# Free Church Witness

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| | |
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# Be Reconciled

Recently I was shocked. A mother told me that her son would not speak to her. He has not been in touch for months. She tried to phone him but he would not accept her phone calls. She tried emailing but there was no response. Mother and son are both professing Christians. Maybe the son was deeply wronged. I heard only one side of the story. But could his response ever be justified? I might add that they do not belong to our Church, though I fear similar cases could be found among ourselves.

Are you free from guilt in these matters? Is there anyone you will not speak to? Is there any hand you will not shake? Is there someone whose hand you will shake but in your heart you bear a grudge? Do you have an inner animosity? Is there a fellow-Christian whose wings you would like to see clipped and some humiliating experience happen to them? We have all been hurt and offended in the past, but have we got over it? Do we find it impossible to forgive someone? Have we ourselves not been guilty of offending and hurting others by our thoughtlessness or selfishness? What has the Bible got to say?

### The Lord's Prayer

In the 'Lord's Prayer' Jesus taught us to pray: 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' (Mt.6.12). Can we truly say that and dare to pray these words? Do we want God to deal with us as we deal with our fellow men? We are guilty of many and grievous sins against God. Would we like Him to hold them against us? To emphasise His point our Lord, following the prayer, added: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Mt.6:14-15). How can we claim to be Christians and that our sins are forgiven and that we are going to heaven when we die, if we retain a grudge toward anyone? Our Saviour set before us a brilliant example when He suffered injustice and barbaric hatred from those whom He came to save. In the middle of His pain He prayed for them and genuinely meant it, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Lk.23:34).

### Make peace before you pray

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel Jesus makes a similar though even more challenging point: 'Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift' (Mt.5:23-24). Here our Saviour is not just talking about the angry feelings we might have in our heart towards others but the resentment they have towards us. Even although we are innocent we should be aware that others who are offended by us will make our offering unacceptable. We are to strive to reconcile all to us before drawing near to God. In Old Testament times and until the death of Christ and the rending of the veil of the temple the people of God would come to Him with sacrifices and offerings. Today we come with the sacrifices of praise and the incense of prayer. God delights in His people worshipping Him but here we are told that certain requirements are necessary before our worship will be accepted by Him.

### The Unmerciful Debtor

Jesus' parables present His teaching in a powerful way. A certain king had an examination or audit done of his accounts. One of his servants was called before him who owed him 10,000 talents – a vast sum of money which would be reckoned as many millions today. The king ordered him to be sold with his family into slavery and all his assets realised. The man fell down on his knees before him and pleaded for time and he would pay him every penny. The king was moved with compassion and amazingly forgave him his total debt. That servant then went off and found another servant who owed him a hundred pence – in comparison a paltry amount. He caught this servant by the throat and demanded immediate payment. This fellowservant fell at his feet and pleaded with him for time, promising to pay him all. He would not listen and cast him into prison till he paid his debt. Others felt sorry for the poor prisoner and told the king. He summoned the cruel man and said to him, 'O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses' (Mt.18:32-35). Surely there is a powerful message for us here. We have been forgiven a vast debt by God; how then can we hold grudges against others?

### Fall outs are common

On the other hand it is worth pointing out that Christians do fall out and do bear resentment to one another, and it is not just in our day. Paul had to plead with two prominent ladies in Philippi, 'I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord' (Phil.4:2). The church in Corinth, though rich in spiritual gifts, was rent by divisions. Paul writes: 'For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' (1Cor.1:11-13). Paul and Barnabas had a fall out with one another and had to go their separate ways for a time. We are all sinners, even the best of us, but that is no excuse. We must strive for perfection and nothing less.

"Those who have the most money and property are seldom the happiest. Though we would gain the whole world we must soon leave it all behind. Jesus warns, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth' (Lk.12:15)."

**Faithfulness**

There is of course a danger from the other side. We can be so concerned to get on well with everyone that we fail to speak out when we see wrong being done. When, on the arrival of Jews from Jerusalem, Paul saw Peter ceasing to eat with the Gentiles, separating himself from the 'unclean' Gentiles and eating only with fellow Jews, he said, 'I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed' (Gal.2:11). We all have a duty to witness even although we know that people will hate us for it. A minister or elder must sometimes speak out to correct what is wrong even if it offends. Church discipline can be painful but it must not be avoided just to keep the peace. But the question has to be asked, 'Are our hard words spoken in love and with tears or in an arrogant and harsh way?'

**The worst disputes**

The worst disputes by far are those in a family. One of the commonest causes for a fall out is disagreement over a will. The parents leave their worldly wealth to one child and the others feel resentment, or they leave it to be equally divided among all their children and the one who had the burden of care for the elderly parents feels that it is not fair. The parents of course have a right to leave their money to whomsoever they wish. However it is sad if through a lack of wisdom or favouritism their children are provoked to covetousness, fall out with one another and are stirred to angry thoughts toward their parents. But looking at the matter from the other side, how wrong it is for a family to fall out over money and property! Those who have the most money and property are seldom the happiest. Though we would gain the whole world we must soon leave it all behind. Jesus warns, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth' (Lk.12:15). The key to happiness and blessing is contentment. 'Godliness with contentment is great gain' (1Tim.6:6). Ask the question, 'Why have we fallen out? Is it for the glory of God or our own selfishness and pride?'

**Church disputes**

There are many similarities between family disputes and church disputes. They are both within a family and very bitter. Past love and friendship seems to increase the hatred. People say nasty things which, once said, cannot easily be withdrawn. Some church disputes are over trivial matters which become magnified in the fog of war. Positions are taken up from which human pride finds it difficult to retreat. The electing of office-bearers and the calling of a new minister are particularly dangerous times for a congregation. Even when division is necessary, for example when fundamental Christian doctrine is denied or biblical ordinances such as church discipline and Reformed worship are trampled underfoot and there is a defiant refusal to put right what is wrong, Christians on both sides of the dispute should strive to love one another and honour each other where they can. Eventual reconciliation on the basis of truth and righteousness should always be the ultimate aim. Descending to slander, ridicule and abuse neither glorifies God nor edifies man. Remember the qualifications for eldership include 'no striker … but patient, not a brawler'. A bad temper disqualifies from office.

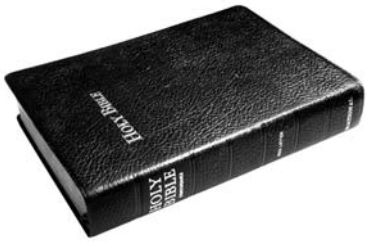
**Many Scriptures**

We often sing the words, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity' (Ps.133:1). Let us mean them. The great mark of the Christian is brotherly love, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another' (Jn.13:35). Our assurance of salvation is tied in with love: 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren' (1Jn.3:14). Is there any Christian against whom you have a simmering hatred?

# The Authorised Version

***Rev Kenneth Smith***

*2011 marks the 400th anniversary of the Authorised Version*



In the Bible, God addresses us through human speech and human personalities, 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2Pet.1:21). We do not worship the Scriptures, but we worship God who speaks to us through the Scriptures. The Westminster Confession of Faith begins with 'The Holy Scripture'. It says 'Although the light of nature, and the works of Creation and Providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God as to leave men inexcusable, yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation'. It continues, 'for the better preserving and propagating of the truth' it pleased the Lord to commit the same 'wholly unto writing'.

**History**

God, in His message by the prophets, always appealed to the past, reminding Israel of His dealings with them, how He had brought Israel out of Egypt, gave the commandments at Mount Sinai, led them and chastised them as His family. It is appropriate for us to look back upon the wondrous things that God has done for the church of Christ in our land. The Papacy has laboured with persevering stubbornness to gain the ascendancy and bring Britain back into subjection to Rome, but God's eye has been on us. His care has watched over us. He has granted us a good translation of the Scriptures. Our land is a great battlefield where the conflict between truth and error, between the truth of God and the lie of Satan has been going on for ages.

There is a similarity in the situation today to what it was when the Authorised Version (AV) was first published. With the invention of the printing press the Scriptures were generally available. Translations came from different sources. There was a thirst for the Word of God in English, but the different translations caused some confusion. In 1604, shortly after the Union of the Crowns, King James called a great ecclesiastical council of ministers which was held at Hampton Court. Important decisions were made and the most important was to do a new, faithful translation of the Scriptures for public worship.

