

O send out thy light and thy truth:
let them lead me;
let them bring me unto thy holy hill,
and to thy tabernacles.
Then will I go unto the altar of God,
unto God my exceeding joy:
yea, upon the harp will I praise thee,
O God my God.

Psalm 43:3-4

Free Church **Witness**



SEPTEMBER 2009 ISSUE

**The Influence of
Thomas Boston
of Ettrick
- Rev Ronald MacKenzie**



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PRICELESS GIFT OF THE LORD'S DAY 3

MARRIAGE 5

OBITUARY - ALEXANDER MACLEOD. 7

FIVE RECENT ERRORS IN THEOLOGY 8

NEWS DESK 10

REMITTANCES - JULY 2009 13

BOOKS. 14

INFLUENCE OF THOMAS BOSTON OF ETTRICK. 17

LETTER FROM ZAMBIA 19

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chickens, all looking for food. As we arrived and took our places next to the house, many curious neighbours joined us – privacy is foreign to these villages. We met Moses' wife Monica and their six children. He showed us his harvest which is quite reasonable this year and together with the family and neighbours we walked to the little pool near the stream where they draw their daily (muddy) water for cooking, drinking and washing. On the way Moses told us his story:

'My parents are very serious spiritists; they are respected leaders in their 'church'. They have nine children of whom I am the only Christian. Me and my family were always dealing with demons and often possessed. There was always fear, magic, witchcraft and drinking. One day I was so afraid that I asked if the only true God could pull me out of it and give freedom from the bonds of Satan. God answered my prayers and I found peace in the church of the Bible. Since that time I am praying for my relatives because they are still in bondage. I planted a church and am their pastor now. My wife grew up in a Muslim family but the Lord has also saved her. Living in this village is not easy as my parents live here and most of our neighbours live bad lives, drinking and practising witchcraft. This year I enrolled in College and feel very privileged. Every Monday morning I leave home and walk for 5 hours to the College. I don't have a bike. The teaching is very good and useful for my ministry. My wife loves the women's meetings, as it is a great opportunity for her to learn from the Bible and have fellowship with other pastors' wives. Please remember her when she is alone with the kids at home when I am in College. She cannot read, but I have started to teach her now. We don't have our own Nyanja Bible, I borrow one from the elder in our neighbouring village. We will receive a Nyanja Bible from the College as soon as Monica is able to read.'

And so each one of our students has his own 'interesting' story and we realize how much prayer they need. I am sure you are convinced of praying for them as well.

Family

Our family is doing well. Obed is a great joy to all of us, developing very fast. In his 7th month he decided to crawl and pull himself to stand up. Now he is walking along the table or anything he can hold onto. He gets very excited when playing catch with his big brother. Rhode could graduate as a mom; she loves to take care of him patiently and lovingly, many times rewarded by a big hug.

Home-schooling Joas and Rhode is getting very tough with a very active little boy who needs constant care and lots of love and attention and many other demands that come with being a fulltime teacher, homemaker, wife and missionary. The progressing pregnancy is of course also taking its toll in energy. Days are like suitcases, they are all the same size but some people have to put more in them than others. I know from experience what happens when 'a suitcase is stuffed too much'. We have been

thinking and praying a lot about the near future – the time of delivery, and home schooling during and after that time (September). Considering a number of factors, it appears to be better for us to go on furlough before the delivery. We hope to go to the Netherlands mid-August and, if everything will go well, return in November, the Lord willing.

[Events in this paragraph were overtaken by the ill-health of the Molenaars. Cees, Obed and Mirjam went down with malaria. They returned to the Netherlands in June where they are recovering. Mirjam's pregnancy has meant that she suffered most.]

Volunteer Teacher

We are also looking for a volunteer teacher to come with us to Zambia and take over the home schooling in the mornings, to give me time to be mother for all our children in the first place. I will still be 'home- schooling' the remaining part of the day. Sometimes most of the learning happens out of the 'classroom'. For example, I took the kids to a local potter and another day we went local-beehive-making in the bush. Rhode loves working with me in the vegetable garden, Joas collects wild honey from hollow trees (and finds information about bees and honey on the Internet), we play sports with friends, collect most interesting insects and observe a lot of typical Zambian traditions, getting a very broad world view. 'Living is learning'.

There would be much more to write but 'suitcases' are limited. We hope to inform you about other things in one of our next updates. We thank you for your prayer support and we pray that the Lord will bless you in return.

With much love from the Molenaar family

Molenaar Family – ceesmirjam@gmail.com

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to publication! But Satan's wiles were overcome and Boston's original manuscript was eventually published.

Sent into the world with much earnest prayer for the divine blessing, and passing through numerous editions, it was received with joy by earnest Christians and souls seeking Christ. Spiritual declension had entered many parish pulpits and what Ebenezer Erskine, a few years later in his sermon before the Synod of Fife, castigated as 'harangues of cold morality' could not feed the souls of their hearers. Its success exceeded all expectations and by it Boston's ministry was extended far and wide (including the Scottish Highlands). 'There is no book of practical divinity', writes Principal John Macleod, 'not even William Guthrie's *Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ*, nor Rutherford's *Letters*, that was more read in the godly homes of Scotland than this treatise. It did more to mould the thought of his countrymen than anything except the Westminster Shorter Catechism'. Its doctrinal content had been greatly influenced by Boston's discovery, in a humble home in Simprin, of Edward Fisher's *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. This little book had the effect of giving Boston a clearer and fuller insight into the free grace of God as the sole cause of salvation; and it immediately 'gave a tincture', as he put it, to his preaching. Other like-minded ministers read *The Marrow*, including Hog of Carnock who had it republished in 1718 (the General Assembly had already condemned the *Auchterarder Creed* a year earlier).

Boston was a man of scholarly attainments, widely recognised as a self-taught Hebraist who corresponded with the foremost Reformed scholars in Europe of his time, and a theologian of such eminence that Jonathan Edwards judged him to have been 'a truly great divine'. Never a robust man, he had his full share of tribulation – personal, family and ministerial trials, as his *Autobiography* so touchingly shows. He left behind him twelve volumes of collected writings. The two books that did most to extend his ministry throughout Scotland and even England, America and Holland were *The Crook in the Lot* and *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*.

One whose life and ministry was influenced by Boston was the late Rev Kenneth MacRae of Stornoway. In his *Diary*, we find him commending Boston's *General Account of My Life*. 'It has', he says, 'been a blessed book to me'. Referring to the opposition he encountered in his own stand for Sabbath Observance, he writes, 'Boston's troubles comfort me'. On another occasion he writes: 'Worked out a text which Boston had handled and then compared the two. The comparison made me feel ashamed, but what I was interested to notice was that Boston sheared far closer to the conscience than I am wont to do, and did not deal out God's comforts with such a liberal hand. I find Boston's style very profitable to my own soul in wakening me up and disturbing my slothful spirit.'

Letter From Zambia

June 2009

Dear Friends,

The Lord knows all our needs and has been taking care of them, answering your prayers. Thank you very much. Even a card with an encouraging Bible verse sent by someone we don't even know personally was used to comfort us at the right time. The Lord uses the church to support missionaries in the field; He will give His blessing upon both parties.

Rewarding

Our main job, running and teaching the pastors' training College, is a beautiful calling. We enjoy this work from day to day. The weekly teaching is going well. Somehow the group of students this year is participating, interacting and encouraging in a wonderful way. Second and third year students are giving a good example to the first year's, advising, supporting, and encouraging them. Being here for some years now and getting to know traditions and

customs not only makes it easier to relate to the people, but also to apply the teaching practically and culturally. Especially for classes like homiletics, we benefit from our experiences in visiting the local churches. The connection between the teaching and the life-practice grows stronger. The brothers often respond with words like, 'Thank you, just what we need to know', and 'I finally understand'. They are appreciative for the blessings at the College and have provided food and even the new curtains in the classroom. One original way of expressing this after Cees indicated some common pitfalls in the preaching voice was: 'We are washed!'

