

Free Church

Witness



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Scriptural Optimism - Editorial





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Scriptural Optimism

Today many good churches are struggling in what is often called the Post-Christian age. Godly people are appalled at the heresy, immorality and false worship that claims the name Christian. In our small congregations it is easy to forget the future hope taught in the Scriptures. We forget that even as far as this world is concerned we are on the winning side. Let's look at some of the encouraging passages of God's Word.

Eden

Just after the fall God gave the first gospel promise and it is bursting with hope: 'it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel' (Gen.3:15). Satan the prince of this world shall be decisively defeated. Jesus says, 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out' (Jn.12:31). He was about to die and he saw this death as the overthrow of Satan. Surely the outworking of the binding of the strong man (Mt. 12:29) will be the eventual takeover of his whole house by Christ.

Abraham

The promise of Eden was reiterated and further explained to Abraham. God said to him, 'That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gen.22:17-18). This is not speaking of a mere remnant being saved. Up till now the real church of God on earth has been a small minority. But here we have a predicted multitude of spiritual children of Abraham. They will be like the stars – hundreds of thousands of millions. And all nations will be blessed through the seed which is Christ.

Psalms

The Psalmist makes predictions about the coming Messiah and the extent of His kingdom: 'He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him' (Ps.72:8-11). Has this been fulfilled? Can Christ's kingdom meaningfully be spoken of as ever yet having reached from sea to sea? So far all kings have not bowed before Christ nor have all nations come to serve him. Surely there is cause for optimism that this will soon happen.

Isaiah

Isaiah, inspired by God's Spirit, makes many wonderful prophecies and they are still waiting to be fulfilled. He says of Messiah: 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law' (Is.42:4). The rule of Christ will be recognised even in the far off isles of the sea. All the earth will accept His judgment. How optimistic we should be: 'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine

habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited' (Is.54:2-3). 'Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought' (Is.60:9-11).

Daniel

Nebuchadnezzar was given a vision of a great kingdom that is going to overcome every other: 'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure' (Dan.2:44-45). This kingdom, though starting as a little stone, eventually becomes like a mountain that fills the whole earth. We are still looking for this to happen. What a wonderful promise!

Christ's Prophecies

Jesus asks: 'Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it' (Lk.13:18-19). The picture is one of amazing growth. He then adds: 'It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened' (v21). Christ's kingdom is going to spread till the whole world can be said to be leavened, ie transformed. He said to Nicodemus: 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved' (Jn.3:17). Christ came into the world not to save a few from it but in a very real sense to save the world and that will yet happen. He will not fail in His purpose. Many are perishing yet at the end of the day, in all things Christ will have the preeminence (Col.1:18).

Paul

Paul is quite sure that the Jewish people are yet going to be saved as a nation. He says, 'For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?' (Rom.11:15). He adds, 'For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this

mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob' (vv25-26). The Jews were rejected that the Gentiles might be saved and when the fullness of the Gentiles comes then Israel will again be grafted into their own olive tree and this will be life from the dead for the whole world. We look forward to this.

Revelation

The Book of Revelation tells of many wonderful things yet to happen. 'And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever' (Rev.11:15). Until now there has never been a time when it could truly be said that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of Christ.

Surely we have here a tremendous promise. We long to see Britain, France, Germany, Japan, China, India and Saudi Arabia becoming in a true sense the kingdoms of Christ. It will happen because the word of God says it and the Scriptures cannot be broken (Jn.10:35). Revelation 20 speaks of Satan being bound in hell 1000 years and then being loosed. Some refer this to the Gospel age. Certainly Satan was defeated by Christ at Calvary. But is he not still working? When one thinks of the spiritual darkness of the dark ages who can assert that the devil was locked up in hell at that time? And if the binding of Satan refers to the whole Gospel age what is referred to by the loosing of Satan? No, there is an age of great gospel blessing yet to come when it will be obvious that Satan is locked up and then there will follow a time when he is loosed. We look with joyful optimism for this blessed day when Satan will be imprisoned. Perhaps it will even be this year.

Marks of True Prayer

Rev Joel Beeke

1. True prayer brings heaven down into the soul and lifts the soul up to heaven.
2. True prayer is the prime exercise of faith where all saving graces converge to climax in the highest expression of gratitude (to God), the deepest expression of humility (with regard to ourselves), and the broadest expression of love (for others).
3. True prayer is real life. It is the 'soul's breathing itself into the bosom of its heavenly Father' (Thomas Watson).
4. True prayer is the sinner's response to God's voice. The prayer of the brokenhearted is a gift to God in reply to God's gift of prayerful broken-heartedness.
5. True prayer is a holy art taught by a groaning, wrestling Spirit who often uses the impossibilities and apparent 'artlessness' of the believer's entangled and sin-stained life to pencil upon him the image of his worthy Master.
6. True prayer is spiritual air for spiritual lungs. Where prayerful praying drifts into prayerless praying, the true believer degenerates into listlessness.
7. True prayer is the fruit of God Triune – the Father as Giver, the Son as Meritor, the Spirit as Wrestler and Indweller.
8. True prayer has an unexplainable way of increasing our awareness of both the worthiness of Christ and the unworthiness of the sinner; hence, it is both the chief part of thankfulness and of humility (cf. Heidelberg Catechism., Q.116).
9. True prayer is the believer's greatest weapon in the armoury of God. Puritan Thomas Lye confessed: 'I had rather stand against the canons of the wicked than against the prayers of the righteous'.
10. True prayer does not preach to God. It does not lead by the hand, but reaches for His guiding hand.
11. True prayer has more to do with God than man. It is wrapped up in holy concern for the glory and kingdom of God.
12. True prayer longs for revival. Its expectation is only in the Lord. When Adoniram Judson had laboured for eight years without one apparent convert, his mission board asked him if he had any expectation left. Judson responded: 'My expectation is as great as the promises of God'.
13. True prayer does not focus upon itself or the petitioner. It does not turn inward for morbid introspection, but turns inward to bring all the sinner's deadness and depravity outward and upward to the Almighty God of grace.

14. True prayer lets God be God. It empties its hands and heart before the open throne of God. True prayer is not *explanation* but *petition*. It doesn't tell the Lord how to convert a sinner, but asks Him to do it, trusting He knows better than any petitioner.

15. True prayer spreads out everything before the Lord as if He knows nothing about the sinner's condition, yet knowing that the Lord knows all.

16. True prayer conjoins holy reverence and holy familiarity with reverential boldness.

17. True prayer is not self-congratulatory, but self-condemnatory and Christ-congratulatory.

18. True prayer recognises that it changes neither God nor 'things', while simultaneously realising that God often is pleased to reach His purposes through the means of prayer.

19. True prayer is fellowshiping with God. It is a foretaste of heaven's eternal conversation.

20. True prayer is not a flurry of words in an ever-spiraling height of voice, but is a matter of the heart in an ever-spiraling depth of meditation before God.

21. True prayer ever feels that it is not sufficiently true, deep, thorough, and complete.

22. True prayer, when neglected, is like an untapped power line, a disconnected computer, a system broken down. Valuable information neither descends or ascends.

23. True prayer dresses itself in words, but its body is wordless. It is heart-work. Hence, Bunyan rightly advises:

'When thou prayest rather let thy heart be without words than thy words without a heart.'