**The Method of Translation**

Fifty-four of the most learned and distinguished men were selected and given the task of producing the best and most reliable translation. Some of them were the greatest linguists of their day. They were divided into various companies to which were assigned different portions of Scripture. The first met at Westminster with the books of Moses and all the Old Testament history up to the 2nd Book of Kings. Dr Andrewes, whose learning was held in high esteem all over Europe, presided over this division. Chronicles to Song of Solomon was under the charge of Dr Lively at Cambridge. Isaiah to Malachi was under Dr Harding at Oxford. The Gospels, Acts and Revelation were translated at Oxford and the Epistles at Westminster. Each member of a division took the same chapter and translated it in his own study. Then they all met together to compare their work. Where there was disagreement they discussed it and sought to improve it until the best translation was agreed upon. Then it was sent to the other companies for their examination. When the whole Bible had been translated it was sent to London where two delegates from each university examined it anew. These last learned doctors gave nine months of hard work to examine the translation. In all, it took seven years to produce the AV. Completed in 1611, the AV was authorised by King James to be read in the churches. It has now served the church for almost 400 years and God has blessed it to millions.

**Multiplying of translations**

In our day we see a multiplying of translations. Many consider the AV language to be out of date and difficult to understand. They generally view those who adhere to the AV as bound by tradition and afraid of change. The call for a new translation came first from liberal churches and all progress is not upwards. Taking advantage of the disunity among the Protestant churches, illustrated by the different denominations and new translations, the Roman Catholic Church presents herself as the true custodian of the truth. It is not without reason that elders of the Free Church in their ordination vows promise 'to observe uniformity of worship'. The multiplicity of Scripture translations has caused some confusion. It has not stopped the declension of the church and tends to divide congregations.

**Commending the AV**

In this article I wish to commend the AV for the public worship of God. It is the most faithful translation of Scripture we have in the English language. The learned men who translated it sought to keep as close as possible to the actual words used. They added some words to help make clear the meaning but showed this in italics. Other translations have added words but they do not tell us what they have added.

Do we value the AV as we ought? The AV was blessed to many in the past and present and the new versions themselves are soon 'out of date'! The Authorised Version is the most suitable translation we have for public worship. The Word of God is couched in noble language and has a sense of reverence and majesty. It speaks with a directness of force that commends it to all classes and conditions of men. The passages of Scripture are easier to remember and, when it is read from the pulpit, it is almost musical. The care, the time, and the learning of the men God used to provide us with the AV have made it valuable and enduring. We believe it is on the whole the best translation. It has taught the church for nearly 400 years. It has withstood relentless and vicious attacks from Satan who still whispers in the ears of people, 'Yea, hath God said …' seeking to undermine our confidence in the Word of God. It is a day in which it should be made clear that we reverence the written word of the One who says, 'I am the Lord; I change not'.

# IV. Evolution's Effect on Vital Biblical Doctrines

***Rev Anthony R Dallison, Virginia, USA***

I have alluded to these effects throughout these articles and there is therefore the need only for brief summary, as follows.

**1. Denial of the Inspiration and Authority of Scripture**

If we cannot trust the creation account in the early chapters of Genesis, doubt is cast upon the inspiration and veracity of the rest of Scripture as well. Moreover, we have seen that all the books of the New Testament, except for Philemon and II & III John, contain allusions to Genesis, and that more than half of the 200 NT allusions to Genesis are found in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

**2. Denial of the Person and Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ**

He was involved in the work of creation (Jn.1:1-4 & 10; Col.1:15-16 & Heb 1:2), He affirmed the divine creation of Adam and Eve (Mk.10:6-7), their being 'one flesh' (Mk.10:8), and He referred to 'the creation which God created' (Mk.13:19). It was the Son of God Himself who taught His followers to accept the historical accuracy of the Old Testament in general and the Book of Genesis in particular (Mt.19:4; 23:35; 24:37-39; Lk.17:19,32).

**3. Denial of the Need for the Doctrine of Redemption**

Sin, suffering and death, according to evolution's teaching, are natural phenomena and not the result of divine judgment upon mankind through its federal head, Adam. Mankind is therefore in no need of divine redemption, in contradiction of the Bible's plain teaching that sin was introduced by Adam's disobedience and can only be remedied by the work of the 'second' (or last) Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom.5:19f).

As Morris & Whitcomb say in *The Genesis Flood,* 'Uniformitarian palaeontology dates the formation of the major fossiliferous strata many scores and hundreds of millions of years before the appearance of human beings on the earth. It assumes that uncounted billions of animals had experienced natural or violent death before the Fall of Adam: that many important kinds of animals had long since become extinct by the time God created Adam to have dominion over every living creature: and that long ages before the Edenic curse giant flesh-eating monsters like Tyrannosaurus Rex roamed the earth, slashing their victims with ferocious dagger-like teeth and claws… But how can such a description of the history of the animal kingdom be reconciled with the early chapters of Genesis? Does Genesis, honestly studied in the light of the New Testament, allow for a reign of tooth and claw and death and destruction before the fall of Adam? If not, we have further compelling reasons for questioning the uniformitarian scheme of reading (the fossil record in) the rocks and ... strong encouragement for finding in the great Genesis Flood the true explanation for fossil formations in the crust of our planet'.

Moreover, such clear-cut passages as Romans 5:12-21 and 1Corinthians 15:21-22 indicate that Adam's sin and fall introduced spiritual and physical death into the human race. In the Romans passage we learn that 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned … by one man's offence death reigned by one ... by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation … by one man's disobedience many were made sinners'. Likewise, we are told also in the Corinthian passage that 'by man came death' and 'in Adam all die'.

The Bible further teaches that all human beings have descended from one human pair. 'Eve...was the mother of all living' (Gen.3:20); confirmed by Acts 17:26: 'He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth') and that these first human beings were created directly by God wholly apart from any evolutionary development of man's body from animal forms. The Lord Jesus Christ stated that 'he who made them from the beginning made them male and female' (Mt.19:4). Genesis 2:21-23 clearly indicates that Eve came out of Adam and not from the animal kingdom by some evolutionary process. This is confirmed by the apostle Paul: 'the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man' (1Cor.11:8). So, if Eve received her body in this purely supernatural way out of Adam's side, why should anyone postulate an evolutionary development for Adam's body? The Bible teaches that Adam's body was formed from 'the dust of the ground' (Gen.2:7), not of evolved animal forms.

Therefore, in the light of this biblical revelation regarding the origin of Adam and Eve, Christians must insist on the essential unity and the supernatural, non-evolutionary creation of the human race. Otherwise there could be no such thing as human sin or eternal salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ (Rom.6:23; Heb.2:9, 14; 1Jn.1:5-2:2).

**4. Denial of the Future State of Perfection and Glory in Heaven**

If there has been no Fall of man and no need of his redemption, there is no place for a future state of man's full restoration. Whereas, the Genesis account is not only important as a history of man's origin, but also as a prophecy of man's future. The Book of Revelation makes this clear, where Paradise lost, in Genesis, becomes Paradise regained, in Revelation.

For example, note the following comparisons between the original world and the final world. In the probationary world there was division of light and darkness (Gen.1:4) and in the eternal world 'no night there' (Rev.21:25); in Genesis the division of land and sea (1:10), and in Revelation 'no more sea' (21:1); the rule of sun and moon (Gen.1:16), and no need of sun and moon (Rev.21:23); man in a prepared garden (Gen.2:8-9), man in a prepared city (Rev. 21:2); river flowing out of Eden (Gen.2:10) and river flowing from God's throne (Rev.22:1); gold in the land (Gen.2:12), and gold in the city (Rev.21:21); tree of life in

midst of the garden (Gen.2:9), and tree of life throughout the city (Rev.22:2), and God walking in the garden (Gen.3:8), and God dwelling with His people (Rev.21:3).

Even more striking is the contrast between the world under God's curse and the eternal world renewed, eg Cursed ground/ no more curse ; daily sorrow/ no more sorrow; thorns and thistles/no more pain; sweat of the face/tears wiped away; eating herbs of the field/twelve manner of fruits; returning to dust/no more death; evil continually/ nothing that defileth; coats of skins/fine linen, white and clean; Satan opposing/Satan banished; kept from tree of life/access to tree of life; banished from the garden/free entry to the City; Redeemer promised/redemption accomplished.

For these and many other reasons it becomes evident that a correct understanding of the early chapters of Genesis is vital to an understanding of the eternal purposes of God.

## A Crime

A worried woman went to her gynaecologist and said: 'Doctor, I have a serious problem and desperately need your help! My baby is not even one year old, and I'm pregnant again. I don't want kids so close together'.

