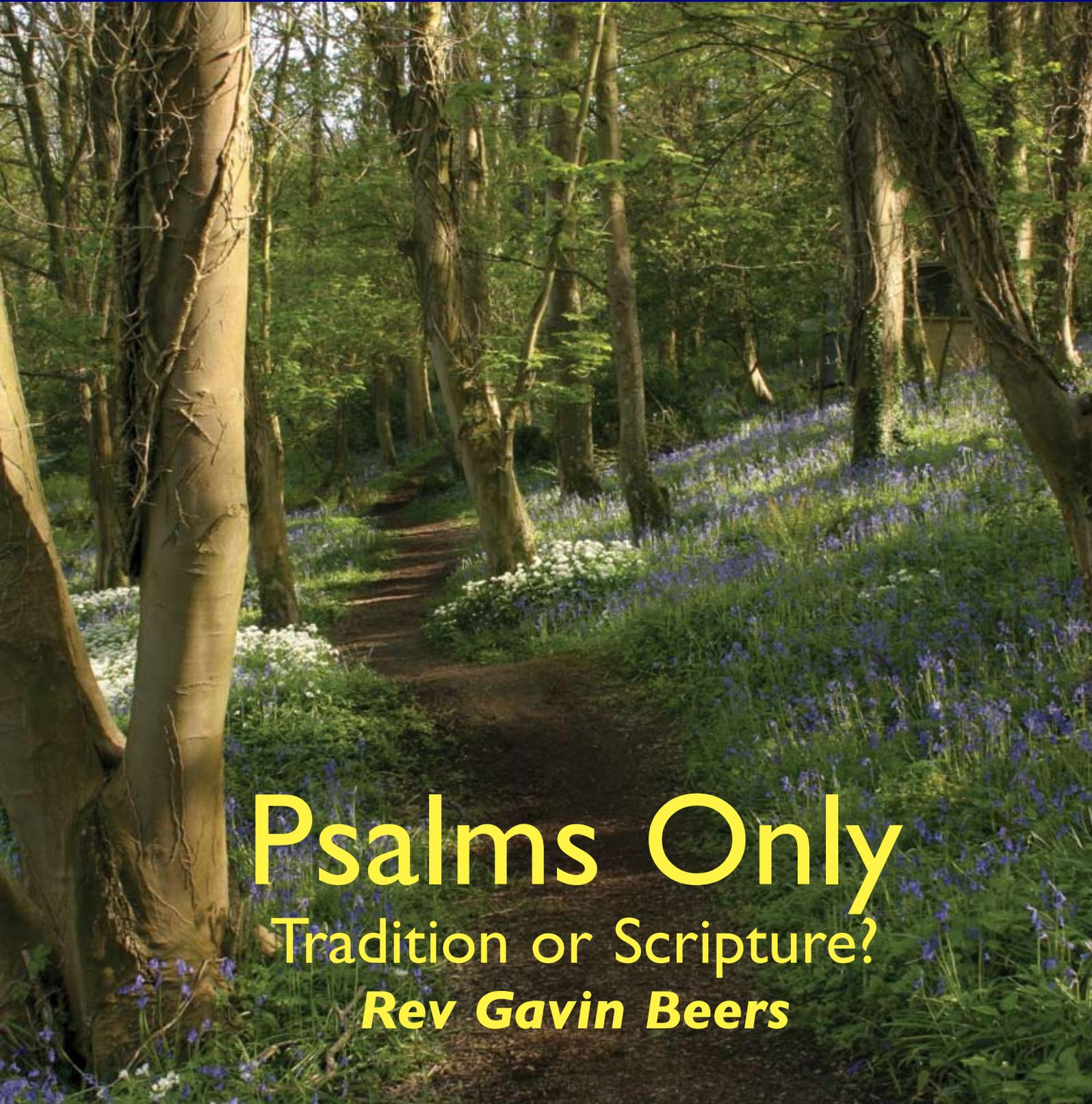


# Free Church **Witness**



**MAY 2011 ISSUE**



## **Psalms Only** Tradition or Scripture? *Rev Gavin Beers*



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# Drunkennes



**W**hat would you say if you saw a professing Christian lying naked in a drunken stupor? Sometimes the young are carried away with youthful lusts and end up disgracing themselves and their Christian profession. But the Bible tells us of an old man of God who had some of the most wonderful experiences of God's presence and salvation and yet is found in this pitiful, pathetic and scandalous state. What a warning! We can be hard on the young but the Scriptures reveal to us several cases where old believers backslide terribly, causing offence and bringing contempt upon the church of God.

## Noah's Godliness

Amongst the godly of ancient times Noah is one of the most outstanding. Scripture says of him: 'Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God' (Gen.6:9). He was a righteous and holy man and 'perfect' in the wicked day in which he lived when violence and lust reached such proportions that God said, 'The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth' (6:13). But in contrast we are told, 'But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord' (6:8). God decided to wash the world clean as it were and start again with Noah and his family. Earlier we read of Enoch who 'walked with God: and he was not; for God took him' (5:24). Here was one who was so godly and had such a deep relationship with God that he was said to walk with God and did not actually die. He and Elijah are the only two in the history of mankind of whom this can be said. Yet Noah in the chapter following the one about Enoch is also said to walk with God. What a holy man Noah must have been!

Noah's faith is praised in Hebrews 11 where he is placed among the heroes of faith: 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith' (Heb. 11:7). Peter says God 'spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly' (2Pet.2:5). Here is one of the greatest men of God who ever walked this planet.

## Noah's Drunkenness

The Bible tells us: 'Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard' (Gen.9:20). No doubt in pre-flood times people grew grapes and made wine. It is not presented as some new discovery which Noah made, but rather as something he thought he would try doing. It was some years after the flood since Canaan the youngest son of Ham was around. The zeal of the builder of the ark and the preacher of righteousness is beginning to wane. The thankfulness and worship which characterised Noah's emergence from the ark is not so evident. Sadly how often in the Scriptures we are warned of the backsliding which characterises many Christians in their

old age. He made his wine, enjoyed the taste and the sensation and overindulged.

## What does the Bible say about drink?

Wine is a gift of God's providence: 'Wine that maketh glad the heart of man' (Ps.104:15). Our Saviour turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana when the supply had run out (Jn.2). Paul advises Timothy, because of the contaminated nature of the water available, 'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities' (1Tim.5:23). The Lord's great rule is moderation in all things: 'Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand' (Phil.4:5). Drunkenness is severely condemned: 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed' (1Cor.6:9-11). All drunkards will go to hell unless they repent, and repentance means not just being sorry but turning one's back on drunkenness. We all know the poverty it brings, the broken families and broken hearts, the health problems (stomach, heart, liver, brain damage), the accidents caused, the violence, the crime, the destroyed lives, the early death, but the Bible also tells us of the eternal misery of hell which follows. People like to talk of heavy drinking as an illness but God talks of it as sin (Gal.5:21).

## Noah's Shame

Scripture warns, 'Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder' (Prov.23:31-32). Noah was tempted and yielded. He overindulged, threw off his clothes and lay in a drunken state in his tent. How pathetic! How desperately sad to see the godly patriarch bringing the name of God into the gutter! The devil is always looking for ways to tempt us and get us to grieve the Holy Spirit and tarnish our witness. A moment's madness can do much harm. It takes a lifetime to build a good character but only a few minutes to lose it. Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. It is easy to steal, to lie, to lose your temper, to commit adultery and so disgrace yourself and your God. People will say, 'You Christians are great at telling others how to live but you are just hypocrites. The church is full of hypocrites'. However, remember that there is also a way back. The devil will try to get you to despair. 'There is no hope', he says, 'just give up your profession of faith. You are going to end up in hell anyway'. But God loves to receive prodigals back. He promises, 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him' (Hos.14:4). The New Testament makes plain that Noah repented. He 'became heir of the righteousness which is by faith' (Heb. 11:7).

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## Ham's Sin

Noah's second son Ham was also a professing man of God. He too was saved from the flood which came on the ungodly. He sees his father lying naked in the tent, doesn't just glance but fastens his gaze on him and despises him. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' (1Cor10:12). The Fifth Commandment says, 'Honour thy father and thy mother'. He should have felt deeply sad but instead enjoys it. Do you ever take pleasure in someone else's sin? His son Canaan receives prominent mention in the narrative. Perhaps he was the first to come on old Noah and told his father, or perhaps Ham told Canaan and shared the mocking of his father with his youngest son. Ham proceeded to tell his brothers Shem and Japheth, expecting them to join in his mockery of godly old Noah, but their reaction was quite the opposite and immediately and delicately they covered their father's nakedness. How wicked it is to gloat over the sins of other Christians, even those who have offended us or been unkind to us in the past.

## Noah's Prophecy

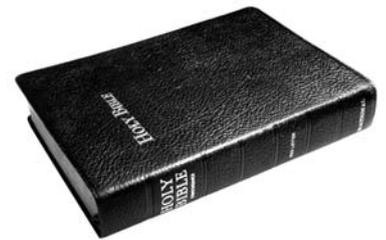
Some have wrongly tried to justify the slavery of Africans on

the basis that Noah pronounced a curse of servitude upon Ham. The Africans are certainly Ham's descendants but it is worth noticing that the curse is pronounced on his son Canaan and not on the rest of his sons: 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren' (Gen.9:25). Later the wickedness of Canaan had reached such a level that Israel was commanded to wipe them out and take over their land. The Gibeonites survived by deceiving the Israelites and persuading them to enter into a covenant with them but they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God (Josh.9:27). Shem is blessed. From him comes the elect nation and the seed of the woman, the Saviour. Japheth will share in the blessing and come to dwell in the tents of Shem. Here is a clear prophecy, thousands of years before it happened, of the gospel blessings which would come to the Europeans, the sons of Japheth. But we long too for the fullness of the promised blessing to come to the Jews (and indeed the Arabs as well – also Shemites) in that they will behold Him 'whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him' (Zech.12:10) and so be saved with Japheth.