Moses story

During our last visit we were impressed by the testimony of one of our students, Moses. He lives in a typical Zambian village consisting of about 40 thatched mud-houses, corn-storage rooms made of woven grass, basket-like peanut storages, a few bathrooms (a hole in the ground with a thin reed wall) and lots of wandering cows, pigs, goats, dogs and

The Priceless Gift of the Lord's Day



Recently, in one of the better Christian periodicals, I read an article on the Sabbath Day which I very much enjoyed until I came to a paragraph towards the end. The writer had presented ten reasons why we need to celebrate the Lord's Day. They were excellent, well-reasoned, practical and edifying. Then came the following which in my opinion undermined all that had been said before:

But does this mean I can't watch TV, kick a football around on the lawn, travel, or buy a newspaper on a Sunday? We must be careful not to replace the pleasure and joy of keeping this day holy with legalistic rules that God has never given us. This is where the Pharisees went wrong. Rather we ought to approach the Lord's Day with a sense of delight by asking not, 'What can't I do?' but rather 'What can I do for God's glory on this special day?'

Legalism

How often the term 'legalism', or as here the adjective 'legalistic', is bandied about today! It is vital to have a clear understanding of this word. 'Legalism' is simply giving to the law a place it should not have. Essentially it is trusting in the law for salvation, looking to the observing of the commandments as a way to justify oneself in the sight of God. The Pharisees were legalistic as illustrated by the one whose prayer Jesus outlined: 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess' (Lk.18:11-12). The Pharisees saw others as sinners but themselves as righteous. Writing to Titus, Paul the ex-Pharisee states: 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost' (Tit.3:5). Legalism did not die out with the ancient Pharisees but is very much alive today. It is the natural religion of man. Most people think, 'If I keep God's commandments and do good I will get to heaven', but the Bible makes plain, 'There is none righteous, no, not one' (Rom.3:10), and the Apostle adds, 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin' (v20). So legalism is the opposite of evangelicalism - it is trying to save oneself by keeping the commandments.

Does that mean we do not need to keep the Commandments?

Many Christians today are hostile to the keeping of commandments. Some argue that we are 'not under the

law but under grace' (Rom.6:14).

The belief seems to be that observing the commandments does not matter since by God's amazing grace all our sins are washed away. Paul responds: 'Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness' (Rom.6:15-18). How could someone who is dead to sin live happily in it? And sin is simply the 'transgression of the law' (1Jn.3:4). Others argue that the commandments belong to the old covenant which has passed away and so are no longer binding. The Apostle however repeatedly makes plain that the moral law is still in force. For example when addressing children on their need to obey their parents he quotes as his authority the Fifth Commandment, 'Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth' (Eph.6:2-3).

But can we not be too pernickety in keeping the Commandments?

Jesus states: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' (Jn.14:15). The implication is plain. We keep His commandments because we love Him and the more we love Him the more carefully we will keep His commandments. The details of the law are important. Jesus warned in the Sermon on the Mount, 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven' (Mt.5:18-19). The Pharisees and legalists keep the commandments in order to earn salvation and to gain favour with God, but the true Christian does so out of love and appreciation for all that the Lord has done for him. The care with which you keep the details of the commandments is a measure of your love to Christ.

But was there not a conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees over keeping the commandments?

Jesus and the Pharisees were often in conflict over commandments but it was always over human laws and additions of the Pharisees as over against the divine laws recorded in Scripture. For example the Pharisees asked Jesus: 'Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?' (Mt.15:2-3). The problem was that the Jews were making laws and giving them a position equal to God's laws – indeed in many cases above God's commandments. There was nothing in the Scriptures about washing your hands before you eat however beneficial the custom might be hygienically. Jesus also asserts: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess' (Mt.23:25). Sin is a transgression of God's commandments, not human customs or man-made laws.

But was there not a conflict over the Sabbath?

Some people think that Jesus did away with the Sabbath. The Jews surrounded the Fourth Commandment with many commandments of their own to try to strengthen observance. They failed to realize that it is just as evil a sin to add to God's Word as it is to subtract from that Word (Rev.22:18-19). When the disciples on the Sabbath were hungry walking through standing corn and plucked and ate the corn the Pharisees criticised them. When Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath they took counsel against Him how they might destroy Him because they viewed Him as a Sabbath-breaker (Mt.12:14). Jesus was teaching that there are works of necessity and mercy which are legitimate and appropriate on the Sabbath. Careful keeping of the Fourth Commandment actually involves caring for men and animals on the Sabbath. Jesus is our example in the way He kept the day holy.

Is it alright to watch TV on the Sabbath?

Watching TV could seldom be described as a work of necessity or mercy. This day is to be kept holy for the Lord. It should be spent, not in worldly entertainment - 'doing thy pleasure on my holy day' (Is.58:13). Rather it is a day to take a break from such things and to enjoy God. It is a day for the public and private exercises of worship. It should be spent in reading His Word and books based on the Scriptures, listening to sermons, meditating on God's mighty works, singing His praises, praying and fellowshiping together around the things of God. Sadly plenty of worldly thoughts enter our hearts anyway without adding to these from a TV screen.

What about kicking a football on the lawn?

I suppose the idea here is playing games with your children. But surely we have enough time for playing with our children on the other six days? Rather from their earliest years we should train our children to understand that the Lord's Day is

different. Just as we don't do our weekly work on the Sabbath so our children should learn not to do their weekly games on that day. If kicking a football on the lawn is legitimate where does one draw the line? What if neighbours' children come along? There is so much pressure on our children to participate in Sunday sport. Rather let us strive to interest our children in studying the Bible and in getting to know God personally.

Sunday travel?

It is becoming increasingly common for Christians to use the Lord's Day for travel. Now sometimes necessity requires this, eg men who are preaching away from home or medical staff or relatives caring for the sick. But is it right to use the Lord's Day for holiday travel? The day should be spent in the worship of the Lord. Airports, trains, buses and ferries do not provide an environment which encourages worship. Hour after hour behind the wheel of a car is scarcely conducive to resting in the Lord. Let us spend the Lord's Day in the house of the Lord with His people and in our homes delighting in our beloved Saviour. Do not despise the Sabbath by using it for travel but show your love for the Lord by treasuring His Day as the best in the week, not to be wasted in travel.

Buy a newspaper?

How can any Christian find it an edifying way to spend the Sabbath, reading the gossip in the Sunday papers? Will this bring us nearer to Christ? Will it feed our souls? Will it help us to keep the day holy? Do we not have sufficient good reading material to keep us going on the Lord's Day? Never were there so many good books available as today and yet sadly the Christian public in Britain were never reading less. There are huge resources available to us both in print and on the internet and yet some Christians yearn after the celebrity news, features, sport, etc of the newspapers. Are they really Christians? It can't be right and will not bring blessing. Closely related there is another problem. Buying a paper requires someone to work selling papers. This is not a work of necessity and if we are buying such goods on the Sabbath we are encouraging others to work on that day in direct contradiction of God's law.

Conclusion

We should view the Lord's Day as a great gift and blessing given to us by God. The Sabbath was made for man (Mk.2:27) and we need it. Yes we must stress the positives, asking, What can I do on the Sabbath and how can I enjoy it more? But God's commandments all have a negative side too. There is a turning away from certain behaviour as well as a performing of other matters. No one sums it up better than the Lord Himself: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it' (Is.58:13-14).

