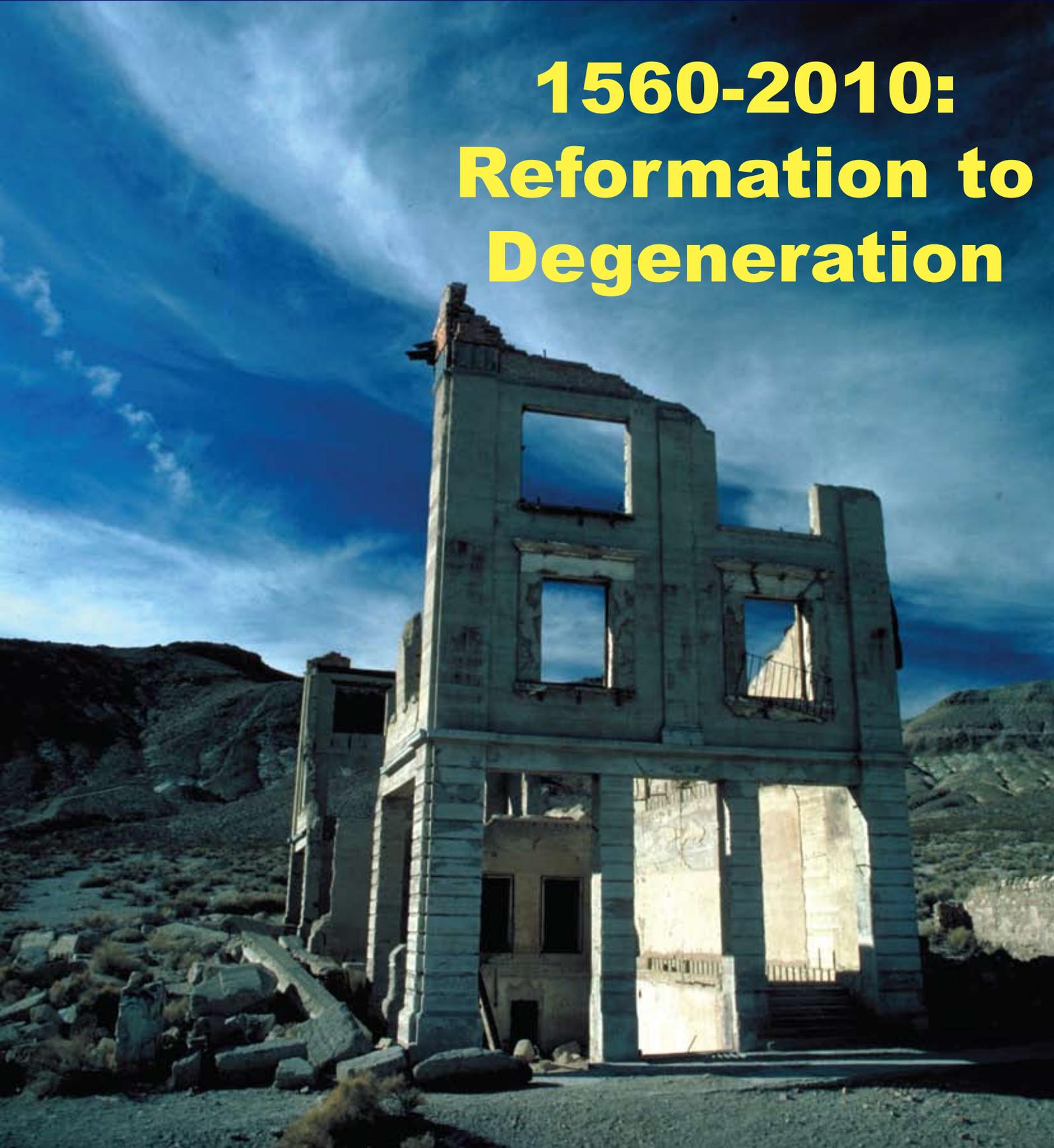


# Free Church **Witness**



MAY 2010 ISSUE

## **1560-2010: Reformation to Degeneration**





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# Lessons from the Reformation



The date of the Scottish Reformation is usually given as the 1st of August 1560. Parliament had been called on 10th July but adjourned to that day for preparations to be made. John Knox preached and public thanks were given to God for His merciful deliverance. The anti-Reformation laws were rescinded. The Scots Confession was accepted by the Parliament on 17th August. Today we thank God for what happened 450 years ago. How different our lives and our nation's life would be if the Romish plans of Mary of Loraine, Mary Queen of Scots, the Guises, Cardinal Beaton, the Pope and many others had succeeded! This issue of the *Free Church Witness* will be devoted largely to celebrating the Reformation. Many lessons are to be learned from the Reformation and in this editorial we will focus on a few of these.

## A Nation born in a Day

The sudden nature of the Reformation in Scotland is remarkable. True there was preparation in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries by the preaching of the Lollards, especially in Ayrshire. Then there were the lives, preaching and martyr testimonies of Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart and others. Bibles had come from the Continent. Many bright young men went to study in the colleges of Germany and Switzerland and returned home enthused with the new learning. Knox is often credited with almost single-handedly bringing about this Reformation but most of the preparatory work was done while he was a slave in the French galleys or ministering in Geneva and elsewhere. In contrast with other nations such as England where the Reformation was from the top down, a decision of the King Henry VIII, in Scotland all classes were affected and essentially it was a movement from the ground up. It was not an administrative change but radical heart change. Essentially the Reformation in Scotland was a massive revival of true religion. It was a work of the Holy Spirit. We look around today. We see a nation given over to pleasure and the pursuit of money. Everywhere secularism reigns. There is no fear of God. Churches are liberal, or sacramental, or man-pleasing and most are spiritually dead. Can this change? Remember what God did at the Reformation. Priests and bishops were ignorant and immoral. Scotland was spiritually dark and then God arose and everything changed. We need faith today in an Almighty God, in the powerful working of His Holy Spirit. Why should we not also see a nation born in a day?

## No Cross, No Crown

There is no doubting that the 'blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church'. Many happily laid down their lives in preaching the gospel. One thinks of James Resby, the Lollard, and Peter Craw, the Bohemian, burnt in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. There is no doubting the impact made on many by the burning of Hamilton and Wishart. From the time of Hamilton around twenty others died as martyrs, for example, Norman Gourlay and David Stratoun who were burned on Carlton Hill, Edinburgh. Each death made its own impact as people witnessed godly men making the ultimate sacrifice for Christ and His gospel. John Knox and many others also put their own lives on the line. But no sacrifice for the Lord is in vain. God calls His church to witness and endure trials for Him today. He tests the reality of our faith. Christ shed His blood for us and demands that we are unashamed in our stand for Him. A costly stand reaps a rich reward.

## Vital Role of Scripture

How was it possible to bring about such a dramatic change in the church? Rome's strength was in her tradition and her unity in the Pope. She claimed to possess the truth and that no salvation was to be found outwith her bounds. Her various beliefs and practices were imposed on all by the authority which she claimed resided in herself. She pretended to have the unanimous consent of the church fathers although they differed greatly from one another. As long as the Church based her teaching on herself or tradition her position appeared unassailable. The Reformers however went back to the roots. They asserted that Scripture was infallible and the only rule, was self-interpreting and that the Holy Spirit illuminated the Bible. This meant that the Church and its priests were bypassed. As the message of Scripture was made known, the Holy Spirit witnessed with its truth to the hearts of men and women and they were saved. The translation of the Scriptures into English, the invention of the printing press able to make many copies and at a reasonable price and the distribution of the Bible through Scotland prepared the way for the Reformation.

## Justification by Faith

The great doctrine of the Reformation was justification by faith alone in Christ alone. All men and women are sinners and to a greater or smaller extent feel their own sin and guilt. The Roman Church by means of penances, priests and sacraments tried to deal with this, but the sense of

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guilt remained. Great sins were mortal and there was no forgiveness. Even those guilty of merely lesser or venal sins were sent to the agonies of Purgatory when they died. There was no assurance of salvation. To people oppressed in this way the doctrine of salvation by faith alone was wonderfully liberating. When accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit it brought true peace, assurance and joy. Let us value this great doctrine and not return to the weak and beggarly elements, to the works salvation, to which many are in bondage.

### **Moral Purity**

More than anything else what undermined the authority of the Roman Catholic Church was the immorality of its priests and bishops. The Church's priests professed to be celibate and took a vow not to marry. Yet Cardinal Beaton, for example, had eleven illegitimate sons and three daughters. His successor Archbishop Hamilton was no better. Laws were brought out against churchmen keeping concubines but they had little effect. The ordinary people could see the wickedness of the lives of those who claimed to be holy and they were disgusted. Surely here we have a lesson for today! If our Christianity does not change our lives it is worthless. People read our lives as well as listen to our words. Nothing reinforces the message we proclaim more than our holy, loving, godly witness.

### **Education**

Education had always had a high place in Scotland. Even before the Reformation there were four universities in Scotland but only two in England. Knox's famous idea was to have a school in every parish, a high school in every

major town and the opportunity given even to the poorest student to go to university. *The Book of Discipline* of which he was an author proposed that the wealth of the pre-Reformation church be divided between the maintenance of the ministry, education for all and the care of the poor. Sadly the greedy nobility refused to pass *The Book of Discipline* in Parliament and devised means to acquire the revenue of the church lands for themselves. Nevertheless, the Reformation emphasis on education did bear fruit. Even in 1830 the English universities had less than 3000 students whereas the Scottish ones had 4,400 students. Yet England's population was eight times that of Scotland.

