

Free Church **Witness**



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Missionary Trip to Brazil

Rev William Macleod



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Call the Sabbath a Delight!

Various practices distinguished Israel in their best days from their neighbours. (1) Unlike the heathen they did not worship idols and served the one living and true God. (2) All Israelite boys were circumcised at eight days old. (3) Jehovah's people kept the weekly Sabbath as a holy day of rest and worship. Today, too, the Lord's people are distinguished by their worship of God, by their claim to be His covenant people and their observance of the Lord's Day. While society becomes increasingly secular true Christians stand out because they will not work or play on Sunday, but rather spend this day worshipping and serving God, delighting in Him.

What is the Sabbath?

(1) The first Sabbath was kept by God. Genesis 1 & 2 relate how God created the heaven and the earth and all that is in them in the space of six days and all very good. Then we are told that on the seventh day God rested. He blessed and sanctified the seventh day. That means that it was set apart to be a holy day and a day of great blessings – physical, mental and spiritual. Much harm comes to Sabbath-breakers not only in the judgment that comes upon them as sinners, but also in their missing out on the benefits of the Sabbath.

(2) When Israel were brought out of slavery in Egypt and were formed into a nation, God directed them to Mount Sinai where He gave them His laws for their religious ceremonies and national life. But first and foremost He gave them His moral law. These Ten Commandments were so important that God actually spoke them from heaven in the ears of the whole nation. Then He wrote them upon tables of stone so that they would be seen to be permanent and He commanded that they be placed at the very centre of their religion – kept in the ark of the covenant. The Fourth commandment is 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...'

(3) When God became incarnate and lived in this world He kept the Sabbath, refraining from work and going to the synagogue to worship. True, He was involved in conflict with the Pharisees over Sabbath observance, but this was because they had added to the commandment of God their own commandments. They thought it was acceptable to take a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath but not to heal the sick. They would feed their ox on the Sabbath but condemned the disciples for plucking and eating ears of corn on that day when they were hungry. They could not see that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Jesus taught that works of necessity and mercy are to be carried out on that Holy Day.

(4) Until New Testament times the greatest work done by God was the creation of the world. God then rested. But Jesus did a far greater work when He died on the cross to

accomplish the atonement. He then rested in the grave on the Sabbath. But on the first day of the week He rose from the dead. That completed work is now celebrated by the keeping of the first day of the week, called the Lord's Day, as the Christian Sabbath. In this we follow the pattern given to us by the Apostles.

Stop Breaking the Sabbath

Isaiah the prophet was commanded to 'Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins' (Is.58:1). What sin? One of the worst of these was, 'Doing thy pleasure on my holy day' (v13). But what was that? It was working, buying and selling, hobbies, sport and leisure activities. Rather the day was to be kept holy which meant it was to be used for the direct service of God. Today, that means it should be spent in the public and private worship of God, in reading the Bible and Christian books, in evangelism, ministering to the sick and Christian fellowship. In other words it is a day to be given specially to God and kept apart from the other days. Is this the way you are keeping it?

Call the Sabbath a Delight

Some people keep the Sabbath as the Pharisees did, but this is not pleasing to God. With them it is a matter of trying to earn salvation by their good works. It is duty and drudgery. Some young people growing up in Christian homes hate the Sabbath and long till it is over. But should it all be negative? True you must not do housework, gardening or washing. It is not a day for travelling, sport, entertainment, watching TV or DVDs, reading newspapers or novels. But if you are a true Christian and have been born again you love God and your greatest joy is to please God. Because of this you love to be with Him, worshipping Him and hearing what He has to say to you. Really for you the Sabbath is a delight and a foretaste of heaven. You are not a slave of God but a son and so appreciate the 'law of liberty'. The best day of the week is the Sabbath.

Promise

God makes promises. Turn away from pleasing yourself on the Sabbath and obey God and then you will discover the amazing truth that the most delightful pleasure is to be found in obeying God (Is.58:14). Keeping the Sabbath you will ride upon the high places of the earth. Instead of being down in the dumps, you will have mountaintop experiences. Further, God promises that He will feed the obedient with the 'heritage of Jacob'. What an inheritance you will have! Jacob received wonderful blessings and all these are yours in Christ. 'The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it'. You can be assured of the true blessedness of keeping the Lord's day holy. But there is a serious warning to the Sabbath breakers.



Islam

Part I

Rev John MacLeod (Tarbat)

A secular outsider might be concerned primarily to look at Islam in terms of its history, political influence, sociological distinctives or ethnic origins. Clearly, whilst all those aspects of Islam are important, we have a much greater interest in its religious, theological and evangelistic implications. To cover such a vast subject in the detail required is impossible in the space allotted, so I propose to approach the subject at a very simple level and to address, for the benefit of those who have perhaps given the matter little previous study, three simple questions:

Do we know what we're dealing with in Islam?

Do we understand why it matters?

Have we a God-honouring strategy to address the situation?

1. DO WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH?

What is it? In a nutshell, Islam is a religion which originated with the teachings of Mohammed, a 7th-century Arab religious and political figure. Now, the very name *Islam* gives us an essential clue to the nature of the religion, because *Islam* means 'submission', or total surrender. Those who follow Islam claim that as Muslims they're people who have totally surrendered themselves to what they understand to be God.

Where do their beliefs come from? Mohammedans (as we would traditionally call them) or Muslims (as they'd call themselves) do not think of Mohammed (or Muhammad) as having founded their religion but think of him as having been responsible for purifying and restoring a faith stretching back to Abraham and indeed to *Adam*, but which they imagine to have been distorted by Judaism and Christianity. They believe that God revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad whom they see as God's final prophet, and they regard the Qur'an and the Sunnah (words and deeds of Muhammad) as the basic sources of Islam.

What do they actually believe?

i. **About God?** They believe that there is only one God. The Arabic term for God is Allah. The term possibly comes from a contraction of the words *al-* (the) and *'ilah* (deity, masculine form), meaning 'the God' (*al-ilah*). In traditional Islamic theology, God is beyond all comprehension. Mohammedans are not expected to imagine God in any visual form but to worship and adore him as a protector. As you know, although they believe that Jesus was a prophet, they reject entirely the doctrine of the Trinity, which they think of as a form of polytheism. In Islamic thinking, Jesus is a mere man and not the son of God.

ii. **About the Koran?** The word Qur'an means 'recitation'. When they speak about 'the Qur'an', they're not usually talking about the printed book at all, but rather Arabic recitations of it. They reckon that translations are only as commentaries on the Qur'an, or 'interpretations of its meaning', not as the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an is divided into 114 *suras*, or chapters, which combined, contain over 6000 poetic verses. The chronologically-later chapters discuss mainly social and moral issues relevant to the Muslim community. They regard the Qur'an as the source of Islamic principles and values.

iii. **About angels?** Belief in angels is absolutely central. The Arabic word for Angels (*malak*) means 'messenger', cf Hebrew (*malakh*) and Greek (*angelos*). In Mohammedan thinking angels are perfectly obedient servants of God, communicating revelations from God, glorifying God, recording every person's actions, and taking a person's soul at the time of death. They also believe them to be intercessors on man's behalf.

iv. **About the Day of Judgment?** The Day of Judgment is something that figures large in their thinking. The Qur'an lists several sins that can allegedly condemn a person to hell, such as disbelief, usury and dishonesty. Muslims view paradise (*jannah*) as a place of joy and bliss, in terms of physical pleasures to come in the broader context of an ecstatic awareness of God.

v. **About Predestination?** Here we find a difference between the Shi'a and the Sunni groupings. The Shi'as talk about 'divine justice' (*Adalah*) and stress the importance of man's responsibility for his own actions but, in contrast, the Sunni play down the rôle of individual free will in the context of divine creation of all things and divine foreknowledge of all things.

vi. **About the State?** In theory Mohammedans make no distinction between 'matters of church' and 'matters of state'. In practice, Mohammedan rulers have historically frequently bypassed the Sharia courts with a parallel system of what were sometimes called 'Grievance courts' under their own control and some Mohammedan countries like Turkey are officially secular states.

vii. **About the rule of Law?** Sharia (which means literally, 'the path leading to the watering place') is traditional Islamic law and is regarded as a system of duties that are binding on every Muslim. It covers every aspect of life, from foreign relations to prayer. Some of the matters it covers are not dealt with in detail in the Qur'an itself, so various Islamic scholars have built on their own interpretations in each area of law, based on the Qur'an, the actions and sayings of Mohammed, the general view of legal experts and reason.