The Influence of Thomas Boston of Ettrick

Part 1

Rev Ronald Mackenzie



Described by Principal John Macleod as ‘one of the brightest lights in the firmament of the Reformed Church in Scotland’ Thomas Boston was born in 1676 the youngest of seven children. A native of Duns in the Borders he learned through his childhood experiences to sympathise with the Presbyterian Covenanting cause. His father, John Boston, a God-fearing cooper, was a strong opponent of Prelacy who, for his non-conformity to imposed Episcopacy, suffered a period of imprisonment. Little Thomas spent one night with him in Duns jail ‘to keep him company’.

When James II, in 1687, gave liberty of worship to dissenters from the Established Church – which he did for the sake of his RC subjects – John Boston was not slow to avail himself of his newfound liberty. He attended the ministry of Henry Erskine, the father of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine – men with whom Thomas Boston was to be closely associated in the future when during the Marrow controversy they made a stand for the free offer of the Gospel. It was while attending these services at Whitsome that Thomas, then a boy of twelve, was converted. Referring to it in his *Soliloquy on the Art of Man Fishing*, he says: ‘There thou got an unexpected cast’. Christ caught him by the Gospel hook. Two particular texts were blessed to him: Matthew 3:7: ‘O generation of vipers...’ and John 1:29: ‘Behold the Lamb of God...’. He writes of his new-found spiritual hunger: ‘In the winter sometimes it was my lot to go alone, without so much as a horse to carry me through Blackadder water, the wading whereof in sharp frosty weather I very well remember. But such things were then easy, for the benefit of the Word *which came with power*’.

Following graduation from Edinburgh University, Boston was licensed as a preacher of the gospel in 1697. But two years elapsed before he was ordained as minister of the parish of Simprin. Though naturally timid and retiring, Boston hated man-pleasing flattering. Courteous and respectful, at the same time he would not soften the truth in its bearing upon the conscience of any hearer, high or low. While the common people heard him gladly, particularly exercised Christians, the heritors and proprietors disliked his plain faithful dealing with their souls. Patronage shut him out from many pulpits until in 1699 he accepted a call to one of the smallest and least attractive rural congregations in the Scottish Borders. The deep trials and self-questioning of his call to the ministry during this period led to his soul-searching *Soliloquy on the Art of Man Fishing*.

Convinced that Simprin was a door opened to him of the Lord, Boston threw himself entirely upon his Master who did not fail the devoted selfless young minister. It was there that he first preached the sermons later published under the title *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* – formerly found in the pious households of many, and greatly blessed to multitudes. Robert Burns in a delightful picture of family worship in his *Cottar’s Saturday Night*, describes the choice little library of the God-fearing poor cottar as consisting of ‘Bunyan, Brown and Boston’, – *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Brown’s *Self-Interpreting Bible* and *The Fourfold State*. Although at first a most discouraging field of service, yet Simprin under his zealous, faithful ministry became transformed into ‘a field, which the Lord has blessed’.

In 1707, Boston was transferred to the parish of Ettrick, where he found the people sadly divided by separatism. The Cameronians (followers of Richard Cameron), who had repudiated the Revolution Settlement of 1688, stood aloof from Boston’s ministry and while among the parishioners generally there was much Presbyterian zeal for their Church, there was but little vital godliness. Not until 1710, three years after his induction to Ettrick, did Boston dispense the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper; and indeed, even after labouring for a further five years, he concluded that his ministry there had all been in vain. But when, in 1716, he received a call to Closeburn, his people at Ettrick showed the utmost anxiety at the prospect of losing their minister. But the threatened removal did not take place. Boston stayed at Ettrick and witnessed a remarkable work of grace in what had formerly been a spiritual wilderness. At his first communion in 1710 only 60 persons communicated. At his last communion, in 1731, the number was 777.

It was during his Ettrick ministry that he first published his *Fourfold State*. Many obstacles had attended its publication – as if the Enemy of souls was determined to prevent it seeing the light of day. Boston’s low self-esteem of his own ministerial gifts and writing skills meant that only the pleadings of discerning Christian friends and the encouragements of his friend Dr Trotter, who generously offered to defray the cost of publication, persuaded Boston, after much secret prayer, to consent. Another problem was the conceited proof reader employed by the publisher who, not content to confine himself to proof reading, took upon him the liberty of revising Boston’s homely, simple, plain style, changing his wording, sentences etc. We may well imagine Boston’s horror when he had his revised manuscript returned to him prior

translation by Stuart Olyott who spent time ministering in Switzerland.

The price is certainly high for a pocket-sized book which may be read in an hour or two but it is beautifully presented. More importantly this is *Calvin*. The Genevan Reformer was not merely God's chosen vessel for carrying forward the work which Luther had begun; foremostly he was a preacher and pastor

possessing a marvellous gift for communicating and applying the truth to the souls of the Lord's people with clarity and warmth in a way which few, if any, have excelled.

What we have here in essence is an analysis of the fundamental doctrines of Scripture. There are six chapters: Knowing God and Knowing Ourselves, The Law of the Lord (essentially a treatment of the Ten Commandments), Faith (including an exposition of the so-called *Apostles' Creed*), The Sacraments, Prayer, and Order in Church and State. Anyone who reads and digests Calvin's survey of these important matters will find himself well instructed in the truth.

There are a couple of points of particular interest. Reformed readers who are not well acquainted with Calvin will be surprised and even perplexed to learn that the Sabbath, being a 'shadow', is 'abrogated' and that 'another day' has been set aside for the purpose of worship and rest. By the words in the Creed 'he descended into hell' Calvin understands the sufferings of Christ whereas the Westminster divines saw in them a reference to our Lord's burial.

As the Preface acknowledges Calvin tended not to give precise references for the Scripture passages he quoted and often gave his own rendering of the text. The translator has added the references but a few appear to be inaccurate. On page 57 John 3:3 should be John 3:5. On page 134 Acts 4:19 should be Acts 5:29. On page 130 there is a full-stop missing at the end of the first paragraph. Perhaps these corrections could be made in any future edition.

None of these minor criticisms should detract in any way from the usefulness of this volume. Here are some quotes to demonstrate its worth. On the topical matter of justification Calvin writes: 'For we are said to be justified by faith, not because we receive within ourselves any righteousness whatever, but because the righteousness of Christ is credited to us, as if it were really ours; while our own wickedness is not imputed to us. The outcome is that it is possible, in a word, to truly call this righteousness the remission of sins'. Concerning prayer he states: 'Prayer is a form of communication between God and ourselves by which we set before Him our desires, our joys, our complaints – in short, all that goes on in our heart'. Regarding civil rulers he says: 'For just as a good prince is a testimony to the divine goodness which intends the salvation of men, so a bad and evil prince is a plague from God for punishing the people's

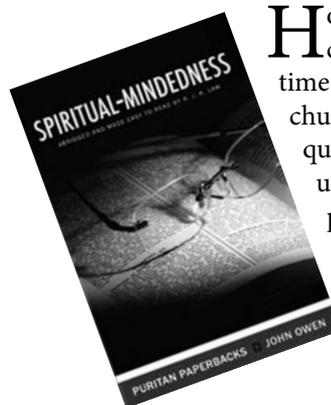
sins'. In this small volume there is plenty of good fare for both the mind and the heart.

Rev David Blunt

Spiritual-Mindedness

John Owen (abridged)

Banner of Truth Trust, pbk, 258pp, £6.00



How do you maintain a consistently spiritual frame in a time of declension within the visible church? John Owen answers the question from Scripture with his usual scholarly thoroughness and pastoral concern. The treatise is based on an exposition of Romans 8:6.

By nature we are not spiritually-minded but have a 'carnal mind at enmity against God'. The pattern and predominating direction of our thoughts change at conversion.