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## Psalms Only - Tradition or Scripture?

**Rev Gavin Beers**



On Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2010 the Free Church of Scotland at its plenary Assembly voted by a majority of 98 to 84 to change its position on worship to allow the use of uninspired materials of praise and musical accompaniment in the public worship of God. In the past, to safeguard the exclusive use of the Biblical Psalter with no musical accompaniment, a statement was read out at ordination and induction services so that the candidate and congregation both understood what was being promised. That statement reads as follows:

'It is my duty to explain to you, and also to the congregation here present, with reference to that part of the question which will be put to you as to "Purity of Worship as presently practised in this Church" ... it is the present practice of the Free Church to avoid the use in public worship of uninspired materials of praise as also of instrumental music'.

After this a series of questions is put to the man to be ordained including the following:

'Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the *Confession of Faith*... to be founded upon the Word of God; and do you acknowledge the same as the confession of your faith; and will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto, and to the utmost of your power assert, maintain, and defend the same, and the purity of worship as presently practised in this Church?

'Do you promise ... that you shall follow no divisive courses

from the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church?'

All those to be ordained then sign the Formula. If they are being ordained to the ministry they have already signed this statement when they were licensed by a Presbytery. The statement reads:

'I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the *Confession of Faith*, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church to be the truths of God; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith; as likewise I do own the purity of worship presently authorized and practised in the Free Church of Scotland...'

I draw all this to your attention because on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2010, 98 office bearers broke these promises. They publicly lost integrity, declared themselves vow breakers and by a monstrous act of ecclesiastical tyranny changed the position of the Free Church on worship even though they had sworn not to undermine, nor prejudice directly or indirectly, nor follow any divisive course from the defined purity of worship.

A summary of the debates was posted online on the Free Church website. As these are read one of the most discouraging things is that those on both sides of the discussion resorted to pragmatic arguments to support their position. Men pressed their concern of losing people, particularly young people

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from the Church, as to why the Church should be open to this change. Thanks should be given to God that a Scriptural argument was brought forward for exclusive Psalm-singing by some members of the Assembly, but one is left with the conclusion that it was because this Scriptural argument was not taught from pulpits that the position of the Free Church on worship came to be thought of as a cultural thing, a tradition that pertained to that denomination but was not Scripturally binding. As a result, when moves were made to change the position of the denomination, they were unable to be resisted.

Exclusive Psalm-singing is not just a Free Church tradition. If it is it can be abandoned today. Exclusive Psalmody is Scriptural and to avoid ending up in the position our separated brethren have found themselves in, ministers in the Free Church (Continuing) need to take seriously their vows to assert, maintain and defend this position as Biblical, otherwise we too will end up losing it.

## **I. The Regulative Principle of Worship**

The Regulative Principle of worship is a principle based on the sufficiency of Scripture which teaches that everything we do in the worship of God must have positive warrant in His Word. Every part of worship must be expressly commanded by God or be clearly deducible from Scripture. It is not enough to say God has not forbidden it, therefore it is allowed. Worship is never merely allowed by God; it is always required, and if He does not require it, we should not give it. An example of this is found in Leviticus 10:1-3 when Nadab and Abihu were killed by God for offering 'strange fire' before Him. They used something God had not authorised and when God explains their error in v1, 'which he commanded them not', He means they did something He never told them to do.

This is seen again in Jeremiah 7:31 when God is condemning the idolatry of His people: 'And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; *which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart*'. God is teaching us in such places that it is His prerogative alone to appoint what should be given to Him as worship. When we apply this to the singing of praise in worship we should ask first, Why do we sing? Because God commands us. Then, What will we sing? Again we will sing only what God tells us to sing. If we sing Psalms it is because God tells us to and if we want to include any other songs in the worship of God we must show that God commands us to do this or else we are in breach of His Law.

## **2. Song in the Old Testament**

Looking for an answer to our question, What shall we sing? we turn first to the Old Testament for a brief overview of our subject in the church of that time. What we find is that the church in the Old Testament always used songs inspired by the Spirit of God in worship. For ease we will divide the history into three periods.

### **i. From Moses to David**

The first example of the church singing praise to God is found in Exodus 15:1 when Israel sang praise to God on the shores of the Red Sea: 'Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider

hath he thrown into the sea'. This song is attributed to Moses and the second to Miriam in v21: 'And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea'. In this period Moses also authored the oldest recorded Psalm in our Bibles, Psalm 90, 'A Prayer of Moses the man of God' which was likely used in connection with Tabernacle worship in the wilderness. In addition Deuteronomy 32 is another song of Moses, and Deborah is found singing praise to God after leading Israel to victory over Sisera: 'Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel...' (Judg.5:1-2).

What should be noted about all these songs is that each one was given directly by God through the Spirit of prophecy. Moses was the greatest prophet of the Old Testament period and we are distinctly told Miriam was a prophetess (Ex.15:20) as was Deborah (Judg.4:4).

### **ii. From David to Babylonian exile**

In this period Israel settled in the land of Canaan and worship was centralised at Jerusalem, first in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. At this time song became more prominent in worship. Before David died he established the pattern for Temple worship having received it from God (1Chron.28:12-13, 19). He appointed singers: the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun (1Chron.25:1-7) and after his death Solomon implemented this God-given pattern when he built the Temple (2Chron.6). Later, after a long period of declension, Hezekiah would bring Israel back to this pattern in his reforms (2Chron.29:25-30).

The question for us is what did these singers sing? It is clear they sang David's compositions which make up about half the Biblical Psalter. Many of his titles were evidently written for public worship and so addressed 'To the chief musician'. Furthermore they sang some of their own compositions. We find Psalms written by Asaph and Heman eg Psalms 50 and 88. Yet all these compositions were given by inspiration of the Spirit of God. David was the 'sweet psalmist of Israel' by whom the Spirit of God spoke (2Sam.23:1-3) and 1 Chronicles 25:5 tells us Heman was 'the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn'. 2 Chronicles 35:15 says the same of Jeduthun, 'Jeduthun, the king's seer'. From this we conclude that only inspired songs were authorised by God for the worship of the Old Testament church.

### **iii. From restoration to Christ**

In 586 BC the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. When the Jews returned from their captivity a programme to rebuild the walls and Temple was completed in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the worship of God in this second Temple conformed to the divine pattern given to David (Neh.12:24, 45-46). It was around this time the Biblical Psalter took its final form, and historians tell us that for the next 400 years only the 150 songs of this Psalter were used in the public worship of God. The main significance of this is found in a recognition that this period of 400 years corresponded to a time when there was no prophet in Israel and no revelation from God between Malachi and John the Baptist. It is no coincidence that no new songs were introduced into worship at this time because there was no one with the gift of inspiration to compose them. What we have learned then from our review of song in worship in the Old Testament is that God gave songs to His

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Old Testament church. He provided what they should sing, and all the songs used in worship were given by the Spirit of God. Each one was accurate, inerrant, authoritative and revelatory which is something that simply cannot be said of any hymn of mere human composition whether it be by Watts, Cowper, Wesley or Newton. We must carry this conclusion over into our study of the singing of praise in the New Testament.

### 3. Song in the New Testament

The New Testament church did not just drop out of thin air; it grew out of the church in the Old Testament as the promise given to Abraham was fulfilled, that all nations would be blessed in his seed (Gen.12:3). Many things were set to change in worship. Christ and His Apostles revealed these things to the church, eg Jerusalem and the Temple would no longer be central (Jn.4:21-24), and animal sacrifices were abolished together with the Priesthood (Heb.5-10). However, the New Testament church still inherited its principle of worship from the Old and upon this, the inclusion of uninspired songs in worship would have required a drastic change of which we would expect to be informed.

So does the New Testament now *command* (not merely allow) the church to sing something other than inspired materials of praise in the worship of God? The text most often offered as warrant for the introduction of uninspired materials of praise is Ephesians 5:19 and its parallel reference in Colossians 3:16. A study of this verse will sufficiently answer our question. We will open up the text and develop the argument under six main headings.

#### i. The Context of the Passage

Paul is writing to a congregation of Greek-speaking Christians some of whom may have been Jewish converts while most were likely Gentiles. At the time of writing, the only Scripture available to them was a Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint (LXX) because the New Testament was not completed nor had the existing books been gathered together. So when Paul wrote to the Colossians to 'Let the Word of Christ' dwell in them richly, 'teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs' (Col 3:16), it was predominantly to this Greek Old Testament he was referring. His original audience did not have Matthew, Mark, Luke and John etc and this must be borne in mind when we interpret the terms used for song in his exhortation in both places.

#### ii. The Terms in the Verse

The Greek words used by Paul are *psalmos* meaning psalm; *hymnos* meaning hymn; and *ode* meaning song. A common mistake made in interpreting these words is to take what these words have come to mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and impose these meanings on the text. Then a psalm may be one of the compositions in the Biblical Psalter; a hymn might be something written by Isaac Watts; a song is then linked with something lighter – perhaps a chorus. Then having imposed this understanding of the words on the text, the conclusion is made that songs other than the inspired songs of the Biblical Psalter are commanded for worship today.