24. True prayer measures no need too great or too small. It neither assumes human probability nor flinches in the face of human impossibility.

25. True prayer pleases God. It shows Him the divine handwriting of Scripture and the divine signature of His covenant promises.

26. True prayer profoundly feels that it can only be validated by the praying High Priest, Christ Jesus, who salts imperfect petitionings with the salt of His meritorious sufferings before presenting the church's prayers without spot or wrinkle in His holy Father's sight.

27. True prayer brings particular requests and waits for particular answers. And they shall be answered – perhaps not immediately, but God's delays are not His denials. 'God never denied that soul anything that went as far as heaven to ask it' (John Trapp).

28. True prayer is bathed in faith. Faithless prayer is fruitless prayer, no matter how sincere it may be.

29. True prayer for others also reaps great benefits for the petitioner in a feeling sense of his own closeness with God. True prayer can't intercede explicitly for others without praying implicitly for one's self.

30. True prayer is a joy in itself even when the answer may appear to contradict the very petitions offered.

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Right Relationships with God and Men III

Rev Jeff Ballantine

Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Bangor, Northern Ireland

2) Right Relationships with Men (Continued)

Right relationships with God and right relationships with men are of course intimately related. You cannot separate them. Those who know God most intimately are generally-speaking most influential with men. Elijah for instance was a man of God in private and that had a

direct impact upon his dealings with men. You can draw a direct line between what he was on his knees before God and the people falling on their faces on Mount Carmel crying out 'the Lord, he is the God; the Lord he is the God' (1Kgs.18:39). The vertical impacted the horizontal. When the disciples spent time with Jesus they also impacted others for good: 'when they saw the boldness of Peter and John,

and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus' (Acts 4:13). In fact Scripture says our relationship with God can even affect our relationship with our enemies: 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him' (Prov.16:7). So these two things are not unrelated.

Yet in another sense the two issues are still separate. It's not always the case that those who have a right relationship with God have a right relationship with men. Read the little book *Martin Luther had a wife* and you'll see what I mean. Some of the godliest men who have ever walked this earth had disastrous marriages. The vertical didn't impact the horizontal. John Wesley ended his days apart from his wife and never attended her funeral because he didn't hear the news until after she was buried! His intimacy with God is indisputable; his intimacy with his wife less so. Howell Harris handed over his girlfriend to brother Whitefield because he thought his need was greater! In these cases men of God acted foolishly in their relationships with other human beings. Furthermore, is it not true that personality problems don't surface on our knees, but they do appear in public? So these two issues, while ultimately inseparable, still need to be treated separately. Once again the constraints of time force me to generalise. It would be profitable to consider in detail what the Bible has to say about right relationships with specific parties such as our wives, our children, our congregation and unbelievers. A detailed study of Matthew 18:15-20 would also be helpful, but these subjects will have to be dealt with by someone else! I intend to focus primarily on our relationship with our brethren and this isn't always easy. As the little poem says:

'To live above with those we love,
That would indeed be glory,
But to live below with those we know,
Now that's another story!'

a) The basis of a right relationship with men

The basis of a right relationship with men is the same as the basis of a right relationship with God, namely the person and work of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans 12:18 the apostle exhorts us 'if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.' Christians are to be peacemakers, not quarrelsome, and nothing but the demands of truth should alienate us from others. However, that is not always possible as the apostle implies, so in this world we reluctantly have to accept the fact that relations with our fellow men are often less than ideal. The gospel divides and there is nothing we can do about that: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple' (Lk.14:26)

However, the same gospel which resolves our vertical problem with God also begins to resolve our horizontal problems with one another. Think for a moment about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the first century. Their alienation makes relations between Catholics and

Protestants in Northern Ireland seem positively friendly. In Ephesians 2 Paul described this alienation as 'a middle wall of partition', so thoughts of a Berlin Wall-type situation dividing east from west are not a million miles from reality. That wall was initially erected by God Himself. He bypassed other nations and set His love exclusively upon Israel. A paraphrase of Deuteronomy 7:7-8 would say: 'The Lord loved you because He loved you'. As a result of this love Israel enjoyed the ministry of the prophets, they possessed the oracles of God and they had access to salvation through the ceremonial law. God's purpose in doing this was to hedge in the Jews so as to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, with the eventual purpose of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles: 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth' (Is.49:6).

However, this wall which God Himself erected was then 'erected a bit higher' by Jewish exclusivism. How did the Jews react to this display of sovereign love? Instead of being profoundly thankful for God's grace many became puffed up with pride. The religious establishment in particular believed God blessed them because they were better than others, and Gentiles soon became conscious of this. Imagine how a Gentile felt when a Jew accidentally rubbed against him at market and then hurried home to wash because he had been defiled by a Gentile dog? Or imagine the feelings of inferiority a Gentile had when he read the inscription on the wall of the temple: 'No foreigner may enter within the barrier and enclosure around the temple. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death?'

This alienation was very deep, and Scripture describes it as 'the middle wall of partition'. Jews despised Gentiles, while Gentiles resented the contempt they encountered at the hands of the Jews. Christ has abolished this 'middle wall' for all who believe on Him. It is as really and truly demolished as the Berlin Wall was in 1989. With the coming of Messiah the ceremonial law disappeared, the wall fell down, and the grace of God brought enemies together: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal.3:28).

We see the demolition of this wall within the apostolic band. Matthew and Simon Zelotes were opposites. They would normally have had no time for one another. Matthew was a tax collector working for the Roman government and because of that his fellow countrymen would have treated him as a traitor. Simon on the other hand was a zealot seeking to overthrow the Roman government and his nationalistic zeal was such that prior to his conversion he would almost certainly have considered taking up arms against them. Prior to his joining the apostolic band, traitors such as Matthew would have been particularly abhorrent to him, yet in Christ they came together. A turncoat working for the Roman government and a zealot working for the overthrow of the Roman government became friends! That's what's so amazing about grace! What unites many of us? Perhaps if we were in the world we would have little time for one another, but through Christ we are one (1Cor.12:12-13).

b) Obstacles which can mar a right relationship with men

1) Pride

Some years ago Rev Iain Murray preached a sermon in Albert Bridge Road Congregational Church in Belfast on the subject: 'What splits churches?' The advert in the paper stated that he was going to answer the question in one word. I was intrigued as to what that one word would be. Was he speaking about the minister? Ministers can be stubborn, can't they? Ask my wife! Was he speaking about elders? They are not free from indwelling sin either. Or was he speaking about the deacons? Remember Spurgeon's words: 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you, resist a deacon and he will fly at you!' Or could he have been thinking about the members?

His answer, however, was much more general, and so obvious when you think about it – pride. Is this not the root of all sins? Was it not pride that prompted the devil to attempt to usurp the throne of God (Is.14, Ezek.28)? Was it not pride that lay behind the fall of our first parents, 'Ye shall be as gods' (Gen.3:5)? Well, brethren, have we really made so much progress in grace that this sin no longer bothers us, or could it be that pride still splits churches? Even the most mature believer can succumb to pride. Is that not what happened to Uzziah after a long prosperous reign? He ended up becoming a law unto himself. After many years of God-glorifying rule, 'when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction' (2Chron.26:16). As a result he usurped the role of a priest, bringing God's judgment upon his head.