### **A Full Confession**

Today it has become common to develop minimal statements on which to base our fellowship or our membership of a certain organisation. Many feel that we should get rid of, or weaken our subscription to the *Confession of Faith* in the interests of unity with more Christians. However at the time of the Reformation the idea was that the *Confession* should be as wide ranging as possible in order to bring people together in the riches of God's truth rather than on a slender form of words which anyone can sign. The *Scots Confession* is a great summary of the truth. Let us aim at the fullest of confessions, teach men and women towards that and not retreat from any of the truths taught in Scripture. Let us also remember that the Church of Rome never really changes. It practised all kinds of lies, cruelty and treachery to keep the nations in subjection to it. Our freedom was obtained at the cost of the blood of the martyrs. Let us stand fast for the great truths of the Reformation and never yield an inch to Rome.

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# **Patrick Hamilton**

## **Precursor of the Scottish Reformation**

*Rev Ronald MacKenzie*



**A**t noon, 29th February 1528, outside the entrance of St Salvator's College, St Andrews, a large crowd had assembled to witness the terrifying sight of the burning of a young nobleman of 24 years who had been tied to a stake. For nearly six hours he patiently endured the slow torment of an agonising death. His death had made a deep and abiding impression on the onlookers, one of whom, Alexander Ales who had witnessed his trial for heresy before Archbishop James Beaton and the Scottish hierarchy and had undertaken to win him back to Rome, was so convinced of the truth of the Gospel by the testimony and courageous death of the young martyr that he openly declared his convictions and was forced to flee to Europe where, under his assumed name of Alesius, he became a zealous reformer

and notable theologian. Alesius, Foxe and Knox are our main sources for information on this faithful young soldier of Jesus Christ whose last words were 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! How long shall darkness overwhelm this realm? And how long will you suffer this tyranny of men?' He was the first of our Reformation martyrs to suffer for Gospel truth. Such was the effect of his death in helping to spread the Reformation in Scotland that men said, 'the reek [smoke] of Master Patrick Hamilton infected all it blew on.'

### **Early Life**

Born in 1504 within the diocese of Glasgow, the second son of Sir Patrick Hamilton of Stanehouse and Catherine Stewart, granddaughter of James II of Scotland, he seems to

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have had his early education at Linlithgow Grammar School. In 1517 he was appointed Commendator or titular Abbot of Fearn, Ross-shire – a common abuse in the pre-Reformation church, but which enabled him to study at the University of Paris where he graduated in Arts in 1520. 1517 was the year of Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg, which marked the beginning of the Protestant revolt against Rome.

### **Gospel Light**

It was in Paris where Luther's writings were already exciting much discussion that young Hamilton heard, and gladly embraced, those truths on justification by grace through faith alone, for which he later 'loved not his life unto death'. According to Alesius, Hamilton subsequently went to Louvain, probably attracted by the fame of Erasmus who, by 1521, had made it his headquarters. Like many other young scholars of the period, Zwingli, Tyndale, Melancthon, and Calvin, Hamilton began as a disciple of Erasmus and ended as a disciple of Luther. In the words of his friend Alesius, 'He was a man of excellent learning and very acute mind'. Having experienced the power of the truth in his own soul, he longed to communicate the Gospel in its simplicity and purity to his own nation.

### **Returns To Scotland**

Early in 1523 he returned to Scotland where he became a member of St Leonard's College in the University of St Andrews. In 1524 he was admitted to its faculty of arts, where he became at first a student of, and then a colleague of, the humanist and logician John Major. But Major was no friend of Lutheran evangelicalism and Hamilton had to seek like-minded friends elsewhere – in men such as Gavin Logie, Principal of St Leonard's College and canons of the local Augustinian Priory, such as its prior, John Wynrame who had become sympathetic to Lutheran views. Constrained by the love of Christ and zeal for the salvation of his perishing fellow countrymen, Hamilton began to preach. His activities and his aristocratic family connections alarmed the papal hierarchy headed by Archbishop James Beaton. Their opposition and the threat of a formal trial led Hamilton to flee to Germany where he sought the fellowship of Luther, Melancthon, and Lambert.

### **Flees To Germany**

Hamilton had intended going to Wittenberg, but providentially, an outbreak of the plague diverted him to the new University of Marburg, which the Protestant Landgrave Philip had erected. There, under Francis Lambert, Hamilton continued his studies, enjoying fellowship with like-minded friends such as the English Reformers, Frith and Tyndale. 'His object', said Lambert, 'was to confirm himself more abundantly in the truth; and I can truly say that I have seldom met with anyone who conversed on the Word of God with greater spirituality and earnestness of feeling. He was often in conversation with me upon these subjects'.

### **'Patrick's Places'**

Lambert suggested to Hamilton that he follow Luther's example and prepare a set of theses to be publicly defended

and disputed. According to Lambert, 'the propositions were most evangelical, and supported by the greatest learning. It was by my advice that he took this step'. Such was the origin of the well-known and influential *Patrick's Places* (*Loci Communes* or *Common Places*) – a treatise like Melancthon's *Loci Communes*. Originally in Latin, Hamilton's theses were translated into English by John Frith and printed. They are to be found in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. A brief selection of *Patrick's Places* will help us to see something of the clarity of Hamilton's grasp of fundamental truths such as justification by grace through faith alone, expressed in his own pithy and homely style.

### **His Teaching**

Take, for example, the section headed 'A Disputation between the Law and the Gospel'.

The Law says, 'Pay your debt'. The Gospel says, 'Christ has paid it'.

The Law says, 'You are a sinner: despair; you shall be damned'. The Gospel says, 'Your sins are forgiven you: be of good comfort: you shall be saved'.

The Law says, 'Make amends for your sins'. The Gospel says, 'Christ has made it for you'.

The Law says, 'The Father in Heaven is angry with you'. The Gospel says, 'Christ has pacified Him with His blood'.

The Law says, 'Where is your righteousness, goodness, satisfaction?' The Gospel says, 'Christ is your righteousness, your goodness, your satisfaction'.

The Law says, 'You are bound and obliged to me, to the devil, and to hell'. The Gospel says, 'Christ has delivered you from them all'.

We have also his comparison between Faith and Unbelief:

Faith is the root of all good; makes God and man friends; brings God and man together. Unbelief is the root of all evil; makes them deadly foes; brings them asunder.

All that proceeds from faith pleases God. All that proceeds from unbelief displeases God.

Faith only makes a man good and righteous. Unbelief makes him unjust and evil

Then we have his final section, dealing with the nature of good works:

'No works make us righteous. No works make us unrighteous'.

'None of our works either save us or condemn us'.

'He that thinks to be saved by his works calls himself Christ'.

Commenting on this last somewhat startling expression, Hamilton asserts, 'He that thinks to be saved by his works calls himself Christ – for he calls himself the Saviour, which pertains to Christ only. What is a Saviour, but he that saves? And he says, 'I saved myself; which is as much as to say 'I am Christ'; for Christ only is the Saviour of the World. We should do no good works *for the intent* to get the inheritance of Heaven, or remission of sins through them. For whosoever believes to get the inheritance of heaven, or remission of sin through works, he believes not to get the same for Christ's sake'.

## Final Return To Scotland

In the autumn of 1527 Hamilton returned to Scotland, bold in the conviction of his principles and fired with a holy zeal for the salvation of his fellow countrymen. He went first to his brother's house at Kincavel, near Linlithgow, in which town he preached frequently. His earnest evangelistic labours were blessed to the conversion of many, including his elder brother, Sir James, and his sister, Katherine. It was during this time that he married a young lady of noble rank whose name is unknown. But Satan was not idle and stirred up Archbishop Beaton and the hierarchy to plot his destruction. The wily Beaton was anxious to avoid open conflict through fear of Hamilton's family connections. Instead, under pretence of friendship, he invited him to a conference at St Andrews to discuss matters of reform. Although aware of the danger, Hamilton accepted, being determined to seize the opportunity to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel, confident that by his death he would confirm the faith of the godly. For a month he was permitted to preach and dispute, probably to provide material for his accusation. At length the trap was sprung. During the night the archbishop's retainers arrested him. Next morning he was summoned before a council of bishops and clergy presided over by Beaton.

## Trial And Martyrdom

He was tried for heresy on thirteen charges, seven of which were based upon his own *Patrick's Places (Loci Communes)*. On examination he maintained that the doctrines he taught were agreeable to the Word of God and undoubtedly true. The council condemned him on all the charges and handed him over to the secular power to be punished. The sentence of burning at the stake was carried out that same day to prevent any armed attempt at rescue by his friends. His unflinching courage and witnessing to his Saviour at the stake caused a great sensation throughout Scotland and attracted more attention than ever to the doctrines for which he suffered. One singular aspect of his martyrdom was that, practically alone, he represented the Lutheran stage of the Reformation.

His gentleness, compassion and courteousness attracted many. In the words of John Knox, he 'did so grow and advance in godly knowledge, joined with fervency and integrity of life, that he was in admiration with many. The zeal of God's glory did so eat him up, that he could of no long continuance remain there [in Germany], but returned to his country, where the bright beams of the true light which by God's grace was planted in his heart, began most abundantly to burst forth, as well in public as in secret'.