This approach tells the text what it means rather than allowing the text to tell us what it means. It is a gross mishandling of Scripture which must always be interpreted in its original

context before it is applied to our contemporary situation. When we do this and interpret the verse in harmony with the rest of Scripture we discover that Paul's exhortation warrants the introduction of no new or uninspired songs but in fact casts us back to the Book of Psalms as our manual of praise. This is confirmed when we examine the titles of those 150 Psalms.

#### iii. The Titles of the Psalms

If you were in Ephesus when Paul's letter arrived, and you had a Bible in your church, it was a Septuagint. As you browsed through the Book of Psalms three terms would keep appearing in the titles and you would be quite familiar with them – *psalmos*, *hymnos* and *ode*. In 67 Psalms the word *psalmos* is found eg Psalm 23; in 6 titles the word *hymnos* appears eg Psalm 8; in another 35 Psalms *ode* is in the title eg Psalm 45. Furthermore, in 12 Psalms the words *psalmos* (*psalm*) and *ode* (*song*) are found together in the title eg Psalm 65, and in 2 titles *psalmos* (*psalm*) appears with *hymnos* (*hymn*) eg Psalm 6. If you had studied the title of Psalm 76 all three terms are found in the Septuagint title, 'For the end, among the hymns, a psalm for Asaph; a song for the Assyrian'. The Ephesian Christian would know that one Psalm could be a psalm and a song, or even a psalm and a song and a hymn together. All three terms were found in the titles of the Psalms and even in the title of one composition in the Book of Psalms. Paul exhorted them in biblical terms they were familiar with.

#### iv. The Text of the Psalms

The words Paul uses are not only employed in the Psalm titles but are also scattered throughout the text of the Septuagint (LXX) Psalms. Many examples could be given but for our purpose three will suffice.

1. Psalm 100:4 in our English Bible reads 'enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise' but in the text of the LXX 'praise' is translated 'hymns'. This amounts to an Old Testament exhortation to the whole earth to praise or hymn to God and of course we have seen that the Old Testament Church used only inspired 'hymns' in the worship of God.

2. We noted that the title to Psalm 65 contained the word *hymnos* (*hymn*) and *ode* (*song*) in the title. Verse 1 in our Bibles says, 'Praise waiteth for thee in Zion', but the Ephesian Christian reading in his LXX would read 'Hymns wait for thee in Zion'. So in the title and the first verse taken together we have psalms, hymns and songs referred to, just like the exhortation in Ephesians 5:19.

3. Psalm 72:20 concludes in our Bibles with the words, 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended'. Whatever the meaning of this phrase in relation to the book of Psalms, the LXX translation refers to these prayers or psalms of David as 'The hymns of David the son of Jesse are ended'.

So it is clear from the titles and the text of the Psalms that the words *psalmos*, *hymnos* and *ode* are interchangeable and are used to refer to the same thing. A psalm can be a hymn or a song or all three. Each term is not used to define one composition as necessarily excluding the other and so there is no need to interpret the words of Paul in Ephesians 5:19 as referring to separate categories of songs distinct from the Psalms of the Biblical Psalter. Indeed the evidence is that Paul was referring to these very Psalms.

**(Continued on p.8.)**

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## Obituary

### **John James Munro, Elder, Brora**

On 9 January 2011, John James Munro left this scene of time and passed on to his eternal rest, aged 88. His passing leaves God's church on earth, and especially the Brora Congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), greatly impoverished. "Johnny", as he was affectionately known was a lovely christian, and one whose standing in the community was indicated by the very high turn-out of young and old at his funeral in Rogart Free Church. Those present have often spoken to me about the sense of God's presence, especially in the singing, at the funeral service, which was conducted in my absence by Rev John MacLeod, Portmahomack. One of the Psalms chosen was Johnny's favourite, Psalm 119: 57-64, which begins: "Thou my sure portion art alone, which I did choose, O Lord".

A quiet man by nature, Johnny was possessed of an exceptional constancy of temper. He was always the same. His store of wisdom, gathered over a long life of quiet observation of life and nature, was remarkable.

He lived his whole life in Rogart. During the war he worked at Morvich farm, Golspie, and afterwards became part-time shepherd of Acheilidh Sheep Stock Club, while also having his own croft with sheep and cattle. This continued until he was

forced to retire through ill-health in 1996. He was then three weeks unconscious in intensive care in Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. Hopes of his recovery were not high. Remarkably, he regained consciousness, and a good measure of health for a further 15 years. It was the most astounding recovery I have ever seen.

While working at Morvich farm he met his wife Williamina, known to us as "Min", who was from Kinraig, Invergordon. Min was visiting her grandfather and grandmother at Morvich farm where her grandfather worked. They were married in 1950 in Rosskeen Free Church, settling in Rogart. They were both converted about the same time, during the ministry of Rev John Mackay, and became members in Rogart Free Church in 1977. Johnny was made an elder in 1989. In January 2000 when there was the division in the Free Church of Scotland, Johnny and Min joined those who formed the Brora Congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

Johnny will be greatly missed by family and congregation, and by me, his minister. We extend our sympathy and prayers to Min, son and daughter David and Kay and their families, and the surviving brother and sister, William and Ella.

*Allan Murray*



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## **Psalms Only - (Continued from p.6.)**

### **v. The Multiplicity of Terms**

Someone might still object, 'But why does Paul employ three terms in Ephesians 5:19, if what you are saying is that all three refer to the Book of Psalms? Is that not a bit redundant, a bit like saying Psalms, Psalms and Psalms?'

In answer to this objection we have already seen that the Psalms themselves do this, eg the title of Psalm 76, Psalm 65 in the title and v1. In addition to this we should also note how frequently in Scripture God employs a three-fold statement to refer to the same thing, a Biblical triplet of terms. So laws can be 'commandments, statutes and laws' (Gen.26:5), miracles can be 'Miracles, wonders and signs' (Acts 2:22), and prayers can be 'Prayers, supplications and intercessions' (1Tim.2:1). So why should it be thought a strange thing that God should use three terms in the one verse to refer to His divinely inspired book of Psalms?

### **vi. The Qualifying Word**

The third term in our English Bible 'song' is qualified by the adjective 'spiritual' ie 'spiritual songs'. When this word is used in the New Testament it usually means produced by the Holy Spirit eg spiritual gifts like tongues or prophecy. If that is the meaning of the word in Ephesians 5:19, then the statement would mean songs produced or directly inspired by the Holy Spirit which would be entirely consistent with God's requirement in the Old Testament of using only inspired materials of praise in public worship.

The word order in the Greek original is interesting too. In our English translation the adjective 'spiritual' modifies only the last of the three nouns ie 'spiritual songs'. However a literal reading of the Greek would be 'Psalms, hymns and songs spiritual' where 'spiritual' comes at the end and may modify all three nouns. Consider the example in English 'There were black cats and dogs'. What colour are the dogs? Does the adjective 'black' describe them or does the sentence mean 'There were black cats and there were dogs as well'? It is ambiguous and can mean either, and the point is so is the Greek in *Eph 5:19*. It is possible, if not probable, that the word 'spiritual' is used by Paul in relation to all three terms, 'Spiritual psalms, spiritual hymns and spiritual songs'.

### **Evaluating the Evidence**

So weighing the evidence from these six points, Ephesians 5:19, which has so often been used to defend the introduction of uninspired songs into worship, in fact gives no warrant for this whatsoever. Indeed, it confirms the principle found throughout Scripture that we are to sing songs inspired by the Spirit of God, and specifically casts us back on the Biblical Psalter. If you were among the saints in Ephesus, familiar only with the Septuagint Old Testament, and seeing that the church of that period only used inspired songs in worship, then hearing these terms found in the text and titles of the Psalms, would you think Paul was giving licence to compose and use new songs in worship in the New Testament? Add to this the example of Christ and His Apostles who did not introduce any new songs into the worship of the church though they had the gift of inspiration to do so, but instead used the hymnbook God had already given to the Church.

Men look to the Word of God in vain for a warrant to introduce uninspired hymns into the worship of God. The best

warrant that can be produced is a question. Why would God confine His people in the New Testament to an Old Testament book of praise when Jesus has come and we have more light? We can understand the question, but it remains a question and our questions are no basis for intruding anything into the worship of God without His command.

## **4. Application**

We have considered a number of arguments that establish that Exclusive Psalmody is Scriptural and not merely a tradition of a church that can be set aside. There are many more arguments that could be brought forward but we wish now to make some practical application under three headings.

### **i. A violation of this Biblical Principle is Sin**

To the majority of the professing church this sounds crazy. Even to those who hold to Exclusive Psalmody there is great discomfort with a statement like this. Does it mean that it is the worst sin in the world? No. Does it mean God cannot and will not bless churches who don't take this position? Again the answer is no. All churches are riddled with sin and God blesses us in spite of our defects not because of them. Does it mean that those churches who adhere to Exclusive Psalmody are guaranteed blessing? Of course not. Churches that hold this view can have many other things wrong with them; chief among them, pride that they take this position!

Nevertheless, if the regulative principle is based on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment, how can we intrude anything unwarranted into the worship of God and it not be a violation of God's law? And what is a violation of God's law if it is not sin? If Exclusive Psalmody is merely a tradition then there is no sin in surrendering it; indeed it would be sinful to bind men to it. If it is Scriptural, and it is, then to surrender it is sin. When it is treated as if it is only a Free Church tradition, the impression is given that sin does not come into the question.