Maybe this is a sin we're particularly prone to in later years. By that time we've worked out what we believe. Furthermore, we enjoy the increasing respect of the people. But alongside that we can have a corresponding confidence in our own judgment with the result that it's possible for us to condemn perfectionism while acting as if we are perfect! We may even unwittingly treat those who differ from us with contempt. Pride can creep in so that 'gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not' (Hos.7:9). Few sins cause more confusion and make us more hateful than pride. It's one of the seven things our Lord hates – 'a proud look' (Prov.6:16-17).

That's why Peter tells us to 'be clothed with humility', to put it on like a coat, so that people cannot but take note of our demeanour (1Pet.5:5). He could speak from personal experience, couldn't he? He knew all about this sin because he had succumbed to it. When our Lord spoke about going to Calvary Peter wouldn't have it. He was absolutely horrified at the prospect of His Lord suffering, so much so that he began to rebuke Christ. Peter fully believed that he was doing the right thing, yet he was gravely mistaken! He unwittingly succumbed to pride and was later proven to be seriously wrong. Perhaps there is nothing more destructive of personal relationships than pride.

2) Prejudice

Think of Jonah's refusal to take the gospel to the Ninevites. What lay behind it? Was it the difficulty of the task, or his



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fear of men? No. Scripture gives us a very different reason: 'And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live' (Jon.4:2-3). Jonah was annoyed because he knew that God was going to be gracious towards the Ninevites and the thought that the inveterate enemies of Israel might come to faith when his own fellow countrymen were being bypassed was more than he could bear. Jonah would have preferred to die rather than see Ninevites converted. Bigotry lay behind his disobedience.

Or think again of the power of prejudice in Peter's life. He was born a kosher Jew and by nature would have had a jaundiced view of Gentiles, so much so that God had to grant him a special vision to prove that He was no respecter of persons. Peter saw a great sheet descending from heaven containing all sorts of four-footed beasts and creeping things. God commanded him to eat of it so that he might learn the lesson: 'what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common' (Acts 10:15). The lesson was subsequently confirmed in the house of Cornelius when many Gentiles were converted. As a result Peter was able to report back to Jerusalem that 'God hath also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life' (Acts 11:18)

One would have thought that Peter needed no further encouragement to flee from prejudice but many years later this sin, so deep-rooted, reared its ugly head again. In Galatians 2:11 we are told how Paul 'withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed'. Peter had caved in to pressure from the those who promoted circumcision as

well as faith in Christ. As a result he stopped eating with Gentile believers. Although he still believed the gospel with all his heart his actions sent out a contrary signal and Paul rebuked him publicly because the gospel was at stake. Peter's prejudice was exposed by the rough edge of Paul's tongue and if an apostle could fall in this area we need to be careful lest we fall prey to the same sin.

Bunyan spoke powerfully and graphically of the power of prejudice in his masterpiece *The Holy War*. He records how Shaddai sent an army of 40,000 to reduce Mansoul under the direction of four captains, Boanerges, Conviction, Judgment and Execution. These mighty warriors addressed the inhabitants with great energy but little success because

Diabolus, Incredulity, Illpause and others interfered to create confusion. Diabolus in particular relied on one Mr Prejudice stationed at Eargate to create havoc. He stationed him there because that's where the King's forces sought to enter. His precise words are: 'The Lord Will-be-will made one old Mr Prejudice, an angry and ill-conditioned fellow, captain of the ward at that gate, and put under his power sixty men, called Deafmen'. Isn't that a powerful picture of prejudice? A prejudiced person acts like a deaf man, refusing to listen to anyone who disagrees with him. Such a person is difficult to reason with and that puts a severe strain on inter-personal relationships. Prejudice is another sin that can seriously mar our relations with others.

The Seer of Shawbost

Rev Norman Macfarlane

From *The Men Of Lewis* (1924)

The island of Lewis had men of great spiritual stature, but this son of the island towered over all the others in the gift of 'prophecy'. He was born at Shawbost, on the West Side of the island and lived there all his fourscore years. It is many years since he died, but his fame has never died. His name was Malcolm Maclean. He was known as 'Calum Mòr na h-Urnaigh' (Big Malcolm of Prayer). His prayerfulness was the wonder of the community. He rose long before dawn so that, like his Lord, he might hold communion with God. He never sat longer than half an hour in any company, however delightful the company might be. He must go out to see his Heavenly Father's face. The lure of prayer was stronger than all the pleasures of holy converse with fellow believers. God's presence was to him the most captivating of all fascinations. This remarkable man could not read but his memory held long Scripture chapters to the last letter. He carried every detail to his Heavenly Father, and was on terms of extraordinary friendship with God. Some people thought his gift of 'prophecy' verged on the uncanny, but there is no mystery at all about it in a soul of such sweet simplicity and faith as his, merged, as it continually was, in heart to heart communication with God. 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?' In that prayerfulness in which he was constantly steeped, his mind became a sensitised plate on which pictures from Heaven were easily and immediately made. When he came back from prayer one could read Paradise in his face.

Heap of stones

Murdo Morrison, Thule, Edinburgh, once told me that he remembered Calum praying at family worship in his father's house on North Beach Street in Stornoway. The house faced the handsome Stornoway Castle, then occupied by Sir James Matheson. Calum's petition was, 'Lord, show mercy to the

man who lives in the big stone cairn over by'. That was a sample of the arresting forms in which his prayers abounded. His usual address to God was, 'Oh Thou of Everlasting Love'. His own soul was fragrant with the love in which he browsed day by day. The whole countryside retailed instances of Calum's foretellings, many of which are still remembered.

Heaven's time

Once there was a fishing boat which failed to return when the others were driven home. Anxiety sprang into the hearts of the waiting friends. There was, after long expectation, no appearance of the boat. At length they went to the Seer. He said that the boat would arrive safely 'at 12 o' clock tomorrow'. The morrow came, and the village crowded down to the shore to welcome the boat. Eyes were eager in scanning the horizon, but no boat appeared! A man ran to the house of the Seer and said, 'It is 12, and there is no sight of the boat!' His answer was simply, 'Your time must be wrong. It's not 12 in Heaven yet!' The man had scarcely got to the waiting company on the shore when the boat rounded a headland, and the crew were landed amid a chorus of thanksgiving.

Calum are you sure?

Another tale of the sea was of a Shawbost boat which had been fishing near the mainland. A terrific storm came on and intense anxiety was in every heart in the village. The relatives were plunged into keen anguish by the tragic news that the boat had drifted on to the Lewis coast in a water-logged state. There was no doubt about the boat. It was perfectly clear and certain that it was the Shawbost boat. It was natural to think the crew were all washed overboard. Calum heard of the melancholy news and assured the village that, while the boat did drift, the crew were safe, and they would see them all by and by. One poor widow, whose only son was one of the crew, was prostrate with grief and moaned sadly,

'Oh Calum, are you sure he's safe?' 'Yes, perfectly sure, unless something has happened since I left the hill two hours ago.' It turned out that a ship bound for Leith rescued the crew from their boat, that the fishing boat itself broke away, and that in the raging seas it was not possible for the ship to catch it up again. The crew were landed at Leith and, in due time, arrived at Shawbost.