The Spirit gives us spiritual-mindedness but indwelling sin is still deceitfully attracted to earthly things. This is a power to distract the mind and to hinder the spirituality of our thoughts. Owen emphasises the fact that while spiritual-mindedness is a grace, it is also a duty, a duty which involves constant prayerful conflict to maintain it. This includes using the means and fixing the mind on the objects which are set forth by God for the spiritual mind to focus on. 'Faith is strengthened by a daily contemplation of these objects' (Heb.11:1). Spiritual-mindedness also 'makes us ready for the cross and all kinds of sufferings; these unseen realities are our comfort' (2Cor.4:18).

A spiritual mind will have an appetite for the enjoyment of spiritual realities and will wean us from the spurious values and attractions of the world. Our perception of the vanity of our thoughts should humble us. We must also set apart time for meditation on spiritual things. We cannot grow spiritually without taking spiritual food. 'Meditation is properly a mixture of spiritual apprehension of God and heavenly things, in the thoughts and conceptions of the mind, with desires and supplications'. Owen goes on to speak of the difficulties in the process and sets out remedies. The spiritual objects for our contemplation do not change; the change must be in us. The Person of Christ is the centre of all spiritual desires; they derive from Christ and lead to Him (Col.3:10,11). We seek the 'mind of Christ' (Phil.2) and to be in agreement with this mind we must be thinking of the same things, and 'the more like Him we are, the more we shall enjoy Him'.

This abridgement of Owen's book is a useful introduction to the full version. We do however miss the AV, the version Owen himself used with his congregation and in writing this book.

Rev James Clark

Marriage (Part I)

Dr Murdoch Murchison

Here Dr Murchison deals with the current position and next month he will DV provide a Christian response.



The Current Position

Marriage was legally defined many years ago as ‘The union of one man and one woman voluntarily entered into for life to the exclusion of all others’ (Lord Penzance 1866). This definition is essentially based on the Christian principles which used to undergird most of our civil legislation and as such is a good and acceptable definition.

Unfortunately in recent years the previously accepted concept of marriage has been seriously undermined by a series of legislative and fiscal changes which for the most part are contrary to Biblical principles. For example, recent legislation provides for easy, no fault divorce and for civil partnerships, while new laws passed by the Scottish Parliament in December 2006 allow unmarried couples, and even same sex couples, to adopt children. These all demonstrate the state’s changed attitude to marriage. In addition, the United Kingdom’s tax system is patently anti-family and leaves married couples facing relatively higher tax bills than their counterparts in other developed countries. Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) confirms that the United Kingdom is almost alone among developed countries in operating a tax system that ignores spouse’s obligations. Research published by CARE earlier this year confirms that under Labour’s benefits system, seventy-five percent of families would be better off living apart than sharing a home. This is because tax credits and benefits are increasingly skewed towards single mothers.

A typical couple on a low or middle income would be £69 per week better off if they lived apart. The most disadvantaged households are those where a husband goes out to work and the wife stays at home to look after a child. In those cases families are estimated to be almost £100 a week worse off.

Marriage is less highly regarded

It certainly appears that a clear Christian viewpoint is seldom heard in our parliaments but those minority groups which are anti-Christian are listened to and have been given a quite disproportionate degree of influence in recent legislation. This situation is underlined by a recent *Educational Report* to the Scottish Government which recommends that primary school pupils should be taught about cross-dressing and transsexualism as part of proposed changes to the curriculum. These recommendations are intended to encourage greater respect for gays under the guise of promoting tolerance.

While the undue influence of anti-Christian groups is to be regretted, it has nevertheless to be conceded that in the population at large, marriage is less-highly regarded than it used to be. This factor is reflected and highlighted

in the *British Social Attitudes Survey* released last year (2008).

The research draws attention to a number of serious and concerning trends. A majority now believes that living together is just as acceptable as being married even when it comes to bringing up children; more than half take the view that weddings are more about a celebration than confirming a life-long commitment and more than three quarters believe that a mother and stepfather can bring up a child as well as two biological parents. The survey also reveals that most people think that divorce is a normal part of life with some two-thirds expressing the opinion that ‘it can be a positive step towards a new life’. As many as thirty-four percent consider that marriage is risky because of the high likelihood of divorce.

These findings go some way to explaining why in the United Kingdom the rate of marriage has fallen by 2005 to the lowest level for 111 years. In spite of these figures and the decrease in the numbers of people marrying, marriage still remains the main type of partnership for men and women in Great Britain. The proportion of married couple families has however decreased over the last ten years from 76 percent in 1996 to 71 percent in 2006. Over the same period the proportion of co-habiting couple families increased from 9 percent to 14 percent. The proportion of lone parent families also increased over the period. It is significant that generally cohabiting families are much younger than married couples and as cohabited relationships are usually much less stable this represents somewhat of a time-bomb with serious implications for the social fabric and well-being of our nation.

Lone parents

The survey shows that the general public appear more divided when it comes to the subject of lone parents. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, as many as 42 percent expressed the view that single parents are as good at bringing up children as two parents and as many as 44 percent maintained that women who live alone should have a child if they want one. Yet the statistics show clearly that single mothers, particularly those who are teenagers, are seriously disadvantaged. They are more likely to drop out of school, to have low or no qualifications, to be unemployed or low paid, to perform less well at school, to become involved in crime and to abuse drugs and alcohol. Against this background it is astounding that there should be any suggestion of a relaxation in the legal age of consent for sexual intercourse. The only ‘taboo’ that remains appears to relate to extra marital affairs. Twenty years ago a large majority (84 percent) expressed the

opinion that these were always wrong and surprisingly that figure has not changed.

Sexual relationships outside marriage are increasingly common and a large majority of the population see no problem with that despite the emotional effects of casual relationships and the increasing problem of sexually transmitted diseases. Certainly many regard cohabitation as the norm prior to marriage. Various surveys however have established that couples who live together before they marry are more likely to divorce than couples who do not.

Prof de Souza writes in a recent edition of the 'Family Bulletin' as follows; 'Cohabitation is a bad preparation for lasting marriage because it confuses what marriage is about. It mistakes the fruits of marriage – delight in each other, a shared project in life, the joy of children – with what constitutes the essence of marriage itself. The fruits (to mix the metaphor) are the result of the foundation which is built by duty commitment, sacrifice, loyalty, perseverance and fidelity. What is needed is not so much a trial period of preparation but training in these virtues.'

Another statistic has serious implications for the future. The number of households headed by a lone parent with dependent children has more than doubled since the early 1970s. Until the mid 1980s a large part of this rise was due to divorce, but more recently the number of single lone mothers has grown at a faster rate because of the increase in the proportion of births outside marriage. In 1972 some 7 percent of children lived in a family headed by a lone parent. By 2005 the figure had increased to 24 percent and that figure has doubtless increased since then. The fact that

almost a quarter of all children live in lone-parent families also represents a potential 'time-bomb' for the future. The evidence is extensive that many of the children concerned will be severely disadvantaged in a wide variety of ways and as a much earlier report indicated, are 'Born to Fail'.

Divorce and remarriage

What happens after divorce and remarriage? The usual pattern is that the new household consists of a couple with one or more children from the previous relationship of the woman only. This is explained by the fact that on divorce or separation, even where there are generous access arrangements for the father, it is customary for most children to continue to live with their mother. While such arrangements can be successfully negotiated it is rarely easy to take on the role of step parent or for children to adjust to a new adult in the household. There is potential for at the least antagonism and discontent and at the worst abuse, a dysfunctional household and youngsters who end up living on the streets.