### **ii. The Position of our Church on this issue must never change**

One anticipates the reaction to a statement like this. What about the principle of Reformed and always reforming? That principle stands of course but it has often been used as a cloak to cover up many abuses men are determined to bring into the church by the back door. The impression is made that all is up for grabs when all is not up for grabs. The only reforming that is to be done is that which agrees with Scripture. If a practice is to be abandoned it must be shown to be at variance with Scripture, and that is not the case here.

Certainly some things can change. The translation from which we sing may change. The tunes we use can change. We can sing standing or sitting. These are all variables but the constant inviolable principle is that God has prescribed only the inspired Psalms of the Biblical Psalter for the public praise of His church. There is no warrant now nor ever for the introduction of anything else and therefore the position of our Church on this issue must never change. Why do we do what we do? Because it is Biblical, not merely traditional.

### **iii. Pragmatic arguments must be resisted by Biblical teaching and confidence in God**

There is a fear present in some in Psalm-singing Churches that we will lose people to places with a more 'modern' worship style if we do not change. The fear is not altogether

unfounded because over time we have lost some of our people to such churches. On the other hand it is thought that by removing the obstacle of exclusive Psalm-singing or relaxing the principle, we will not only keep those people, but attract others as well. Arguments of this kind can be read in the narrative of proceedings in the Free Church debate on the issue. One member confirmed his own belief that the sufficiency of Scripture implied the sufficiency of the Psalms for public praise but then asked, 'What am I going to say to our young people – we're educating them in the theology of the reformed faith, but they drift away to other churches. I want to keep them! [Alex Macdonald's] amendment in opening up honesty is a means to that end. We need to fill our pulpits and take more people – but we need to keep our people!' He then commended the proposed change in worship to the house.

R Scott Clark wrote some insightful articles in the wake of the Free Church decision, exposing this kind of logic for what it is. In one of these 'If we don't do X the young people will leave', he refers to the report of a Marine Corps Colonel during the Vietnam war who said: 'We had to destroy the village in order to save it'. Clark says the 'analogy to this approach is the argument, "We have to change X in order to keep our young people"'. Then he comments 'This sort of pious pragmatism can be found as early as the high Medieval period. Doubtless Christians have always been tempted to say, "If we don't make our worship more interesting we will lose our young people"'. This has been the argument of innovators and pragmatists for a long time but history confirms it does not work'.

If we want to keep our young people from running off to other places with more modern worship styles the answer is simple. Teach them this truth, don't throw it away! People frequently want change in the area of worship because they think of it in pragmatic and traditional terms. In the case of Psalmody they are left hankering for change because they have not grasped the principle outlined in this article; they have not embraced the Psalms as God's provision for His people in all ages and spend more time wanting something else rather than growing to love the Psalms. Clark again comments, 'Maybe the problem of retaining young people has nothing to do with how exciting or contemporary or hip our worship services are? Maybe it has to do with the way we are (or are not) catechizing our children? Maybe we should try being more consistent with our confession and not less?'

The last thing the church should be doing is bowing to the pressure of what this man or woman or young person might do. In doing this we make man our God and throw away our Biblical heritage, and where will it end? Instead we need to do what is right and have confidence in God. If our children do go off it is a reflection on the poor instruction given them by parents and pastors on the principles of Biblical worship rather than any deficiency in Biblical worship itself. However, should they in mercy return, what will they return to? To a Church that has capitulated on one point after another and abandoned its heritage piece by piece? Clark tellingly concludes, 'Young people ... need us to be the grown ups. They are counting on us to be steadfast, to be reliable, to be there. What if the prodigal son returns home only to find a brothel?'

#### **iv. The Principle Applies Everywhere**

The idea has long been alive in the Free Church, and still

exists in our own branch of it, that we sing only Psalms in our Church, but if you happen to be elsewhere where this principle is not held then you join in with that worship because it would offend your brethren and you would be guilty of disunity. There is a lot that could be said about this and many inconsistencies pointed out. Is God only concerned about this principle in Free Church congregations? Is He not God everywhere? Does not His Word bind our conscience and command our obedience in all places? Is the danger of offending a brother greater than offending God? Should that brother be offended that you are seeking to be consistent with Scripture and live with a conscience void of offence before God?

If those who say they are convinced that Exclusive Psalmody is Scriptural, when visiting another congregation who sing uninspired materials of praise, abandon their principles they act as if their position is really only a tradition. The people we tell of our Exclusive Psalmody position then see us give it up before their eyes and wonder at this strange Biblical principle that can be so easily set to the side. They are not likely to be convinced of its rightness when we give the impression that it is really just a tradition that holds in our own congregations. Then our children watch on as we give up exclusive Psalm-singing, and all our attempts to teach them of its rightness ring very hollow. This compromise over many generations has produced confusion not only in the minds of members but also ministers and it has certainly contributed to the abandonment of Exclusive Psalmody in the Free Church. If we are not consistent on this point we can be sure it will contribute to the same demise of Exclusive Psalmody over time in the Free Church (Continuing).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Exclusive Psalm-singing is Scriptural. It should be taught from our pulpits and in our homes, and encouraged in our publications. We should never compromise on 'The singing of Psalms with grace in the heart' and offering praise to God with only the inspired songs of the Biblical Psalter.

## **Western Isles Bible Conference**

**Rev Graeme Craig**

The annual Western Isles Bible Conference takes place DV from Friday 3rd to Sabbath 5th June 2011 at Stornoway FCC. In all there will be five addresses. The speaker expected is Rev David Silversides, Loughbrickland Reformed Presbyterian Church, Northern Ireland. The theme of the Conference will be *The Church's Past and Future in the Parables* and it is expected that it will deal with various matters including the continuity of the church between the Old and New Testament and the church's growth. A warm welcome awaits all. Anyone requiring further details or accommodation should contact Donald MacDonald (Tel. 01851 704039).



# News



## Lachmans

The Lachmans have now arrived in Zambia and settled in. They write: 'David began lecturing on 3 March. During this term, he will be teaching two hours per day two or three times a week. The class he is teaching is an introduction to the Reformed Confessions, focusing on the Westminster Confession of Faith. The College has classes from Tuesday to Friday. We enjoy the opportunity to join the students' worship before class from 6.45-7.30am. Most of the lectures are in the morning, from 7.30-9.30 and 10.00-12.00. At their request, we have also begun teaching the students more Psalms in English, and expanding their

knowledge of Psalm-tunes. There are 30 students here at the College this term, 9 of which are new students. 'We long for your prayers for the work of the Lord here at the College. Please pray that all the teachers will speak the truth in love and be able to communicate clearly to the students and that the students will learn and be able to apply these things in their ministries. Pray that we will have wisdom, discretion and grace in all our interactions in this multicultural environment. We also continue to request prayer for the health of the staff and students, as several staff have caught malaria recently. Pray for a good harvest so that no one will go hungry.

Most importantly, pray that we will glorify God in all that we think, say and do and seek Him first, as the Scripture says: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you".

## Protest against Hymns and Instrumental Music

A growing protest is emerging within the Free Church of Scotland against the introduction of Hymns and Instrumental Music in worship. A controversial petition called a Memorial and Protestation has been circulating around some congregations for the past few weeks and is reaching a far wider

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# Desk

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audience after campaigners took out advertisements in newspapers across the Highlands and Islands. The petition calls on the General Assembly which meets on 23rd May to reverse the contentious decision and revert to the practice of unaccompanied Psalm-singing. Though individual congregations can choose to avoid the use of hymns and musical instruments many individuals rightly feel the church has broken church law and abandoned its constitution. For the sake of peace and unity, many are not willing to force the issue, fearing that it would create another division. An apparent threat in the final sentence of the Memorial gravely concern some in leadership in the Church. The document warns: 'We declare that we shall claim all competent redress from any consequences which adherence to our principles may threaten or involve'. Six of the Church's former moderators have signed the document which is entitled 'The Protection and Preservation of Historic Scottish Presbyterianism'. In its preamble it states: 'It is sad to see the energy of the church being absorbed with yet another attempt to destroy its own foundations and causing huge division in the process'. It accuses 'misguided leaders of the church' of deploying 'new gimmicks to fill church pews'. It alleges the changes were forced upon ordinary worshippers without consultation and says: 'No institution can survive with double standards for its office bearers, far less a church'. The document claims church leaders have abused their roles to 'undermine the position of the church, bring about division and breed confusion'. The petition seems to be the most serious bid so far to challenge the Church's decision last November to abandon purity of worship and follows a low key but significant summit of

Free Church office bearers on Lewis in February. Many church elders rightly see the new worship policy as forcing them to break their ordination vows – a view shared by Rev Kenneth Stewart of Glasgow who resigned from the denomination in protest over the issue in February.

*We support those who stand for Reformed worship within the Free Church of Scotland.*

## Disasters

Recent months have seen terrible disasters which the media like to say are of 'biblical proportions'. First there were the terrible floods in Australia with vast areas of countryside covered with water. The devastation was immense. Then there was the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand. Many lives were lost and buildings destroyed. But then there was the earthquake off the coast of Japan with the resulting tsunami. Japan seemed to be well prepared for earthquakes and is one of the most advanced countries, the third largest economy in the world. Yet how helpless they were! It was incredible to see the footage of the terrible wave coming in from the sea, picking up cars, trucks, houses and tossing them around like toys, crushing and destroying all in its path. Many thousands have been killed and enormous destruction has resulted in the loss of billions of pounds worth of property. Man talks about his advanced technology, and his ability to control global warming, but he is helpless before the unleashing of God's mighty power. Were the people of Australia, New Zealand and Japan greater sinners than other people for these things to happen to them? 'No', said Jesus, 'but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish' (Lk.13:3). Surely they are a warning to us all. In another place Jesus warned of

coming judgment on us all: 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man' (Lk.21:34-36).