# Remittances - March 2010

	2010 Mar	2010 Total	2009 To Mar
<b>Presbytery of Inverness</b>			
Aberdeen	2,479	4,079	3,932
Duthil-Dores	3,718	7,365	5,341
Inverness	2,000	6,000	6,000
Kilmorack & Strathglass	2,944	5,744	4,756
<b>Total Inverness Presbytery</b>		<b>11,141</b>	<b>23,188</b>
<b>20,028</b>			
<b>Northern Presbytery</b>			
Assynt & Scourie	563	563	325
Brora	4,192	5,692	5,053
Kiltearn	1,800	5,400	5,400
Tarbat	1,323	2,673	2,922
<b>Total Northern Presbytery</b>	<b>7,877</b>	<b>14,327</b>	<b>13,700</b>
<b>Southern Presbytery</b>			
Arran	1,342	2,250	1,927
Ayr	1,053	1,148	613
Dumfries	0	0	0
Edinburgh	8,471	10,571	10,179
Glasgow - Partick	7,169	11,169	7,751
Glasgow - Shettleston	3,743	6,243	1,000
Glasgow - Knightwood	7,184	8,884	6,498
Rothesay	147	147	73
<b>Total Southern Presbytery</b>	<b>29,109</b>	<b>40,412</b>	<b>28,041</b>

<b>Outer Hebrides Presbytery</b>			
Cross	2,334	5,827	6,358
Harris - Leverburgh	2,658	4,658	3,774
Harris - Scalpay	3,900	7,300	5,196
Knock & Point	2,573	4,573	2,700
North Uist	2,278	4,278	3,041
Stornoway	13,166	18,847	15,278
<b>Total Outer Hebrides Presbytery</b>	<b>26,909</b>	<b>45,483</b>	<b>36,348</b>
<b>Presbytery of Skye &amp; Lochcarron</b>			
Bracadale	3,607	4,607	3,688
Duirinish (Waternish)	800	1,200	1,200
Glenelg & Arnisdale	235	387	566
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	2,446	5,046	4,462
Lochalsh & Glenshiel	974	1,524	3,695
Poolewe & Aultbea	2,764	3,289	3,387
Ullapool	0	400	0
Portree	1,200	3,600	3,600
Snizort	3,643	6,043	3,833
Strath	337	337	1,574
<b>Total Skye Presbytery</b>	<b>16,006</b>	<b>26,434</b>	<b>26,005</b>
<b>Total From Congregations</b>	<b>91,042</b>	<b>149,844</b>	<b>124,123</b>
Other Donations	4,148	5,357	3,798
Legacy	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95,191</b>	<b>155,201</b>	<b>127,921</b>
Including Gift Aid	43,408	43,408	0

# The Antichrist: III. The Biblical Doctrine

Pastor Malcolm H Watts (Emmanuel Church, Salisbury)

**I**n the last issue of this magazine we examined the first part of the Apostle's teaching on the 'Antichrist', or 'Man of Sin', as found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. Along with the Reformers and Puritans, we concluded that Paul did not have just one individual in view, but these names denoted a succession of men who would be apostate leaders in 'the temple of God' or 'Christian Church'. Resembling Judas, 'the son of perdition', these men claim 'apostolic authority' in the 'bishop's office'; and although they profess to love Christ, they prove to be 'traitors' who 'oppose' the Lord Jesus Christ by so 'exalting themselves' that they actually usurp the place belonging only to 'God'. After considering this passage in detail, we concluded that the traditional Protestant interpretation was correct in regarding this prophecy as fulfilled in the Papacy and centred in the Pope at Rome. We shall now continue our study from verse 5.

## I Kept Telling You – 2 Thessalonians 2:5

*'Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?'*

At this point Paul reminds his readers that he had dealt with this subject of the Antichrist when he had been with them in Thessalonica. 'I told you these things'. The tense of the verb here is the imperfect which, if literally translated, would read, 'I was telling you these things': that is, during his visit these matters did not receive a mere passing mention, but they were time and again mentioned in his preaching and teaching. His readers should therefore recognize their great importance. They should be prepared for a singular and unprecedented departure from the Faith and so should not be disturbed, or thrown off balance, by teaching which suggested that the Second Coming was on the very point of taking place.

## Holding Back – Verse 6

*'And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.'*

After reminding his readers of his previous warning (v5), he assumes that they will understand what he is about to write

to them – 'And now ye know...' What is it, in particular, that they will recall and therefore 'know'? It concerns 'what withholdeth', or 'what holds back', so that the Man of Sin cannot yet appear. Notice that in this verse it is some 'thing' or 'power' (the neuter participle of the verb), but in the next verse (v7) – which needs to be considered along with this one – it is 'he who now letteth' (the masculine participle of the same verb, translated with an old English word meaning 'hindereth' or 'restraineth'). This latter reference therefore indicates a prominent individual, which can only mean that the 'thing' (or 'power') will manifest itself in some 'personal' form.

The great majority of orthodox commentators, ancient and modern, see here a reference to the Roman Empire and to the Emperor (or the Caesar). The Empire was certainly the world power of that time – and one represented by a *single* person. Now if this is correct, it would certainly explain Paul's reticence and his use of rather vague terms. Had he been more explicit, particularly when referring, as in the next verse, to the removal of the Emperor (see v7 – 'he be taken out of the way'), he would have exposed himself to very real danger, such danger in fact as he had before experienced in the city of Thessalonica (Acts 17:6,7).

It was the understanding of many of the Early Church Fathers that Paul is alluding to the Roman Empire here, and to the Emperor in the next verse. This may be seen from the following quotations:

**Tertullian** (AD 145-220) – 'There is ... a greater necessity for our offering prayer in behalf of the emperors, nay, for the complete stability of the *empire*, and for the Roman interests in general. For we know that a mighty shock is impending over the whole earth – in fact, the very end of all things threatening dreadful woes – is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman Empire'.

**Cyril** (AD 318-386) – 'Antichrist is to come when the times of the *Roman Empire* shall have been fulfilled'.

**Jerome** (AD 347-420) – 'Antichrist will not come ... until the Roman Empire has first been destroyed ... If St. Paul



**'Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled'**  
**Cyril (AD 318-386)**

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had written openly and boldly that the Man of Sin would not come until the Roman Empire was destroyed, a just cause of persecution would then appear to have been afforded against the Church in her infancy’.

**Augustine** (AD 354-430) – ‘Only he who now reigneth, let him reign until he be taken out of the way. ‘And then shall that Wicked be revealed’: no one doubts that this means Antichrist’.

How do we explain this consensus among the Early Church Fathers except in terms of this being the received interpretation from the very beginning, that is, from earliest apostolic times?

At the time of the Reformation many Reformers identified with this traditional view of the passage. For example, Francis Turretin, Professor in Geneva, commented on these two verses as follows: ‘this prophecy has been fulfilled for a very long time, that is, the dominion of the Roman emperors (which impeded the appearance of Antichrist), has, in fact, been taken out of the way, and as a result of the empire’s removal, the Antichrist, as a necessary consequence, has been revealed’.

As long as the Empire and the Emperor continued, there would be no emergence of the Papacy or the Pope. Why was that? It was because the Roman world power, under one political head, was extremely jealous of any rival authority and simply would not tolerate it to exist. In the words of John Morison of Brompton, ‘Such a power as that which the Bishop of Rome ultimately assumed was utterly incompatible with the existing power and prevalence of the Roman empire. How could the Pope find the place which he claimed, while Nero sat upon the throne of the Caesars?’

History clearly shows that it was very soon after the Fall of the Empire that the Papal Antichrist arose. Romulus Augustulus, the last emperor of the West, was deposed and exiled in AD 476 and very shortly afterwards, in 493, Pope Gelasius asserted his claim to universal supremacy: ‘The Pope as successor of St. Peter has sole (authority) over the corporate body of Christians, amongst whom the emperor takes indeed a vital place, but one of an assistant nature...’

### **The Mystery of Iniquity – Verse 7**

*‘For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way’.*

At the time of writing this the Roman Empire was still in place exerting its power of restraint. The Apostle now tells us why that restraint is necessary – ‘for the mystery of iniquity doth already work’. This is a reference to the presently existing system of which Antichrist will soon be the head. This description ‘mystery of iniquity’ makes clear that in view is *not* unbelief, humanism or secularism. These movements are *openly* anti-God and anti-Christian and so there is nothing whatsoever ‘mysterious’ about them, but Romanism is different, because it purports to be holy yet this pretension is wholly false and hypocritical.

‘The mystery of iniquity’ appears to stand in contrast with ‘the mystery of godliness’ (1Tim.3:16). Dr Grattan Guinness perceptively comments: ‘We read, ‘Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh’, the Most High stooped and made Himself of no reputation. May we not

say, in considering the self-exaltation of the Popes of Rome, great is ‘the mystery of iniquity’; man, sinful, mortal man, exalting himself to be as God!’

Moreover, in the book of Revelation, the word ‘mystery’ appears again on the forehead of the ‘whore’ or ‘harlot’, symbol of the ‘fallen, apostate Church’ (cf. Is.1:21; Hos.4:15). The passage reads: ‘And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY BABYLON’ (Rev.17:5 – Babylon was the ancient great seat of idolatry, Jer.50:38). There can be little doubt as to this Church’s identity, since that chapter refers to her as a ‘catholic’ or ‘universal Church’ (vv.1, 15 ‘upon many waters’ – ‘peoples and multitudes, and nations, and tongues’), a ‘Mother Church’ (v5 ‘The Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth’), distinguished by certain colours (v4 ‘purple and scarlet colour’, the colours of Bishops and Cardinals respectively), known for amazing wealth and impressive ceremonial (v4 ‘decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls’), depicted as carrying a golden cup (v4 ‘a golden cup in her hand’, the chalice used in the Mass, which is of gold whenever possible), persecuting the Lord’s true people (v6 ‘drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus’), situated in the city upon seven hills, which even then was reigning over the earth (vv.9, 18 ‘seven mountains’ – ‘that great city which reigneth’, clearly pointing to Rome as the seven-hilled city, the then capital of the world empire).

‘Mystery’ is evidently the connecting word. As we have seen, it is a word applied both to Rome and to Romanism; and, most significantly, its Latin form *Mysterium* formerly appeared on the front of the Pope’s Tiara.