"Mohammedans think of Jihad as war against the devil, on behalf of Islam. Jihad is the only form of warfare permissible under Islamic law, and the ultimate aim is to establish the universal domination of Islam."

viii. **About Jihad?** Jihad means 'to strive' or 'to struggle', especially in spiritual terms. Mohammedans think of Jihad as war against the devil, on behalf of Islam. Jihad is the only form of warfare permissible under Islamic law, and the ultimate aim is to establish the universal domination of Islam. For most Shi'as, offensive jihad can be declared only by a divinely appointed leader of the (Mohammedan) community, and as such can't be engaged in without such a leader. Many Shi'as also make a distinction between the 'greater jihad' (*jihad al-akbar*), which has to do with spiritual self-perfection, and the 'lesser jihad' (*jihad al-asghar*), defined as warfare.

ix. **Family life?** Islam regards the family as the basic unit of society and defines very tightly the rights and duties of family members. The father is held to be financially responsible for his family. The division of any estate is specified in the Qur'an, which requires that most of it must go to the immediate family. A female's share of inheritance is usually half of what a male would get. Marriage involves the groom paying a dowry (*mahr*) to the bride, and there's a formal contract to that effect. A man can have up to four wives but a woman can marry only one man. Divorce is usually very easy and sometimes at the whim of the husband. There is considerable variation in the extent to which it's believed that women should be isolated from the wider society.

What do they practise? Islam includes a range of religious practices, but followers are generally required to observe specified duties that unite followers of Islam into a community. Islamic law (sharia) has developed a tradition of rulings that touch on virtually all aspects of life and society from practical matters like dietary laws and banking to warfare.

Are they all the same? The two major groupings among Mohammedans – Sunni and Shi'a – date back to the 7th century and came about because of disagreements over the religious and political leadership of the community. Roughly 85% of Mohammedans are Sunni and 15% are Shi'a. There are important differences in belief and thinking and practice between the Sunni Mohammedans and the Shi'a ones. The *Five Pillars of Islam* are five practices essential to Sunni Islam. Shi'a Muslims subscribe to eight ritual practices which substantially overlap with the Five Pillars. They are:

* The *shahadah*, which is the basic creed or tenet of Islam: 'I testify that there is none worthy of worship except God and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.'

* *Salah*, or ritual prayer, which must be performed five times a day. (However, the Shi'a are permitted to run together

the noon with the afternoon prayers, and the evening with the night prayers). Each *salah* is done facing towards the Kaaba in Mecca. *Salah* is intended to focus the mind on the deity, and is seen as a personal communication with him that expresses gratitude and worship. *Salah* is compulsory but flexibility in the specifics is allowed depending on circumstances. In many Islamic countries, reminders or calls to prayer are broadcast publicly from local mosques at the appropriate times. The so-called 'prayers' are recited in the Arabic language, and consist of repeating verses from the Qur'an.

* *Zakat*, or alms-giving. This involves giving in relation to one's assets and is obligatory. A fixed percentage is spent to help the poor or needy and to help propagate Islam. The *zakat* is not considered to be charity but rather a religious obligation on the well-off because their wealth is seen as a trust. They are also expected to give further amounts as voluntary donations and Shi'ites are expected to pay an additional amount in the form of a *khums* tax at 20% which goes into the hands of the Imams.

* *Sawm*, or fasting during the month of Ramadan. Muslims must not eat or drink (among other things) from dawn to dusk during this month, and must be mindful of other sins. The fast is supposed to encourage a feeling of nearness to Allah, and during it Mohammedans are expected to express their gratitude and dependence on him, atone for their past sins, and think of the needy. *Sawm* is not obligatory for people for whom it would constitute an undue burden. For others, flexibility is allowed depending on circumstances, but missed fasts usually must be made up quickly.

* The *Hajj* – the pilgrimage to Mecca. Every able-bodied individual who can afford it must make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime. It is a very ritualistic activity – when the pilgrim is about six miles from Mecca, he must dress in two white seamless sheets. The pilgrim must walk seven times around the Kaaba, touching the Black Stone, run seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah, and symbolically stone the devil.

In addition to the *khums* tax, Shi'a Muslims consider three additional practices essential to the religion of Islam. The first is jihad, which is also important to the Sunni, but not considered a pillar. The second is the requirement to live a virtuous life and to encourage others to do the same. The third is to refrain from vice and from evil actions and to also encourage others to do the same.

What's their background? Within 100 years of Mohammed's time a Mohammedan empire covered an area from Central Asia to the Atlantic Ocean, but there was a lot of discord

within it. Even so, the spread continued into several parts of Africa, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. A dispute over leadership led to the split between the Sunnis and the Shi'as, so that division is almost as old as the religion. From very early on there was a distinctly racist streak in Mohammedan thinking and non-Arabs who converted to Mohammedanism weren't treated as being on a par with Arabs.

Supporters of Islam sometimes think of the period from 750 to 1258 as being the Golden Age of Islam with their empire centred on Baghdad. But central control got weaker and weaker, although the total area controlled by Islam expanded, stretching across North Africa and up into Europe.

From the 9th century on, the territory that they'd conquered in Europe began to be reclaimed from them. Their hold on Spain was loosened and they lost their Italian possessions.

From the 11th Century there were constant struggles with the Crusaders but generals such as Saladin had remarkable success, recapturing Jerusalem during the Second Crusade. That whole era came to an end with the Battle of Baghdad in 1258, when the Mohammedans were overrun by the Mongol Empire and indeed just before that they'd lost control in Egypt to slave-soldiers by the name of Mamluks in 1250.

Baghdad had fallen – but that didn't mean the end of Mohammedanism. Far from it. In the 13th and 14th centuries the Ottoman empire went on the rampage with a string of aggressive conquests which included the Balkans, and parts of Greece. In 1453 they captured Constantinople.

They captured Egypt in 1517, and then launched a European campaign which got as far as Vienna in 1529.

At the same time a rather different Shi'ite dynasty assumed control in Persia and established Shi'a Islam as the official religion there and there were other Islamic dynasties ruling over many areas right down into the Indian sub-continent, such as the Mogul (Mughal) emperors, though in India they were somewhat syncretistic in their religious practices.

Things began to fall apart in the Ottoman empire – in the 19th Century, Greece and several of the Balkan states got their independence; at the end of World War 1 the Ottoman empire came to an end. Since then Mohammedan society has been politically and religiously somewhat fragmented.

Some of their groupings see Western ideas and culture as a threat. In countries like Iran and Afghanistan (with the Taliban), revolutionary movements created Islamic states. Groups like al-Qaeda have engaged in international terrorism in an attempt to bring about the establishment of global Islamic power. Some other Mohammedan groupings would try to reconcile their religion with the idea of secular governments and human rights in the way that they'd be understood in the Western world.

How many of them are there? Estimates vary widely, but in round terms we could talk about 1,000,000,000. There are perhaps 40 countries where they are in the majority. About 20% of them are Arabs. About 300,000,000 of them are in the Indian sub-continent. In Europe there are about 30,000,000 of them, perhaps 2.5% of the total number.



Visit to Brazil

Rev William Macleod

(Left with Paul Brasil)

On Monday 23rd June I set off for a two week lecturing trip to Brazil. I had been invited by the Puritan Project. This organisation had been set up some fifteen years ago by Olin Coleman, a retired missionary, and some Brazilians including Dr Manoel Canuto, a paediatric consultant, who leads the work locally. The purpose of the Project is to translate and publish good Puritan and Reformed literature and through its local office and by means of its annual conference to encourage the acceptance of experimental Calvinism in the Brazilian churches. When Olin Coleman died last year his dying wish of his son Mike, a business man in the USA, was to continue to support this project which was so near to his heart. So Mike and his teenage son were present this year, and he was most helpful to me in the arrangements which had to be made. Elsewhere in this magazine you will find Mike's moving tribute to his father.

Some years ago an attempt was made to discipline Dr Canuto for calling for reformation in worship and practice. He was suspended by his session and presbytery and the suspension was only raised when the appeal came before the General Assembly. Dr Canuto is a lovely Christian man with a sense of humour. He offered to buy me a parting gift of a walking stick to help me hobble from the plane after having given the eighteen lectures and sermons which they requested! Manoel has helped many people through the monthly magazine, books and conversations. A new, exciting office is being built for the Project in the centre of Recife.