## Christian Foster Carers

*Christian Institute*

The Prime Minister waded into the row over Christian foster parents' views on homosexuality, saying Christians should be 'tolerant, welcoming and broadminded'. David Cameron made the loaded remark in response to a question from the Derby Telegraph about a court case involving Eunice and Owen Johns from Derby. The Christian couple were in line to be respite foster carers for children aged between five and eight. But their application was put on hold by Derby City Council because they would not tell a child placed in their care that homosexual behaviour was a good thing. The matter went to court and, in a ruling handed down judges refused to declare that the Council was acting unlawfully.

Christians are told to be tolerant but how can we be tolerant of sin without denying God? The most intolerant people in our society are the homosexuals who are quite prepared to destroy people's lives and jobs if they will not affirm that the homosexual lifestyle is good.

## Egypt

*Barnabas Fund*

A Muslim mob has turned on Christian demonstrators who were protesting in Cairo against the burning down of a

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church by Islamists. The ensuing violent clashes left 13 dead and 140 wounded. Thousands of Christians had taken to the streets of the capital (early in March) after the destruction of a church in the village of Soul, 30km from Cairo. A Muslim mob attacked the Christian demonstrators, resulting in deadly clashes. The violence broke out around Mokattam garbage village, where Barnabas Fund has been helping the Christian residents with various projects over several years. A number of homes in the vicinity were looted and torched by the mob during the violence.

A senior church leader from Cairo said: 'Large groups of Muslim youths from surrounding areas began to form and attack the Christians. Within hours there were many thousands in the fight, and the attackers had all kinds of weapons, whereas the village youth mostly had stones. Although the army sent in several tanks, they apparently did nothing until later in the evening, when they are reported by eye-witnesses to have shot in the air indiscriminately... It is quite obvious that this was a well-organized and deliberate attack on Christians'.

The incident that sparked the Christian protest involved a mob of nearly 4,000 Muslims, who attacked Christian homes and destroyed the church in Soul by exploding gas cylinders inside. In an act of 'collective retribution', the Muslims were seeking revenge against all the Christians in the village because of a personal dispute involving one Christian and a Muslim family.

### **Somali Islamists Kill Convert**

*Christian Observer*

International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that on January 26 members of the Somali Islamic radical group, Al-Shabaab, killed a Christian convert from Islam in the Somali capital of Mogadishu. Another Christian convert escaped from Al-Shabaab's detention on January 29. The Islamists killed Abdirahman Hussein Roble after accusing him of spying and fitna among Muslims. Fitna is an Islamic term used to derogatively describe Christian evangelism among Muslims. On February 9 two eye witnesses notified Abdirahman's widow and relatives about his murder. Abdirahman, who converted to Christianity in 2009, was the father of two children. Abdirahman is the twenty-fourth Christian to be killed by the Somali Islamists since 2009.

### **Pakistan**

*Barnabas*

Two Christian men were shot dead in an attack on a Pakistan church by Muslim youths on Monday 21 March. Father of four Yunis Ilyas (47) and newly-wed Jameel Masih (21) were killed on the spot during the incident at a church in Hoor Camp, Hyderabad. Two others were injured; one of them, Sadiq Masih, was transferred to a hospital in Karachi, where he is in a critical condition. The incident started at around 6.30pm when Muslim youths began shouting vulgar abuse at Christians who were arriving for a prayer service at the church. The pastor and a number of other Christians remonstrated with the Muslim boys, but they continued insulting the Christian girls. The Muslim aggressors left the scene, but they returned shortly afterwards with pistols and fired at Christians as they were coming out of the church. Wilson Saraj, Barnabas Fund's co-ordinator for South Asia, said: 'The church and the entire community are deeply saddened by this attack and tragic loss of these two brothers in Christ. The Christian community is

feeling very insecure today; they urgently need our prayers. The attack comes three weeks after the assassination of Minorities Minister, Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian who tirelessly defended the beleaguered Christian community in Pakistan. Christians are increasingly subjected to violence by hostile Islamists and suffer severe discrimination in public life. They have been feeling particularly vulnerable since the death of their advocate. Let us thank God for the freedom we have but also never forget the modern martyrs of the Christian church.

### **ASA Ruling Overturned**

A High Court judge has overturned a decision by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) that an advertisement by a Belfast church was homophobic. Sandown Free Presbyterian Church launched judicial review proceedings against the ASA after being found to be in breach of its code of practice. The judge ruled the ASA's decision interfered with the church's rights to freedom of expression. The ASA said it was disappointed and was considering the judgment. However Free Presbyterian minister the Reverend David McIlveen described it as 'a landmark ruling'.

The case centred on a full-page advert taken out in the News Letter ahead of a Gay Pride parade in Belfast in August 2008. It was headlined 'The word of God against sodomy' and invited people to meet for a peaceful gospel witness against the act. After receiving seven complaints that the notice was homophobic, the ASA ruled it could not appear again in the same form. It also told the church to take more care in future to avoid causing serious offence. Sandown Free Presbyterian Church's legal team argued its rights to religious belief and freedom of expression under European law had been breached. It also claimed the church was not offered the chance to offer an explanation before the ban was imposed. The church argued that the ASA misinterpreted a quotation from the book of Leviticus which branded homosexual acts an abomination. According to the church the description applied to sodomy itself rather than any individuals.

In his ruling (22/3/11), Mr Justice Treacy stressed the context of the advertisement was important. The judge noted that the advertisement contained no exhortation to violence and that it also made clear how violent antagonism towards homosexuals was unacceptable and unjustifiable. He said: 'The applicant's religious views and the Biblical Scripture which underpins those views no doubt cause offence, even serious offence, to those of a certain sexual orientation. Likewise, the practice of homosexuality may have a similar effect on those of a particular religious faith. But Article 10 (of the European Convention on Human Rights) protects expressive rights which offend, shock or disturb. Moreover, Article 10 protects not only the content and substance of information but also the means of dissemination since any restriction on the means necessarily interferes with the right to receive and impart information'.

Mr McIlveen expressed delight with the outcome outside the court. Flanked by the Rev Ian Paisley, he said: 'We want to make it clear we had nothing against the seven people who objected to the advertisement. This is a landmark now for future decisions. People can quote the Bible and that's a freedom that we have sought'. Mr McIlveen asked that his sincere thanks be passed on to all who prayed with them for the favourable judgment received from the court regarding this case.

## Funeral Services

### Rev James Clark



Funeral services are for the worship of God and not for the praise of men (Job 1:21). They are to remind us of the cause of death – SIN, and also of the only remedy for sin – CHRIST JESUS, who alone can give life to the dead. The service is for the comfort of the living and only the Word of God can comfort anyone at a time of bereavement (1Thess.4:18); the words of men can give no everlasting consolation. The Word of God encourages the godly in the time of death but gives no comfort to the ungodly, only a 'fearful expectation of judgment'. 'Say to the righteous that it shall be well with him... Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him...' (Isaiah 3:10, 11). Funeral services should remind us all that one day death shall happen to us and that we should prepare. Only the 'grace of the Lord Jesus Christ' can give that secure preparation, who also said, 'Be ye ready...'. Those who approach death by congratulating themselves on their good works are not prepared! Funeral services should make a distinction between those who die in faith and those who do not – all do not go to the same place after death (Isaiah 66: 24; Luke 16:23).

Finally, an illustration of how things sadly are today. The story is told of a man who came to an island for four weeks holiday. During the first week four people died, each of them from a different denomination. The man respectfully went along to all the funeral services at the four different churches. All were buried in the same graveyard. During the second week another four people died, another four in the third week and a further four in the fourth week. The man attended all the funeral services. As he came out of the sixteenth funeral service he said to the Minister at the door, 'Excuse me Sir, could you tell me please which graveyard all the *bad* people are buried in?'

## Congregational Remittances - March 2011

	2011 March	2011 To Mar	2010 To Mar				
<b>Presbytery of Inverness</b>				<b>Outer Hebrides Presbytery</b>			
Aberdeen	2874	4674	4079	Cross	2458	6172	5827
Duthil-Dores	4958	7428	7365	Harris - Leverburgh	2844	5044	4658
Inverness	2000	6000	6000	Harris - Scalpay	4348	7748	7300
Kilmorack & Strathglass	2950	5750	5744	Knock & Point	2740	4990	4573
<b>Total Inverness</b>	<b>12783</b>	<b>23853</b>	<b>23188</b>	North Uist	2501	4501	4278
<b>Northern Presbytery</b>				Stornoway	6891	20959	18847
Assynt & Scourie	700	700	563	<b>Total Hebrides</b>	<b>21782</b>	<b>49414</b>	<b>45483</b>
Brora	3644	5644	5692	<b>Presbytery of Skye &amp; Lochcarron</b>			
Kiltearn	1000	3000	5400	Bracadale	1112	3112	4607
Tarbat	1784	2784	2673	Duirinish (Waternish)	0	1215	1200
<b>Total Northern</b>	<b>7128</b>	<b>12128</b>	<b>14327</b>	Kilmuir & Stenscholl	0	2600	5046
<b>Southern Presbytery</b>				Lochalsh	1034	2679	1911
Arran	1406	2554	2250	Poolewe & Aultbea	2558	3513	3289
Ayr	959	959	1148	Ullapool	48	48	400
Dumfries	0	0	0	Portree	1200	3600	3600
Edinburgh	8255	12255	10571	Snizort	4287	6687	6043
Glasgow - Partick	10084	12084	11169	Strath	68	148	337
Glasgow - Shettleston	4875	8225	6243	<b>Total Skye</b>	<b>10306</b>	<b>23602</b>	<b>26434</b>
Glasgow - Knightwood	5174	8874	8884	<b>Total Congregations</b> <b>82752</b> <b>153947</b> <b>149844</b>			
Rothsay	0	0	147	Other Donations	5735	10411	5357
<b>Total Southern</b>	<b>30753</b>	<b>44951</b>	<b>40412</b>	Legacy	0	0	0
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88486</b>	<b>164358</b>	<b>155201</b>
				Including Gift Aid	46890	46890	43408



# Books

## Faith Unfeigned

*John Calvin,*  
Translated by Robert White,  
Banner of Truth Trust,  
hbk, 189pp, £14.50

**H**ow should Christians respond to persecution? Should they try to practise their faith privately and otherwise conform to the world? Should they be prepared even to flee their native lands if necessary to worship with the Lord's people? These are some of the questions this book seeks to answer. In Calvin's day, these were no academic queries; in many countries believers faced intense persecution from the Roman Catholic authorities. Sometimes the choices were literally between flight or execution, if they made open profession of the Reformed faith.