So the doctor said: 'Ok, and what do you want me to do?'
She said: 'I want you to end my pregnancy, and I'm counting on your help with this'.
The doctor thought for a little, and after some silence he said to the lady: 'I think I have a better solution for your problem. It's less dangerous for you too'. She smiled, thinking that the doctor was going to accept her request.
Then he continued: 'You see, in order for you not to have to take care of two babies at the same time, let's kill the one in your arms. This way, you could have some rest before the other one is born. If we're going to kill one of them, it doesn't matter which one it is. There would be no risk for your body if you chose the one in your arms'.
The lady was horrified and said: 'No doctor! How terrible! It's a crime to kill a child!'
'I agree', the doctor replied. 'But you seemed to be OK with it, so I thought maybe that was the best solution'.
The doctor smiled, realizing that he had made his point. He convinced the mum that there is no difference in killing a child that's already been born and one that's still in the womb. The crime is the same!

# Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), Part 1

***Rev William Macleod***

Why should we study the life of Jonathan Edwards? What was special about him? Arguably Edwards was America's greatest theologian, greatest philosopher and one of its greatest preachers. The most famous sermon ever preached in America is entitled, 'Sinners in the hands of an angry God' and was preached by him at Enfield on 8th July 1741. It marked the beginning of revival in that town, and many were awakened and converted as God's Spirit came down in power on the congregation that day. Others were blessed when the sermon appeared in print and still today souls are being saved through it. Two or three years ago I met a young man who told me that he was converted at university where he was studying eighteenth century American literature. Among other works the class was asked to read was this sermon of Edwards, no doubt the intention being to poke fun at the 'fire and brimstone preaching'. It was the means God used to convict him of his sin and bring him to repentance.

**His Books**

Edwards, growing up in the manse of a godly minister in New England, was steeped in the Puritan theology of the seventeenth century but he also drew on what was best in the Enlightenment thinking of the eighteenth century. He was in close contact with Scottish theologians and preachers such as McCulloch, Robe, Erskine and M'Laurin. He was a friend of George Whitefield the great open-air evangelist. In Edwards were combined the deep thinker, the accomplished scholar, the zealous, evangelistic preacher and the earnest, holy man of God.

Dr D Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who in many ways was the most influential Reformed theologian and preacher of the last century, spoke of the huge impact the discovery of a dusty old set of the *Works of Edwards* in 1929 in a Cardiff bookshop had upon him. For the rest of his life he drew on the treasures and the fire to be found in these volumes. But it's not just evangelicals who have been fascinated by Edwards. Yale University Press began a massive project in 1957 to edit carefully all Edwards' books which had already been published and also to publish for the first time all his notebooks, sermons and writings which had survived. *The Freedom of the Will* appeared in 1957 and in 2008 the final volume, Volume 26, entitled *A Catalogue of Books*. This work provides an immense resource for the Christian church from one to whom God gave great insight into His Word. Many biographies and other works have been written on Edwards and his thought. The Rev Iain H Murray provides us with a typically-readable and edifying biography published by the Banner of Truth Trust. A large, scholarly and carefully researched biography has been produced more recently by George Marsden, published by Yale Press. It is largely sympathetic and also very readable.

**Birth**

Edwards was born in East Windsor manse, Connecticut, New England in 1703, incidentally the same year as John Wesley the founder of the Methodists. His father Timothy was also a gifted theologian and saw much blessing on his ministry, with several revivals taking place in his parish. His mother, Esther Stoddard, was the daughter of Solomon Stoddard the long-time minister of Northampton and highly-respected patriarch of Massachusetts. She herself was a talented and godly woman. After her husband's death it is said that local women used to gather in her home in an afternoon to hear her read and expound the Scriptures. Jonathan was the only son but he had ten sisters, all of whom survived to adulthood. They were all six feettall and folk spoke of Timothy Edwards with his sixty feet of daughters! Jonathan was a precocious child and was taught by his father. He entered Yale College at the early age of twelve and by the age of thirteen was reckoned to have a good grasp of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He graduated with a BA in 1720 while still only 16 and spent a further year studying for an MA (although he did not graduate till 1723).

**Conversion**

When Jonathan was nine God's mighty power in revival came upon East Windsor. He was awakened to a concern of soul. Along with his friends he built a den in a swamp where the boys gathered to pray. It would have been wonderful to have been a fly on the wall watching and listening. However after a while the revival passed and the effect wore off and they began to use the den for games of fighting Indians. Another revival came when he was twelve and again he was deeply moved but in time the effect of this one also passed. At the age of sixteen he became seriously ill with pleurisy. He stated how he felt himself shaken over the very pit of hell. For the next year or so the conviction of sin remained though with varying intensity. He described himself as a 'miserable seeker'. One day while contemplating the words: 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen' (1Tim.1:17), the light broke through. His heart was filled with wonder, love, joy and assurance. He told his father about it. From now on his first and greatest resolution was to do everything he did to the glory of God. His prolonged seeking and his depth of conviction of sin meant that when peace came it was all the richer. He knew God, feared Him and was caught up with His glory. He was seventeen at the time.

**The Ministry**

Licensed to preach when still only eighteen he went as a supply preacher to New York in August 1722. He lodged with a widow Mrs Smith and greatly enjoyed fellowship with her and her son John. A group had broken away from the main congregation and following his eight months preaching there they decided to return to the main body. In this sense he did himself out of a job but it was a happy outcome with which he was delighted. He was very happy in New York and much appreciated by the congregation. Following this he became minister in Bolton, a small town near his home in Connecticut. He does not seem to have been very happy here and so when a call came to him to be a tutor in Yale College he accepted. He remained in Yale

two years.

**Northampton**

In 1726 while he was still only 23 years of age he received a call to assist his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, who was the minister of the large and important congregation of Northampton. Stoddard had been pastor of the congregation for almost sixty years. He had seen many revivals, was a mighty, gospel preacher and an able theologian and was greatly revered by the people of Northampton and, indeed, the whole region. In 1729 Stoddard died and so he became full pastor of this influential church. Sabbath attendances were well in excess of 1000.

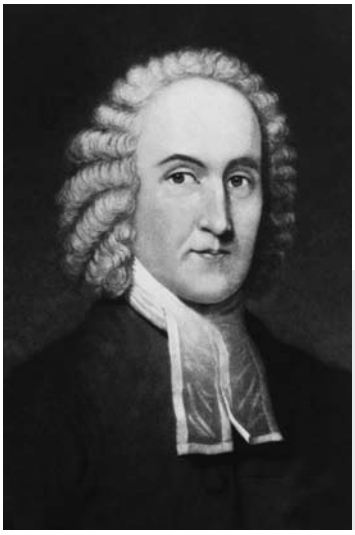
**Marriage**

The year after his induction Edwards married Sarah Pierpont, a minister's daughter from New Haven. He had first noticed her when she was only thirteen and had noted in his diary that she was a specially godly young lady. When they married she was seventeen and he twenty-four. They had eight daughters and three sons. Jonathan normally rose between four and five in the morning. He spent usually thirteen hours in the study daily.

Sarah was an amazingly capable and dedicated wife. She was the one who managed the household which often resembled a small hotel. People passing through the area would stay overnight or for several nights. Students came to study under Edwards and they too stayed for prolonged periods in the manse. They had several servants including a black slave. This was considered normal and acceptable at the time. Sarah also managed the farm which provided a supplementary income. The buying and selling of cattle, sheep and horses and the planting of the fields was supervised by her. Her husband left everything in her capable hands and she was very much the virtuous woman of Proverbs chapter 31. She saw her role as doing everything in her power to ensure that her husband spent the maximum time in prayer and the work of the ministry. She herself had some wonderful experiences of God. In the evening after dinner Jonathan would relax with the family and friends in the parlour and family worship would be held. The day was brought to a close with Sarah and himself in the study reviewing the day, meditating on the Scriptures and praying together. Theirs was a happy and harmonious marriage and home.

**Personal Life and Ministry**

Edwards did little in the way of pastoral visiting unless he was specially requested say to visit someone who was dying. His practice was to see people requesting help, in his study. In times of revival many came and queues would form at the study door. He saw his gifts as being in the area of studying, writing and preaching. He was somewhat shy though he could be good company when relaxed among friends. He was a highly disciplined individual with a great sense of purpose in his life. He ate and slept as little as possible in order to devote all his energy and time to his work, but this in turn left him open to serious illnesses which affected him at various times. He seems to have also been particularly prone to headaches. For exercise he would chop wood for half an hour or ride out into the woods a couple of miles where he would spend time in meditation and prayer. When out of the study if a significant thought occurred to him he would pin a small piece of paper to his clothes to remind him when he got home to record the thought. He kept notebooks in which he recorded all his insights. There were different notebooks for different topics and these later became the basis of many of his books. He was a godly man and his devotional exercises were very important to him. He spent much time in the study in prayer and meditation on the Scriptures. Also from time to time he kept special days of humiliation, fasting and prayer.