She'll recover

Once he met a friend travelling through Shawbost to the village of Bragar. Calum asked him his errand. 'I'm on my way to see my daughter who is dying of the terrible fever that is carrying off so many people in Bragar.' In his mind he saw her dead and buried, over a dozen times on that sad day. 'Your daughter is not dying, and she will not die at this time,' said Calum. 'But I was told she was sinking beyond all hope, and that I must hurry if I wished to see her alive.' 'Your daughter will win through,' was Calum's answer. She had been in the balances and death had evidently set his mark on her, but she recovered and is alive today, enjoying the nation's bounty in the form of the Old Age Pension.

A Child's death

Calum had a horse which usually grazed on the village common. One day a woman passing along saw Calum on the common as if he had been looking for his horse. She went to him and said she saw the horse feeding on the other side of the knoll. 'Woman, why do you trouble me? I was not looking for my horse! I was looking at a company of angels who were carrying the soul of a child from Arnol up to Heaven.' That evening news reached Shawbost of a child's death in the village of Arnol. It happened at the hour that Calum had the vision.

Within an hour

On one occasion Calum called on the Gaelic schoolteacher whose fees, so far as fees went, were in the shape of peats for fuel. There had been no peats brought to him lately. His supply was exhausted. There was no fire that day. He apologised to Calum for the lack of fire to welcome him and to boil the kettle. 'Never fear,' said Calum, 'You'll have peats within the hour.' It is said that the teacher subjected this utterance to 'the merciless test' of pulling out his watch and placing it on the table. True to the prediction, a woman appeared within an hour with a creel of peats on her back for the teacher. The fire was made and soon the house was bright with glow and praise.

Payment

Once while busy getting his corn into the barn, Calum asked a boy who was idly passing by to help him, and he would pay him for his work. The boy agreed and worked with a will. When the job was finished he asked for payment. 'I'll pray for you, my boy. That is the best payment I can give you. Oh, boy, go home and be thankful! When I am in my grave you will know the value of this payment and rejoice that it is not

copper that you receive for this that you have done for me.' The boy is now an old and respected elder, and from his own lips this story was given to Norman Morrison.

Church Collection

Calum was a collector of the Sustentation Fund, and a most successful one. Many people gave gladly, but some gave out of fear. They were afraid of his prayers and of his prophecies. One man refused out and out to give anything to the fund. Calum pitied him and felt for him and said, 'Oh, man, this is a great folly. You will rue it. For this refusal you will lose one of your stirks.' And so it came to pass. There was nothing of personal anger in Calum over the refusal.

Prayer for a Cow

On his collecting rounds he came to a woman whose only cow was very ill. She was in great distress. 'This is all the money I have in the house,' she said. 'I would like to give it to you, but I also feel that I ought to buy something with it to help the poor cow.' 'You give the money to the Lord's cause, and He will look after the cow. I think I may promise you that the cow will recover.' She gave him all she had. He spent that night in prayer, but got no assurance or any message concerning the widow's cow. He was in deep trouble and hastened along to John Maciver, his fellow villager, to enlist his help in prayer. 'What will the woman say if the cow dies? I have asked her to give the money to the Lord's cause, saying that He would look after the cow. What will the village say if the cow dies?

Come, friend, let us unite in prayer for the cow.' John Maciver and the Seer joined in earnest prayer for the cow, and the

animal began to mend. When the story of these two saints and the cow reached the household of faith in Carloway there was some merriment over the place of honour which the cow obtained in the Court of Heaven!

Preachers

Calum was asked what he thought of the sermon one morning. He said, 'The preacher did not get beyond harbour lights. That was his characterisation of a shallow preacher who hugged the shore when the deep sea was a little way out. 'What did you think of that colleged minister that we had last Sabbath?' 'Ah! our own cock (the uncolleged lay preacher, Kenneth Ross) crows far bonnier!' 'How did you like the Rev So-and-So?' 'Och for him! He never lifted the latch to enter my door.' 'But was your house fit for the minister to enter?' 'Fit! Why, the Holy Spirit dwells in it, and surely it's fit for the minister!'

Death

Calum said to a friend, 'Your wife will die first, then you, and will be buried here. I shall die shortly after you, and also be buried here.' All of which happened. In his old age friends in Stornoway clubbed together to support this dear saint, and they made all arrangements for a paid attendant to give her undivided care to him in his closing days. The sky was in glow as his sun sank red in the west. How easy and natural the translation to Heaven of this unique man of God!



News



Arbroath All Age Holiday 2007

Eileen Louise Murray, Stornoway

The Free Church (Continuing) All-Age Holiday last year took place in the Arbroath Windmill Christian Centre. This holiday gave people the opportunity to have worship together and to get to know each other, enjoying one another's company. There were activities for the younger children organised by Anne Macaulay and Ann Mairi Macleod. They kept the children well occupied during the week by providing sports and crafts. It was apparent that all the children enjoyed these activities, and we thank them both for the hard work that they put in to making the week enjoyable for the children.

After breakfast every morning, worship was held for the children by Mr Greg MacDonald (Ness). His talks were based on the title 'God and Children'. The headings he had for each day were: 'God Loves You', 'God Helps You', 'God Stays with You', 'God talks to Children', 'God Has Space for Children' and 'God Listens to You'. These were greatly

enjoyed by the children (and of course the adults), and we pray that they will remember these lessons as they grow older. There were quizzes for the young and the teenagers after the talks each day. There were teams called the Roman Army and the Roaring Lions. However, to the Roaring Lions' disappointment, the Roman Army won by quite a number of points.

After lunch each day, people had the opportunity to do what they chose. Many of us, who had not visited Arbroath previously, were interested in visiting areas in Arbroath such as the Museum, some historical sites and also in making trips to the famous 'Sugar n' Spice' (known for its very delicious desserts).

After dinner each night, worship was held again by Mr MacDonald when he gave informal talks to the adults about the tabernacle. Mr MacDonald gave all the adults a deeper insight as to what happened in the Tabernacle and he also used PowerPoint for visual aids. He showed the structure of the tabernacle in a simple yet effective way. Everyone found these talks very interesting and learned a great deal

from them. The adults would meet often and have Bible Studies which were held by Mr Fraser. While listening to the discussions of the adults, the children and teenagers learnt a great deal about the Bible. Sunday night was particularly enjoyed by all who were there as we all gathered together to sing our favourite Psalms. This was indeed a time of great blessing from the Lord.

Throughout the week, tournaments were held for all to take part. It was a good time getting to know people and seeing a bit of competitiveness! Mr Greg MacDonald won both the Air Hockey and Pool tournaments. There was also table tennis which was won by Soon Jo Hong.

In 2007 the responsibility of organising the All-Age Holiday had been handed over to David and Ruth Keddies. We would all like to thank the Keddies for the great effort they put in to make the week enjoyable. Unfortunately, the Keddies were not with us for the whole week. Mr and Mrs Fraser took over the responsibility when they left and we would like to thank them also as they made the week very enjoyable for us as well.

We would like especially to thank Mrs Isobel McQueer, our cook, for making all the food for us morning, afternoon and evening.

Finally, the Lord must be thanked for the blessings He gave us over the week. It was a thoroughly enjoyable holiday and one that I would highly recommend.