Now, returning to 2 Thessalonians 2, we note that the spiritual and doctrinal conspiracy which will one day culminate in Roman Catholicism had *already*, in Paul’s own day, begun its course of corrupting biblical doctrine and practice. ‘The mystery of iniquity doth already work...’

Even in New Testament times, the evil influence was to be clearly seen in: (1) following vain tradition (Col.2:8); (2) striving after supremacy (3Jn.9; cf. 1Cor.1:12,13); (3) multiplying of mediators (Col.2:18); (4) indulging in idolatry (1Cor.10:14); (5) justification by works (Gal.1:6-9; 2:16); (6) subjection to human ordinances (Col.2:22,23); (7) adhering to sacramentalism (Acts 15:1; Gal.6:15); (8) observance of festival days (Gal.4:10); (9) practice of asceticism (Col.2:23); (10) adding doctrines to those found in Holy Scripture (Rev.22:18,19). Dr Thomas Newton rightly says: ‘The foundations of Popery were laid indeed in the apostles’ days, but the superstructure was raised by degrees, and several ages passed before the building was completed, and the man of sin was revealed in full perfection’.

However, the Apostle continues, ‘only he who now letteth (or restraineth) will let (or restrain), until he be taken out of the way’. As we have seen the reference is to the Roman Emperor. The time did come when the Empire crumbled and the Emperor was removed. The throne at Rome being now vacated, the Bishop of Rome was able to occupy it as the new ‘Pontifex Maximus’ or ‘Supreme Pontiff’ – formerly the Emperor’s title.

*To be continued*

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# George Wishart:

## His Life and Influence on the Reformation

*Rev Richard Ross (Portree)*



On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1546, George Wishart was burnt at the stake in St Andrews. His crime was to be a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and to have preached the gospel of saving grace in Christ alone to perishing sinners. Thus, in those dark days of the Papacy in Scotland, the Lord's people were called upon and not found lacking, when it came to sacrificing their lives for the advancement of the true gospel. Their sacrifice was not wasted as the Lord visited the land with a great blessing – the Protestant Reformation of 1560.

### His Life and Martyrdom

George Wishart was born in Pitarrow, near Montrose in the year 1513. Being born into a family of the nobility meant that he was well educated. He excelled at Greek and while at the University of Cambridge was influenced by the writings of Martin Luther. His desire for a clearer grasp of the Protestant faith was realised by travelling into Europe. While on the Continent, he came under the influence of the Swiss and German Reformers. His introduction to them had a profound effect upon him and he became a convinced Calvinist. His talent for languages was immediately put to good use translating the First Helvetic Confession into English.

He returned to Scotland in 1544, initially preaching in Montrose, but mostly in Dundee. He preached Christ with a newfound earnestness, and his labours were greatly blessed by the Lord in the conversion of sinners. However, the enemies of Christ were active and he was forced to leave Dundee by the Archbishop of St Andrews. Wishart went west to Ayrshire and preached the same gospel of Christ to perishing sinners. While in Ayr, news came to him of an outbreak of plague in Dundee. Without due regard for his own safety he returned to Dundee stating, 'They are now in troubles and need comfort. Perhaps this hand of God will make them now to magnify and reverence the Word of God which before they lightly esteemed'. He was gratefully received by the perishing in Dundee, and preached to them from Psalm 107:20, 'He sent his word and healed them'.

His faithful labours in Dundee enraged Cardinal Beaton, who persuaded a priest named John Weighton to disguise himself and attend Wishart's preaching in order to kill him. The plot was discovered by Wishart, who displayed his Christian compassion by guarding the life of the would-be assassin from an outraged congregation. After this incident, Wishart left Dundee and went to stay in East Lothian. It was around this time that he became friendly with John Knox, who was willingly seen in public with a two-handed sword acting as a bodyguard for Wishart while he preached.

However it was clear that his enemies were determined to silence him and after a narrow escape at Montrose from the Cardinal's horsemen he felt that his time of departure was drawing near. He is recorded as stating: 'I know assuredly my travel is nigh an end. Neither shall this be long in doing, for there shall not many suffer after me'.

His arrest came swiftly. He was deceived by the Earl of Bothwell who promised him a safe passage, only to apprehend and take

him up to St Andrews to deliver him into the eager hands of Cardinal Beaton.

He was accused of denying purgatory, the Mass and other falsehoods of the Roman Catholic Church. After a mock trial he was sentenced to death on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1546. Such was the hurry of Cardinal Beaton to be rid of Wishart that he even refused a request from Lord Arran the Regent to await his arrival before he would proceed with the trial of Wishart. Cardinal Beaton got his way and George Wishart was burnt at the stake with the Cardinal looking on mercilessly from a balcony of the palace.

It is said of George Wishart that at the stake he prayed for his accusers, declared his forgiveness towards his executioner, and prophesied the death of Cardinal Beaton as a judgment from the Lord. He died in prayer: 'O Thou Saviour of the world, have mercy upon me. Father of Heaven I commend my spirit into Thy holy hands', and passed into his eternal rest to be with the Lord he had faithfully served in his lifetime.

### His Influence on the Reformation

There can be little doubt that his cruel death at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church had a profound effect on the nation. The injustice and speed at which he was martyred was seen by many as an indication of the tyranny of the Catholic Church and even Lord Arran felt great unease at this event. The common people felt a growing sense of outrage at such deeds being done in the name of the Church, and it furthered their despising of the Catholic clergy. The unjust murder of George Wishart, rather than dampen the enthusiasm of people for Protestantism, increased it.

The sacrificial whole-hearted commitment of George Wishart to Christ and the gospel also had an influence on the nation. His willingness to give his life rather than deny his Lord bore a loud testimony to the reality of his faith in Christ. The people of Scotland could not but fail to be impressed by the dedication of the Protestant martyrs when compared with the avarice of the Catholic clerics. Men like George Wishart not only preached Christ, but also lived and died for Him.

It is difficult to accurately assess his influence on John Knox, although their gospel friendship was widely known. It is however surely inconceivable to think that the preaching of George Wishart would not have a strengthening effect on Knox, whom the Lord was to use to secure the Protestant Reformation in Scotland.

However it was the preaching of George Wishart to the common people that had the greatest and lasting influence on the Reformation. He preached Christ freely to all as a decided Calvinist, and the Lord blessed his labours in Dundee, Montrose and Ayrshire. Although he did not have a long gospel ministry, its effect was long-lasting. His preaching of Christ, along with that of other faithful men, helped lay a foundation of biblical truth among the common people, which had previously been denied them by the clergy. In the providence of the Lord, these faithful gospel preachers and martyrs were preparing the nation of Scotland for the Protestant Reformation of 1560.



# News



## Arbroath Weekend, February 2010

*Sarah-Ann Lee*

**Left to Right: (Back Row)** Joel Harding, Rev Gavino Fioretti, Peter MacLeod, Stephen Campbell, Andrew MacLeod, David Woods, Tom Budgen, William Johnston, Martin Fraser, Karen Reyburn, Connor Quigley, Megan McAleese, Murdo Macleod, Rachel Gill, Bruce MacKenzie, Gordon Stewart, Ian Bannerman, Philip Todd, Neil Smith, David Wylie, DR Morrison, Alasdair Morrison, Nathan Roberts Sian Spencer, Murdo MacKenzie.

**(Middle Row)** James Boyd, Jennifer Littl, Naomi-Jayne Lowery, Christine Boyd, Ruth Naylor, Peigi Smith, Helen Brannigan, Flora MacLeod, Fiona Sim, Alasdair Macleod, SN Partheepan, Ben Lowery, Janet Matheson, Murray MacKay, Caroline Morrison, Sandra MacKay, Christine Macleod, Kerry Martin, Iain Taylor.

**(Front Row)** Eileen Murray, Becky Wilson, Esther Boyd, Rachel Venton, Sarah-Ann Lee, Cathel MacSween, Carla Quigley, Stephen Steele, Rhian Spencer, Mrs Isobel McQueer.

It truly is a blessing to be able to get away from the hubbub of life for a weekend and engage in a time of Christian fellowship and listening to the preaching of God's Word. With Rev Gavino Fioretti as the speaker on the topic 'What is the Church?' it would prove to be insightful on the nature of and function of the church and our duty within it. It was an excellent time of mixing with other Christians, with great food and great conversations.

Learning about the church: its origin, its practice, its worship, and its commission, was enriching. We had a comforting reminder that while many congregations and denominations exist in this world currently, we are all united in the body of Christ and will one day experience the perfect church in heaven. This reality felt especially true, as there we were, like-minded brethren together worshipping and fellowshiping for these few days. I

think all would agree that the Question and Answer session was enjoyable, with Rev Fioretti cutting straight to the heart of each question the same way as he did during the talks. Listening to the testimonies given by Benjamin Lowery and Karen Reyburn, it was truly a time to reflect on how God worked in our lives, and the immense comfort that comes with assurance of our place as His children. But perhaps the most thought-provoking moment for me

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# Desk

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was during the last in the series of talks, about the Church's Commission. It was one which challenged us to think and rethink and consider what we as God's people were doing in our witness for Him and the good news of salvation in this day and age, with the various avenues available to us. With that to think upon, we concluded the Weekend Away reflecting on God's goodness towards us and our call to spread the gospel.

## Highland Bible Conference

The next Highland Bible Conference is due to take place DV at Westhill Free Church (Continuing), Culloden Road, Inverness, IV25BP, tel: 01463 791828, from 19th to 20th June 2010. The speaker expected is Rev Iain H Murray of the Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh. Meetings as follows:

**Saturday** June 19 7.30 pm

**Lord's Day** 11 am and 6.30 pm

## Seminary Closing Lecture

The Seminary closing lecture will be delivered, DV, at Westhill Church, Culloden Road, Inverness, on Friday June 18 at 7.30pm. The speaker will be the Rev Iain Murray. All are welcome.