Brazil

Brazil is a large country similar in size to the USA and with a population of 190 million. The language spoken is Portuguese. Ninety percent of these would claim to be Christians but true Christians are much fewer in numbers. Traditionally Roman Catholic, today a large proportion of

the population profess to be Protestant but most of these are Pentecostal and Charismatic. The Assemblies of God (Pentecostal), which were founded 100 years ago, is the largest Protestant church. There are many neo-Pentecostal churches which are just synagogues of Satan where many kinds of blasphemy are practised and proclaimed. For example, in some churches prayers are written on pieces of paper and then burnt in an 'offering' to God. The 'Prosperity Gospel' which proclaims health and wealth if you become a Christian, predominates. Believe in Jesus and all your illnesses will be cured and you will become rich. How different from the teaching of Jesus who asserted that in this world his disciples would have tribulation (Jn.16:33)! In a country where there is much poverty these man-centred teachings have great appeal.

The Presbyterian Church has around 700,000 members in several thousand congregations. Their Assembly meets every four years with two ministers and two elders representing each presbytery – this making a total of some 1,400 delegates. It had been founded by missionaries of the Southern Presbyterian Church in America. Sadly the church eighty years ago had become quite liberal. Carl McIntyre was invited to help. Through his influence the Church became Dispensational and Fundamentalist, but at least generally it was Evangelical. Now there is a small but growing Reformed movement greatly encouraged by the Puritan Project. Several men have gone to study at Greenville Seminary and Puritan Reformed Seminary in the USA and at Potchefstroom in South Africa and are now returning to teach in the Seminaries in Brazil.

Arrival

I arrived in Recife, a city of three and a half million, on Tuesday afternoon, having been travelling since 11pm local time the night before. After being fed and watered I gave my first lecture on the 'Scottish Sabbath' at the office of the

Puritan Project around 7pm and then had to answer some hard questions. There were around thirty or forty present.

Next morning we were up again at 3am for a flight to Belem, a city of a couple of million inhabitants. Here we were well entertained by Pastor Paul Anglada. I had to give six lectures on 'Christ the Redeemer' over the following days at a conference in his church. The lectures were broadcast live on the internet. The church was small when Pastor Anglada went there and for the first while got even smaller till there were just about ten members. Then it began to grow as people appreciated the Reformed faith which he preached. Now some 300 attend. A beautiful new church has been built. The church has also set up a Christian School, called the John Knox School, which has around 600 pupils. They also have a publishing house and a bookshop. Pastor Anglada teaches in a seminary and has written some excellent books. As well as the congregation, which was largely composed of young people, some church leaders from various churches in the area attended. For that first week the Rev Ken Wieske, a missionary from the Canadian Reformed Churches, was my interpreter. We got on very well and he did an excellent job. A pastor, Paul Brasil, who is doing a doctorate at Greenville Seminary, also gave lectures on the 'Temple', the 'Sacrifices', the 'Passover Lamb' and 'Justification by Faith'. I was able to get a translation of the main points he made whispered in my ear and was very impressed with his grasp of Biblical Theology and his many helpful insights.

Maragogi Conference

On Monday we flew back to Recife, and drove the two hours or so down the coast to Maragogi, a beautiful seaside resort. Here a residential conference for church leaders and their families was held from Monday evening to Friday lunchtime. I was asked to give the same lectures on 'Christ the Redeemer', plus a further lecture on the same theme and also a lecture on Hyper-Calvinism (eight in all). Rodrigo Brotto, who is on



his final year studying for an MDiv at Greenville Seminary, translated for me and he too was a very competent translator. Pastor Paul Brasil gave a repeat of his lectures given at the Belem Conference. Pastor Ken Wieske gave a further two helpful lectures on 'Christ the Servant' and 'Union with Christ'. The final speaker was Pastor Josafá Vasconcelos. He spoke on 'Christ the Preacher' and 'Christ the Good Shepherd'. He had at one time been known as the Billy Graham of Brazil and spoke to audiences of many thousands. However through reading he came across the Reformed faith and began to preach it. As you would expect, the Presbyterian Church, which is largely Arminian, dropped him from the post of evangelist, so he became a church planter. He has planted several churches and his present church, like ourselves, sings only Psalms. I was amazed that only Psalms were sung at the conference. He led the Psalm singing and I never saw anyone do it with more vigour and feeling. I was greatly moved by the singing, even although I couldn't understand the words. It is wonderful that churches in Brazil are returning to the Psalms, recognizing the emptiness of much that goes under the name of worship in the churches of today.

At the conference I met Tyler Green who is a member of our church in Greenville and on his final year at the Seminary there. He feels a burden for Brazil and is considering serving the Lord there. Others I met included Samuel Vitalino, a very gifted young man who has also studied at Greenville Seminary and now hopes to do a doctorate. He is a poet and has had two books of his poems published. He had been a successful lawyer before yielding to the call to the ministry. He teaches in a Seminary and is a pastor in a congregation which has planted four other congregations. His presbytery, Teresina, is largely staffed by men who have come through the Seminary. Six of the seven pastors in his presbytery are Reformed. I was also impressed with Rev Julius Van Spronsen who has recently come from a pastorate in Smithers in Canada to be colleague of Pastor Wieske in the Reformed Churches. He is another of those solid Dutchmen raised on the Heidelberg Catechism.

Final Sabbath

On my final Lord's Day I preached in the morning at a Presbyterian Church in Recife and then gave a lecture on fencing of the Lord's table and restricted communion. These concepts were largely foreign to the folk but very much appreciated. Many questions were asked. At night I preached in a Reformed Church – one of those started by Ken Wieske's denomination. It was lovely to meet the founding member of this church. She is an old woman who can neither read nor write. She had been involved in spiritualism before her conversion. The first service was held in her little porch with an ironing board as a lectern. She wept as she remembered these early days and attributed all to the grace of God, delivering her and others from the bondage of sin. There is now a congregation of some sixty or seventy. The gifted pastor, Adriano, used to be a Charismatic but came to the Reformed faith through reading good books. Over and over again we heard of church leaders coming into contact with Reformed literature, and their lives turned upside down.

Often, once they embrace the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, they are no longer accepted by their former fellow-Christians. It is a testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit that churches which used to delight in imitation manifestations of the special gifts of the Spirit, which used to delight in unbiblical, man-centred worship, and which used to preach a message of 'salvation' by works, now by God's grace worship in Spirit and in truth, practising biblical worship in accordance with God's will, singing the Psalms, preaching the gospel of grace, and teaching the Reformed confessions.

Prayer Support

I felt wonderfully upheld by the prayers of God's people. Though others went down with bugs and colds I was upheld. I was quite nervous setting out for Brazil wondering how I would manage speaking through an interpreter. It certainly is far from ideal and yet I was granted a measure of liberty which was a blessing to my own soul and I trust to others. I did not feel any fatigue till I had finished speaking on the final Sabbath evening and then, the work having been done, it struck me.

Brazil is a beautiful and rich country. Trees, flowers and fruit of every kind grow in abundance. The rivers and seas are teeming with fish. Many varieties still require to be identified. There are many natural resources. It has a climate ideal for agriculture. Two or three crops a year can be grown in turn. It is a country which could easily rival the USA in wealth and prosperity but its Roman Catholic culture and the bribery and corruption in society has held back its development. There are many very wealthy people and a growing prosperous middle class but there are also many very poor people who beg on the streets. We met one young fellow, one of the 27,000 street children in Recife, his eyes glazed and his brain dead through sniffing glue and although Ken gave him some money for food we fear that it would be spent on more glue. It is a very violent society with high levels of murder. The Murder Meter in Recife town centre displayed each day how many had been killed up to that point. In the morning we saw that eight had already died. By evening it is usually twenty or thirty. Despite the violence of society the people generally are peace-loving and extremely hospitable. They almost killed me with kindness! The food is excellent, many exotic fruits and vegetables and the most delicious fish.