Desk



Visit to Australia

Rev Gavino Fioretti

On 7th November 2007 at lunchtime I left Inverness and after two days spent on planes and in airports I reached Adelaide in South Australia. It was the beginning of five weeks of intense work. I was delighted to see my dear friend and brother, Rev James Frew, but also to meet many Christians from our church and other denominations. My first sermons were for Mr Frew in Magill Free Church (Adelaide). Then I went to Cohuna, to the home of the Taylor family, where there is a recently-begun very promising preaching station. There were nine people that day, but often they have twenty. I preached in three different places in the Melbourne area. One of these was for Rev John Nelson in Chadston. Mr Frew is involved in establishing a Free Church (Continuing) witness in the Melbourne area and I preached for that group. After a few days in Victoria I went to Queensland. There I

was to work with a friend, Chris Tuck. The people in Ipswich, Queensland, with whom we were involved, were not originally Free Church people but now have close links with the Magill congregation. It was originally a Bible Methodist Church We had wonderful fellowship with God's people and many opportunities to proclaim Christ in the two weeks spent there. On fulfilling my duties in Queensland I went back to Adelaide where I had the privilege of assisting at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the first time. It was a wonderful weekend. I cannot express fully what a wonderful time I had, though I missed my family very much. It was amazing to see what the Lord is doing in that country. There is a real interest among many scattered people for the things of God that seems to be lost here in Scotland. God's people there are so hungry for the gospel that they are willing to travel many hours

to go to church. People from many places are contacting Mr Frew and his helpers asking that someone would go and preach to them Christ Jesus and His wonderful gospel. One event sticks out in my memory. I had the privilege to meet a very influential Aborigine pastor, Bob Brown, with whom I had a time of heavenly fellowship. He is deeply concerned about the spiritual state of the Aborigines and hopes that faithful preachers will preach the full, free and unfettered gospel to his beloved people. It is both humbling and amazing that the Lord has opened an effectual door for gospel usefulness in Australia. Mr Frew has seen numbers come and associate with the Free Church (Continuing). It is as though God had been preparing the situation for his going. It is a promising situation, but one that calls for our prayer and support. To see the



gospel prosper there will not just bring blessing to Australia but surely also for our beloved Free Church. Please, brethren, pray for this new missionary work in Australia. Our brethren need our support from Scotland especially when so many are calling out for us to take the Word of God to them.

Let us pray that God will provide men to strengthen the Kirk Session at Magill and faithful preachers to supply the great need of God's people over there. Let us pray that God will bless the many hours spent travelling and labouring and that the multitudes will be saved.

Lords Approve Animal-Human Embryos

Christian Institute

The House of Lords has voted to allow the creation of animal-human embryos for medical research. Proposals to permit so-called 'saviour siblings' were also approved. Lord Alton's attempt to ban animal-human embryos was defeated by 268 votes to 96. Lady O'Cathain led the debate on banning the creation of so-called 'saviour siblings' to provide spare-part tissues for the treatment of an existing child. Her amendment was defeated by 118 votes to 62.

Although we were saddened by these results, we are thankful to God for those Peers who spoke out and voted in favour of protecting human life from the time of conception. We are also thankful for the media coverage of these important issues.

Worst anti-Christian Violence in India for 60 Years

Hindu extremists launched a spate of violent but meticulously planned attacks on Christians in Kanhdamal District, Orissa State, on 24th and 25th December 2007. A total of 95 churches were burnt to the ground, as well as 730 homes of Christians. In cases where a Christian ministry operated from rented premises owned by a Hindu, the attackers were careful not to damage the building, but took all the contents outside and set them on fire. The death toll is unknown at the time of writing,

but taking into account all known cases of 'arson, murder and assault' the violence was, in the words of the All India Christian Council, 'the largest attack on the Christian community in the history of democratic India.'

Persecution in Nigeria

Ten persons have been killed and three churches set on fire after Muslim students in the city of Bauchi began a rampage on 11th December because unidentified people pulled out two foundation blocks of a high school mosque under construction. Area Muslims joined the attacking students, resulting in the deaths and damage in the city, including dozens of homes belonging to Christians. The identity of nine of the ten people killed has been kept secret as the Bauchi state government has ordered security agents to bury the bodies in a common grave, eyewitnesses to the burial reported. The body of the 10th person has been identified by eyewitnesses only by his surname, Bogoro, a Christian security agent.

A teacher at the Government Day School, Baba Tanko Secondary School, who pleaded that his identity remain undisclosed out of fear of Muslim attack and government penalty, said he witnessed the sparking of the rampage when Muslim students claimed that the foundation of the school mosque had been pulled down. Muslim students began attacking Christians in their classes, he said. 'They broke chairs and desks', he said. 'They also attacked their Christian colleagues with knives and daggers. I had to run for my dear life because the situation became uncontrollable.'

Barnabas Fund Revised Response to Muslim "Open Letter and Call"

Since the publication of 'An Open Letter and Call from Muslim Religious Leaders' on 13th October 2007, the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, Yale University, has issued a response entitled 'Loving God and Neighbour Together' in which they have apologised to Muslims for past Christian actions and effectively embraced the Muslim arguments in

the 'Open Letter and Call'. A number of senior evangelical leaders have signed the Yale response. This has created grave concerns amongst other Christians both in the West and in the non-Western world. One senior church leader in the Middle East has cited a comment from an Arab Christian in the West: 'A large number of Christians suffer from all kinds of pressure in Muslim countries because of their religious beliefs. If Muslims truly want peace in the world, why don't they give Christians in the Muslim countries the same rights that Muslims enjoy in Western countries?' A Christian leader in a Muslim context in Africa wrote of his pain at reading the Yale response and asked of Western Christian leaders, 'Do they care what we, living in these contexts, feel?' Barnabas Fund responded to the 'Open Letter and Call' with their analysis, which aimed to interpret the Letter from an Islamic perspective.

Sex Lessons Not Halting Rise in Teen Pregnancy

More than twenty schoolgirls are becoming pregnant every day, fuelling fears that the Government's sex education strategies are backfiring. Figures released by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) revealed that underage pregnancies rose by 4% to total 7,462 in 2005 – the latest year for which data is available. This leaves England and Wales with the highest birth rates for under-16s in Western Europe.

The LifeLeague says: 'We agree with the conclusions of Professor David Patton, who said: "There has been a tendency for the Government's teenage pregnancy strategy to focus on creating schemes where teenagers can get the morning-after pill or other forms of family planning at school or clinics. The danger with this sort of approach is that it can lead to an increase in risky sexual behaviour amongst some young people. There is now overwhelming evidence that such schemes are simply not effective in cutting teenage pregnancy rates"'.

The Grasshopper



I've something to tell you today
How God's mighty power is shown,
In using the feeblest and poor
That the glory may all be His own.

A woman once took up her babe,
T'was left in a meadow to die,
She hastily hurried away,
Nor heeded its pitiful cry.

Poor baby, forsaken, alone,
Left heartlessly out on the grass,
'Mid insects and flowers and trees,
And nobody likely to pass,

But God had His eye on the boy,
For all that He made are His care,
And a grasshopper feeble and small,
That day was His messenger there.

For God is so mighty and strong,
He uses the foolish and base
To be links in the chain of affairs
That eventually work out His grace.