## Western Isles Bible Conference

The next Western Isles Bible Conference is due to take place DV at Stornoway Free Church (Continuing) from 4th to 6th June 2010. The speaker expected is Rev. Richard Brooks and his theme is 'Christian Experience in the Psalms.'

A warm welcome awaits all. Anyone requiring further details or

accommodation should contact Donald MacDonald on 01851 704039.

## Job Cuts in Church of Scotland

Staff numbers are to be axed at the Mission and Discipleship Council, the Church of Scotland body which recruits new members and is behind Christian education, as the fallout from the Kirk's financial woes continues. Nearly half of all staff in the department responsible for the Kirk's *Life and Work*, publishing arm St Andrew Press and the Scottish Storytelling Centre are to go under the cost-cutting plans. The Church is trying to reduce its £1.2 million deficit and the 44-strong department has been warned it will be reduced to just 24 after the revamp. Three regional offices in Glasgow, Perth and Inverness are to close with eight job losses.

## End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

CARE

Margo MacDonald MSP has introduced a Bill into the Scottish Parliament which would license assisted suicide. This would mean a fundamental shift in the long-accepted way in which our society cares for the ill and the vulnerable. For the Christian it undermines a basic belief that life is given to us by God and it is not ours to dispose of. The Bill is very poorly drafted and as a result would include within its remit people who are dependent on someone else as a result of a disability. What would be permitted in the Bill is unbelievably wide. If the Bill were to become law it would critically undermine the

relationship between doctor and patient. Doctors and nurses, who have come into medicine to help and heal, would find themselves being forced to be involved in the process of assisting people to die before their natural end. The Bill contains no opt-out clause for those doctors with a conscientious objection. If you believe that this is a retrograde step for Scotland to take, please write to your MSPs. If you are a healthcare professional or have a positive personal experience of caring for someone at the end of their life your letter will carry particular significance. You can find out more about this issue, and advice on how to contact your MSPs, at the Care Not Killing web site [www.carenotkilling.org.uk](http://www.carenotkilling.org.uk). Campaign postcards to distribute within your church, and beyond, are also available. Please contact CARE for Scotland on 0141 332 7212 / [cfs@care.org.uk](mailto:cfs@care.org.uk) to request a quantity.

## Election2012

(CARE sent the following paragraph)

Your local council needs you! Have you ever considered that becoming a local councillor is one opportunity of making a vital contribution in your community, impacting key local decisions with Christian values and helping to set the priorities for your local area? Perhaps you have thought about it, but didn't know how to get started. Perhaps just by reading this you've realised that this is what you'd really like to do. *Election2012* aims to ease the way for Christians to stand as councillors in the next local elections in 2012 – and, yes, you really need to start planning now! For example, you should join the party of your choice as soon as possible. With support,

information, encouragement, advice, and training days, *Election2012* is a unique resource for anyone feeling God's prompting into local politics. Councils need to reflect the make-up of their community and so everyone – male or female, retired or working, full-bodied or disabled, young or old – should give this consideration. Do explore the web pages at the address below. Get an insight into the experiences of councillors currently in post. Find out what councils actually do. Read a bit more about our Christian responsibilities. Ask us questions. Come to a training day. Election 2012 is a joint initiative from CARE for Scotland and Evangelical Alliance Scotland. See [www.localelection2012.org.uk](http://www.localelection2012.org.uk).

## **New Psalmody CD**

*Rev Bill Scott*

God willing, the Psalmody Committee of our Church hopes to have Volume 6 ready for the Assembly in May. Of the 193 tunes in the Psalmody 144 were chosen some years ago. These were divided into 12 with 12 tunes in each portion, to be learned over a 12-year cycle. With volume 6, we are six down with six to go! The overall title to this ambitious programme is *Worthy to be Praised*, and our God is worthy of all our praise. As usual this volume follows the same pattern as others in the series. The 'Listening Disc' includes four of the more familiar tunes which are now set for younger singers. These are sung by children from our Sabbath Schools. Also included are two Gaelic tunes sung by solo voices and by a congregation as an option for Gaelic singers. Listening or singing along to the Psalms sung in harmony is a treat for many and an aid to their private or family worship. We suggest that they may be used where there is no precentor. Use the 'Teaching Disc' and learn to sing your own part, be it soprano, alto, tenor or bass. Indeed for anyone willing to listen and learn, our worship will be enriched by the wide variety of tunes from the Psalmody. The Double CD costs £8.00.

A new edition of Manual for Precentors, now renamed *Learning to Sing the Psalms* is available with an accompanying CD and costs £4.00. For those who already have the manual the CD alone costs £1.00. It is also hoped to have a selection of 'Gaelic Tunes' ready. This reprint from 1867 has the tunes in Solfa and Staff, with the words in Gaelic and English, as well as the precentor's line. As such it is unique. All the above with Volumes 2-5 of *Worthy to be Praised* may be obtained from Mrs Isobel Scott, 36 Pinewood Place, Blackburn, West Lothian, EH47 7NY.

## **Ladele's Appeal Rejected**

*Christian Institute*

The UK Supreme Court has turned down an appeal application in the case of Lillian Ladele, a Christian registrar who was disciplined because of her stance against civil partnerships. The nation's highest court dismissed the application, claiming it 'does not raise an arguable point of law of general public importance'. Miss Ladele says she is 'disappointed' and feels her religious rights have been 'trampled by another set of rights'. She is 'actively considering' taking her legal fight to the European Court of Human Rights.

The Ladele case shows how so-called permissive changes to the law quickly become coercive. When the civil partnership legislation was passed, the public was told that it was simply to permit homosexual couples to enter into a legal union – it wouldn't affect anyone else. But it quickly became coercive. Lillian was told to toe the line on civil partnerships or be dismissed from her job. And we know many others were told the same thing.

## **Evangelistic Witness**

Over the past few years the June Free Church Witness has been a special evangelistic issue with some 10,000 to 12,000 copies being produced. The same is planned for this year. The magazine will contain testimonies, challenging articles for unbelievers and explanations of the Gospel. It will be in full colour, the usual 20 pages in length and have no date on it so that it can continue to be distributed for months or even years. The price for the special issue this year will 30p per copy. The price has been held at 20p for a number of years and the church has effectively been subsidising the cost. Production costs have now risen to the extent that it is necessary to increase the price charged. The magazines should be available for collection at the Assembly, D.V. After the Assembly the remaining magazines can be collected from Inverness. If you would like to order extra copies of the June issue please contact Rev David Blunt (Tel. 01876 510305; email [davidblunt@fccontinuing.org](mailto:davidblunt@fccontinuing.org)) as soon as possible with an indication of how many copies you require. It is important that we have an idea of the total quantity required to help the printer.

## **Conference on Christian Education**

*Saturday 5th June 2010*

**St Quivox Church of Scotland,**

*(kindly lent)*

Dallmilling Road, Ayr

10am-4pm

Speakers

**Gavin Beers and Ali McLachlan**

Science demonstration by **Marc Surtees**

Come and browse education resources and books  
2nd-hand resources exchange (bring and swap)

Bring your own lunch/Fast food outlets nearby  
Drinks provided

Contact **Tim and Rosie McClure** 01505 500 462 or  
[tcmclure@lineone.net](mailto:tcmclure@lineone.net)

Sponsored by Home Service



# 1560 – 2010: From Reformation to Degeneration

*Rev James Clark*

**A**fter 450 years, we are able to assess the long-term effects of the Reformation in Scotland. We may do this by contrasting the attainments of 1560 with the condition of the church in Scotland in 2010.

## **The Attitude to the Reformation Itself**

In 1560 it was a cause of thanksgiving to God that the church had been delivered from the tyranny and superstitions of Popery. The Reforms were made according to the Bible and were welcomed by the Lord's people.

Today in Scotland, the Reformation is seen by many as a mistake made which led to an unnecessary separation from the Papacy. Today, there is a widespread desire by professing Protestants to join Roman Catholics in a return to pre-Reformation doctrines, worship and practices which find no warrant from Scripture. The present church in Scotland has more similarities to the medieval church than the church of 1560. Would the Reformers recognise the church in Scotland today? In 1560 there was published *'The Confession of Faith and Doctrine believed and professed by the Protestants in Scotland'*. It was approved by Parliament in the same year 'as doctrine founded upon the infallible Word of God'. There is only a small remnant of 'Protestants' in the church in Scotland today who would agree with the Scots Confession, and few, if any, in Parliament.

## **The Ministry**

In 1560, men were called by the Holy Spirit to the ministry. They were equipped with spiritual gifts and were eminent for holiness. Nowadays unconverted men, women and even homosexuals are 'called' by the so-called church to enter the Christian ministry, without God's prior approval or attesting evidences.

## **The Bible**

The Bible was regarded as infallible and every word held in reverence. It was the only rule for faith and practice. It was also accepted that it could not be understood without the Holy Spirit and prayer. The Scots Confession, adopted by the liberated church, contained doctrines founded upon the Scriptures.

Nowadays, the Bible is subject to human critical opinion, is not regarded as perfect and can be dispensed with by the 'church' in formulating doctrine, mode of worship and practices, many of which are now ecclesiastically approved yet are clearly condemned by the Bible. Instead of 'Sola Scriptura', Scripture alone no longer regulates doctrine, worship or practice, but human ecclesiastical opinion decides which parts of the Bible are to be believed and practised.

## **Worship**

In 1560, worship was regulated by the Word of God and there was an emphasis on preaching the Word. All the man-made inventions accumulated over the previous thousand years were rejected because not found in Scripture. The praise was in Psalms unaccompanied by musical instruments.