**Revival**

In 1734-35 God visited Northampton with a great revival. New power accompanied the preaching. The Lord's people long for preaching with power, and here it was at last. God became the great reality to all. The fear of God came down on the community. All frivolity was abandoned. The taverns were forsaken. The church was crowded at all services. Men and women were convicted of their sin and prayed earnestly to the Lord for mercy. Everyone was talking about the things of eternity. Sinners rejoiced in finding the Saviour. The impact was enormous. Edwards thought that virtually everyone in the town had been converted (later sadly he had to revise his judgment). He wrote a book, describing much of what happened, entitled, *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions,* and this caught the attention of many in Britain. It is a wonderful book telling of the great things God had done and stirred up the Lord's people on both sides of the Atlantic to cry to God for a universal outpouring of His Spirit. From now on Edwards was a household name among the godly.

The Northampton church building was showing signs of its age and work began on a new building and not before time. The winter of 1737 was particularly harsh with severe frost which caused the foundations to shift. While he was preaching one Sunday the galleries collapsed amongst terrible screams from those below. It was thought that many must have been killed but amazingly no one was seriously injured. Edwards sought to make use of this amazing providence to exhort his congregation to give heed to this warning voice from God and stressed the duty of repentance. Life is uncertain. Prepare to meet your God!

*To be continued*

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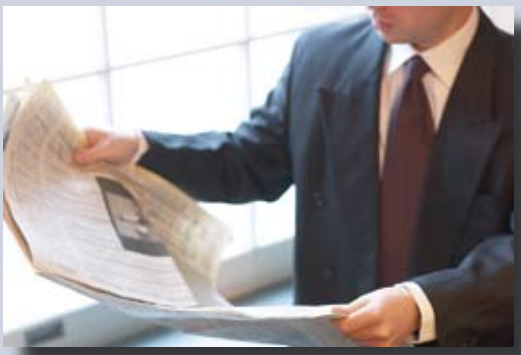


# News

## Retiral of Rev Maurice Roberts

*Scott Melhuish*

On Friday 3rd December 2010 the congregation of Inverness Westhill Free Church (Continuing) and other friends gathered in Culduthel Christian Centre, Inverness, to mark the retirement from the pastoral ministry of Rev Maurice J Roberts. The evening provided an opportunity to express our appreciation for the work and ministry of Mr Roberts over many years. Rev Ronald MacKenzie who chaired the event, explained that he had known Mr Roberts since 1972 when they were students together in the Free Church College in Edinburgh. They were both licensed to preach the Gospel on the same day by the Presbytery of Edinburgh and had enjoyed a long friendship since that time.

The senior elder, Mr Murdo Smith, made a presentation to Mr Roberts as a token of the love and esteem which the congregation bore to Mr and Mrs Roberts. Mr Smith said that it had been a privilege to be under his preaching ministry, and he wished him health and much of God's blessing and presence in the days that lie ahead. Mrs Alina Fraser, the oldest member in the congregation, made a presentation to Mrs Roberts. A presentation was also made on behalf of the Sabbath School by Agnes Wu and Anita Ratti.

It was a delight to see the most senior minister in the church, Rev Hugh Ferrier, in attendance and to hear his words of appreciation for Mr Roberts. Mr Ferrier said that Mr Roberts was well known as a foremost expositor of the Word of God, a pious man and a caring pastor as he himself had experienced by Mr Roberts' visits during his recent illness. Mr Ferrier said that Mr Roberts was a true Free Churchman who had adhered to his ordination vows, which cost him and likeminded colleagues dearly in their stand in 2000. Mr Ferrier also spoke of Mrs Sandra Roberts as his excellent wife and companion, and the one who has been a tower of strength to him.

Due to the travel difficulties resulting from the November snow and the poor road conditions, some people were not able to attend in person and had sent written greetings. Rev William Macleod mentioned the three points in which Mr Roberts had most influenced him: (1) A sense of the awesomeness of God and the requirement of personal holiness; (2) a longing and prayer for revival, and (3) a desire and expectation for the conversion of the Jews. Rev Iain H Murray of the Banner of Truth Trust wrote that the call Mr Roberts had given to continue in prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit of God had not fallen to the

# Desk

ground, and had surely in their lifetimes already been answered in ways above what we could ask or think.

Words of appreciation were also read from others including Dr Murdoch Murchison, Rev Kenneth Macdonald (Scalpay), Mr Iain Maclennan (Lewis), Rev Anthony Dallison and Rev David Blunt. Mr and Mrs Donald Mackay from Stornoway wrote of remembering the young Englishman coming up to the Island with a great zeal for the Gospel, and love for the Lord's cause. Greetings were also sent from America and Korea.

As a former student of Mr Roberts in the Seminary, Rev Andrew Allan spoke of Mr Roberts abundant zeal, and his knowledge of Greek and the Word of God. Others who spoke included Mr Donald Macdonald (Harris), Mr Tim Biggs (Australia), and the Inverness Elders Mr David Macrae, Mr Glenn Fraser, and Mr Iain Mackay.

Originally from Manchester, Mr Roberts had worked as a Classics teacher for a number of years before being called to the ministry. He served as minister in Ayr Free Church from 1974 until he was called to Greyfriars Inverness in 1994. Editor of the Banner of Truth magazine from 1988 until 2003, Mr Roberts is well-known as a conference speaker in many countries around the world. He has written a number of books including The Thought of God, The Christian's High Calling, and The Happiness of Heaven. Mr Roberts continues to serve as Lecturer in Greek & New Testament at the FCC Seminary in Inverness.

*Rev Maurice & Mrs Sandra Roberts*

Mr Roberts had intentionally delayed his retirement until the Inverness congregation was settled with a new church and manse, and until the main bank loan for the new Westhill building had been fully paid off. He spoke of his deep appreciation for the congregation and of being bound together in the bundle of life with the Lord our God. He said that all that matters in the whole world is to know God and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he exhorted those present to seek Christ with all their hearts, and make sure they had Him as their Saviour. The evening concluded with the singing of Psalm 133, and Rev John Angus Gillies pronounced the Benediction.

*40th Anniversary Service, Emmanuel Church, Salisbury*

### Pastor Watts's 40th Anniversary at Salisbury

*Paul Thick*

The 5th/6th February marked an important milestone in the history of Emmanuel Church, Salisbury. Although the church is relatively young compared to some, being founded as recently as 1953, this year's official anniversary also marked Rev Malcolm Watts' 40th anniversary as pastor of the church.

Previous to this weekend members had held an informal meeting on Saturday January 22nd in order to express their gratitude to God for His faithfulness and innumerable blessings over this period, and also to express their love and appreciation to Malcolm Watts. As

*Malcolm & Gillian Watts, with Maurice & Sandra Roberts*

the church hall was too small for the numbers attending, a larger building in nearby Wilton was hired for the occasion. During the afternoon, Derek Richardson, one of the Elders at Emmanuel, spoke on the theme of 'Thanksgiving to God'; John Thackway (Holywell) spoke very warmly of his personal indebtedness to the pastor and reminded the members and friends present of the blessings they had received over these years; and, following this, further words of encouragement from F J Harris (Cheltenham) were read by retired pastor Alan Tunstell, since sadly Mr Harris was prevented from attending through illness.

The official and formal Anniversary Meetings commenced February 5th with a Saturday meeting at which Rev Maurice Roberts (a close friend of the pastor's for many years and former minister of Inverness Free Church [Continuing]) spoke very helpfully indeed on 'The faithful and wise steward' (Lk.12:42), carefully listing the marks of a true minister of God. Mr Roberts also preached at the two Sabbath services and at an after church meeting. In the morning he spoke with both challenge and comfort from Romans 8:37 – 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us', and in the evening he focused the attention of the congregation on 'The rich young ruler' (Mt.19:16-22), urging the necessity of seeking Christ with the whole heart. Public and formal thanks were given to God in prayer at both the morning and the evening services of worship, the church being profoundly aware of the fact that its present spiritual 'peace and prosperity' are favours graciously and mercifully given by God. All the sermons preached at these meetings were recorded and are available online via www.salisburyemmanuel.org.uk

At this time the church has been able to reflect on the way that the Lord has led it over the past 40 years through faithful, systematic, expository preaching. The effect of such teaching has been reformation in government with the appointment of ruling elders, and, most notably, reformation in public worship with the introduction of unaccompanied Psalm-singing. Such reforms were not instantaneous, but gradual. After detailed teaching on the Regulative Principle, the singing of Metrical Psalms commenced in 1985, and by the end of 1994 (with the full agreement of all the members) the transition to Exclusive Psalmody had been completed. It was in January 1988 that consecutive readings in both Old and New Testaments were introduced at each service on the Sabbath. Since then, the whole of the Bible has been publicly read several times, with explanation and application after each reading, giving the sense of the passage and showing its relevance for today. The Constitution (the Church's governing document) has been developed over these 40 years to include these reforms, and to ensure, in subsequent years, continuity of belief and practice. The Authorised Version, for example, is stated to be the only version of the Church, and it alone is read and preached from in all services and meetings. It is gratifying that this Constitution has been of help to other Churches when they have sought to re-write or revise their own church constitutions. The Salisbury Conference held now in October for 15 years has also become established and highly valued, around 200 people regularly attending.