Reflection

I believe that God is beginning a new work in this land. There is a cloud the size of a man's hand. He is raising up a band of young, gifted and consecrated men. Reformed literature is being blessed by God. Remember the work of the gospel in Brazil. I asked them what they would request that we should pray for. They replied that they longed for God to rid their land of Charismatic worship. It turns religion into man-centred entertainment. Their other concern in the Presbyterian Church was Freemasonry which appears to be rife. Pray for good men to be appointed to the seminaries. Pray too that the increasing material wealth of the population would not lead them to become secular and agnostic towards the gospel as is the case in Britain today.

Faint yet Trusting

Rev James Clark

'I had fainted unless I had believed' (Psalm 27:13, 14).

This was a sudden and striking contrast to his condition at the beginning of the Psalm when he felt strong. Now his only hope is that there is a great Power supporting him, otherwise he would have fainted. This conviction is what kept him from despair and fainting.

Changing conditions

While we are here on pilgrimage we cannot expect uninterrupted joy and peace – this is not God's design for His children. We are subject to changing conditions, both providentially and spiritually. David was in the depths of distress but his faith, however weak, kept his head above the waters of despair. In the life of David and other believers there are many things that can reduce a man to a fainting condition; eg conviction of sin, the terrors of the law, trembling in mind and body, dim prospects and expectations (v12).

Looking back on our experiences we realise that it was the secret hope, produced by faith, of 'unless the Lord had been my help' (Ps.94:17; 119:92) that kept us from sinking never to rise. This was when we felt we could not go on, but then proved in our experience that God will be faithful to His word. This kept us from 'staggering' (Rom.4:20) and falling down.

Trial of faith

The Bible tells us that every godly character, like David, had to pass through a trial of his faith and sometimes was tried to the uttermost of his strength, which was then found to be weakness...and thus the power of God was magnified in the experience of 'unless the Lord...'. The word of the Lord tried Joseph in his faith (Ps.105:19). To be brought into a fainting condition is a great test of endurance. What you could do before, you no longer have the strength to do now (Ps.102:23) and you are perplexed – it can be a frightening experience, as most new experiences are. All that you are laying hold upon does not support you. You must, as David, 'encourage yourself in the Lord your God' alone (1Sam.30:6). Yet, even then, you may be fainting in your attempts to pray: you cannot find the words and you cannot see His Face. The Lord's silence and 'hiding Himself' can exacerbate your sense of fainting.

Security

At length, we experience the security of the 'everlasting arms' – none are beyond His reach, and we cannot fall through them! The arms of power to support us when we had fallen so low, lower than we ever thought possible. Are you still faint? Perhaps you have been there before in your experience. You are to 'wait on the Lord'. Faith says,

'He shall ... strengthen thine heart' again. He will not leave you to sink. There is a secret divine power which preserves us from despair, a power which holds up the soul when all around it collapses against it and the weight is felt, pressing us down, fainting. Yet we wait, and there must be Divine strength in the soul to do even that, although we do not perceive it at the time. It was 'believing to see' what we could not see now, that kept him going – the language of hope, however faint.

'Unless', implies an alternative. Someone other than myself is there. When faith is fainting, hope comes to her aid and whispers, 'Believe and you will see'. As Pilgrim passed through the waters which were going over his head he cried out, 'Hold out faith and patience'. You will yet see the 'goodness of the Lord', the promise fulfilled and the Promiser revealed. Hope brings the 'good news' from the far country – as happened in Gethsemane to Another who was in a fainting condition and thus 'can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities'. He will not fail thee. You may faint into His everlasting arms – He does not cast out!

He Giveth More Grace!

He giveth more grace as the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as the labours increase,
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

Refrain:

*His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

Fear not that your need shall exhaust His provision,
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;
The Father both you and your load will up-bear.

Annie Johnson Flint (1866-1932)



News



Arbroath Youth Weekend

The next Free Church (Continuing) Youth Weekend is entitled 'Faith and Works'. The speaker is the Rev David Silversides, minister of Loughbrickland Reformed Presbyterian Church, Northern Ireland. The dates are Friday 17th - Monday 20th October 2008. It will be held at the Windmill Christian Centre, Arbroath. For booking forms and further information please contact: Nathan Roberts, 26 Philip Avenue, Linlithgow, EH49 7BH. Tel 01506 668162 e-mail (preferable): arbroath@bible-sermons.org.uk

Registrar Wins Case

A Christian registrar from Islington who was bullied and threatened with the sack because of her religious beliefs that same-sex unions are wrong has succeeded in her claim of unlawful

discrimination by the Council. In its unanimous judgment, the employment tribunal found that Miss Lillian Ladele was directly discriminated against by Islington Council after she asked to be allowed not to perform civil partnership registrations.

Uzbekistan – Persecution

Barnabas

On 9th June, Uzbekistan's state-run TV showed, for a second time, a film about Christianity entitled 'In the clutches of ignorance', which is full of shocking and false allegations against Christians. The film was shown before live coverage of the European 2008 football championship to attract the largest possible audience. Following the first showing in May, a Christian congregation was attacked. In the weeks following the second broadcast, several Uzbek Christians have been arrested and congregations have been harassed by government authorities. In one instance, which happened on Saturday 14th June, eight police officers entered the house of Pastor Zhandos Kuandukov in Nukus under the pretence of doing passport control. They asked Zhandos and his family to sign documents saying that they would not hold any religious meetings in their house any more. When Zhandos' family refused, the police officers threatened to search the whole house. Neighbours, who heard the commotion, were told to stay away or they would be sent to jail. They were also told that Zhandos and his family were terrorists. At 6pm some police officers brought a search warrant and they began searching the house, taking books, video cassettes, a computer and a passport. Zhandos,

his sister, his assistant Aimurat and his sister-in-law were taken to prison for more questioning. Aimurat was held in prison on charges of terrorism, extremism and fundamentalism.

China - Crackdown on House-Churches

Barnabas

Over the last few weeks, several Chinese house-church leaders have been arrested and house-church meetings have been broken up by government officials. On 18th June Zhang Mingxuan, president of the Chinese House Church Alliance, was detained together with his interpreter as he was on his way to meet with a senior EU official in Beijing. Last year, Pastor Zhang had written three open letters to the international community, informing them about the persecution and harassments house church leaders and members face at the hands of government officials and authorities. Since becoming a Christian in 1986, he has been arrested, beaten and imprisoned twelve times. On 1st June, a Sunday service at Taikang County, Henan Province, was disrupted when several Public Security Bureau (PSB) officials broke into the meeting and detained seven of the Christians present. The officials did not give any reason for the arrests. During interrogation, the seven Christians were questioned about who was taking donations to the earthquake disaster area. A woman and her child were released, but the other Christians remain in detention on charges of sending money to the disaster area in the name of a house church. Many Chinese Christians have seen the disastrous earthquake that hit

Desk



the Sichuan province on 12 May as an opportunity to share the Gospel with others in a practical way.

Attenborough Evolution v God *CMI*

Many Christians wonder why famous TV naturalist Sir David Attenborough refuses to give credit to God for all the marvels of nature. The answer is that he ignores the effects of the Fall, so he accuses Christianity of teaching that God created nasty germs and bugs as nasty. But Attenborough is merely following in the anti-God footsteps of Darwin himself. Despite even some Christians declaring Darwin to be a hero, and his burial in Westminster Abbey, he was rabidly opposed to the God of the Bible in every important way. But like Attenborough, he committed glaring logical fallacies, and he also exhibited gross chronological snobbery.

Fathers' Day Banned *Christian Institute*

Primary schools throughout Scotland banned children from making Fathers' Day cards to avoid upsetting children from single-mother or lesbian homes. The policy, which affected thousands of children, was adopted by schools in Glasgow, Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire, Dumfries and Galloway and Clackmannanshire. According to the last census, two thirds of Scottish children live in a household headed by a married couple.

A spokesman for East Renfrewshire Council said: 'Increasingly, it is the case that there are children who haven't got fathers or haven't got fathers living

with them and teachers are having to be sensitive about this.'

Matt O'Connor, founder of campaign group Fathers For Justice, said: 'I'm astonished at this. It totally undermines the role and significance of fathers.... It also sends out a troubling message to young boys that fathers aren't important', he added.