Nowadays, worship is according to human or 'church' opinion. The place of preaching in the service has been devalued and

relegated. There is now also a return to the use of musical instruments which was practised in the Old Testament temple worship but was abolished along with every other part of the ceremonial law.

## **The Government**

At the Reformation, the Government supported the true church in opposition to Rome. This was in accordance with the Establishment Principle and the Government intervened only according to, and in order to establish, Biblical principles. 'Moreover, we state that the preservation and purification of religion is particularly the duty of kings, princes, rulers and magistrates' (Scots Confession ch.24).

Nowadays, the State has returned to the role it played in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD ie to oppose and attempt to subdue the church of Christ. The State currently supports almost anything which aligns itself in opposition to the Bible. Moreover, many churches have rejected the Establishment Principle.

## **The Church and the World**

The Reformation Church distinguished itself by its unworldliness and its heartfelt devotion to spiritual things. Within the church, Biblical discipline was exercised in order to restore the penitent and exclude the impenitent. The marks of the church are 'the true preaching of the Word of God... the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus... and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered as God's Word prescribes' (Scots Conf. ch.18).

The church of today is characterised by its friendship with the world and desire for conformity. The Ten Commandments are no longer regarded as the standard for godliness and the basis for discipline. Many church 'members' are characterised by nominalism, formalism and apathy to the cause of God and truth. Most Kirk Sessions are unwilling to discipline professing members whose lives contradict Biblical standards.

## **The Person of Christ**

The Reformation reasserted the headship of Christ over the church and nation. It also dogmatically witnessed that Christ is the only Saviour and only way to the Father.

Nowadays, many in the 'church' contradict Christ's teaching and oppose Christ's commands and there is widespread toleration of other ways and other 'mediators' who are supposed to lead to God.

## **Rome**

The Pope was regarded as the Anti-Christ and Man of Sin and was seen as dangerous to the safety of the true Church. This year the Prime Minister has invited him to this nation and very few Protestants are inclined to protest.

What a degeneration in Scotland! What proud defiance of God! JC Ryle stated a hundred years ago: 'Our lot is cast in days when it is the fashion to despise everything that is old'. Alas, this includes our Reformation in Scotland. We should be thankful for the Reformation God accomplished here and stand to resist its undoing by the pseudo-pious ecclesiastics in Scotland!

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# John Knox

*Rev Sherman Isbell*

*Right: St Giles' Cathedral, Knox's Church in Edinburgh*



John Knox was born near Haddington, East Lothian, about 1514, the son of a prosperous farmer. The future reformer became a priest in the Roman Church, and a notary, authenticating legal documents and drawing up ecclesiastical papers. As a young man, his anchor of faith was first cast on John 17, where he saw 'that the counsel of God is stable and His love immutable towards His elect, received by Him in protection and safeguard'. Reflecting on Christ's words, 'thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me', Knox later wrote: 'O that our hearts could without contradiction embrace these words, for then with humility should we prostrate ourselves before our God, and with unfeigned tears give thanks for his mercy! So straight and near is the conjunction and union between Christ Jesus and His members, that they must be one, and never can be separated.'

## Call to Preach

By 1543 Knox was serving as personal tutor to the sons of two Protestant lairds, and the following year was bodyguard to George Wishart, a preacher who was braving the wrath of the church authorities. After Wishart's death, Knox and the scholars under his care took refuge at the castle in St Andrews, where Knox continued his instruction of them in John's Gospel. These expositions were overheard by John Rough, chaplain of the garrison, who then preached on the election of ministers, and publicly called on Knox to join him in the work of the ministry: 'In the name of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, and in the name of these that presently call you by my mouth, I charge you that ye refuse not this holy vocation, but that as ye tender the glory of God, the increase of Christ's kingdom, the edification of your brethren, and the comfort of me, whom ye understand well enough to be oppressed by the multitude of labours, that ye take upon you the public office and charge of preaching, even as ye look to avoid God's heavy displeasure and desire that He shall multiply His graces with you.' Knox burst into tears and left the room, but was persuaded to accept the call.

## Slave

Attending a debate between Rough and the dean of St. Andrews Cathedral, Knox sought to prove that the Church of Rome was more degenerate than the church which consented to Christ's death. His amazed hearers said, 'Others chopped off the branches of the Papistry, but he strikes at the root, to destroy the whole'. From the outset, his critique of the Roman Church was based on an assertion that observing ceremonies not commanded in Scripture does not come from faith, but is sin, for which he cited Deuteronomy 4:2. The castle soon fell to the French fleet which was assisting the Roman Catholic regime in Scotland, and Knox was enslaved for nineteen months as an

oarsman on a French galley. He remained assured that he would not die until he had opportunity to preach Christ again in St. Andrews.

## Ministry in England

The English government, which was supporting the Protestant cause in Scotland, secured Knox's release, and sent him to preach to a garrison of soldiers at Berwick, where he met the Englishwoman he would later marry. Finding that the local bishop was reluctant to enforce the Protestant reforms authorised by the Church of England, Knox took advantage of the laxity of oversight to introduce an even more radically Protestant order of worship. Summoned to defend himself before the Council of the North, Knox declaimed, 'All worshipping, honouring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God without his own express commandment is idolatry. The mass is invented by the brain of man, without any commandment of God. Therefore it is idolatry.'

Knox became one of the six chaplains appointed to preach to the Protestant king, Edward VI. When the king died in 1553 at the age of sixteen, Knox regarded it as a judgment on England for failure to appreciate the opportunity to implement full reform. Knox foresaw the persecution which would follow under the new queen. Before leaving for France, he wrote of the great attachment he had formed to the English: 'My daily prayer is for the sore afflicted in those quarters. Sometime I have thought that impossible it had been, so to have removed my affection from the realm of Scotland, that any realm or nation could have been equal dear unto me. But God I take to record in my conscience, that the troubles present (and appearing to be) in the realm of England are double more dolorous unto my heart than ever were the troubles of Scotland'. From this period his speech and written words were notably anglicized. From the continent he wrote pastoral letters to those he left behind, exhorting believers not to return to the Roman Church, but to meet in secret for prayer and mutual exhortation. Many of his former associates, such as John Rough, were soon put to death.

## Expulsion from Frankfurt

Knox now visited several of the Swiss reformers to learn their opinions about resistance to tyrannical authority. Calvin urged him to become the minister of a church of English exiles at Frankfurt. Knox accepted the call, but arrived to find the congregation rent by a controversy about liturgy. In short order, Knox was undermined by dissidents, who made allegations against him to the magistrates, resulting in Knox's expulsion from the city. Nevertheless, the liturgical compromise prepared by Knox while in Frankfurt was now to be utilized by a congregation of refugees whom Calvin invited to assemble at

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Geneva, and Knox became one of their pastors. The same order of service would be adopted in Scotland when the Reformation was established there five years later.

Knox made a visit to Scotland in 1555 and 1556, responding to 'the fervent thirst of our brethren, night and day sobbing and groaning for the bread of life'. Knox was surprised by the progress being made by the gospel in his native land, even in Edinburgh, where 'the trumpet blew the old sound three days together, till private houses of indifferent largeness could not contain the voice of it. Rejoice, Mother, the time of our deliverance approacheth. For as Satan rageth, so does the grace of the Holy Spirit abound and daily giveth new testimonies of the everlasting love of our merciful Father'. Knox enlisted the support of local lairds in Ayrshire, Lothian, Angus and Montrose, who were also involved in resistance to French political intrusion into Scotland.

### **Description**

A contemporary provided a description of Knox's appearance. 'In bodily stature he was rather below the normal height. His countenance, which was grave and stern, though not harsh, bore a natural dignity and air of authority; in anger his very frown became imperious. Under a rather narrow forehead his eyebrows rose in a dense ridge; his cheeks were ruddy and somewhat full, so that it seemed as though his eyes receded into hollows. 'The eyes themselves were dark-blue, keen and animated. His face was somewhat long, with a long nose, a full mouth, and large lips'.

Knox went back to Geneva, where he studied with Calvin and was made a citizen of the city. He urged others to see for themselves what had been achieved in Geneva, 'where I neither fear nor am ashamed to say is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles. In other places, I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion so sincerely reformed, I have not yet seen in any other place'. The reformation carried out in this Swiss city of ten thousand inhabitants would become the model for what would be erected in Scotland, which numbered upwards of a million.

### **Permanent Return**

Knox left in January 1559 to return to Scotland, but was delayed until May at Dieppe, where he acted as pastor to a French Reformed congregation, and then sailed to Leith. Knox had become a leading exponent of the propriety of using political and military leverage to resist an oppressive regime and depose rulers. He acted as the spiritual guide to several Scottish nobles and lairds who earlier had banded together to work for recognition of a reformed church, and who eventually undertook armed revolution against the Roman Catholic regent for the young queen. Throughout the summer of 1559, and into the winter, there were moments of triumph and also of defeatism. Knox was intrepid in admonishing his associates when they trusted in clever stratagems, rather than relying on God as their protector. After rebuking them, Knox would call them to press forward with renewed hope in God. The English ambassador reported of Knox's preaching at such times, 'The voice of one man is able in one hour to put more life in us than five hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears'. The struggle consumed Knox, who wrote in December: 'I have read the cares and temptations of Moses, and sometimes I supposed myself to be well practiced in such dangerous battles. But

alas! I now perceive that all my practice before was but mere speculation; for one day of troubles since my last arrival in Scotland hath more pierced my heart than all the torments of the galleys did the space of nineteen months; for that torment, for the most part, did touch the body, but this pierces the soul and inward affections'.