In the mercy and grace of God, the church has grown very considerably over the years. Every effort is made to promote fellowship with those ministers and churches holding fast to the Reformed Faith (Mr Watts was involved in the drawing up of Affirmation 2010 which seeks to take a stand on these biblical truths and apply them to the vital issues of the present time). The Church was encouraged to receive the warm greetings from a wide number of ministers and churches. These were read at the after church meeting. In one of them reference was made to 1 Samuel 7:12, which expresses the church's heart-felt and deep gratitude for the mercies of the past, and also our prayer and hope for future mercies: 'Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us'.

### Homosexual marriage and the registration of civil partnerships in churches

*Joint Statement by Affinity, The Christian Institute, Christian Concern, Reform and the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches*

There has been speculation in the press about the Government's proposals for civil partnerships to be registered in places of worship. There has also been speculation, and indeed confusion, over the separate issue of scrapping the definition of marriage in order to allow two people of the same sex to hold a marriage certificate.

Government proposals to allow civil partnerships in churches implement changes made in the 2010 Equality Act. However,

there has been no announcement from the Government that it has any plans to introduce full same-sex marriage.

*The definition of marriage*

The thousands of churches that our organisations represent hold firmly to the clear teaching of the Bible that marriage is the lifelong, exclusive union of one man and one woman. This is the definition that has long been recognised in English law and, indeed, by almost all cultures for all of human history.

Marriage was ordained by God for the good of all people and is a holy institution. It was also designed to represent something of the relationship between Christ and his church. There are two partners to a marriage because there are two sexes. Marriage is a complementary covenant involving the bringing together of the two sexes not only for the purposes of procreation but also to reflect more fully the image of God.

We are also concerned about the effect of declaring that the institution in which children are raised does not require both a mother and a father.

For all these reasons we, and many others, would firmly oppose any efforts to eradicate the definition of marriage and impose a new definition on everyone in order to satisfy the demands of gay rights groups.

*Civil partnerships in churches*

We reiterate our long-held opposition to allowing civil partnerships to be registered in churches. It is a breach of undertakings made by Government ministers during debates on the Civil Partnership Bill. Parliament was persuaded to pass that Bill, in part, because it was made clear that civil partnership was a civil rather than a religious institution and would not take place in religious premises.

However, there are a small number of religious groups who are not content with being able to carry out civil partnership blessing ceremonies, as they currently do, but who want the legal registration itself to take place in their premises. In response to the demands of these groups, the Government is embarking on a course of action that is bringing it into conflict with thousands of evangelical churches and the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.

In any legislation, churches must be protected against the possibility, now and in the future, of any kind of legal action being brought against churches which conscientiously disagree with civil partnerships.

When it comes to equality legislation, permission often turns rapidly into coercion. In a country where faith-based adoption agencies have been forced to close or cut their religious ties by equality law, where Christian marriage registrars can be dismissed for their religious views on marriage and where Christian B & B owners are forced to pay compensation to same-sex couples, Christians will need a great deal of reassurance that the Government is not about to do something that will make their situation even worse.

### French Court upholds Marriage

*Christian Institute*

France's highest court has upheld its legal definition of marriage as one man and one woman. The country's law was being challenged by a lesbian couple who wanted inheritance rights and joint custody rights which are reserved for married couples. But the court, known formally as the Constitutional Council, ruled in favour of the traditional definition of marriage.

*Thank God for this strong stand taken by the French.*

### Harmful effects of Pornography

*Christian Institute*

Widespread exposure to 'crude and debasing' pornography is affecting everyone in society, a national newspaper columnist has warned. Sandra Parsons, writing in the *Daily Mail*, cautioned that 'so many men, including young boys' are using modern technology to access 'vile images of extreme porn'. And she said that this imagery is 'infecting all ages, all strata of society'.

The commentator warned: 'Exposure to this stuff has a well-documented numbing effect. Watching it can warp the ideas of even the most "normal" of men — ones with loving wives and adored daughters — to the point where he has watched so much extreme porn that he stops viewing women as people and sees them instead only as packages of meat'. And Sandra Parsons also said the 'worst part' of the widespread exposure to porn was that 'too many young girls are playing up to it'.

*As Christians we must avoid pornography like the plague.*

### Hatred from Homosexuals

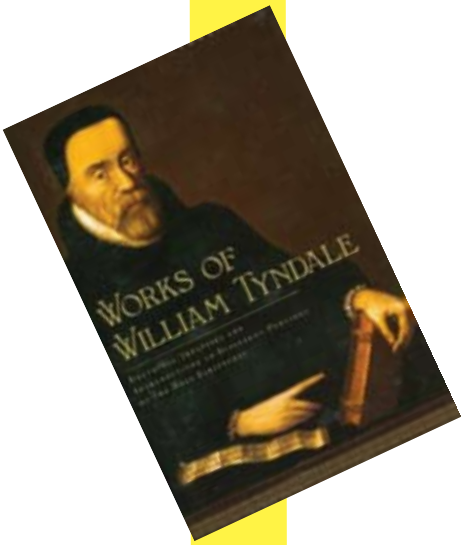
*Christian Institute*

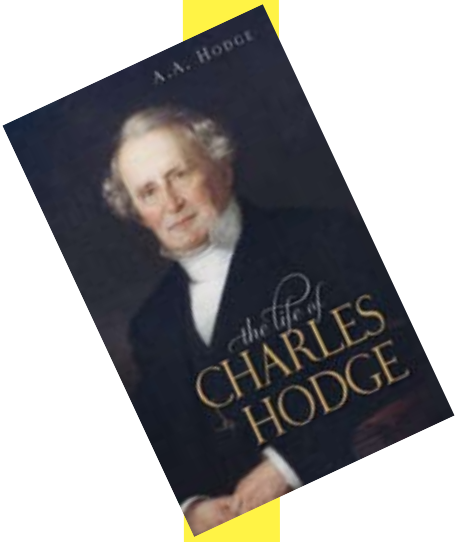
A prominent columnist who warned against the homosexual lobby's attempts to silence all opposition has been subjected to a 'vicious outpouring of hate', including calls for her to be killed. Recently Melanie Phillips wrote an article warning that 'some gay people were in danger of turning into the new McCarthyites by demonising and attempting to silence all who disagreed with the gay rights agenda'. And while the commentator, whose comments came after two Christian B&B owners were sued over their double bed policy, was expecting a reaction she was left shocked by the scale of the abuse she received.

Describing her treatment she said , 'I have been subjected to an extraordinarily vicious outpouring of hate and incitement to violence, via email, the internet and in the mainstream media, and much worse besides. In my article, I expressed concern that attempting to bar a Christian GP from the government's advisory council on drugs because of his views on homosexuality, bombarding the school curriculum with irrelevant gay references, and prosecuting Christian hoteliers for refusing to accommodate gay men in the same bedroom were examples of a frightening intolerance. The response to this warning against an attempt by the gay lobby to silence dissent? An eruption of tweets on Twitter suggesting that I should be killed. Yes, really'. She added: 'If the gay lobby had set about trying to prove my point, it could hardly have done a better job. Indeed, the total inability of those who subjected me to such abuse to realise that they are, in fact, spewing out the very hatred, intolerance and incitement to violence of which they are accusing others would be hilarious were it not so terrifying'. And while Melanie Phillips makes it abundantly clear that she harbours no ill feelings towards homosexuals, she does have grave reservations about the homosexual political agenda.