This work is a new translation from the original French of a 1552 publication by Calvin, comprising four related sermons, along with an exposition of Psalm 87, and some relevant letters. The consistent argument of the work, running through all these texts, is that believers must be open and public in their profession of Christ, and that if the danger is great, they must either flee abroad to a place such as Geneva where there was liberty for Reformed worship, or be prepared to endure the persecution.

The first sermon, on Psalm 16:4, urges believers to flee from idolatry, and not to join in celebration of the Roman mass for the sake of conformity, while knowing it to be idolatrous. The second, from Hebrews 13:13, encourages believers to endure persecution faithfully, and not to compromise their Christian profession by valuing personal safety above Gospel truth. The third message, from Psalm 27:4, makes a powerful argument for the value and esteem believers must have for the public worship of God and the fellowship of his saints, in opposition to the attitude of some believers, described as 'desk-bound intellectuals', who considered that they could manage without like-minded fellowship, and chose for their

own reasons therefore to remain in Popish countries, practising their Protestant faith in secret. In the fourth sermon, on Psalm 27:8, Calvin develops this theme into a very practical challenge, urging such believers to make the material sacrifices necessary to come to a Protestant country, where they could join in the fellowship of the true church of Christ. The Lord's value and estimation of His true church is emphasised further in the exposition of Psalm 87.

In style, Calvin is startlingly direct, sometimes very sharp and cutting when reproving sin, yet always humble and God-honouring in tone. This boldness is a rebuke to the weak and sometimes almost apologetic tone in much modern-day preaching. Calvin ably exegetes the word, but also applies the message very forcibly to his hearers and readers, bringing a message that resounded in his own day, but with a challenge also for the present day. Though persecution is not yet overt in this country, the day may not be far when it is so, and even now believers must often face the dilemma, whether to stay quiet and avoid the hassle, or profess Christ accepting the consequence of that profession for His sake.

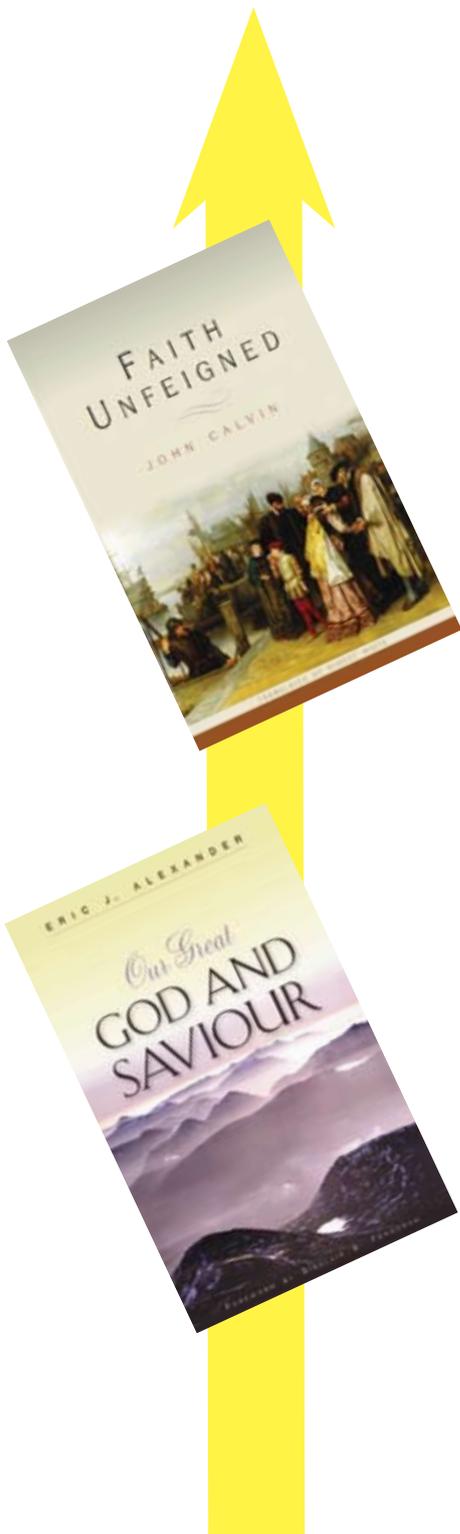
The book is warmly recommended. As a modern translation, with good historical notes, and fairly brief, this would make a good starting point for anyone interested in reading Calvin.

*Alasdair J Macleod*

## Our Great God and Saviour

*Eric J Alexander*  
Banner of Truth Trust,  
pbk, 189pp, £7.50

**T**his book is based on a series of studies which the author, senior minister of St George's Tron in Glasgow, prepared for the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology. There are three sections in this book: the character of God, the salvation of God and the church of God. There are



a similar number of chapters in each section and each chapter is based on a verse or passage of Scripture.

Mr Alexander's long experience in the ministry is seen in his helpful exposition of the texts under consideration, supported in a measured way by reference to the writings of the Puritans and others including the late Professor RA Finlayson. A number of different Bible versions are used but the great majority of Scripture references are taken from the New International Version (NIV). The author does however dispute the accuracy of the NIV in at least two places. In speaking of the suffering of Christ (Isaiah 53:5) he states that the word *punishment* is a 'bad translation' and should be rendered, as in the Authorised Version, as *chastisement* because only a father can chastise whereas anyone can punish. When commenting, with reference to 2 Corinthians 3:18, on sanctification he states that it is as we behold the glory of the Lord that we are changed into His image. The NIV use of the word *reflecting* does not therefore accurately describe what takes place in the sanctification of the believer. However in the chapter entitled 'God's fellow-workers' – an exposition of 1 Corinthians 3:9 – he argues that the phrase *for we are labourers together with God* in the AV does not capture Paul's emphasis that God works through the believer and that all that we have and are enabled to do as believers is of God. Whilst agreeing with the need to emphasise that salvation is not in any way dependent upon works I am not convinced that the AV rendering can be interpreted as denying that, to quote the chapter sub-heading, 'this work is God's work, not ours'.

We would all profit from this book which is well laid out and covers such important and majestic themes in a thorough and helpful way. I believe that those seeking to preach upon these themes will especially benefit from the insightful comments Mr Alexander makes on the various Scripture passages under consideration.

Dr Andrew Naylor

## Make His Praise Glorious

Roy Mohon

Truthzone, pbk, 76pp,

Available from The Lighthouse,  
34 Yarm Road, Stockton-on-Tees

When studying the subject of Exclusive Psalmody over a decade ago I came into the possession of a large A4-sized photocopied booklet by Rev Roy Mohon entitled *Make His Praise Glorious*. It was a response to a book I had recently read by Dr Kenneth Dix entitled *The Praises of God in Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. At that time Rev Mohon's book contributed in bringing me to the conviction that in the Book of Psalms God has provided an inspired manual of praise for His church in all ages. I am delighted that in 2009 Mohon's awkward-sized booklet made it into print as a book of 76 pages complete with helpful references, indices and endnotes.

His work is a charitable and specific response to Dr Dix's book but it is valuable as it covers many of the main arguments that establish exclusive psalmody. He begins by dealing with questions like:

What is worship? How will we worship? Who says? demonstrating that God regulates His own praise and that we are bound to the positive prescriptions of Scripture for everything we include as a part of worship, eg singing or prayer; and the content of each part, eg inspired Psalms or uninspired hymns. A large part of his focus is on the terms 'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 where he analyses Dix's argument that these warrant the production of uninspired New Testament hymns, showing instead that these terms cast us back to the Old Testament Biblical Psalter. Further, he shows some implications of replacing the inspired Psalter with human compositions, demonstrates the lack of evidence for the composition of any early New Testament hymnbooks, and examines the spiritual and doctrinal content of the Psalms and their sufficiency for worship today, before finishing with an appraisal of making metrical translations of the Psalms.

Readers will find this book easy to read and very helpful in setting forth Biblical reasons for our practice of Exclusive Psalmody. The arguments will deepen convictions and the doctrinal appraisal of the Psalms will give a deeper understanding and greater appreciation for the songs God has given for His church in all ages to sing. Highly recommended in a day when this position has come under attack in Reformed circles in Scotland.