### **The Reformation**

When a parliament gathered in August 1560, it abolished papal authority in Scotland, outlawed the mass, and embraced a confession of faith written by Knox and others. Knox was settled as a minister at St Giles, Edinburgh. At the close of the year, the young Mary Queen of Scots suffered the death of her husband, the king of France, and returned to Scotland. About the same time, Knox as well lost his spouse, who died at the age of 24, leaving him with two sons. Calvin wrote to console him. 'Farewell, excellent sir and brother, worthy of the heart's affection. Your widowhood is to me grief and bitterness, as it ought to be. You found a wife whose like is not found everywhere; but as you have rightly learned whence consolation in sorrow is to be sought, I doubt not that you bear this calamity with patience'. Knox remarried four years later.

The next years were a further contest to ensure that the Protestant cause would hold on until it had taken root, and to safeguard what had been gained. Although a Protestant council governed the country, it allowed Mary to maintain the mass in her chapel. This was the cause of tension between the council and the church's ministers. Knox in particular was alarmed. Mary also contrived that the financial resources of the church would be allocated largely to those who had held office in the pre-Reformation church, with the remaining third of the patrimony being divided between the lavish expenses of her court and the support of impoverished Reformed ministers. Knox, who in conversation with the queen withstood her demands, was discouraged by the pragmatic accommodations to her by many of the Protestant nobility. Mary eventually undermined her own credibility, by marriage to a man who was suspected of involvement in the murder of her previous husband, and she was forced to abdicate the throne in 1567.

### **Death**

Knox lived on until November 24, 1572, already an old man at age 58. In his later years he felt deeply the vanity of temporal affairs, and referred to 'this my churlish nature, for the most part oppressed with melancholy'. James Melville, a student at St. Andrews, often heard the great man's preaching about a year before the close of his life. 'I had my pen and my little book, and took away such things as I could comprehend. In the opening up of his text he was moderate the space of an half hour; but when he entered to application, he made me so to shudder and tremble, that I could not hold a pen to write'. At the end of his days, so feeble was Knox outside the pulpit that he had to be lifted into it by two men, 'where he behooed to lean at his first entry; but ere he had done with his sermon, he was so active and vigorous that he was like to ding that pulpit in blads, and fly out of it!' When he was laid in the grave, the Earl of Morton said of him, 'Here lieth a man who in his life never feared the face of man: who hath been often threatened with pistol and dagger, but yet hath ended his days in peace and honour. For he had God's providence watching over him in a special manner, when his very life was sought'.

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# The Scots Confession, 1560

*Rev Greg MacDonald*

## The Birth of a Confession

The persecution of the Reformers in Scotland eased slightly in the 1550s as the Regent, Mary of Guise, initially tolerated the reforming party. She was however only securing her power-base until Mary, her daughter, was married to Francis II of France. At this she began to raise the army against the Protestants in Perth. In response the Reformers agreed to give up their stronghold on two conditions:

1. That no foreign garrison be imposed on Perth.
2. That Parliament be convened to deal with the religious questions in dispute.

Mary soon broke the spirit of this pact by stationing troops at Perth, in the pay of the French. The Protestant Lords raised their own forces and Mary retreated first to Edinburgh then to Dunbar. Once in Edinburgh the Lords issued a proclamation deposing the Regent. They sought help from the English Queen Elizabeth I, while Regent Mary cried to the French. Both sent troops by sea, but the English blockaded the Firth of Forth, disappointing Mary's hopes of assistance. She died in Edinburgh on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1560.

It would be more than a year before her daughter, Mary Queen of Scots, arrived to take the throne. The Protestants made use of that vacuum. Parliament met fully on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1560. The Protestant nobility petitioned Parliament, seeking the abolition of Popery. The petition of the Protestants made a challenge: 'We offer ourselves to prove, that in all the [rabble of the clergy] there is not one lawful minister, if God's word, the practice of the apostles, and their own ancient laws shall judge of lawful election. We further offer ourselves to prove them all thieves and murderers: yea, rebels and traitors to the lawful authority of empires, kings and princes; and therefore unworthy to be suffered in any reformed commonwealth.'

Parliament formally directed Protestant noblemen and ministers to draw up 'in plain heads, the sum of that doctrine which they would maintain, and would desire this present Parliament to establish as wholesome, true, and only necessary to be believed and received within that realm.' In essence the Parliament took up the challenge. They wanted to see the proof.

Over the next four days, *The Scots Confession* was drafted by six ministers: John Winram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas, John Row, and John Knox. On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1560, the document was read before Parliament. Protestant ministers stood on edge, waiting for a challenge, eager to defend the cause of truth. Yet it never came. The best the enemies of Reformation could come up with was, 'We will believe as our fathers believed.' When the vote was taken, the Confession was ratified, with only a few dissenting voices. Catholic Bishops said nothing at all.

John Row, one of those who drafted the confession, said that they 'took not their pattern from any kirk in the

world, no, not from Geneva itself; but, laying God's Word before them, made reformation according thereunto, both in doctrine first, and then in discipline'. The first General Assembly met in December 1560 and approved both the Confession and the 1<sup>st</sup> book of Discipline.

## I. The Need for the Confession

The Preface to the Scots Confession is both solemn and impressive. In it the six Johns explain why they needed to put down in writing and commit to the scrutiny of the world, what they believed. It is a preface charged with emotion, written by men who had witnessed such a great change in their country. Just a few decades before, Scotland was smeared with the oil-slick of superstition, ignorance and poverty that came on the back of Romanism. Scotland officially persecuted, hounded and slandered any of the reforming viewpoint. More than that, the nation had tried and tortured their friends, and murdered them in the name of justice. Now these six men were writing this *Confession* at the behest of their nation, through Parliament! They wrote expecting that it would be accepted as the creed of Scotland! The voice of the writers comes through so clearly in this Preface:

'The Estates of Scotland, to their natural countrymen, and unto all other realms and nations, professing the same Lord Jesus with them, wish grace, mercy, and peace... Long have we thirsted, dear brethren, to have notified unto the world the sum of that doctrine which we profess, and for the which we have sustained infamy and danger. But such has been the rage of Satan against us, and against Christ Jesus' eternal verity lately born amongst us, that to this day no time has been granted unto us to clear our consciences, as most gladly we would have done... But seeing that, of the infinite goodness of our God, we have obtained some rest and liberty, we could not but set forth this brief and plain confession partly for satisfaction of our brethren, partly for stopping of the mouths of impudent blasphemers. But we have chief respect to our weak and infirm brethren, to whom we would communicate the bottom of our hearts, lest that they be troubled or carried away by diversity of rumours, which Satan spreads contrary [against] us...'

The Reformers were clear – they needed a Confession. It wasn't an extra, it wasn't a preference. They felt it as necessary from the bottom of their hearts. To grasp this alone will make studying this subject worthwhile. Their earnestness and eagerness to set down exactly what God had done for them and exactly what they believed to be the truth of the Bible was not cold, scholastic or exhausting. It was exhilarating, joyful, yearned for!

## II. The Meat of the Confession

The Confession is in two main sections. The first 12 chapters are historical (don't be put off by 12 chapters. They are really

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just paragraph points. All 12 chapters can be read in 30 minutes). It begins with God, the eternal, triune God, the Creator of all things. Then comes the Fall, the doctrine of sin and the Evangel from Genesis 3 on to the Incarnation. Some pages cover Christ as God and Man in one Person. Next comes election, of His people, and of the chosen Messiah; His Incarnation, Suffering, Death, Resurrection and Ascension.

The second section is more doctrinal. These 13 chapters cover the doctrines that flow from the completion of the redemption of Christ. These show the contradictions between the biblical position and that taken by the Roman church. As an example, the chapters dealing with good works show us the necessity of the Spirit, the perfection of the law and the impossibility of good works leading to, or being the cause of, salvation.

The Church is also considered, in its unity and catholicity. Its nature includes families; its only head is declared to be Christ. Consideration is given to the marks of the church as: the preaching of the Word; right keeping of the sacraments; and upkeep of discipline. Rome's claims for herself that her antiquity, her title, her succession, or her sheer numbers, indicate she is the true church are dismissed by biblical example. The sacraments are given detailed examination over three chapters, and the confession closes with a look at the role of the state powers and then the gifts of the church.

Chapter 19 is very short and yet key to all. It reads: 'As we believe and confess the Scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make the man of God perfect, so do we affirm and avow the authority of the same to be of God, and neither to depend on men nor angels. We affirm, therefore, that such as allege the Scripture to have no authority, but that which is received from the kirk, to be 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'.

Satan has spent centuries portraying the Reformed Confessions as being a bad thing. He pretends that for Reformed Christians they are in place of Scripture, as if Reformed Christians feel they can dispense with Scripture because they have Confessions. So it is very much in fashion today to claim that confessions are not needed, that they are a hindrance, that they obscure and obstruct the teachings of the Bible.

But hear the charge of the six Johns: 'If any man will note in this our confession any article or sentence repugning to

God's holy word, that it would please him of his gentleness, and for Christian charity's sake, to admonish us of the same in writing; and we, of our honour and fidelity, do promise unto him satisfaction from the mouth of God (that is, from his holy Scriptures), or else reformation of that which he shall prove to be amiss.' Their hearts were so set on being biblical that they would be glad to learn to be more biblical. What a solid foundation that gives their confession. Its one aim is to be biblical. It is so biblical that it admits its own fallibility, its own errancy compared to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. Yet until and unless anyone can show their teachings to be out of step with the Bible they vow to hold on to it with their last breath as their sincere and best understanding of what God intends in his Word.

The *Scots Confession of Faith* went on to be adopted by the first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in December 1560. It was again ratified by the Scots Parliament in 1567 and it remained the subordinate standard of the Scottish Kirk until the adoption of the more full and considered Westminster Confession of Faith 80 years later.