*Christians who say that homosexual acts are sinful are accused of hate crime. Rather the hatred comes from the other side when anyone dares criticise their immoral lifestyle.*

# Books




**Works of William Tyndale**

Banner of Truth Trust,

hbk, 2 vols, lxxvi + 532pp & 684pp, £33.00

In the year in which we commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the Authorised Version of the Bible it is good to know that the writings of a famous man of God whose labours made a most significant contribution to this time-honoured version are in print once again. William Tyndale (c.1494-1536) was the first to translate the Scriptures into English from the original languages, his desire being to 'cause a boy that driveth a plough' to know more of the Scriptures than the ignorant clergy of his day. He was the 'hidden' translator of the Authorised Version for it is estimated that more than three-quarters of the text draws upon his work.

These two volumes are a reprint of the three volumes published by the Parker Society from 1848 to 1850 and edited by Rev. Henry Walter, who followed the text published by Day in 1573 which had been edited by the martyrologist John Foxe. Numerous footnotes refer to this primary edition and other previous editions and also provide explanations of the main text. The volumes are well-presented with a clear print and include Scripture and General Indexes.

Volume 1 of the present edition reproduces the material in the first volume of the Parker edition. It contains an anonymous 'Biographical Notice' of Tyndale followed by four 'Doctrinal Treatises': a brief one on the Gospel ('A Pathway into the Holy Scriptures'); a lengthier one on Justification ('The Parable of the Wicked Mammon'); a major one on Government ('The Obedience of a Christian Man'); and another brief one on the Sacraments. In *The Obedience of a Christian Man* Tyndale highlights the domination of the Roman Catholic Church over the whole of English life. He advocates disobedience to her improper authority, at whatever cost: 'Christ is with us until the world's end. Let his little flock be bold therefore. For if God be on our side, what matter maketh it who be against us, be they bishops, cardinals, popes, or whatsoever names they will?' Tyndale demonstrates from both Testaments that God requires obedience in civil matters to the 'powers that be', extending from the king as head of the state to the father as head of the household. The volume concludes with twenty-nine 'Prologues' or introductions to different books of Scripture: these cover the Pentateuch, Jonah (the longest after that on Romans) and all the New Testament books except Acts and Revelation, and are interspersed with several 'Tables' expounding certain words and phrases which occur in various books.

Volume 2 replicates the material in the second and third volumes of the Parker edition, retaining the original page numbering. It begins with 'Expositions' of the Sermon on the Mount and the First Epistle of John, 'Marginal Notes' on the first twenty-one chapters of Matthew's Gospel and 'The Practice of Prelates'. The last-named work, which begins with the intention of examining King Henry VIII's proposed divorce from his barren first wife Catherine of Aragon, turns into a survey of political intrigues on the part of the ungodly, beginning with the scribes and Pharisees who persuaded Pilate to crucify Christ down to the contemporary dealings of Cardinal Wolsey. Tyndale opposed Henry's divorce because he believed that it was contrary to Scripture. Catherine was briefly the wife of Henry's elder brother, Arthur, but had been widowed. Henry began to think that his marriage was cursed and believed he had confirmation from the Bible in Leviticus 20:21. Tyndale explains that the curse of childlessness if a man marries his brother's wife applies only when the brother is still alive – an interpretation that makes sense of the injunction in Deuteronomy 25:5 that a man *must* marry his brother's widow.

Volume 2 continues with Tyndale's 'Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue', the reference

being to 'A Dialogue Concerning Heresies' in which More asserted that the Roman Catholic Church was the one true Church established by Christ and that all its traditions and practices were valid. There follows, also in reply to More, 'The Supper of the Lord', which includes expositions of verses in John chapter 6 and 1 Corinthians chapter 11. As Lord Chancellor, More sought to suppress the use of Tyndale's New Testament which, appearing after the advent of the printing press, threatened the Roman Catholic monopoly in the form of Jerome's Latin Vulgate of the fourth century. Tyndale's translation used 'congregation' instead of 'church', 'elder' instead of 'priest' and 'repent' instead of 'do penance' – challenging the accepted Roman dogma. Finally there is a brief exposition of 'The Testament of Master William Tracy', amounting to a biblical explanation of the terms of a will left by a godly man who was known to Tyndale. Efforts have been made recently to rehabilitate More. Canonised by Rome in 1935 he was also the subject of a sympathetic play and film entitled 'A Man for All Seasons'. However More was in reality a fanatical figure and fiercely anti-Protestant. In the end he was executed for treason. Tyndale was martyred as a 'heretic' at Vilvoorde in Belgium, being strangled at the stake and his body then burned. As Foxe tells us, his final words were in the form of a fervent prayer: 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes!' Tyndale's plea was answered a few years later in the publication of the 'Great Bible' prepared by Myles Coverdale, which King Henry authorised to be read in the services of the Church of England.

Reading the writings and remembering the life of such a useful and faithful man of God we are once again rebuked on account of our worldliness and lack of spiritual fruit and power. The study of these *Works* would help to rekindle our zeal for God and His cause in our own dark day.

*David Blunt*

### The Life of Charles Hodge

*A A Hodge*

Banner of Truth Trust

hbk, 672pp, £17.00

Charles Hodge (1797-1878) was arguably America's greatest theologian of the nineteenth century. His massive three-volume *Systematic Theology* written after a lifetime of teaching is still a standard work for Bible-believing divinity students today. Interestingly he began his teaching career lecturing on Old and New Testament exegesis. This knowledge of the Scriptures, its meaning in the original languages and the study of hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) gave him the foundation for his later eminently-biblical teaching of Systematic Theology. This biography is written by his son who was also his successor in Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary and was no mean theologian himself.

Typical of most nineteenth-century biographies' this one is written at a leisurely pace. Many letters are quoted in full. This is not the kind of book to be read in one sitting. My interest was specially stirred when I reached Chapter Five where Hodge, having been appointed Professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature and feeling himself not sufficiently well-versed in biblical and related languages, leaves his family behind and sets off for two years' study in Europe. He begins in Paris studying French, Arabic and Syriac. From there he went to Halle in Germany and later Berlin in both of which he continued his study of Oriental languages and learned German. It is fascinating to read of his impressions of liberal theologians whom he met like Schleiermacher and Gesenius and of evangelicals like Tholuck, Hengstenberg (began as a liberal and was converted) and Neander. Some of these became lifetime friends. There was a revival at the time in parts of Germany. Even the Crown Prince was involved.

I was not aware that for a large portion of his life he suffered from pain and serious lameness. His first book, his excellent commentary on Romans, was written as he lay on his back with his leg in a steel splint. Patiently he bore with some horrible treatments. The Presbyterian Church to which he belonged split in 1837 into a New-School and an Old-School section, forced by the Old-School men. Hodge, who belonged to the Old-School section, was against the division. In 1870, when the two bodies reunited, Hodge was again opposed to the union because of the broader theology of the New-School men.

It is interesting to read of his relationships with Princeton's first professors Alexander and Miller and then later with Alexander's son whom he described as the most gifted man he ever knew, Addison Alexander, who taught Old and New Testament. On his own as a boy Addison learned Arabic so that he had read the Koran through by the age of fourteen. Still a boy, he learned Farsi so that he could read the Persian poets. He learned all the main European languages so that he could enjoy reading their classical works. Hodge became great friends with William Cunningham from the Free Church of Scotland.

Hodge's comments on the slavery question and the Civil War of the 1860s are fascinating. We are told how he burst into tears on hearing the news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. He was able to continue teaching till the end of his long life. His deathbed was as we would expect one of great serenity. Typical of him was the boast that Princeton Seminary taught nothing new. He rejoiced in the old truths of the Scriptures and rejected liberalism. He was a true man of God and his life and teaching went together.

Warmly recommended.

*William Macleod*

### FCC Spring Conference

This year's Spring Conference is due to take place on Friday 22nd April in Culduthel Christian Centre, Inverness and there is still time to book. A brochure including a booking form was enclosed with the March issue but if you do not have one then it may be downloaded from the Church website (www.fccontinuing.org); alternatively you may contact the booking secretary Mr Lindsay MacCallum on 01349 884170.

It being the year in which we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Authorised Version of the Bible fittingly the theme of the Conference is 'The Word of God and the People of God'. The speakers expected are the Rev. Greg MacDonald (Ness) who will be speaking at the morning session on 'The Word of God: Inspired and Preserved' and the Rev. Jack Seaton who will be speaking at the afternoon session on 'The People of God: Obedient and Blessed'. A book table and children's programme will be available. For further information please contact the booking secretary.