Cannabis *Christian Institute*

The number of children aged 15 or under being treated for mental illness increased rapidly after laws on cannabis were relaxed, new official figures suggest. Information obtained by an MP shows that the NHS spent £2.72million on anti-psychotic drugs for under 16s last year. That is a two-thirds increase on the 2004 figure of £1.7million. The cost of the anti-psychotic drug has not changed much over that period, meaning most of the extra money was spent treating substantially more young patients. This is the latest evidence adding to a mountain of research on the damage caused by cannabis to mental health. A study lasting 27 years involving 50,000 people showed that smoking cannabis trebles the risk of a young person developing schizophrenia. Cannabis-related admissions to mental hospitals have risen by 85% since Labour came to power according to Government figures. There are now more than 22,000 people a year, almost half under the age of 18, being treated for cannabis addiction. In 1997 the number was 1,600. The Government announced it will reverse its disastrous 2004 decision to weaken the law on cannabis. The drug will once again be a Class B substance.

Adelaide Bible Conference

Rev J Frew

A blessed time was had at the Magill Bible Conference held in June this year. We enjoyed well-nigh capacity crowds at most meetings and if any more had come to the Friday afternoon meeting there would have been hardly room to receive them! It was the Lord's wonderful blessing. Many in the congregation gave of their time and talents to do what they could to make the event what we hoped it would be, and, before the Lord, we express our deep gratitude.

One Correspondent wrote that 'The Conference was held in a spirit of unity and Christian love. What a joy it was to fellowship with others of "like precious faith". The 1st session was a real encouragement to witness to others as to what great things the Lord has done for us. In the 2nd session Mr Frew completely blew evolution and atheism out of the water demonstrating non-creationist atheism is 'irrational' and 'unbelievable'. In the 3rd and 4th we heard how Christ is the Head of the church as to origin, ordinances and growth. Wonderful! In the 5th we enjoyed "Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath" and how we ought to take public worship very seriously. In the 6th we heard how marvellously "Christ is King of Worship" and in the 7th a staggering address on "Jesus Christ is Lord of Salvation". "Amen" poured out from our hearts! In the 8th session, I believe every Christian present was "transported" for a brief time to heaven itself. What a picture was painted of the heavenly home being prepared for God's people!'

Testimony to the Life of James Olin Coleman Missionary to Brazil

Mike Coleman

The last long conversation I had alone with Dad was on 13th September 2007, just ten days before he died. He had been very weak and sleeping much of the time, but on that day he had a surge of energy, and asked Mom to help him get his clothes on. He got fully dressed, with his trademark Englishman's cap and his braces, put his pens and note-cards in his shirt pocket, and even got his keys. He asked us to take him for a drive. Shocked at his sudden strength, we suggested we take his wheelchair and go to the Broyhill

Walking Park in Lenoir

Mom and Dad's sister Sue Jones were with us, and they walked a little way behind us as I pushed Dad around the lake on that beautiful clear day. I began to talk with Dad about what it means to be called to God's service, and how you know it is a true call and not just a general desire or urge to do something good. We talked for 30 or 40 minutes as we went around the lake twice, and I was very aware that this was possibly the last time we would be out together, and possibly the last good long conversation we would have. I walked very slowly, hoping to make it last as long as I could. Since I was behind him, he could not see the tears rolling down my face as he spoke of discerning when God was calling you. I've blamed a lot of bloodshot eyes and sniffing on allergies over the last few weeks, and let's just say the allergies were active that day.

A True Call

After our conversation that day, I reflected on the difference between a true call and just that general urge to do good, and how it applied to Dad and Mom's life and calling to service in Brazil. An urge or general desire can be temporary. When we have the general urge to do good things it is usually accompanied by the thoughts of all the pleasant things that might happen: people might become stronger in the faith or even make a profession of faith, we might relieve their hunger or pain, or perhaps enhance their education in a way that improves their daily lives. If responding to a general desire to do good always resulted only in good times and good feelings it would be an easy thing to respond to. In most cases though, even when there are good fruits of our labours, we soon find discouragement along the path. People may not respond the way we hoped they would, or personal pain and suffering will interfere. These types of trials can cause that general urge or desire to wane, leaving us frustrated and depressed at the unfairness of it all. A true call from God that results in service to Him is accompanied by a deep commitment that lasts and sustains even in the

most difficult or adversarial times. When the whole world seems to turn against you while you are fulfilling that call, God will sustain you with the knowledge that you are being faithful to a work He has called you to.

Dad and Mom were called early on in life. Even as a teenager Dad challenged his father to not use swear words on the farm, and they agreed that how you appeared on the outside reflected who you were on the inside.

Missionary

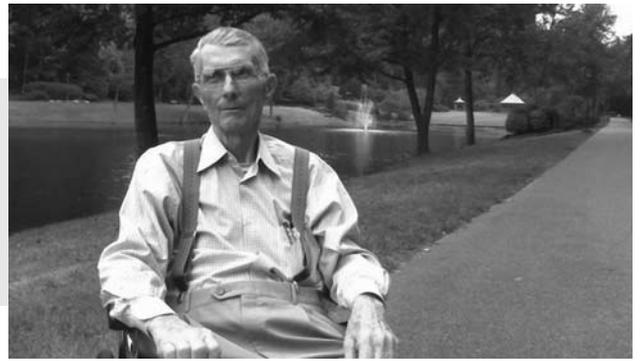
In 1961 they were accepted into the Presbyterian Board of World Missions and spent a year in Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, and then left for service to Brazil in 1962 by travelling aboard a ship from New Orleans, which was the only means of travel to Brazil. They spent a year in language school learning Portuguese, and then went to the interior of Brazil to Garanhuns, a few hours from the coastal city of Recife to help the local poor farmers learn how to better their lives and to share the Gospel with them.

Dad and Mom experienced their share of personal trials in their service over the years: trials that would have sent many of us running back for the comforts of family and the United States. In 1964 they tragically lost a newborn son due to a completely avoidable medical error during birth. In 1965 I was born, and those of you who know me know how much stress that must have added to their lives. In 1966 Dad's father passed away suddenly from a heart attack while they were on the mission field. In 1970 Dad almost died from diphtheria and spent a month in isolation in his bedroom. I remember being five years old and being able to see him only through the open door from the hallway as he took painful injections each day to try to save his life. Not long after, the local corrupt police chief tried to extort money out of Dad by making false accusations, but God sent a friend along to help resolve it. We found out later that that police chief had ordered over 60 murders, including teenage boys who did not follow his orders.

The Amazon

In 1975 we moved to the Amazon, where we lived in the town of Altamira on the banks of the Xingu river. It was a beautiful but rough place to be. The next town over was around 350 miles in each direction on a dirt road called the Transamazon Highway. Calling that rutted dirt 2000 mile long driveway a 'highway' stretched the acceptable use of that word. Dad worked with colonists along the Transamazon Highway who had come to try to make a living as a result of land giveaways by the federal government.

"The work they did and the love they shared was not their own, but rather they were a vessel and a conduit for the love of Christ to flow through them."



He would teach these families how to raise a small herd of milk cows, how to plant vegetable gardens, and about nutrition, while also working to share the gospel with them and strengthen their faith. The city and the dirt highway were extremely dangerous and filthy. We would often come back from visiting the colonists completely covered with red Amazon dust, so that even our eyelashes and eyebrows were caked with dirt. The road was so rough that our mechanic was almost treated like family.

Dad once was out about 50 miles from town and attempted to lasso a bull by himself to load into the truck, and the bull charged him. His ribs were broken, his shoulder was torn out of its socket, and he finally rolled away from the bull and drove back home over those rough dirt roads, his broken ribs causing excruciating pain when he hit the ruts in the road. It took him months to recover from those injuries.

Kidney Stone

Some time later when I was about 12 years old, he and Mom and I were travelling to visit some friends a few hundred miles away along the Transamazon highway, Dad got what we later learned was a kidney stone. It was dark, the tall noisy jungle was all around us, and it was a stretch of road not known for friendly people. Dad was rolling on the ground in unbearable pain next to our pickup truck, and Mom and I were standing there with a flashlight worried he was about to die. We got him back into the truck. He knelt on the floor board with his head in the passenger seat, Mom got in the bed of the truck, and I learned to drive that night. We drove for a couple of hours out to the closest town and woke up the doctor at the local medical clinic and finally got some relief.

I tell you these stories not to discourage any of you from service, but to highlight the remarkable endurance and faithfulness of my parents in fulfilling their call. With so many personal challenges, and this is only a short list of them, it would have been very easy to leave their mission field and come back to the United States to the comfort of a teaching job where there was plenty of good medical care and air conditioning. If they had just had the general desire to do good, and not a true call to service, that desire would have evaporated very early on. When God calls, He also provides through the Holy Spirit the strength to endure the most difficult trials.