### III. The Fruit of the Confession

The Reformation was a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God on Scotland. It is to God alone that all glory belongs. So when we think about the fruit of the Confession, we are looking for evidences of God's blessing. Now neither the Confession itself, nor its writers, take any credit or glory except insofar as God used them. But we would miscall the hand of God if we did not identify fruit from it.

The Scots Confession was used by God to bring the very best kind of unity – unity around the Word of God. That is the unity we crave. We long for that kind of unity amongst all true churches. The reason we get weary so often when we hear yet another call for church unity is only because it does not have this basis.

By God's grace the Scots Confession united a parliament and indeed the nation under the parliament. It united the reformed congregations into that single body of the re-formed Kirk of Scotland. And it maintained that unity for most of a century, until it could hand over its duties to the Westminster Confession of Faith – a document better suited to the purpose. By then the six Johns were long gone but you get the impression that they would have been very pleased indeed to withdraw their Confession in favour of the document that came from Westminster. After all, that is exactly the spirit of their preface. The Scots Confession was never actually repealed and still technically stands as a confession of the Scottish church.



**"The Scots Confession was never actually repealed and still technically stands as a confession of the Scottish church."**

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# Justification – The Heart of the Reformation

*Rev Maurice Roberts*

It is not too much to say that the doctrine of Justification is the very heart of the gospel of Christ. Martin Luther famously held that this doctrine is the one which determines whether any church is a true or else a false church. Justification is the mystery of the gospel, to which men are blind till God opens their eyes. It is the doctrine which took longest perhaps for the church to define correctly in her official creeds. It is certainly one of the doctrines which Satan has laboured most earnestly to destroy. Yet this doctrine is the one which brings sweet comfort and assured hope both for this present life and for that which is to come when we truly understand and believe it. Justification is the key which opens the door to the experience of 'heaven upon earth'. It is the way for a sinner to enjoy immediate forgiveness from God, immediate peace with God, instant assurance to a place in glory. Justification is the answer to that greatest of all questions which concerns man's quest for eternal happiness, 'How can I be right with God?' Once a man has grasped this one doctrine and believed it with his heart he has found the greatest treasure which is to be had in all the world.

## What Justification Is Not

Justification does not refer to the way in which God *makes* men good. It is not to be identified with the New Birth. It is not a term which, either in whole or in part, urges sinners to do something to gain God's pardon for their past sins. It is not a process but an act, complete at once in this life and needing no repetition. It is not to be confused with Sanctification, the process by which God makes His people progressively holy.

Justification does not give us a new heart, nor does it write the Moral Law upon our heart. It does not come to us as a reward for goodness on our part. It is not something which the church can give us, but it must come from God alone. It is not a reward for our degree of religious knowledge or our intensity of devotion in worship or for our long service within the church. We cannot purchase it with money. Though we should give our body to be burned we cannot by this means obtain Justification from God.

Even the famous medieval theologian and scholar Thomas Aquinas went seriously wrong in his teaching at this point. He taught that the first element in Justification is the infusion of grace, as a consequence of which comes the second element, pardon for sins. But in this he was not following the teaching of the Bible. Neither Baptism nor taking the Lord's Supper is the way to receive Justification. Sadly, mistakes on this subject have through the ages of the church been all too common and in some churches they are still common.

## What Justification Is

Justification is the word used in the Bible to mean that a person is now in a right standing before God. The New Testament word in Greek is 'dikaioo', which is a verb meaning 'I declare, or reckon, someone to be righteous'. The following

texts make this point clear: Matthew 11:19; 12:37; Luke 7:29; 10:29; Romans 3:20; Romans 3:24-26. So, a justified sinner is one whom God reckons to be righteous, not one whom God *makes* righteous.

By 'righteous' we mean that the justified man's sins are all forgiven and also that the claims of God's holy law, the Ten Commandments, are all now fully and completely satisfied in respect of this man. So, a justified man is one whom God will never condemn, either in this life or in the life to come. To state the same thing another way, we may say that a justified man is deemed by God to be not guilty of any sin any more. No matter how much he may have been guilty of sin in the past of his life, he is now in the happy position of being pronounced by God to be totally free from all guilt. God, in other words, now deems him to be a righteous man – not in part but in whole, not just for a time but for eternity – not just after death but *now* in this world while he is alive.

This is the blessedness which the Bible calls 'being justified'. Surely no one in his right mind would say that this is an unimportant or a trivial subject! To get this blessing is to become a true child of God and an heir of God's eternal kingdom. To become justified is to have an assured hope of everlasting life in heaven after death. That is why this doctrine needs to be clearly understood and carefully studied. It is so vital that we dare not get this doctrine wrong.

## How Can A Just God Justify Sinful Men?

It is here that the doctrine of Justification is most frequently misunderstood. People find it hard to understand how a just God could pardon sinful men. Surely, they argue, if a man is still a sinner it is impossible for a holy God to reckon him to be righteous. This is the familiar objection to the Bible's doctrine of Justification. So, the way in which people attempt to resolve this problem is by arguing that God must first of all inject something into the sinner to make him good and on the basis of this injected goodness God will then be righteous in justifying him.

Let us look carefully at this mistake. It has been the error of theologians as well as others over the centuries of the Christian church. The human mind always tends to argue that a man must be made inwardly good before a holy God can reckon him to be justified. But to argue in this way is to go wrong from the start, as countless numbers of people still do go wrong.

The way we are to proceed in understanding Justification is this. God is perfectly righteous. He will not justify those who have no righteousness. Moreover God will not justify those who have a defective or an imperfect righteousness. Only on the basis of a perfect righteousness will God justify any sinner. But herein is the problem of problems. No sinner possesses a perfect righteousness because all of us are born with sin and are sinful as long as we live in this world. This is true of the very best of men and women. There is not one

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in all of history, apart from Jesus Christ, who is without sin. How then is a just God able to justify anyone?

The answer is simple but sublime. God has found a way to overcome this problem. It is just this: God has provided a perfect righteousness for us and He offers to give a perfect righteousness to us. A perfect righteousness is given to every man or woman in the instant in which they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

### **Where Does This Perfect Righteousness Come From?**

This perfect righteousness does not come from any man. It is the gift of God, freely given to all who believe in Jesus Christ. This is the very essence of the gospel. Man cannot give himself a perfect righteousness, no matter how hard he tries. This is the tragic mistake of thousands of so called 'saints' who strove ever so hard in their lifetime to make themselves acceptable with God. History is full of such people. There is not a greater tragedy on earth than this. Sinners will attempt to make themselves good by their own efforts when God has plainly told us that it is all in vain. We cannot achieve a perfect righteousness by our own good works or by our efforts to live a life of perfect devotion.

The gospel message is just this: The moment we trust in Christ we are given the divine gift of a perfect righteousness. To put it more clearly, we say that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner in the moment in which he or she believes in Christ as Saviour.

This gift of righteousness is what God offers to us all in the Christian message of salvation. It is free to all who want it. The greatest sinners on earth are as welcome to take this free gift as those who regard themselves as the most moral and the most upright.

But where does this righteousness come from? How did it come into existence in such a way that God is now able to give it to sinners? Here is the point which demands our utmost concern to understand. To grasp the answer to this question is to see what multitudes of religious persons have never seen.

Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God came into the world to live and to die for us in order to bring this righteousness into existence. Christ took upon Himself our guilt and by His death on the Cross He paid in full the debt owed by us sinners to God's justice. In this way, by His perfect life and by His atoning death, Christ brought into being a perfect righteousness which we may have. But how is it possible for Christ's righteousness to become ours? It is by what we call imputation. God imputes this perfect righteousness to everyone who puts his or her faith in Jesus. This is the gospel way of justifying sinners.

In this way God can be just in justifying those who are in themselves still sinners. God justifies the ungodly in this way. As a wealthy man is able to pay the fine imposed by a just judge on a bankrupt criminal, so Jesus Christ has paid the debt to God's justice of every sinner who trusts in Him. In a word, Christ died to give us a free pardon.

### **Why This Message Is Offensive To People**

One would think that this wonderful message from God, by which eternal life is offered freely to all who believe in



Jesus, would be readily welcomed by all who hear it. After all, it offers free Justification to all men who come to Christ. It is the promise of pardon, blessing and heaven. Why then do not all who hear this promise come without hesitation to God to receive it?

The answer is that people stumble over this message. Some do so because they are unwilling to confess that they are sinners. Others mistakenly suppose that God will pardon their sins on the ground that their good deeds outweigh their evil deeds. Others still are offended at the very thought that God would justify them only by means of a righteousness not their own. At the root of man's unwillingness to come to Christ for Justification and pardon, is the deep-seated pride which is in all men's hearts. This pride has first to be broken before a man will come to God for mercy. This is why God sends trouble into men's lives – illness, perhaps or bereavement – or deep-seated convictions of guilt, and the like means to humble them.

It is when men come to an end of themselves that they will turn to God for mercy. In our misery we cry out to God, 'Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner'. In the instant in which we so pray to God we receive His pardon. We become in that very hour justified sinners.

### **Proof That A Man Has Been Justified**

The proof that a man has been justified is that he is now ready to confess his sins to God. He does not conceal his guiltiness any more but admits it to himself and to others. The rest of a man's life after Justification is one of humble gratitude to God for His pardoning grace. From the hour in which he is pardoned the believer now lives to please God. This is why people go to hear the gospel preached week after week as long as they live. It is why they love their Bible with a special passion. In it they find food for their soul.

These good works which a believer now does are no part of his Justification. They are the fruits and evidences of it.

And when the believer comes to the end of his life in this world he may take to himself the comfort that he will shortly leave this world behind and enter forever into the glorious presence of the God who has justified him freely by His grace.

“Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts”

**Zechariah 1:3**