In summary: various statistics and surveys confirm that in the United Kingdom an increasing number of men and women do not consider that marriage as such is relevant to their relationship. While marriage is still popular with many, an increasing percentage of those who do marry regard it as a temporary arrangement which is fine when all goes well. It can, however be dissolved very easily should difficulties arise, should husband or wife be attracted to someone else, or even as is frequently said, should they just 'wish to move on'.



Cromwell's Assessment of Parliament

The Daily Mail (19th May 09) published the following speech to Parliament by Oliver Cromwell in 1653 when he lost patience with the House after learning that it was attempting to stay in session despite an agreement to dissolve. I think we will all be able to see parallels with today's incumbents.

It is high time for me to put an end to your sitting in this place, which you have dishonoured by your contempt of all virtue, and defiled by your practice of every vice; ye are a factious crew, and enemies to all good government; ye are a pack of mercenary wretches, and would like Esau sell your country for a mess of pottage, and like Judas betray your God for a few pieces of money.

Is there a single virtue now remaining amongst you? Is there one vice you do not possess? Ye have no more religion than my horse; gold is your God; which of you have not bartered your

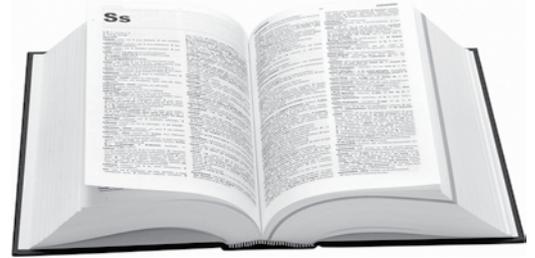
conscience for bribes? Is there a man amongst you that has the least care for the good of the Commonwealth?

Ye sordid prostitutes have you not defiled this sacred place, and turned the Lord's temple into a den of thieves, by your immoral principles and wicked practices? Ye are grown intolerably odious to the whole nation; you who were deputed here by the people to get grievances redressed, are yourselves become the greatest grievance.

Your country therefore calls upon me to cleanse this Augean stable, by putting a final period to your iniquitous proceedings in this House; and which by God's help, and the strength he has given me, I am now come to do; I command ye therefore, upon the peril of your lives, to depart immediately out of this place; go, get you out!

Make haste! Ye venal slaves be gone! So! Take away that shining bauble there, and lock up the doors. In the name of God, go!

Books



Concerning the True Care of Souls

Martin Bucer

Translated into English by Peter Beale

Banner of Truth Trust

hbk, 218pp, £14.00

This book, described by the publishers as a Reformation handbook of pastoral theology, first appeared in 1538. It was originally written in German and later translated into Czech and Latin. It would appear that this is the first English translation. For those unfamiliar with the author an interesting sketch of his life and times by the late David Wright, formerly Professor of Patristic and Reformation Studies in the University of Edinburgh, will help set the scene. Martin Bucer was born in 1491. An able scholar, he joined the Dominican order. He was deeply impressed by Martin Luther at the disputation of Heidelberg in 1518. Like many others he found Luther's commentary on Galatians 'a treasury full of the dogmas of pure theology'. Soon he would clearly and publicly align himself with the great Reformer and become a wholly committed Protestant. In 1521 he quit the Dominican order and in the process of time married Elizabeth Silbereisen, herself a former nun. The Lord preserved him in difficult and dangerous times and eventually he was able to set up home in Strasbourg, where his father had citizen rights. Here he was permitted by the town council to conduct Bible expositions and before long 'was acknowledged as the *de facto* leader of the Reform movement in Strasbourg'. In 1849 he was forced to move again, this time to England where he was appointed Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters of varying length, the last being a summary of the whole. Each chapter begins with a number of Scripture texts to which the author makes continual reference as he builds his case. Bucer begins by setting out the nature of the church and Christ's leadership in it. The reader is left in no doubt that Christ alone reigns in His church. There follow four chapters setting out the nature of the ministry through which the Lord works and who are 'carers of souls'. He demonstrates the need for a plurality of elders and argues cogently that the office of elder and bishop is one. In the light of this it was somewhat disappointing to find a later suggestion of an office of oversight which sounds remarkably like that of a Bishop as episcopacy would understand it! He also lays great emphasis on the need for those entrusted with leadership in the church to live a holy life free from reproach.

He then divides the work of 'carers of souls' into five categories. They are to seek the lost sheep giving diligence 'not to miss anyone, anywhere, out with the word of salvation'. The second duty, which is dealt with in just four pages, relates to the restoring of stray sheep. A much longer chapter is then devoted to the healing of the wounded sheep and, perhaps, this is the most helpful part of the book. Drawing on the Scriptures and the practice of the early church fathers he deals at length with discipline and the maintenance of order, laying great emphasis on the place of penance before restoration. Perhaps, in order to avoid confusion, the finished work of Christ as the sole ground of our atonement could have been given greater emphasis at this point. The point is made very distinctly

mid-way through the chapter, but an earlier underlining of this truth would have been helpful. This chapter includes a response to several objections to Biblical discipline and the present writer found this very helpful. The fourth role he assigns to the under-shepherd is the duty of strengthening the weak sheep. The guarding and feeding of the flock constitutes the fifth responsibility. The flock, in turn, are reminded of the need for respect and obedience toward those who are set over them in the Lord.

Whilst I cannot comment on the faithfulness of the translation, Peter Beale has, without a doubt, laboured to give the English reader a useful book. However it is not the most polished of works and would benefit from a measure of pruning. David Wright acknowledges in his introduction that 'the work bears evidence of having been compiled in some haste', but maintains that its 'forcefulness and clarity carry the day'. It is doubtful whether it will appeal to a wide audience but those entrusted with leadership will find it challenging and thought provoking.

Rev Murdo A N MacLeod

Truth for All Time A Brief Outline of the Christian Faith

John Calvin

Banner of Truth Trust

pbk, 134pp, £10.00

This short work was first published in 1537. It is a summary of the first edition of the renowned *Institutes* which was published in 1536. An English translation from the original French appeared in 1949 but the present volume which was first published in 1998 is a republication of a later



Books

Family Worship

Dr Joel Beeke

Reformed Heritage Books

pbk, 32pp, \$3.50

In this book Dr Beeke deals with the very important subject of family worship. Family worship is sadly neglected in many homes; and even where it is done it is very often just a tradition. As a father I am aware of how difficult family worship can be. How often after we finish worship we feel that we have not worshipped at all. Dr Beeke briefly but very clearly sets out the importance, principles and duty of family worship. He states that it is of crucial importance for the growth of the church. The third chapter is very useful and helpful where the writer gives some practical advice to improve family worship. One area of criticism is Dr Beeke's view on what to sing. He encourages singing Psalms first, but he also does encourage using good hymns. Why sing hymns when we have received from God a perfect hymnbook? Apart from this little criticism, a profitable read.

Rev Gavino Fioretti

The Family at Church

Dr Joel Beeke

Reformed Heritage Books

pbk, 80pp, \$8.00

The book is divided in two parts. The first part is entitled 'Listening to Sermons' and the second part 'Attending Prayer Meetings'. In the first part Dr Beeke gives much practical advice about the right approach to the preaching of God's Word. The second part is an encouragement to attend prayer meetings. He shows the place of this meeting in the apostolic age, and the blessing it brought to the church. The church needs God's power, and the

only way to obtain that power is through prayer.

A very interesting book, and highly recommended.