That same afternoon in the fields,
A boy was enjoying his play,
When hearing a grasshopper's song
He hastened directly that way.

But oh what a wondrous surprise
He had when the baby he found,
Still lying alone on the grass,
And wrapped in a slumber profound.

The grasshopper's chirp he forgot,
His errand was happily done,
He took up the babe in his arms,
The poor little desolate one.

Then to his own mother he bore
That baby boy safely away,
And she with true kindness and love,
Adopted that child from that day.

The baby at last grew a man,
A magistrate honoured and great,
He built the first Royal Exchange,
And won the warm thanks of the state.

And then at the top for a vane,
He placed a large grasshopper there,
To remind everyone that passed by
Of God's ceaseless, wonderful care.

So now you will all understand,
What sometimes you may have thought strange,
Why a golden grasshopper should stand,
On the top of the Royal Exchange.

N.B. The Royal Exchange was founded by Sir Thomas Gresham in 1568, and named the first Royal Exchange by Queen Elizabeth in 1571. The grasshopper was made the crest of the Greshams after the incident referred to in the poem. Though the Exchange was burnt down in 1666, and the rebuilt one was also burnt down in 1838, the original grasshopper survived both fires. In the last war it was taken down for safety, and replaced on the apex of the Exchange campanile on 10th January, 1949. How wonderful is God's providence!



Books

The Ministry

Charles J. Brown

The Banner of Truth Trust

pbk, 112pp, £5.50

Charles Brown gave his life to the one great purpose of preaching and pastoring, and in that capacity he was the equal of the most eminent men of his day. At the Disruption of 1843, ministers and elders of the Free Church first gathered in the Tanfield Hall, Edinburgh, and it was in that building, the following Sunday afternoon, that Brown was called upon to preach to three thousand. His text was, 'I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; which shall never hold their peace, day nor night' (Is.62:6).

With the inevitable controversy that accompanied the events surrounding the Disruption the concern among the Free Church leaders was that the priority of personal devotion to Christ could be displaced. For that reason, in the following year, the General Assembly of May 1844 was preceded by a day of humiliation and prayer and for the first meeting of the day, prior to discussion, Charles Brown was asked to preach. He took for his theme, 'The Minister's Responsibility and Aim', based on the words, 'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved' (Hab.2:1). The message of that Tuesday in May 1844 was long to be remembered. Brown began by reminding his hearers that the purpose of their meeting was 'not so much to speak to one another as to speak to the Lord our God, and pour out our hearts before Him in sorrowful confession of our many, many shortcomings and sins'; and this in order that it might 'please Him in infinite mercy to make some use of us as His instruments in the great work on which His heart is set, and for which the Son of God died'.

He went on: 'How is a minister to teach others the ways of God unless he is walking close and straight in them himself? How

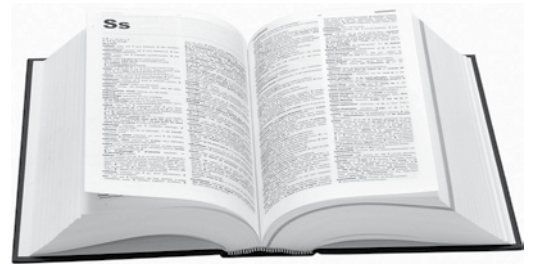
shall he lay open the sins of others, not harshly but tenderly, unless he is seeing and mourning in secret over his own?' Before the sermon concluded, 'Many a head was bowed, and here and there amidst the Assembly men were silently seeking relief in tears.' The discussion that was expected did not follow. Instead, after a few words by Dr Chalmers, there was silence: 'In vain the Moderator invited further discussion. Men's hearts were full; the Assembly remained for a time in hushed silence. It seemed as if members were afraid to disturb the solemnity of the scene; as if it would be best for each to retire and enter into his closet, and shut the door behind him. At a quarter past two o'clock the blessing was pronounced, and men went to their homes'.

Charles J Brown was 'An animated, incisive, and very spiritual preacher'. This powerful little volume survives as a statement of what he saw as the essence of the gospel ministry – preaching with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Such men of doctrinal earnestness, whose lips have been touched with a 'live coal from off the altar', have ever been the means of reviving the church and awakening the world. Only let the Christian ministry return to the apostolic rule of Acts 6:4 and the church will surely see brighter days. The life of the minister is the life of his ministry. It is to be deeply regretted today that a low level of spiritual vitality greatly hinders the impact of even the most gifted ministries. Paul's words to Timothy, 'Take heed unto thyself', continue to apply to all ministers of the gospel.

Brown writes about public prayer: 'All ... working of a man's self mechanically up into the spirit of prayer, are to be shunned, as one would shun a viper. The spirit of prayer must needs lie at the bottom of all, and thus, the cultivating of ceaseless secret prayer, in connection with the blessed Scriptures, whose language forms the very warp and woof of all wise and right public devotion. I speak not of mere texts strung together (which are perhaps the worst kind of public



Books



prayers of all), but of a certain vein of Scripture language and thought, running easily, and as it were naturally, through the whole exercise.

The book begins with a useful biographical introduction by Rev Iain H Murray and concludes with an example of Brown's own preaching, on Genesis 3:24, entitled 'The Expulsion from Eden – its character and lessons'. All ministers can find treasures in this book. 'Who is sufficient for these things?' (2 Cor.2:16).

Rev Jaeyoon Kim



SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

The Loveliness of Christ

Extracts from the Letters of
Samuel Rutherford

Selected by Ellen S Lister

Banner of Truth Trust

Gift Edition, 128pp, £10.00

I have to confess to my shame that several times I have attempted to get into the *Letters* of Samuel Rutherford and failed. Others spoke in glowing terms of the blessings they had received and of how their hearts were warmed. Perhaps my problem was lack of the patience required to stop and think what the old English meant. However with this beautifully produced little book I at last found an entrance to the letters. HGC Moule in the prefatory note a hundred years ago described this book as a 'casket of jewels'. Sinclair Ferguson in the modern foreword states: 'This setting of brief quotations makes the words sparkle like diamonds on a dark cloth in a jeweller's shop.'

Let me give three brief quotes to whet your appetite:

'Our best fare here is hunger.'

'Christ's cross is such a burden as sails are to a ship or wings to a bird.'

'There is no sweeter fellowship with Christ than to bring our wounds and our sores to Him.'

Reformation Heroes

Diana Kleyn with Joel Beeke

Reformation Heritage Books

hbk, 240pp, \$18

It is vitally important to remember our history, especially our church history. We owe so much to the Reformers who stood up for the truth and suffered for it. We have Reformed theology today and the freedom to preach the gospel because of those who fought for this in days gone by.

Reformation Heroes is a beautifully produced book, originally written for older teenagers but profitable and readable for all. Even those well versed in church history will be stirred and challenged by reading again about Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Tyndale, Calvin and many more.

Rev William Macleod

George Smeaton

Learned Theologian and Biblical
Scholar

Rev John Keddie

Evangelical Press

pbk, 184pp, £8.95

This book is a must read for all who are interested in the Free Church of Scotland. Rev John Keddie introduces us to George Smeaton – the man, and the theologian. Although he was Professor of Exegetical Theology in New College Edinburgh from 1857-1889, surprisingly little is known of this eminent theologian today in Reformed circles. This volume seeks to redress that imbalance.