Gavin Beers



## Head Teacher Sought

**Rev Greg MacDonald**

Lewis Independent Christian School (LICS) have been providing God-honouring education now for more than a decade. Based in Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis, LICS is the only Christian school in Scotland to have an expressly Reformed theological basis, and use only Psalms in school worship each day. Parents' donations and kind supporters provide the financial basis of the school, but at present the school is urgently seeking a suitable head teacher. The new head teacher will carry forward the parents' vision of a thoroughly Christian curriculum, excellence in education and discipline, and the nurturing of a godly character in each pupil.

If you are interested in this position, or would like to know more, please contact the school either by post (LICS, 80 Newmarket, Stornoway, HS2 0ED), phone the Board Secretary (01851 810037) or email: [secretary@lics.org.uk](mailto:secretary@lics.org.uk).

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# The Scottish Reformation

## A Movement of Grace, Part III

### **Rev John W Keddie**

*Last month we saw the Scottish Reformation as a movement of Grace in the restoration of the Bible and Biblical teaching and also the rediscovery of the faithful preaching of the Word with its consequent widespread impact spiritually in people's lives.*

#### **(3) There was the establishment of a sound Church order**

In a genuine work of God there will invariably be a concern for the establishment of the ordering of the church under the authority and headship of Jesus Christ. As far as church order in the Reformation Church was concerned a charge was specifically given by the Scottish Parliament on 29th April 1560 to provide 'judgments touching the reformation of religion, which heretofore in this realm (as in others) has been utterly corrupted ... [a] common order and uniformity to be observed in this realm concerning doctrine, administration of sacraments, [election of ministers, provision for their sustenance,] ecclesiastical discipline and policy of the kirk'. From this charge arose the *First Book of Discipline* compiled by the same six 'Johns' who were later also responsible for the *Confession of Faith*. They completed the *Book of Discipline* between the date of the initial charge and 20<sup>th</sup> May. This *Book of Discipline* aimed at a total 'Reformation of Religion in the whole Realm' (Burleigh). Alexander Mitchell went as far as to write that 'I regard the *First Book of Discipline* as, in several respects, the most thoughtful, judicious, practical, and comprehensive of the documents connected with the organisation of the Reformed Church of Scotland'. However, it is not a manual of Presbyterianism. (Strictly speaking Presbyterianism was not formally established until the 'Golden Act' of 1592.) We could characterise it as a 'start' in the organisation of a Reformed Church in a transition period in which a Church was emerging from a strongly hierarchical system of ecclesiastical government and control. We could say that the understanding of the government of the Kirk was implicitly rather than explicitly Presbyterian. The *Book of Discipline* was received by the Church and endorsed by some of the Lords (on 27th January 1561) but never got through Parliament.

The 'book of the policy' of the Reformed Church is stated under nine 'heads', covering doctrine, the sacraments, idolatry, ministers and their lawful election, provision for the support of ministers, rents and patrimony of the Kirk, ecclesiastical discipline, the election of elders and deacons, and, finally, in general the 'polity' of the Church. Under 'doctrine' there is an emphasis on preaching Christ: 'Seeing that Christ Jesus is He whom God the Father has commanded only to be heard, and followed of His sheep, we urge it necessary that His evangel be truly and openly preached in every kirk and assembly of this realm; and that all doctrine repugning to the same be utterly suppressed as damnable to man's salvation'. As to the Sacraments, it is established that only two are to be observed: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The *Order of Geneva* is referred to as being used in some kirks. This was later (1564) was received by the Scottish Kirk as a *Book of Common Order* (commonly known as 'Knox's Liturgy'). It was a guide for the Kirk and not mandatory, but was influential in encouraging uniformity of

practice. It is interesting that in relation to baptism the 'Liturgy' states that 'it is evident that the sacraments are not ordained of God to be used in private corners, as charms or sorceries, but left to the congregation, and necessarily annexed to God's word as seals of the same; therefore the infant that is to be baptised shall be brought to the church on the day appointed to common prayer and preaching'. In relation to the Lord's Table it is stated under the Ninth Head that 'four times in the year we think sufficient to the administration of the Lord's Table, which we desire to be distinct, that the superstition of times may be avoided as far as may be'.

In the Fourth Head respecting the admission of ministers is a class called 'Readers'. These were men, not (yet) ministers, who would 'read' the common prayers and Scriptures and 'exercise both themselves and the kirk, till they grow to greater perfection'. Initially they served in places where there were no ministers, but without further progress towards the ministry they could not preach nor administer sacraments.

The Fifth Head concerned 'the Provision for the Ministers, and for the Distribution of the Rents and Possessions Justly Appertaining to the Kirk'. Included was the question of financial support for the ministry. Renwick states that they 'proposed that the income of the Church [from land rents, teinds etc] be divided into three parts: one for the maintenance of a gospel ministry, another for the promotion of education throughout the land, and the third in support of the poor'. They also appointed a class called 'Superintendents'. Again, like readers this office was considered temporary. But only ministers would be in this class. These were men thought to be specially apt in 'supervising' an area. The *Book of Discipline* specifies various 'Dioceses' throughout the country. The Superintendents were not, however, like Bishops. Such hierarchical government was rejected. These rather were ministers given responsibility essentially to supervise the work of the readers. In addition to this the Eighth Head dealt with the election of elders and deacons. All in all the *Book of Discipline* recognised five offices, three of a permanent nature and two temporary. The permanent offices were minister, elder and deacons, and the temporary were described as 'Readers' and 'Superintendents'. The latter arose because of the fewness of ministers available to cover all the parishes in town and country. It was intended in this way to cover the whole country with some sort of ministry, not least in outlying areas. Superintendents had to visit congregations in their area regularly, preach at least thrice a week, administer the sacraments where there was no ordained minister, see that discipline was maintained and advance sound Christian living among parishioners.

Besides such positive provision for ministry, there was in the *Book of Discipline* considerable material on ecclesiastical discipline (under the Seventh Head). The desire was to have a godly, educated and disciplined ministry eschewing the sort of

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corruptions which had been such a feature of the corruption in Church order before the Reformation.

One other matter on this subject of Church Order: The last Head in the *Book* – the Ninth – was a general but vital one ‘Concerning the Polity of the Church’. There is clearly a desire to maintain good order in the Church. To that end certain things were deemed necessary. They are summarised in this Head: ‘that the word be truly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, common prayers publically made; that the children and rude persons be instructed in the chief points of religion, and that offences be corrected and punished...[and] Psalms should be sung’. There is also a strong statement about the observance of Sundays for rest from work and engagement in worship and catechetical teaching of children, as well as a general requirement of family instruction: ‘Every master of household must be commanded either to instruct, or else cause to be instructed, his children, servants, and family in the

principles of the Christian religion’, and family worship should be conducted morning and evening.

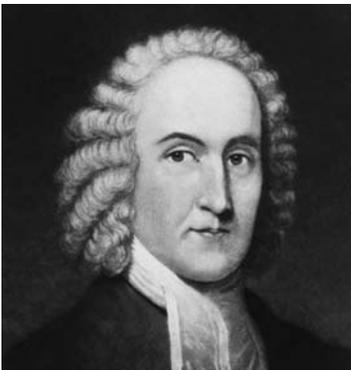
There is much else besides, both in the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Common Order*. Suffice to say that implicitly in the former, and explicitly in the *Confession of 1560* there is a clear desire for the purity of the Church strictly along Scriptural lines. In the *Confession* ‘Notes’ are given by which the true Kirk would be determined from the False:

- (1) ‘the true preaching of the Word of God’;
- (2) ‘the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus’; and
- (3) ‘ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God’s Word prescribes.’

All this demonstrates, I would suggest, that here was evidence, not necessarily of a church in which everything was yet properly and completely in order, but nevertheless in which there is a movement of divine grace.

**(To be continued)**

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## Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) Part II

**Rev William Macleod**

*Last month we considered the life of Jonathan Edwards up till the time of the revival of 1734-35 and the collapse of the old church building in 1737. In this article we will look at the rest of his life and the controversies in which he was involved.*

### Great Awakening

The Great Awakening of 1740-41 was a much more extensive revival. It affected all the American Colonies but also Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England. George Whitefield played a prominent part though the revival was already in New England before he arrived. One characteristic which made it different from previous revivals was that some ministers itinerated from place to place preaching with power. People crowded to the churches where services were held. They would travel great distances to hear the Word. The greatest of sinners were marvellously converted.

### Controversies

Wherever the work of God is going on the work of the devil is sure to be there too. In the early church it was a time of revival, great blessings were coming from God and many were being added to the church daily. Yet we read of troubles. The Galatians, who would have taken out their eyes to give to Paul, turned against him. He had planted the church in Corinth and saw himself as a father to the flock and yet they too turned away to false apostles. He had to say sorrowfully to Timothy, ‘All they which are in Asia be turned away from me’ (2Tim. 1:15). Edwards experienced his own share of this grief.

### Extremism in Revival

Some of the younger ministers caught up in the excitement of the revival went to extremes and did much harm. They held meetings till late at night, encouraged emotionalism and stirred up those who were already excited. They severely criticised those who were in any way cautious about aspects of the revival,

indeed going the length of calling such ministers unconverted and telling their congregations to leave such ‘unspiritual’ men. Some separatist churches were set up disturbing the harmony and order which had for long existed in New England. James Davenport was the most extreme of these young ministers. It would seem that he became mentally unbalanced. He held bonfires for the burning of ‘worldly clothes’ (including his own breeches), jewellery and books. Amongst the books burned were a set of Flavel the great Puritan divine. Charles Chauncy an intellectually gifted Boston minister and contemporary of Edwards wrote against the revival dismissing it because of these extremes. Edwards sought to defend the revival as essentially good though he did acknowledge the faults. There was a prolonged controversy. Chauncy stressed the primacy of the intellect over the emotions. Faith he saw as essentially an assent of the mind. Edwards argued that the emotions were also involved in true saving faith. Conversion, where it is genuine, affects the whole man. Davenport and those like him did much harm in dividing the churches and provoking opposition to the revival. Thankfully he later saw his error and repented of it but the damage was done. Those like Chauncy who opposed the revival were known as the ‘Old Lights’ and those like Edwards as the ‘New Lights’. Many of the Old Light party eventually became Unitarian (rejecting the Trinity and atonement).