Rev Gavino Fioretti

Union and Communion with Christ

Maurice Roberts

Reformation Heritage Books

pbk, 130pp, \$10.00

This is an excellent little book of eighteen short chapters. It can be profitably used as a daily devotional. The language is non-technical and the book is easily read. The subject is very important and basic to the Christian life. As the branches must remain in the vine and draw their nourishment from it so must we abide in Christ if we are to be fruitful and not to wither and be cast into the fire. A short quotation will give a taste of what this book is like:

Because God's fellowship is extremely precious, we commonly witness emotion, even great emotion, when people are first converted to faith in Christ. The heart of a sinner is overwhelmed when the pure waters of heavenly joy and peace flood into his heart. He has never felt what he now feels. To have God through faith in Christ is to have new and strange emotions. Light floods the soul. All things suddenly fall into place in the mind. The heart is filled with complex emotions of joy and sorrow. Repentance and faith mingle in the soul. Now, for the first time, we begin to love God and to be displeased with ourselves that we never loved Him before. Now, and not beforehand, we realize how desirable God is and how empty we were without Him. Now, as we never imagined previously, God becomes more important than all else in the world.

Rev William Macleod

- Obituary -

Alexander Macleod (1925-2009) Elder, Knock & Point



Alexander was born on 3rd February 1925 at 25 Swordale, Point, the youngest in a family of seven. His brother Donald Roddy (in Tain) and Anna (in Dumfries) still live. His father, Donald, was an Elder in Knock. His brother, Norman, was lost at sea when HMS Rawalpindi was sunk on 23rd November 1939. It was a traumatic loss for him as a fourteen-year-old boy.

After leaving school he worked as a labourer for various local contractors until called up to the war to serve in the Navy in May 1943. He served on various minesweepers until demobilised in September 1946, returning to Swordale with the intention of only staying for a short while. However, in God's providence, circumstances dictated that he should remain in Swordale and he worked as a labourer and a fisherman.

He was converted during the last great revival in Point in 1957-59 under the preaching of Rev William Campbell. He often spoke of the revival times and longed to see revival again. He was one of eleven to profess faith at the Communion in November 1958. (Rev Neil Shaw was another of the eleven.)

He married Christina Montgomery from Branahuie (the western extremity of the parish of Knock) in April 1962 and moved there to her family home. He was an exemplary husband to Chrissie and father to their two sons and one daughter. On moving to Branahuie he took up weaving and later became a groundsman for the Ministry of Defence at Stornoway Airport.

He was ordained to the Eldership on 23rd June 1963. He supported the two resident elders in Melbost & Branahuie (Donald Macfarlane of the Point congregation and Donald Maciver of the Stornoway congregation) with the Sunday School, Sunday evening services and weekly prayer meetings

in Melbost Mission House. When they died in the late 1970s he ploughed a lonely furrow in the township taking services, often with no assistance, on Sunday evenings and Wednesdays for a number of years until the Lord provided support by causing other men to move to the village. He had a particular interest in the Tabernacle, Priesthood and the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament and over several months in the Melbost Mission House he gave a series of addresses on these which everyone found most edifying.

His retirement in 1990 afforded him the opportunity to attend communion seasons around the Presbytery and he was a regular attender at the question meetings.

In October 1994 he was bereaved of his wife and it was a loss he felt very keenly.

He was deeply affected by the division of 2000, especially when the congregation was locked out of the Knock village mission house. On the other hand, in his latter years he was to experience much joy in seeing his four grandchildren born, grandchildren he loved very dearly.

'Sandy' moved on to a higher sphere of service on Thursday 14th May 2009. Our condolences go out to all the family circle. He is, and must be, missed here in order to take up his place there, in Immanuel's Land.

Alexander was a very wise, gentle and caring man. He was a very supportive elder and his advice at meetings of the Kirk Session was much appreciated and will be missed by all. He had a wealth of spiritual experience and we learned much in his fellowship. It was clear to all in his last days that he was 'ripe for glory.'

We extend our condolences to Donald Roddy, Anna, Don, Calum, Ann and all the family.

Rev James Clark

Five Recent Errors in Theology (Part I)

Rev Maurice Roberts

The title of these articles is not meant to be unkind or overly critical. It is readily admitted that people are often much better than their creed. But it is important to be aware of trends in evangelical thinking which depart from the Reformed Faith which our fathers held dear. We undoubtedly live in a time of general declension both in doctrine and also in morals. These articles have been prepared to alert God's people to the need to be aware of what is happening in some circles and to be on our guard lest inadvertently we adopt wrong teachings without realizing that they are unsound.

Biblical Balance

Truth is always poised on a knife-edge. The biblical doctrine of Justification, for example, is poised midway between Antinomianism and Legalism. We are, in other words, justified by faith alone without the law; but, when justified, we have a desire to keep the law out of love to God.

Assurance is poised midway between Carnal Fear and Presumption. The assured believer has a sweet sense of God's love in his soul; yet he also has a deep concern not to offend God by committing sin.

The doctrine of the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is poised between Nestorianism, which taught that He is two persons, and Eutychianism, which said that He has only one nature. Orthodoxy says that Christ is one Person in two natures.

These are not unimportant matters. They are vital and essential truths which we are to espouse and embrace with care and precision.

This article is written because we need all to recognize that in our own day there are pressures and tensions which are straining at several grand old doctrines and which threaten to move us away from the old orthodoxy into novel positions, which represent a serious departure from the true faith of Christians.

Some Doctrines We Need to Keep an Eye On

These articles look at five points of Christian doctrine which we need to guard in these days against error. They are as follows:

1. **Justification by Faith.**
2. **The Moral Law as a Rule of Life for the Believer.**
3. **Federal Vision Teaching.**
4. **The Open View of God.**
5. **Conditional Immortality.**

Let us look briefly at each of these points in turn.

I. Justification by Faith

This is unquestionably one of the most vitally important doctrines in God's Word. We cannot afford to go wrong on this point. Luther famously said that Justification is the article of a standing or else a falling church. To go wrong here is to run the risk of losing our own souls.

The orthodox doctrine of Justification is that of our Westminster Confession and Catechisms. These words of our Shorter Catechism ought to be learnt by heart. 'Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone' (Shorter Catechism number 33).

We note the following elements in this excellent definition:

1. Justification is done in one single unrepeatable act of God. It is not like Sanctification, which is a life-long work of God done in our soul.
2. Justification is all of God's grace and entirely without merit on our part.
3. In the act of Justification God pardons, not some, but all of a man's sins.
4. In Justification God imputes, or reckons, to a sinner all the obedience of Jesus Christ. This obedience was procured for sinners by Christ through His earthly life of total obedience and His atoning death on the cross. Nothing of ours enters into the merit of that righteousness which God imputes to a man in his Justification.

**"Truth is always poised on a knife-edge.
These are not unimportant matters. They are vital and
essential truths which we are to espouse and embrace
with care and precision."**

The president of Vision Beyond Borders, Patrick Klein, elaborated: 'Villages are being surrounded, and rockets are lobbed in. The Myanmar regime then goes in with machine guns and mows down whoever is still alive, and then the evidence is burned. There are reports they're also blockading villages so the people can't go out and get food; it is also reported that women are being raped and men are being set on fire while they're alive. And they're actually poisoning the water supplies now. We're hearing reports they're even lobbing rockets across the Thai border into the refugee camps, and Thailand is doing nothing to stop it.'

Klein continued: 'When God's people pray, things begin to happen. So we'd like to call people to pray, and to get involved. [Americans] can contact their Congressmen and let them know we know what's going on in Burma, and we would like to see this stopped. People are coming to know the Lord, but I know they're really struggling in Burma. The church is struggling inside Burma. People have felt like they're forgotten. But as Christians pray, the Christians in Burma will know that God is with them. And as word gets back that Christians are praying, it'll encourage them.'

Rev John Macsween

CDs of sermons by the late Rev John Macsween (Point) are available from Mr D Buchanan, 27 Upper Bayble, Isle of Lewis, HS2 0QH. The profits go to the Knock and Point Building Fund.