The book begins by taking us through his early life and ministry, till he eventually arrived in New College in 1857. It deals honestly with the turbulent times of controversy experienced by the Free Church in the later nineteenth century, giving us the perspective of George Smeaton on these difficulties.

Why do I recommend you read it?

It is a very readable biography of an eminent Scottish theologian who lived through the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, and continued to witness to the truth of Christ's Word until the end of his life.

This book shows that there is nothing new under the sun in Reformed church circles. Chapters eight to ten reveal the desire for innovation in worship and the fight to loosen Confessional standards which faced Smeaton and fellow churchmen in the 19th century. These men remained faithful to Christ, and so must we.

This book shows that you can still maintain a warm Christ-centred preaching style even in the rarefied atmosphere of an orthodox academic theological establishment. The author quoting from one of Smeaton's printed sermons says: 'In the federal (covenant) system, which Erskine knows to wield so skilfully, the high doctrines of sovereign, special efficacious grace on which the federal system rests are found in perfect harmony with the freest proclamation of the invitations of the gospel.'

This book is much more than just an historical account of George Smeaton. It is an excellent read, and one that might entice you also to read more of George Smeaton's printed works. I heartily recommend this superb book to as wide a readership as possible.

Rev Richard Ross



The Riches of the Psalms II

Rev Malcolm H Watts

This excellent series of articles on the Psalms by Pastor Watts first appeared in The Messenger, which is the magazine of Emmanuel Church, Salisbury. Last month Pastor Watts looked at the nature of the Book of Psalms and gave a brief history of Psalmody.

3. Collection and Arrangement of the Psalms

We may observe the following:

(i) Authorised collection

The need for an authorised collection arose when David, under divine direction, made Psalm-singing an essential element in worship: 'he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel' (1Chron.16:4).

(ii) Number rose

The number of Psalms rose by degrees, which was the case even with secular collections (Numb.21:14 – 'Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord' – a collection of national songs of victory; 2Sam.1:17 – 'David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher' [the upright one] – appears to have been a book containing various songs about heroes).

(iii) Not all included

Not all Psalms were chosen for inclusion in the book of Psalms, though some omitted songs were placed by the Holy Spirit in other books of the Bible. (eg 2Samuel 1:19ff and 23; cf 1Kings 4:32 – 'he [Solomon] spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five'). What then were the principles of selection?

a. Obviously they had to be 'inspired' (2Sam.23:2; cf Mt.22:43 – 'How then doth David *in spirit* call him Lord...?'). David's fellow psalmists, Asaph, and Heman, for example, were 'seers' or 'prophets' (1Chron.25:5; 2Chron.29:30).

b. They had to be directly sacred.

c. They had to be 'suited to public worship' (cf Is.38:20). It is true that many of the Psalms are written in the first person, but the 'I' of the psalmist often represents the typical pious Israelite and even, in process of development, the entire nation of Israel. In any case, these Psalms contain material which the nation or church could easily appropriate to its spiritual need.

(iv) Psalms arranged

The Psalms were then duly arranged. 'Not only are the Psalms inspired, but the arrangement of them was not without the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Psalms have been well likened to pearls strung together in a beautiful necklace' (Christopher Wordsworth). There is nothing consistently chronological about the arrangement, but they are sometimes related to each other: their authorship (eg Ps.73-83 – Psalms attributed to Asaph); superscription (eg 52-55 – 'Maschil', or 'Instruction', appears in these titles); catch-words (eg 1 and 2 contain such words as 'blessed', 'meditate', 'way', 'perish'); particular seasons (eg 3:5; 4:8 suggest morning and evening Psalms); notes of thanksgiving (eg 105-107 which all begin with 'O give thanks'); theme development (eg 22, 23, 24 deal respectively with death, resurrection, and ascension); and subject (eg 9-14 all deal with judgment).

(v) Editorial work

There is some evidence of editorial work (Ps.72:20). While dogmatism here must be avoided, it is suggested, with some probability, that collections were made in the times of:

a. David: hence, the first section of the Psalter is mainly Davidic.

b. Solomon, for he was a prophet and poet who composed psalms: Psalms 72, 127, and possibly 128 and 132.

c. Jehoshaphat (2Chron.17,20).

d. Hezekiah (2Chron.29; cf Prov.25:1).

e. Ezra, he being a priest and 'ready scribe in the law of Moses' (Ezra 7:6).

4. Interior Divisions

The Hebrew Psalter is actually one volume in five parts. Its divisions can be easily identified, for each division ends with a doxology which, in the last, is a whole Psalm.

(1) **Psalms 1-41:** 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen (Ps.41:13).

(2) **Psalms 42-72:** 'Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended' (72:18-20).

(3) **Psalms 73-89**: 'Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen' (89:52).

(4) **Psalms 90-106**: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord' (106:48).

(5) **Psalms 107-150**: The last five are Hallelujah Psalms, each beginning with a 'Hallelujah', or 'Praise ye the Lord'. The doxology at the close of this section is – 'Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power... Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord' (150:1-6).

Authorship

These sections have certain characteristics, sometimes by reason of authorship:

the first is mainly Davidic;

the second is still mainly Davidic, but eight of the Psalms are ascribed to sons of Korah;

the third is Asaphic on the whole, opening with eleven 'psalms of Asaph', followed by four Korahite – 'A psalm for, or of (margin), the sons of Korah';

the fourth is chiefly anonymous, with the exception of Psalm 90 (Moses), and Psalms 101 and 103 (David); and

the fifth is also generally anonymous, although 15 of the Psalms here are ascribed to David.

Contents

These sections have also been classified as follows:

Book 1 (Psalms 1-41) – *Doctrinal*: God, His glorious name and wonderful works; and man, his sin and his salvation.

Book 2 (42-72) – *Experimental*: 25 Psalms of failure, 16 of victory;

Book 3 (73-89) - *Historical*: Dividing the Sea (74:13); thy way in the sea (77:19); cleaving of the rock in the wilderness (78:15); the vine from Egypt (80:8); the people given up (81:12); coalition against Israel (83:5); David's glorious kingdom (89);

Book 4 (90-105) - *Prophetical*: The beginning of the Lord's reign (96-98);

Book 5 (106-150) - *Jubilant*: Psalms full of praise.

Similarity to Pentateuch

The Jews were right to see in these five books (or divisions) some likeness to the Pentateuch, with its five books (Genesis to Deuteronomy). 'Moses gave the five books of the Law to the Israelites and, as a counterpart to them, David gave the Psalms consisting of five books' (Hebrew *Midrash* on Psalm 1). Delitzsch observes in his commentary: 'The Psalter is also a Pentateuch, the echo of the Mosaic Pentateuch from the heart of Israel; it is the five-fold book of the congregation to Jehovah, as the law is the five-fold book of Jehovah to the congregation. And there are several evident similarities eg (1) In both cases we have five books; (2) there are twin themes throughout of life and death, blessing and cursing (Ps.1; Deut.30:19).

However, there is something more striking by far:

Book 1 (Psalms 1-41): Psalm 1 corresponds to *Genesis*, telling of the blessedness of man when he walks not in wicked counsel but delights in the law of God. The 'tree' and the 'rivers' carry us back to Eden, where originally man was both holy and happy.