It wasn't, of course, about enduring trials with no fruit. Their work did bear much fruit. Many people came to know the Lord. Starving families were rescued from the side of the

road, with their bellies swollen from malnutrition. I recall one family he rescued that was feeding their child water and black pepper, because it filled them with gas and eased the hunger pains. Children were made healthier by having a better diet of milk, cheese, and vegetables, and their parents learned to provide simple lives for themselves.

In 1987 they went to work in the Presbyterian Seminary in Recife, Brazil, where Dad served as Dean of Students. They lived across the street from the Seminary in a large rented house, and opened their home daily to the students for meals and Bible studies, and began to encourage other pastors and leaders to deepen the understanding of their faith.

Puritan Project

In 1992 they returned to the United States and settled down in Lenoir, North Carolina near my sister Carole. Dad, along with several Brazilians, began the Puritan Project in order to translate good Reformed books into Portuguese, and also to bring speakers to an annual conference intended to strengthen the Brazilian pastors and leaders. Many of these pastors and leaders will now use that deeper understanding to share God's Word across Brazil. The work they did and the love they shared was not their own, but rather they were a vessel and a conduit for the love of Christ to flow through them. This is what made their work effective: that the more they humbled themselves and the more they endured, the brighter the light of God's love shone around them.

Reflection

Even as their work produced many fruits, reflecting on Dad's life I see that the fruit of the Spirit was always growing in him in a personal way. Not a single time in my whole life did I hear Dad raise his voice. Galatians 5:22-23 says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. I have looked over this list a dozen times in the last week, and I can't find a single one that was not strongly evident in his life. As he grew older I could see each of these growing in him. He radiated them.

On September 23, 2007, the Lord's Day, Dad received his final call: the call to come home to the welcoming arms of his Saviour. However with this call, this final and wonderful call, there is nothing to endure. There is only joy and peace in a perfect body. We are the only ones that have to endure a short wait until we will be with him, and we all can't wait to see him again.



Books

Christianity's Dangerous Idea The Protestant Revolution A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First Alister McGrath

SPCK, pbk, 553pp, \$29.95

There is no doubting the genius of McGrath or his encyclopaedic knowledge. He writes as one who comes from a broadly evangelical background and tends to view the history of Protestantism with Anglican and ecumenical eyes. The dangerous idea of Protestantism referred to in the title is that every Christian has a right and duty to interpret the Bible. This is a well-written book, easy to read, and contains many fascinating insights. There are, however, some errors and over-generalisations. For example he refers to Andrew Melville taking hold of the sleeve of King James VI of Scotland and reminding him that while he and his colleagues would support the king in public, in private they all knew that Christ was the real king of Scotland. Actually Melville reminded James that there were two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There was the civil kingdom of which James was the head and there was the spiritual kingdom of which Christ is the head and of which James was only an ordinary member.

With regard to the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, he asserts that they understood the great commission (Mt.28:18-20) as referring only to the apostles and therefore they had no interest in missions. Yet Calvin says in his commentary on the passage, 'The Lord commands the ministers of the Gospel to go to a distance, in order to spread the doctrine of salvation in every part of the world... It ought likewise to be remarked, that this was not spoken to the apostles alone; for the Lord promises his assistance not for a single age only, but even to the end of the world'. Geneva was involved in mission work to several countries especially France and even sent two missionaries to convert the natives in Brazil.

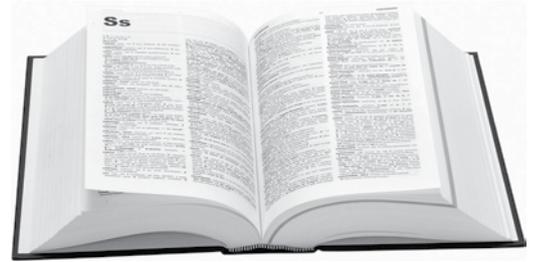
McGrath asserts that Luther and Calvin regarded the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches as true churches. Yet Calvin commenting on 2 Thessalonians 2 writes that some believed a resurrected Nero would be the Antichrist: 'Paul however is not speaking of one individual, but of a kingdom that was to be seized by Satan for the purpose of setting up a seat of abomination in the midst of God's temple. This we see accomplished in popery'. The papacy was the Antichrist and Roman Catholics (as well as nominal Protestants) needed to be converted before they became true Christians.

Following the pretended insights of the 'New Perspective on Paul', McGrath criticises the Reformers for regarding the Roman Catholic Church of their day as teaching a religion of works while in fact there was some emphasis on grace. Actually the Reformers were concerned to emphasise that salvation was by grace alone, while the Roman Catholics taught that salvation was by grace plus works. Paul asserts clearly, 'Not of works, lest any man should boast' (Eph.2:9). Any works on our part would be something of which we could boast. We are justified by faith without the deeds of the law (Rom.3:28). From the Epistle of James, McGrath argues that individuals are justified by faith and works, but what James says is that faith without works 'is dead, being alone ... I will show thee my faith by my works'. The faith comes first and where that faith is genuine it will reveal itself in works.

Noting how the Reformers removed images and pictures from the churches, whitewashed the walls and raised the pulpit, McGrath sees this as making God transcendent and distant – a cold and intellectual religion in comparison to Lutherans, Anglicans and later Pentecostals. However in the best Reformed churches, especially the Puritan and Scottish Presbyterians, while emphasis is laid on the holiness and exaltation of God it is also stressed that God dwells with him who has a broken and a contrite heart and trembles at His word (Isaiah 66:1-2). The best



Books



Reformed preachers demand that every true Christian has an experience of God, indeed a life of constantly experiencing God.

One of the problems of a work like this is that it is done by an academic theologian who is aware that he is being assessed by his fellow academics. Because of this the activity of God is ignored. A natural explanation is required for every new movement and success or failure of the church, eg a change in outlook, or a different emphasis in theology, or a new zeal in mission. In the scientific world the challenge is to explain all according to the laws of nature. However when it comes to spiritual matters Christ teaches us, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth ... so is everyone that is born of the Spirit' (Jn.3:8). There is a mystery about it all. We are told that before Jacob or Esau were born or had done good or evil, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated' (Rom.9:13). There is no natural law to explain who will be saved, and how many, and where and when. In the spiritual realm God sometimes comes down mightily and other times He withdraws. True revival is not a matter of methods. God's sovereign activity must not be left out of the equation when writing a church history.

Rev William Macleod

Where do we go from here?

John Blanchard

Evangelical Press, bklt, 40pp,

£14.95 for pack of ten

This is the latest in the series of evangelistic booklets written by John Blanchard. They are a wonderful tool in evangelism. The books are all beautifully produced, very readable, clearly present the gospel, are excellent for passing on to friends and are written from a Reformed theological perspective which is very unusual today.

Where do we go from here? deals with the subject of death. It presents the various ideas that are commonly held concerning the afterlife, shows the weaknesses of them and proclaims the truth given to us in the Scriptures. There is no shying away from the biblical doctrine of the judgment and of hell. Sinners are warned to escape 'from the horrors of hell and enjoy the glories of heaven' while there is yet time. He calls on all sinners to repent and put their trust in Christ.

Rev William Macleod

Thine is My Heart

Devotional Readings from

John Calvin

Selected by John H Kromminga

Reformation Heritage Books

pbk, 344pp, \$22.00

Thine is My Heart brings together a year's worth of daily meditations from the writings of John Calvin, carefully selected to reveal his devotional side. Taken from his commentaries, correspondence and sermons, these selections demonstrate that practical application of Christian truth was never far from his mind.

The compiler of the writings, John H. Kromminga, Calvin Seminary, says in his introduction to the book, 'Christian doctrine was not for him (John Calvin) a mere intellectual exercise, but a pathway to the presence of God'. This becomes ever clearer as the reader reads through the book day by day.

The text for March 22 is: 'Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation' (Zechariah 2:13). Calvin comments on this text saying, 'By silence we are to understand, as elsewhere observed, submission. The ungodly are not indeed silent before God, so as willingly to obey His word, or reverently to receive what He may bid or command, or humbly to submit under

His powerful hand; for these things are done only by the faithful'. How true Calvin's comments are!