# The Scottish Reformation

## A Movement of Grace, Part II

***Rev John W Keddie***

*This is the substance of a paper given at the Free Church School in Theology, Larbert, September 2010. Last month, we saw the historical context of the Reformation.*

**3. How do we recognise the Scottish Reformation as a Movement of Grace?**

In assessing the Scottish Reformation as a movement of God's grace, an indispensable source is John Knox's *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, produced over the years in many editions. Under God John Knox was a vital factor in the Reformation movement in Scotland. It was, however, essentially a rediscovery of grace and a notable work of the Holy Spirit in the land. Invaluable in providing a clear understanding of the ideals of the Reformers in doctrine and church order and practice are the formal documents associated with the Scottish Reformation, especially *The Scots Confession of 1560* and the *First Book of Discipline* (1560). Also of significance are the *Book of Common Order* ('John Knox's Liturgy') (1564), and the influential *Geneva Bible* (1560). These are also clear indicators in their own right of a movement of grace in Reformation times.

**(1) *There was a restoration of the Bible and Biblical teaching*.**

That the work of Reformation was a work of grace is evident from its beginnings. Wrote Knox: 'We began every man to look more diligently to his salvation: for the idolatry and tyranny of the clergy was and is so manifest, that whosoever doth deny it, declares himself ignorant of God, and enemy to Christ Jesus. We therefore, with humble confession of our former offences, with fasting and supplication unto God, began to seek some remedy in so present a danger. And first, it was concluded, 'That the brethren in every town at certain times should assemble together to common prayers, to exercise and reading of the Scriptures, till it should please God to give the sermon of exhortation to some, for comfort and instruction of the rest'. And this our weak beginning God did so bless, that within few months the hearts of many were so strengthened that we sought to have the face of a church amongst us, and open crimes to be punished without respect of person. And for that purpose, by common election, were elders appointed, to whom the whole brethren promised obedience: for at that time we had no public ministers of the word; only did certain zealous men … exhort their brethren, according to the gifts and graces granted unto them'.

Obviously a right understanding of the Bible is crucial for a spiritually healthy church. It became necessary to confess the faith believed among those concerned for the reformation of the Church. In Scotland this faith was expressed in *The Scots Confession of 1560*. It comprised 25 Chapters covering a range of doctrinal, practical and ecclesiastical issues. Arguably it was the *Confession* that finally established the Reformation in Scotland. In 1560 Church and Parliament came to its decision. The *Confession of Faith* was, according to Knox, prepared in four days for presentation to Parliament, which ratified it on 17th August, 1560. It was entrusted to six 'Johns': Knox, Wynram, Spottiswoode, Willock, Douglas, and Row. These same six had been charged on 29th April with producing a book 'touching on the reformation of religion'. This resulted in *The First Book of Discipline*, which was signed by the compilers on 20th May. Although presented to Parliament this was never formally ratified. The conviction in the *Confession* is striking: 'We are completely convinced that whoever denies Christ Jesus, or is ashamed of Him in the presence of men, shall be denied before the Father and before His holy angels. Therefore by the aid of the mighty Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ we firmly intend to endure to the end in the confession of our faith'. 'It embodies', as someone has rightly observed, 'the true spirit of our Scottish Reformers' (G D Henderson). It was, said another, 'the warm utterance of a people's heart' (Peter Lorimer). As a *Confession* it is not the product of an academic exercise, nor is it particularly compiled for didactic purposes. It was a *Confession* arising out of the situation through which these men had passed and were facing. As such it clearly indicates a movement of grace and clear grasp of Biblical doctrine.

At its heart is a high view of Scripture and its authority. Chapter XIX deals with 'The Authority of Scripture': 'As we believe and confess the Scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make perfect the man of God, so do we affirm and avow their authority to be from God, and not to depend on men or angels. We affirm, therefore, that those who say the Scriptures have no other authority save that which they have received from the Kirk are blasphemous against God and injurious to the true Kirk, which always hears and obeys the voice of her own Spouse and Pastor, but takes not upon her to be mistress over the same'. Elsewhere the *Confession* states that 'all things necessary to be believed for the salvation of man are sufficiently expressed' in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the written Word of God'. It is the Spirit of God speaking through this Word that determines what is to be believed, how lives are to be ordered and how controversies are to be resolved. This reliance on the Word is clear in the view of Church Councils and their relative authority: 'So far then as the Council affirms its decrees by the plain Word of God, so far do we reverence and embrace them'. There was a return to the Word of God and its authority.

Bible reading was recovered. Some copies of English Bibles came into Scotland after the Scottish Parliament (in 1543) permitted people to own Scots or English translations of the Bible. But really the impetus to Bible reading came in 1560 with the completion of the *Geneva Bible*. This translation became the Bible of the Scots. John Knox himself had contributed to it and the notes or annotations in the margins were a great aid to study and understanding. It was, in 1579, the first Bible printed in Scotland and became standard for the Scottish Kirk till perversely its printing was outlawed by King James I and

displaced by the Authorised Version after 1611. (Some Puritans (and others) thought the AV distinctly Prelatic in form.)

As far as the *Scots Confession* was concerned, in relation to its doctrinal/theological position, Alexander Mitchell makes the astute comment: 'I venture to think that no one who, with a good conscience and honest intent, could sign that *Confession*, and answer in the affirmative the questions regarding election put to candidates for the ministry at their ordination, need hesitate to put his name to that which in 1647 was received as 'in nothing contrary' to the former … which is quite as distinctively Calvinistic as the Westminster Confession'. The *Confession* is a clear indicator of a genuine movement of grace.

**(2) *There was a rediscovery of the faithful preaching of the Word and a consequent widespread impact spiritually in people's lives.***

After Patrick Hamilton returned to Scotland in 1527 he immediately began to preach the doctrines of grace. Hamilton preached the necessity of justification by faith. Salvation is not by works. However, he had no truck with the antinomians: 'I condemn the false trust in any works; for all the works wherein a man putteth any confidence are therewith poisoned and become evil. Wherefore thou must do good works, but beware thou do them not, to deserve any good through them'. One church historian wrote, 'He spared not to lay open the corruptions of the Roman Church, and to show the errors crept in to the Christian religion; whereunto many gave ear to his preaching, and a great following he had both for his learning and courteous behaviour to all sorts of people' (Spottiswoode). Shamefully, he was burned at the stake as a heretic on 29th February, 1528.

Fifteen years after Hamilton's death George Wishart appeared on the scene with his preaching power and reforming zeal. 'First at Montrose, then at Dundee, afterwards in Ayrshire and other places, and finally at Haddington, he at once roused and satisfied the souls of the people. The pivot of his preaching, like Hamilton's, was God's way of life for sinners, through the sole work of Jesus Christ. A pupil of Calvin's, he had learned the value of expository preaching, and at Dundee he expounded the Epistle to the Romans' (Blaikie). John Knox writes of the effect of Wishart's preaching on one occasion at Mauchline in Ayrshire: 'He continued in preaching more than three hours. In that sermon God wrought so wonderfully with him that one of the most wicked men in that country … was converted. The tears ran from his eyes in such abundance that all men marvelled. His conversion was without hypocrisy, for his life and conversation witnessed it in all times to come'. This was the character of Wishart's preaching. Little wonder it made such an impression on Knox himself.

Knox of course took up the mantle. 'Knox was the spiritual successor of Hamilton and Wishart', wrote Garden Blaikie, 'of whose message no one could mistake the tenor; they were evangelists, if ever men were. It was their mantle that Knox took up'. Unquestionably Knox was a powerful preacher of the evangel, as well as being a profound theologian.

This all set the tone for a rediscovery of preaching as central for the church of Jesus Christ. These men set the standard which others followed. As Peter Lorimer reminds us: 'The preaching of the Reformers was a resuscitation of the preaching of St Paul. Christ and faith in Christ were the constant themes of their awakening and world-renewing ministry. They were deeply convinced that nothing but Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and that nothing but faith brings Christ close home to the souls of men. They went to the root of the matter. They saw clearly that in all moral and religious life, in all life of the heart, it is faith or trust that lies at the very bottom' (Lorimer). 'Thus the Reformation flowered', wrote Thomas Lindsay, 'by the preaching of the Word, and the pulpits, occupied by faithful and earnest preachers, became a power in the land'. The spiritual nature of this work was duly emphasised: 'Every minister was earnestly exhorted to his private exercise of fervent prayer, reading, and meditation of things heard and read, that thereby he may be stirred up to grow day by day more and more zealous and devout in spirit, familiar with his God, armed with spiritual armour against all adversaries, and diligently moved to the practice of doctrine in a godly life and holy conversation' (Lindsay). In the rediscovery of preaching Christ and the widespread impact in the salvation of souls and instruction of the people, testimony is borne to the fact that this was a movement of the grace of God.