On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent
 Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest He returning chide,
 'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
 I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
 Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
 Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
 They also serve who only stand and wait'.

John Milton

Remittances - July 2009

	2009 Jul	2009 Total	2008 Total to July				
Presbytery of Inverness				Outer Hebrides Presbytery			
Aberdeen	800	7,132	6,081	Cross	2,054	13,901	13,219
Duthil-Dores	1,621	11,660	12,703	Harris - Leverburgh	1,000	7,774	7,484
Inverness	2,000	16,000	14,000	Harris - Scalpay	1,585	11,536	11,757
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,300	9,956	10,563	Knock & Point	900	6,300	7,121
Total Inverness	5,721	44,747	43,347	North Uist	1,000	6,641	7,059
Northern Presbytery				Stornoway	5,104	37,162	34,424
Assynt & Scourie	0	2,325	2,570	Total Outer Hebrides	11,643	83,315	81,064
Brora	0	9,153	11,268	Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron			
Kiltearn	1,800	12,600	11,400	Bracadale	2,000	7,688	8,229
Tarbat	500	6,422	4,224	Duirinish (Waternish)	800	2,800	2,800
Total Northern	2,300	30,500	29,462	Glenelg & Arnisdale	180	1,352	1,194
Southern Presbytery				Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,350	9,862	10,175
Arran	791	4,373	4,620	Lochalsh & Glenshiel	300	4,589	8,724
Ayr	0	613	2,460	Poolewe & Aultbea	600	6,257	7,631
Dumfries	0	0	0	Portree	1,200	8,400	12,406
Edinburgh	0	15,279	13,576	Snizort	1,200	8,633	13,461
Glasgow - Partick	2,000	17,000	19,000	Strath	0	3,074	1,716
Glasgow - Shettleston	700	6,000	6,200	Total Skye & Lochcarron	7,630	52,655	66,335
Glasgow - Knightwood	2,114	14,309	13,332	Total From Congregations 32,899 268,865 279,727			
Rothesay	0	73	331	Other Donations	1,030	9,497	12,311
Total Southern	5,605	57,647	59,519	TOTAL	33,929	278,363	292,038
				Including Gift Aid		22,121	38,359

financial gain and at worst by hostility to God and His Law and the religion of the people of Lewis.

Shorter Catechism Diploma

Rev K Macdonald – Welfare of Youth

The Welfare of Youth Committee being aware of the great help that the Shorter Catechism can be to any aspiring to understand the teachings of Scripture would encourage Ministers, Kirk Sessions and families to bring to the attention of their young people the benefits of learning the Catechism. In the past it was the custom to give a prize only to any who managed to repeat all the questions in one sitting, but there is now an opportunity to take the catechism in three stages over a few years if necessary and receive a certificate for each stage. The Bronze award is for 1-38, Silver for 39-81 and Gold for 82-107. While a number of children have already completed the first two stages, Bronze and Silver, and are now engaged in preparing for the Gold, we would love to see more doing so. It would be good to see more participating from all our congregations. Please prayerfully encourage your young folk to consider this worthwhile exercise.

600 Muslims Firebomb Christian Homes

Barnabas Fund

On Tuesday 30th June, around 600 Muslims used petrol bombs to attack at least 117 Christian homes in Bahmani Walla, a village in Punjab, Pakistan. 117 houses were vandalised and 48 properties were damaged by fire, water pumps were sabotaged and Christians who returned home the following day found they had no electricity. Police failed to intervene. The violence was seemingly caused by an incident on the Monday night, in which a Christian man driving a tractor requested that a Muslim man riding a motorcycle allow him to pass. The request was refused and a disagreement ensued. News of this was spread along with allegations of blasphemy against Islam. In the next few hours a mob of about 600 Muslims congregated in Bahmani Walla and began to attack the Christians living there. Vehicles owned by Christians were burnt or stolen. Jewellery and cash were also taken. The following day a boycott was in force against many of the Christian businesses in Bahmani Walla. The most disturbing development was the throwing of acid at the Christians as they fled. At least nine women and four children have been injured.

Shettleston Centenary

Ewan Wilson

The congregation of Shettleston Free Church (Continuing) hope shortly to mark the centenary of the erection of the Wellshot Road church building. They intend to produce an historical booklet entitled: *Shettleston Free Church of Scotland – Years of Struggle, Years of Grace*. Also they plan to hold a Thanksgiving Service on Friday, 25th September at 7.30pm to be conducted by Rev John Keddie, our Church Historian.

Suicides had Treatable Conditions

Christian Institute

Several of the 115 Britons who have so far committed suicide at the Dignitas facility in Switzerland were

suffering from “treatable” conditions, it has been revealed. A leading doctor has said he is ‘horrified’ at the newly-released details of the British deaths which have taken place at the clinic since it was founded. Many of the individuals suffered from terminal conditions such as cancer. However, two had Crohn’s disease, an inflammatory bowel disease, two were tetraplegics, and one had rheumatoid arthritis. A further three had kidney disease, which can usually be treated by dialysis or a transplant.

Swiss Government Considers Suicide Ban

Christian Institute

The Swiss Government is considering a new proposal to ban assisted suicide facilities in Switzerland. The new proposal would tighten restrictions on who could access assisted suicide, potentially limiting it to those who are close to death. If passed it could spell the end for so-called ‘suicide tourism’ to Swiss facilities such as Dignitas, which has come under increasing fire in recent weeks over allegations of suspicious deaths. The current law in Switzerland allows terminally ill patients to choose to kill themselves with the help of organisations like Dignitas. But the Swiss Government is now considering ‘legal barriers and a ban on organised suicide assistance’.

Vulnerable protected as assisted suicide bid fails

Christian Institute

An attempt to weaken the law on assisted suicide failed in the House of Lords on 7th July. Peers voted 194 to 141 against a proposal to make it legal to help someone travel overseas to commit suicide. We thank the Lord for hearing the prayers of His people on this important issue.

Lords back free speech shield in ‘gay hate’ law

Christian Institute

The Government was defeated in the House of Lords on 9th July over its attempt to repeal a free speech protection from a sexual orientation ‘hatred’ law. Peers voted by 186 to 133 to keep the protection in place. The matter will be passed back to the House of Commons where MPs voted for repeal. This is another matter for thankfulness.

Persecution in Somalia and Iraq

Christian Observer

Muslim Al-Shabaab terrorists in the south-central town of Baidoa, Somalia, beheaded seven Somalis for being ‘Christians’ and ‘spies’ on 10th July. Muslim terrorists in Baghdad, Iraq, exploded a car bomb outside a church during the weekend of 11-12th July, killing four and wounding at least another sixteen. Five other bombs were exploded outside Baghdad churches during the same period.

Burmese Christian Karen Tribe Suffers

Christian Observer

The Karen tribal group of rural eastern Myanmar is suffering extensively because of fighting between Karen National Union and the Myanmar military regime. Thousands of Karen refugees have crossed into Thailand to escape the fighting, and another half-million persons in eastern Myanmar have been displaced and have suffered atrocities committed by the Myanmar military regime.

5. The means whereby a sinner receives God's Justification is faith in Christ as Saviour. We are justified by faith alone.

This is the true doctrine of Justification. But this correct definition of Justification has of recent years been challenged by a new theory called The New Perspective and also by documents produced by 'Evangelical and Catholics Together' (ECT).

New Perspective Teaching

In 1977 E P Sanders challenged this orthodox view of Justification by his influential book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. He has been followed since that date by a number of other writers who have in one way or another altered the orthodox teaching on this vital point. Such writers are these: Dr N T Wright, now Bishop of Durham, whose doctoral thesis was entitled *The Messiah and the People of God; a Study of Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans* (1980). Other writers who have taken a new line on Justification are: Alister McGrath, James Dunn and Don Garlington.