Thine is My Heart is republished by Reformation Heritage Books in paperback and would be a welcomed addition to any Christian's bookshelf. It would be an ideal gift to give to someone who is ignorant or hostile to the teaching of John Calvin or to a young Christian. Many modern day Christians dismiss Calvin and his teachings simply because they are ignorant and misinformed about what Calvin actually taught and believed.

Rev Andrew Allan

The Banner of Truth

Magazine Issues 1-16

50th Anniversary Edition

Banner of Truth

pbk, 514pp, £16.00

This is a 50th anniversary edition of the first sixteen issues of the *Banner of Truth* magazine. Originally issued between Sept 1955 and Aug 1959 each issue consists of a number of articles from well-known authors such as M'Cheyne, Spurgeon, Pink, Ryle and a whole host more. Its main creator and editor, Iain H Murray explains the reason for the magazine's initial appearance. 'Our burden was not for a magazine as such; it was for a recovery of the truths that present salvation as the work of divine grace. Our hope was for the republication of an older Christian literature as the best means to that end, for little of that kind was available in Britain in 1955'.

The magazine and its associated printing house have certainly realised one of its aims, which was to increase the availability of good Christian literature. However, members and adherents of many churches up and down our land still seem to be content with starving themselves spiritually when there is a feast of edifying knowledge to be found

at their fingertips. Many Christians may feel that some of the publications printed by the Banner of Truth are too weighty for them and they may be justified in that fear but this is where a publication such as this is extremely useful. A reader can 'dip their toe' into the waters of each of these writers and find something suitable for themselves.

The articles are many and varied with excerpts from sermons by past great men, alongside doctrinal issues such as John Knox and the doctrine of predestination. Issues 7 and 8 have specific themes. Issue 7 is wholly given over to the instruction of children alongside parental duties with, amongst others, two sermons for children and one for parents from J C Ryle. Issue 8 is for all ministers and includes articles entitled, 'The Importance of Seriousness to the Christian Minister', 'The

Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor' and also one called 'Ministerial Boldness' by William Gurnall.

There is a great deal of good reading in this volume and the articles are as relevant to us today as they were then. Instruction from Oliver Heywood, a non-conformist minister from the 1600s, as to how and why we should have family worship is still vital instruction for this day and age. I would thoroughly recommend this title to everybody, firstly, as a reminder of the excellent work that has gone before, but also for the fact that this book is the type that can be kept by the bedside or on the coffee table and returned to time and time again.

'Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst' (Isaiah 5:13).

Rev Kenneth MacDonald



The Riches of the Psalms

VI

Rev Malcolm H Watts

10. The Great Worth of Inspired Psalms

1. Epitome of the Bible

The book of Psalms is a Bible within a Bible. Athanasius called it an 'epitome of the Bible', while Luther called it 'a little Bible, wherein everything contained in the entire Bible is beautifully and briefly comprehended and compacted within a manual'. It holds the middle place of Scripture, as the very heart of God's written revelation.

Here, summarised for us, is the whole of sacred learning:

God: Psalms 90, 102, including the Trinity, Psalms 146:1ff, 99:3, 5, 9 – 'holy' repeated three times, and all the divine attributes, Psalms 86, 89, 96, 98.

Revelation: general and special, Psalms 8, 19, 119.

Decree: Psalms 33:11, 2:7, 148:5-6.

Works: creation, providence and redemption, Psalms 104, 145, 40.

Depravity: Psalms 12, 14, 58.

Salvation: especially regeneration, justification, adoption, Psalms 87, 32, 103.

Church: Psalms 46, 48, 87, 122, 132.

Last things: resurrection, judgment, eternal life, Psalms 16, 1, 133.

2. Praise of the Divine Excellence

This book unveils God, in all His perfect and most excellent glories, and it provides an inspired response of praise: 'The Lord is great and greatly to be praised...' (Ps.96:4; cf 99:1) It shows us God, as only God can reveal Himself, and it teaches us how to fear and adore His glorious Being. 'In the Psalms there is an all-sufficient treasury of praise. In the infinite wisdom of God they contain all that is necessary for the glory of God and the benefit of our souls' (George Laverty).

3. Insight into Human Condition

This book shows us ourselves as we really are. John Calvin began his *Institutes* with this tremendous sentence: 'Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves'. And, in his Preface to the book of Psalms, he wrote: 'This book I am wont to style an anatomy of all parts of the soul, for no one will discover in himself a single feeling, whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror...'

The Psalms express our inmost feelings. eg in loneliness (Ps.102:7 – 'I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top'); oppression (Ps.129:1 – 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth...'); abandonment (Ps.68:5 – 'A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation'); uncertainty (Ps.77:7 – 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?'); depression (Ps.38:10: 'My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me').

4. Repentance and Prayer

The Psalms teach penitence and prayer. They provide us with a most excellent pattern showing precisely how these things are experienced and expressed; and they inflame our hearts to greater sorrow for sin and desire for God. 'They address themselves to the simple instinctive feelings of the renewed soul...' (Edward Irving).

They sympathise with the souls of believers in all their feelings, agonies and ecstasies. Sometimes prayers pour forth (Ps.86:1-6; cf 119:94 – 'I am thine, save me'), and sometimes praises (Ps.148:2ff – 'Praise ye him, all his hosts... sun and moon... stars of light...').

5. The Way into God's Presence

The great value of the Psalm book is that it conducts us into the presence-chamber of the King and brings us before the throne of His glory (Ps.26:6 – 'I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord'; cf 43:3-4):

'O send thy light forth and thy truth;
let them be guides to me,
And bring me to thine holy hill,
ev'n where thy dwellings be.
Then will I to God's altar go,
to God my chiefest joy:
Yea, God my God, thy name to praise
my harp I will employ'.
(Ps. 43:3-4 – Metrical)

'Whoever wrote these sacred poems, and under whatever circumstances they were written, they bring us into the presence of God. We stand at the portals of a sanctuary, and can hear the soul-subduing strains of heavenly music within. It is through the Psalms that we learn to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life' (WT Davidson).

6. The Nature of Communion

The Psalms describe the almost indescribable experience of communion with God. I like what one has said: 'The Psalter is the music of the soul's friendship with God'. But more excellent still, perhaps, is the language of another when he describes the Psalter as 'the whole music of the human heart, swept by the hand of its Maker' (William Gladstone). Psalm 63:3-4 – 'Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name'.

7. An Agency to Stir Godliness

The Psalter creates in believers a strong affection for God's holy Law and a profound recognition of its higher and more deeply spiritual requirements: Psalm 19:7-9 – 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether', cf Psalm 119, which JJ Stewart Perowne suggests could be entitled: 'The Praise of the Law' – and the whole is a great stimulus to holy living.

The Law is of great use to believers, to show what Christ has done (Gal.4:4,8), to show what service and gratitude we owe (2Cor.7:1), to show us our many deficiencies (Rom.7:24), to show us the rule of sanctification (1Cor.9:21), and to show us the excellence of what one day we are to enjoy (Rev.21).

8. Voice of the Church

The Psalms introduce us to the communion of saints. The Jews were able to recite the Psalms in a national way, so that the 'I' became the voice of the worshipping community. But even if we do not take that into account, the Psalter is still the book of the church's song; 'Let the 150 Psalms be distributed into two columns – the one containing those in which the personal element predominates, the other, those that are characteristically social, – and it will be found that the two columns are, as nearly as may be, of equal bulk' (William Binnie).

Examples are: Psalm 51:18 – 'Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem...' – here we have confession of sin and prayer for revival. Psalm 79:8 – 'O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low'. Psalm 85:6f – 'Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation'. Reference is also made to the future extension and prosperity of the church (Ps. 2:7-8; 22:27-31; 110:1).

9. A Book of Hope

This book is a book of hope. Arising from great stress and sorrow, there are chants of holy expectation: 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness' (Ps.17:15). Upon the eternity of God (Ps.90) the everlasting happiness of His people is founded (Ps.102:25-28). God's covenant extends beyond the present, for our God is our portion for ever (Ps.73:26). The ends of the godly and ungodly are contrasted (Ps.49:14-15). The godly are strangers in the earth (Ps.39:12; 119:19). The grave is no terminus for them (Ps.16:9-11). They are borne away to God (Ps.49:15, 73:24). The Psalter is, one has written, 'the book of resurrection, of the restitution of all things, of the doing away with the imperfect and the coming of the perfect' (AR Whitham).