### ‘Young People’s Bible’ Controversy

It is amazing how quickly the solemnising effects of a revival can wear off. In 1744, just two years after the revival Edwards learned of several young men who had found a book on

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medicine and midwifery and were passing it around quoting some of the material in a lewd joking way and also taunting some young women. Blasphemously they called this book the 'Young People's Bible'. Up to twenty unmarried young men were involved (all in their twenties) and all but three were members of the church. Sadly they had been immorally entertaining themselves with this book for the past five years. Edwards was deeply troubled. He felt a personal sense of shame and disgrace and particularly because his church had been held up as an example of the wonderful things God had done. An attempt should have been made to deal with the matter privately and pastorally. Instead Edwards, in a fateful mistake, read out from the pulpit the names of some of the accused and of witnesses who were asked to report to the manse. He had not made plain who were accused of guilt and who were the witnesses. Some on the list belonged to influential families. The town was soon in an uproar. Noting this, some of the young men treated the minister and those involved in the investigation with contempt. Eventually the young men apologised but the damage was done. After this Edwards' relationship with the young was never the same. Indeed his relationship with the whole congregation was spoiled.

### Communion Controversy



Solomon Stoddard had encouraged all church attenders to take communion even if they were not converted. He saw communion as a converting ordinance. As long as people were morally upright and sound in their understanding of the faith he argued that they could benefit from partaking in the Lord's Supper. Timothy Edwards, Jonathan's father, had written against this. To begin with, Jonathan accepted this practice, but as time passed he became increasingly uneasy with it and especially so after the 'Young People's Bible' controversy. He wrote against it and wanted to preach against it but there was huge opposition. Some of

them felt it was a direct attack on the memory of their old, beloved minister. Some members of the Stoddard clan became intensely involved. William Williams, the minister of Hatfield was married to a daughter of Stoddard (Christian). He was a great admirer of Edwards, but when he died his family mostly became bitter opponents of Edwards, though they were his cousins. The end result of the controversy was that the congregation voted to dismiss Edwards from the charge. To us it appears shocking that such a godly, gifted minister, and one who was used in the conversion of many of those who turned against him, should suffer in this way.

### Mission to the Indians

Edwards' dismissal from Northampton left him perplexed as to where he should now go. It was a time of great financial stress for him. His friends in Scotland invited him over assuring him that he would have a good following and

could get a congregation. While he said he would have no difficulty signing the *Westminster Confession of Faith* he found it hard to envisage uprooting his large family to cross the Atlantic. However he did not totally dismiss the proposal. He continued to give supply in Northampton when there was no one else around to preach. His enemies, though, were unhappy and eventually got a decision passed that if there was no preacher there would be no service even if Edwards was available. In 1751, on the death of John Sergeant, who was a missionary to the Indians in the frontier town of Stockbridge, he received a call there. It seemed a strange choice, the great theologian called to work in a small Indian mission station. However he laboured to preach as simply as possible and saw numbers of them professing salvation. Even here in this little town he was not away from strife. Ephraim Williams, the brother of William Williams, was the local squire. Several of his family caused problems and tried to undermine Edwards' position. Eventually some peace was attained. Here in a quiet backwater he had time to write some of his great books, *Freedom of the Will*, *Original Sin* and the *Nature of True Virtue*.

### Princeton

Aaron Burr, who was married to Edwards' daughter Esther, was president of the College of New Jersey which during his time moved to the small town of Princeton and eventually became Princeton University. Burr died suddenly in 1757 (aged 42) and the trustees elected Edwards to be his successor. Edwards was reluctant to go as he had a number of books which he planned to write and feared that he would be too busy in Princeton. He called a local council of ministers and asked their advice. Their decision was that he should go, so, with tears, in February 1758 he moved to Princeton. Within a month, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March he was dead. He and his family had taken a smallpox inoculation and in his case it went wrong. An infection broke out in his mouth and throat, preventing him eating and drinking. His father had died at the ripe old age of 89 just two months before. Sadly his daughter Esther died two weeks after himself leaving two young orphans. Jonathan's wife Sarah, whom he had left in Stockbridge looking after the family till he had settled in Princeton, came later in the summer to collect the two children but she died of dysentery (2<sup>nd</sup> October).

### Deathbed

Edwards' daughter Lucy was with him in Princeton when the end came. He called her and said: 'Dear Lucy, it seems to me to be the will of God that I must shortly leave you; therefore give my kindest love to my dear wife, and tell her, that the uncommon union, which has so long subsisted between us, has been of such a nature, as I trust is spiritual, and therefore will continue for ever. And I hope she will be supported in so great a trial and submit cheerfully to the will of God. And as to my children, you are now like to be left fatherless, which I hope will be an inducement to you all, to seek the Father who will never fail you'. Shortly after this looking around he said, 'Now where is Jesus of Nazareth my never-failing Friend'. When those who were around his bedside thought that he was unconscious, they expressed their sorrow at what his loss would mean to the College and to the church at large, but he surprised them by uttering a final sentence, 'Trust God and you need not fear'. How true and what wonderful words with which to close a life of proclamation of the Gospel!



## News from Zambia

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

We are so glad we are able to write to you again! Finally we have access to the internet again. Without going into too much detail the trouble was that the satellite internet was broken for a very long time. First we had to wait long for the part to fix it, and when we got that part, we realized that it was not the only broken part, so we had to wait again. In the end the technician arrived with the second part and he fixed the internet within a few minutes. Unfortunately it is still very slow.

### **Back in College**

We arrived back at the College around the middle of January. It was wonderful to see all our old friends. We really feel as if we live in two countries. We were so happy to be in South Africa and to see our friends and family, but we missed our home in Zambia. And now we miss everyone in South Africa. Cobus put it like this: 'When I am in South Africa, I miss Bilison and Nelson and when I am in Zambia I miss Marthiné. So I always miss someone!'

But our year started with a lot of challenges. Week 1 – it was just week 1 – chaos! After two months of travelling it takes some time to get everything in its place and everyone in their routine again. Since we left Zambia, Anel got six teeth, she started to sit and to crawl – a big difference for a small girl! And a big influence on her daily routine!

Week 2: Anel became very ill, but she also recovered completely. We start with homeschooling (with a crying baby as background music). Cobus is in Grade 2 and Nelrie in Grade 0.

Week 3: Jacomien gets malaria and after ten days she is still so weak that we decide to send her and Anel to South Africa. Heinrich had to be alone with Cobus and Nelrie for a week and a half, so he had to take care of their schooling and the household together with all his other responsibilities. During this time the College started again, but our colleagues helped with the teaching so he did not need to teach much. We are happy and relieved to tell you that Jacomien is back in Zambia and healthy. It will take some time before she has all her strength back, but it is improving every day.

We are also grateful to say that the College started this year with 32 students – the biggest group up to now. It was with great joy that we welcomed the Lachman family in February.

David, Katie and Elijah came from Scotland and David is a lecturer with Heinrich and Cees. We hope that they will enjoy living and working with us.

In the meantime our children adapted to Zambia again. They enjoy playing with their friends. The farm has more than enough things to keep children with a good imagination very busy. They find enough sand (or mud), branches, stones and leaves to 'work' with. At the end of the day our white children look a lot more like their friends. Nelrie is a little sad because her friend is staying in town now to go to school there. She only comes home during weekends so during the week she doesn't have a friend. Sometimes she will play with the boys, but when they remember that she is a girl, they refuse to play with her!

### **Trials and Joy**

We also want to share with you these verses: 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing' (James 1:2-4). James says that you have to count it joy when you meet trials because then you can be perfect and complete. That sounds wonderful, but it is really difficult to feel joy when you are shivering with fever or when you are typing words the wrong way because of headaches! We already told you our trials. If you think about it, you will understand why we say we did not think much about joy then. But this part of Scripture kept coming back to us and in a lot of things we could see reasons to have joy. Our neighbours cared about us and helped us. There was a woman that we didn't know on the flight with Jacomien to South Africa who helped her all the time. Afterwards we learned that she is a medical doctor. The medical people in SA and Lusaka went out of their way to help Jacomien. Anel accepted drinking from a bottle quite easily when Jacomien was not able to nurse her any longer. Lots of people called, visited and sent messages. We can now say that we feel joy because in these trials we saw God's love and that He is with us and in the process we could grow closer to being 'perfect and complete'.

### **We thank the Lord**

- For our safe journey to and from South Africa.
- That all our colleagues are also back in Zambia.
- That we are all healthy and together again.
- For all the new students and also the old students who came back this year.
- That the Lachman family came to join us.

### **Pray with us**

- For the College year that lies ahead.
- That the Lachman family will settle in quickly and that they will be happy to live and work with our team.
- For another lecturer.

*Greetings from Zambia*

*Heinrich, Jacomien, Cobus, Nelrie and Anel*

“O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name:  
make known his deeds among the people.  
Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him:  
talk ye of all his wondrous works.  
Glory ye in his holy name:  
let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.”

**Psalm 105:1-3**