Book 2 (Psalms 42-72): Psalm 42 corresponds to *Exodus*, telling of groaning affliction, under the simile of the hunted hart. 'Cast down', as under a burden, there is hope for the people, that God will command loving kindness in a day of deliverance.

Book 3 (Psalms 73-89): Psalm 73 corresponds to *Leviticus*, stressing God's goodness to those ceremonially and morally clean. This striving for holiness may seem to be in vain, but in the 'sanctuary' (the sacred courts) the psalmist found understanding and discovered that those who go after false gods would be cut off (Lev.20:5, cf Ps.73:27).

Book 4 (Psalms 90-106): Psalm 90 corresponds to *Numbers*, teaching that in the absence of a 'home' (for 40 years) God is His people's 'dwelling-place'. It tells of the generation which perished in the wilderness (Numb.14.22-24) and teaches us also to 'number' our days (v12).

Book 5 (Psalms 107-150): Psalm 107 corresponds to *Deuteronomy*, reviewing God's dealings with his 'redeemed' whom He has brought to a place of 'habitation'. It also calls for praise (cf Deut.32).

Purpose

The Psalms were meant to be used in a variety of ways, including:

Worship – 'To the Chief Musician' (mentioned 55 times), ie 'the Precentor', or 'Master of Song' (cf Ps.118:15 – 'The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous');

Teaching – '*Maschil*' occurs 13 times and is derived from the verb 'to instruct'. (Ps.60 [title] – '*Michtam* of David, to teach'; Psalm 78:3-6 – By Psalms, the divine Word was a means of instructing children); and

Meditation – '*Higgaion*' (Ps.9:16 cf 19:14) – 'Meditation'. The word actually indicates some interlude allowing time for thought.

"Psalm 1 corresponds to Genesis, telling of the blessedness of man when he walks not in wicked counsel but delights in the law of God. The 'tree' and the 'rivers' carry us back to Eden, where originally man was both holy and happy."

Congregational Remittances - January 2008

	2008 Jan	2008 Total	2007 Jan				
Presbytery of Sutherland				Presbytery of Lewis			
Brora	1,000	1,000	1,200	Cross	1,767	1,767	1,661
Assynt & Scourie	600	600	600	Harris - Leverburgh	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total Sutherland	1,600	1,600	1,800	Harris - Scalpay	1,540	1,540	1,600
Presbytery of Inverness				Knock & Point	850	850	800
Duthil-Dores	1,038	1,038	3,125	Stornoway	4,611	4,611	9,498
Inverness	2,000	2,000	2,000	Total Lewis	9,768	9,768	14,559
Total Inverness	3,038	3,038	5,125	Presbytery of Lochcarron			
Presbytery of Ross				Glenelg & Arnisdale	86	86	190
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,300	1,300	1,300	Lochalsh & Glenshiel	1,154	1,154	1,036
Kiltearn	1,700	1,700	1,700	Poolewe & Aultbea	888	888	1,056
Tarbat	750	750	750	Total Lochcarron	2,127	2,127	2,282
Total Ross	3,750	3,750	3,750	Presbytery of Skye & Uist			
Presbytery of Edinburgh				Bracadale	1,000	1,000	0
Aberdeen	2,000	2,000	0	Duirinish (Waternish)	400	400	0
Edinburgh	0	0	0	Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	1,300	1,300
Total Edinburgh	2,000	2,000	0	North Uist	800	800	700
Presbytery of Glasgow				Portree	1,200	1,200	680
Ayr	1,500	1,500	0	Snizort	1,650	1,650	1,650
Arran	564	564	578	Strath	0	0	1,800
Dumfries	0	0	0	Total Skye & Uist	6,350	6,350	6,130
Glasgow - Partick	2,000	2,000	1,800	Total From Congregations			
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	0	0	34,647	34,647	38,124	
Glasgow - Thornwood	1,700	1,700	1,600	Other Donations			
Rothsay	250	250	500	1,043	1,043	1,997	
Total Glasgow	6,014	6,014	4,478	TOTAL	35,690	35,690	40,121
				Including Gift Aid			
				0			
				0			

Zambia News

Phil Bailey

Dear Friends,

I'm back in England for the month of November enjoying the weather, catching up with family and friends and taking a rest.

Covenant College

On October 12th the College came to a close for another year with the 7th Graduation Ceremony. Seven more students had completed the three-year course and graduated. Principal Cees Molenaar then returned to Holland to be reunited with Mirjam and his children. They all hope to return to Covenant College in February.

Buildings

The new student dormitory is nearly finished – just the painting to do and then it will be ready for the start of the new term in March 2008. This will provide much improved accommodation and washing facilities for the students.

Covenant College Farm

The last couple of months on the farm have been a busy time of preparation of the fields. Twelve lima (quarter hectare) plots have been 'holed' and fertiliser and lime placed in them waiting for the first big rain to enable sowing of the maize. As I write there have been some rains around but as yet the big ones have not started so sowing has not begun. The students have been regularly taken to the fields to learn this new method and each has been provided, on a loan basis,



with the inputs to do one lima each. In this way we hope to show in many villages how to increase yields.

The Mill

The Hammer Mill was nearly completed when I left Covenant College Farm in mid-October. This will house the milling machinery to grind the maize into the maize flour and also for crushing the oil from the sunflower seeds. The machinery will be installed in December and we trust will be in operation soon afterwards. This development has been possible now that we have our own electricity supply which was finally connected at the end of September.

Children’s Ministry

Marjanne Hendriksen continues to be busy visiting and teaching the teachers of the Christian Education Fund schools, taking the children’s club in the afternoons for the Covenant College staff children and on Saturday afternoons for all the children from the nearby villages.

A Baby and a Truck

One joyful (it turned out to be!) time last month was the birth of baby Christina. She is the daughter of Barbara and Tuesday Banda. Tuesday joined us at the MacDonald’s home as farm supervisor. He called me at 1.30am one Sunday morning in October to say Barbara was about to give birth. I picked them up with, thankfully, two other ladies and set off for the hospital in Lusaka. We reached about halfway when the ladies screamed for me to stop. Then they said OK go fast, fast! Then they screamed again and I managed to stop in a hotel entrance. Tuesday and I got out

and paced around like nervous fathers as the two ladies helped Barbara. Just two minutes and we heard the beautiful sound of a crying baby! Born at 2.10am on the back seat of my truck!

We carried on to the hospital, woke up the security guard to open the gates and then the nurses who were sleeping in armchairs. They came out and tended to the baby which was taken into the hospital. Barbara climbed out of the vehicle, walked straight past the waiting wheelchair and into the operating theatre! Tuesday and I went home exhausted! After morning church we went and picked up mother and baby and took them home. Both are still doing very well and the back seats of the truck have been taken out, scrubbed and put back again!

PRAYER POINTS

- § Give thanks for the time of rest I’ve had with family and friends
- § Pray for all the students that they will be diligent with their farming loan packages
- § Pray for continued wisdom in all the decisions that have to be made in the various projects
- § Pray for a good rainy season as so many lives depend upon good rains over the next four months

Thank you for your continued support

With Christian greetings

Phil Bailey



**"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that
the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and
the treader of grapes him that soweth seed;
and the mountains shall drop sweet wine,
and all the hills shall melt."**

Amos 9:13