New ideas are being advanced by these men. Paul, they argue, in his NT Epistles does not attack Judaism as legalistic but as too nationalistic. The false righteousness which Paul attacks so strongly in his NT Epistles is not self-righteousness but national righteousness, or excessive pride in Jewish privilege. It is a mistake, they say, to define 'righteousness' as the status of the individual before God. Rather it is a covenantal word. It is best to think of it as membership within the covenant. So Luther, they would argue, got it wrong when he thought it meant a man's personal and individual standing before a holy God. Justification is God's declaration that a man is within the covenant. This declaration is in turn closely correlated with baptism, in which one becomes a member of that family in its covenant life.

Comment

The above reconstruction of Justification is guilty of a category-shift. Justification is not immediately related to the concept of covenant but to that of the law-court. In Justification God acts as a judge. His judgment is on the basis of His own Moral Law. God acts in different capacities in saving us. As Doctor He heals us. As Father He adopts us. As Judge He justifies us. It is not helpful to slip into the category of Covenant in defining Justification. In any case, there is plenty of evidence in the NT that Christ and His Apostles had self-righteousness in mind and not mere national pride. In Luke 18: 11 Christ represents the Pharisee as thanking God that he was not as other men are, 'extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' He went on to say: 'I fast twice in the week...' This was

not glorying in his Jewishness but in his own self-righteousness.

Again, Paul in Romans 2:22-23 does not criticize the Jews for Jewishness but in these terms: 'Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, thorough breaking the law dishonourest thou God?'

These sins were against the Moral Law, not merely against some purely Jewish national code of morality.

One great danger of this New Perspective is that it has a tendency to make baptism the door to salvation. It looks back to pre-Reformation thinking and has in it the seeds of sacramentalism.

Those who want clear evidence that the sin for which Christ criticised His generation was not national pride but self-righteousness should study Matthew 23. One verse alone from this chapter is enough to show that this is so: 'Ye are like unto whited sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness' (v27). Jewishness as such does not enter into this criticism. It was rather that their hearts as men, not as Jews, were deeply in need of gospel cleansing. The Jews whom Christ here criticises were not rebuked for boasting of being Jews but because they had no righteousness in God's sight. Judged by God's Moral Law they were spiritually and ethically bankrupt.

Evangelicals and Catholics Together

This tendency to weaken and to distort the true doctrine of Justification is seen also in the movement known as Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT). A number of evangelical and also Roman Catholic scholars began in the year 1992 to seek to find a way to bring these two religious points of view together by composing documents which could be accepted by both. The doctrine of Justification was understandably a problem. The ECT documents do not say that we are justified by faith alone, as this is not acceptable to the Roman Catholic Church. Neither do they say that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer as the ground of his acceptance with God. The RC Church will never say that Christ's righteousness is 'imputed'. And they will never say that Justification is by faith 'alone'. They always find a place for human merits or good works of one kind or another. In so doing they destroy the very foundation of Justification, that Christ has done all that a sinner needs in order to be justified.

Good Books to Study

Justification, James Buchanan, Banner of Truth Trust;
The Gospel of Free Acceptance, Cornelis P. Venema, Banner of Truth Trust;
The Great Exchange, Philip Eveson, Day One Publications.



News



Induction to Stornoway - Rev Graeme Craig

Captain Callum MacLean

A capacity assembly consisting of the congregation and friends of the Stornoway Free Church (Continuing) joined together within the church building located at Sandwick Road on the evening of Wednesday 1st April 2009. The occasion was to witness the induction of Rev Graeme Craig to the pastoral charge of Stornoway,

a congregation declared vacant on 2nd September 2007, following the translation of their former minister, Rev David Murray, to the post of Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, USA.

The Rev. James Clark (Knock & Point) who had been interim-moderator

of the Stornoway congregation throughout the vacancy, preached and presided. His appropriate sermon was on the words: 'Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Mt.16:18). The opening song of praise, Psalm 122, was memorable, the congregation combining reverence and exhilarating,

Desk



joyful energy. It established a tone that would govern the entire proceedings. Rev M M MacLeod (Rtd) warmly expressed solemn counsel to the newly inducted minister, and Rev D M MacDonald (Rtd) with his typical winsomeness, suitably exhorted the congregation.

The large congregation then retired to the Cabarfeidh Hotel where fellowship was enjoyed and a most sumptuous and well-managed buffet was provided. The large number of greetings read was indicative of the esteem in which Mr Craig and his family are held. A presentation was made to Mr Craig by Mr Ian MacLennan (Elder) on behalf of the congregation. Mr MacLennan expressed the desire that the minister, with his family of eight children, nurtured over a period of years, would raise many spiritual children in the course of his ministry in Stornoway. Mrs Fraser, a member in the congregation, and in earlier times a frequent visitor to Mr. Craig's former congregation in Ardelve, presented Mrs Craig with tokens of grateful welcome on behalf of the congregation. Expressions of welcome and presentations were made by Amanda MacLean, a member of the Sabbath School Bible Class, to the Craig children. Mr Donald MacKay (Elder) presented tokens of congregational gratitude to Rev James Clark for his dutiful application to the various duties laid upon him throughout the vacancy.

On completion of presentations, Mr Craig solemnly expressed his sincere gratitude to the congregation and sought their patience and prayerful consideration. He also cautioned the congregation to refrain from personal

expressions of praise to him, but to give the glory and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. This summarised the three Ps which was the focus of his address. Speeches were heard from Rev Harry Woods (Kilmorack & Strathglass), Rev John MacLeod (Tarbat), Mr Donald Robertson (Resident Lay Agent) and Mr Samuel Cameron (Elder, Stornoway).

The Stornoway congregation, having experienced the emotional and spiritual void occasioned by the translation of their minister some 19 months ago, are sensitive to the deep loss now felt by the congregation at Ardelve and beyond following the translation of Mr Craig to Stornoway. It is the prayerful desire of the Stornoway congregation that the vacancy in Ardelve will soon be filled by a suitable minister.

A most delightful evening of fellowship was brought to a close with the singing of Psalm 133.



Sunday Ferries to Lewis

We note with sadness the launch of a Sunday ferry service from the Scottish mainland direct to Lewis and Harris on Sunday 19th July. Caledonian MacBrayne, the ferry company, has over the years made no secret of its desire to begin running Sunday ferries, but was opposed by the local Council as well as by the churches and the Lord's

Day Observance Society. Things will never be the same in that once blessed island. It will bring to an end the peaceful, wholesome and godly way of life enjoyed by the islanders. It was a sad blow when in 2006 a Sunday service started from North Uist across the Sound of Harris to Leverburgh. In May this year CalMac said it had been approached by the Equality and Human Rights Commission following a complaint which suggested it was operating in breach of the Equality Act 2006. The company then received legal advice from a QC who said it would be unlawful to refuse to run a service because of the religious views of just part of a community. Later that same month, those favouring the Sabbath rest on Lewis said they had been given legal opinion which dismissed CalMac's opinion that it was obliged by law to sail on Sundays. The Lord's Day Observance Society had consulted Gordon Jackson QC and they then called on the ferry company to back down from 'destroying' the traditional Sabbath. They said that Mr Jackson's view was that a six-day timetable did not erode an individual's human rights unless access to a ferry was denied on religious grounds. Mr Jackson said: 'If a service is being provided, for example a ferry is running on a particular date, it would be unlawful to deny that service to any person because of their religious belief or lack of it... Put simply, it would be unlawful to have a ferry running but deny access to, for example, a Jew or Catholic or for that matter an atheist'. This unilateral move against local opposition shows CalMac motivated at best by crass desire for