## Scottish Reformed Conference

The 22nd Scottish Reformed Conference is due to be held on Saturday 14th May 2011 from 10.00 am to 3.30 pm in Hamilton College, Bothwell Road, Hamilton. The speakers are Dr Joel R Beeke of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, USA and Pastor Steve Curry, Bethany Baptist Church, Bangor, Northern Ireland. The organisers have been encouraged by the growth in the numbers attending in the last two years and feel that the conference meets a real need. Costs: adults £5; students £4; children and young people under 17, free. Tea and coffee are provided at no extra cost, but delegates should bring a packed lunch. Further information and guidance for booking on line is available at

www.scottishreformedconference.org.

Dr Joel R Beeke

# Congregational Remittances - February 2011

| | 2011 Feb | 2011 Total | 2010 Total to Feb |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Presbytery of Inverness** | | | |
| Aberdeen | 900 | 1800 | 1,600 |
| Duthil-Dores | 1040 | 2470 | 3,647 |
| Inverness | 2000 | 4000 | 4,000 |
| Kilmorack & Strathglass | 1400 | 2800 | 2,800 |
| **Total Inverness** | **5340** | **11070** | **12,047** |
| **Northern Presbytery** | | | |
| Assynt & Scourie | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brora | 2000 | 2000 | 1,500 |
| Kiltearn | 2000 | 2000 | 3,600 |
| Tarbat | 1000 | 1000 | 1,350 |
| **Total Northern** | **5000** | **5000** | **6,450** |
| **Southern Presbytery** | | | |
| Arran | 342 | 1148 | 908 |
| Ayr | 0 | 0 | 95 |
| Dumfries | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Edinburgh | 4000 | 4000 | 2,100 |
| Glasgow - Partick | 0 | 2000 | 4,000 |
| Glasgow - Shettleston | 1350 | 3350 | 2,500 |
| Glasgow - Knightswood | 3700 | 3700 | 1,700 |
| Rothesay | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total Southern** | **9392** | **14198** | **11,303** |
| **Outer Hebrides Presbytery** | | | |
| Cross | 1849 | 3714 | 3,493 |
| Harris - Leverburgh | 1100 | 2200 | 2,000 |
| Harris - Scalpay | 1700 | 3400 | 3,400 |
| Knock & Point | 1125 | 2250 | 2,000 |
| North Uist | 1000 | 2000 | 2,000 |
| Stornoway | 6140 | 14068 | 5,681 |
| **Total Outer Hebrides** | **12914** | **27632** | **18,574** |
| **Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron** | | | |
| Bracadale | 1000 | 2000 | 1,000 |
| Duirinish (Waternish) | 500 | 1215 | 400 |
| Kilmuir & Stenscholl | 1300 | 2600 | 2,600 |
| Lochalsh | 1495 | 1645 | 703 |
| Poolewe & Aultbea | 435 | 955 | 525 |
| Ullapool | 0 | 0 | 400 |
| Portree | 1200 | 2400 | 2,400 |
| Snizort | 1200 | 2400 | 2,400 |
| Strath | 50 | 80 | 0 |
| **Total Skye** | **7180** | **13295** | **10,428** |
| **Total Congregations** | **39826** | **71195** | **58,801** |
| Other Donations | 680 | 4,677 | 1,209 |
| Legacy | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **40,507** | **75,872** | **60,010** |
| Including Gift Aid | | 0 | 0 |

# Andrew's Letter from Zambia

***Andrew MacLeod***

**Zambians are tough**

The longer I stay here, the more I appreciate this fact: Zambians are tough. Last week I helped Billison Mwanza load the pickup with heavy sacks of grain and set off to find a buyer for Covenant College maize. Roughly five miles away there is a junction on the Great Eastern Highway where the road splits to go into town. This is Petauke Turn-Off: a dusty strip of waste ground where long distance buses pull in to set down and pick up passengers, taxi drivers jostle for fares and packs of goats and pigs scavenge for fallen grains of maize. In between 'God Gives' restaurant and 'Blessings' hair salon there are grain dealers. These are not grain barons with silos and offices and secretaries, just hardy individuals in concrete shells of buildings with a spring balance outside hanging on two vertical sticks. Today, we have three quarters of a ton to sell and most of the dealers are offering 700 Kwacha a kilo. We pull up outside a dealer who is offering 750 Kwacha. Billison knows how much he weighs and swings on the scale. The scale is *yomanga*, tight, and under reads by 5 kg. We walk away. We find a dealer with an accurate scale and offload the maize. I know the sacks are heavy because I helped load them, and after lifting just a few sweat was pouring off me. Allan Daka and Shem Chiwi however, two day workers at the farm, carry the first two sacks easily on their heads. The dealer weighs each sack as it comes off the pickup. I watch the scale carefully as Billison writes down the numbers: 61kg, 72kg, 68kg... The dealer adds up the total on his mobile phone, Billison does likewise and money changes hands. I look at the list of weights; the lightest is 60 kilos, the heaviest 75 kilos. 75 kilos is three times the weight of a bag of Portland cement in Britain, a dead weight to lift off the ground and raise above your head. Daka and Chiwi are neither tall nor well built, but they are tough.

**Weeding**

I find myself again in Frederick Sakhala's field. It is seven o'clock in the morning. His father has already been here for two hours, as has his 78 year old grandmother. '*Anyamata kaliki-liki kulima*' (boys, busy-busy weeding) she says approvingly as we start forming ridges for the maize plants. But busy weeding I am not, ridging is back-breaking work and I am exhausted after the first twenty minutes, thinking of nothing but how I can get my

hands on a cold drink. The family works steadily, turning over the soil so not a weed can be seen, rhythmically swinging the sharp edge of the *khasu* dangerously close to bare feet. I have had porridge, bread and tea for breakfast and have worked up a good hunger by mid-morning. Frederick eats two mangoes plucked from the tree at the edge of the field. Zambian adults don't usually eat breakfast. At twelve o'clock we rest. The mother has cooked *nsima* (maize porridge, Zambian staple food) and chicken in a small shelter in the middle of the field. For the first half hour we eat and no one talks. It tastes good. Once the meal is over the father pulls up a stool beside mine and wants to know do we grow maize in Scotland? Do we have *nsima*? If not, what on earth do we eat? Do people work in the fields like in Zambia? I think of one man in his tractor covering acres in Scotland, and families in Zambia working every square inch of the land by hand, and the two seem worlds apart. I leave after lunch but the Sakhalas work on under the midday sun until they have put in ten hours. Truly for rural Zambians, by the sweat of their faces do they eat bread.

### Emergency Transport

A few times now there has been a voice outside my window during the night: *Odi!* (knock-knock). I reach for the torch which I keep beside my bed and try to remember where I am. The voice outside says: *Amai ali ndi mimba, afuna kupita ku chipatala* (literally: lady she has belly, needs to go to hospital). So a pregnant lady is due and needs to be taken to the hospital. There are ambulances in Petauke, two or three sturdy Land Cruisers, but they exist to transport patients from clinic to hospital and vice-versa, not for coming out to the villages in the middle of the night to pick up pregnant women. For this reason I always make sure the pickup is parked ready to go with at least half a tank of fuel. The bicycle is loaded into the back of the pickup and the messenger guides me to the village. There is candlelight and a murmur of voices coming from the pregnant woman's hut. The husband and father-in-law are conferring quietly outside, we shake hands. *Zikomo, a Bambo* they say, thanking me for coming. With a minimum of fuss the woman climbs in, accompanied by two older ladies. The men stay behind as tradition dictates. The first time I did a hospital run I flew past other vehicles, hazard lights flashing in the style of Zambian ambulance drivers, but the pickup is thirsty when driven with a heavy right foot, and the time saved driving in this way was negligible, so tonight I'm not rushing. I look instead in the rear view mirror and try to read the expression on the pregnant woman's face. She is a teenager and it is her first child but I detect no panic, just a steady, level gaze. At the hospital there are no waiting paramedics, no wheelchairs, no triage, and none of these are needed. The two older

ladies help the younger one out of the pickup, the oldest turns to me, clasps her hands and says *Zikomo, a Bambo* and I know it's a sign for me to leave. From outside, I watch as the trio walk slowly down the corridor, the pregnant lady supported on either side by a friend, and feel profoundly grateful for the doctors and nurses in that building. Your prayers for the staff at Covenant College and Petauke District Hospital are greatly appreciated.

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

**1 John 4:20-21**

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