10. The Psalms Speak of Christ

Finally, the book of Psalms brings our Saviour into view. 'David on the harp and ten-stringed lute, sings throughout of Christ...' (Jerome). Dr Pierson tells us of a Russian palace with a famous room in which are hung over 850 portraits of young women. These were painted by Count Rotari for Catherine the Second, the Russian Empress. It is said that the artist journeyed through 50 provinces to find his models. When the pictures are carefully examined, it is found that in each of them there is some hidden delicate reference to the Empress – a feature drawn, an attitude expressed, or some favourite fashion, jewel or flower. The result is that the walls are lined with tributes to her beauty. It seems to me that the book of Psalms is like that picture gallery: in each psalm there is some portrayal of the Saviour and the whole is full of tributes to Him. He alone explains the mystery of the Psalms.

May we be given grace to view Christ everywhere in this book, that our souls may be enriched, and also prepared for the sight of him in the glory of heaven.

'His name for ever shall endure;
last like the sun it shall:
Men shall be bless'd in him, and bless'd
all nations shall him call.
Now blessed be the Lord our God,
the God of Israel,
For he alone doth wondrous works,
in glory that excel.
And blessed be his glorious name
to all eternity;
The whole earth let his glory fill.
Amen, so let it be'.
(Psalm 72:17-19 – metrical)

Congregational Remittances - July 2008

	2008 Jul	2008 Total	2007 Total				
Presbytery of Sutherland				Presbytery of Lewis			
Brora	1,400	11,268	11,212	Cross	2,100	13,219	13,221
Assynt & Scourie	0	2,570	4,352	Harris - Leverburgh	0	7,484	7,217
Total Sutherland	1,400	13,838	15,564	Harris - Scalpay	1,540	11,757	10,301
Presbytery of Inverness				Knock & Point	850	7,121	7,281
Duthil-Dores	1,392	12,703	11,848	Stornoway	4,270	34,424	38,748
Inverness	2,000	14,000	18,000	Total Lewis	8,760	74,005	76,769
Total Inverness	3,392	26,703	29,848	Presbytery of Lochcarron			
Presbytery of Ross				Glenelg & Arnisdale	191	1,194	1,069
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,300	10,563	11,267	Lochalsh & Glenshiel	1,027	8,724	8,589
Kiltearn	2,900	11,400	11,900	Poolewe & Aultbea	456	7,631	8,190
Tarbat	0	4,224	5,563	Total Lochcarron	1,674	17,548	17,848
Total Ross	4,200	26,187	28,730	Presbytery of Skye & Uist			
Presbytery of Edinburgh				Bracadale	2,000	8,229	8,378
Aberdeen	550	6,081	5,317	Duirinish (Waternish)	800	2,800	2,800
Edinburgh	0	13,576	18,655	Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	10,175	10,461
Total Edinburgh	550	19,657	23,972	North Uist	800	7,059	5,954
Presbytery of Glasgow				Portree	1,200	12,406	6,840
Ayr	0	2,460	1,341	Snizort	1,650	13,461	12,606
Arran	688	4,620	5,040	Strath	0	1,716	5,123
Dumfries	0	0	85	Total Skye & Uist	7,750	55,845	52,162
Glasgow - Partick	1,893	19,000	19,391	Total From Congregations			
Glasgow - Shettleston	2,300	6,200	6,900		33,693	279,727	293,641
Glasgow - Thornwood	1,086	13,332	14,492	Other Donations	1,990	12,311	12,165
Rothsay	0	331	1,500	TOTAL	35,683	292,038	305,806
Total Glasgow	5,967	45,942	48,749	Including Gift Aid		38,359	48,417

Zambia Report

Dear Supporting Friends,

We are glad to send you a new Covenant College *Column*. We appreciate the growing number of people who are interested in what happens here at the mission. This *Column* updates you on the College ministry and on the lecturers' families, and on the Christian Schools ministry (CEF) that operates side by side with the College at the mission post. The next time I hope to include an update on the Farm as well.

College

The College activities are in full swing. The Lord enabled us to lead the College into its seventh year of training pastors from rural churches in Zambia. This year we changed our programme from two 12-week terms into three 8-week terms. This allows the students to be home at harvest time, and shortens the periods away from home. The year starts in late February and ends in early October. To date, we have just passed the middle of the year.

All 19 students from last year continued their course; two brothers joined us in April. We are thankful for good health and open hearts to receive further teaching in the Word of God and in the practice of leading the church. The new dormitory is well appreciated and it offers, together with electrical power (though unreliable), better study conditions.

In the first term we received help with the teaching from Dr. Brian DeVries (Mukhanyo Theological College, South Africa) who took the students on a grand tour through *African Church History*, and Pastor Joseph Pettitt (Hayes Town Chapel, London), who made Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians to bear on their life and ministry.

Rev Zwemstra taught Hermeneutics and Ethics and Rev Molenaar Christology. Students also participate in Practice Preaching, where the discussion of homiletical, practical, exegetical, and doctrinal issues always makes for an interesting class. The students were glad to find the College staff enriched by an additional lecturer!

Zwemstra Family – Heinrich and Jacomien

After lots of prayer, planning and decision-making it was finally time for us to bid goodbye to everybody in South Africa and leave for our new home – Covenant College. As everyone knows, this is never easy, neither is moving. It was difficult for us to pack everything we need (and could fit!) into our vehicle and trailer and leave the rest behind. Then we had to travel four days to get here! But the Lord blessed us all the way. We travelled safely and got through the borders without any incidents. We are very happy to be here. It will take us a little time to adjust to the new environment, but we look forward to our work here.

Now we are already in the second term at the College. The Lord gave us a lot of blessings during this time. Everything did not go smoothly, but we are still healthy and able to do our work! We had a lot of trouble with the importation of our vehicle. After Heinrich travelled to South Africa and went from office to office in Lusaka, we finally succeeded. We were also able to find cement in town and now the building of our house has started. We know it will still take a long time to finish it, but we are much excited to have our own home in Zambia. We are also thankful for everyone who contributes for this house. The foundation and septic tank are completed now. Our children are a real encouragement for us: they have made some good friends with the children who live at the mission and it is wonderful to see how they adjust.

Trust Meeting

The Trust met on 12-13th April. All trustees were present or had sent representatives. The Trust was blessed by the presence of the College's founder, Rev David Fraser, on behalf of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The following are some of the matters discussed:

1. Lovemore Banda, College graduate and local pastor, was appointed as a new trustee.
2. The Trust encouraged the College to strengthen the relationship with the students' churches, to foster a sense of ownership and interest, and to better adjust the training to the needs of the churches.
3. The trustees reaffirmed their churches' involvement and welcomed concrete requests for support.
4. The auditor's report of the ministries' bookkeeping was accepted and the budgets approved.
5. The Trust officially welcomed Miss Hendriksen and the Zwemstra family to their respective services.
6. Rev Zwemstra informed the Trust of his support structure via TESSA (Trust for Educational Support in Sub-Saharan Africa).
7. The Trust approved the replacement of the College vehicle (Venture) by a 4x4 pick-up. The vehicle will be shared between the various ministries.
8. A new Management Team structure was affirmed by the Trust, to coordinate the work of each ministry: College, Farm, and CEF.

Christian Education Fund – Marjanne

The Christian Education Fund (CEF) supports at this moment twenty local community schools with basic help. We hand out some necessary materials, but concentrate on teachers' training. Teachers at these schools have received almost no training apart from what we offer them at conferences.

At the end of April we again held a full day teachers' training conference. It was an encouragement to be together with 25 teachers and see that they become more and more involved in the programme; answering questions, making suggestions and remembering things from earlier conferences.

Two by two they had to prepare a Bible lesson and one of the teachers gave an example of how to tell the prepared story. The other topics were lesson planning, Farming God's



Way (Bilison) and teaching Bible songs. Please pray for the teachers that they will be an instrument in God's hands to reach a lot of Zambian children with the gospel!

Molenaar Family – Mirjam

We praise our Lord for giving us good health as we find this one of the prerequisites to work here. Since our return from Holland on 1st February, we have all resumed our daily calling. Cees has a diverse calling being principal of this rural College: preparing and teaching lectures, mentoring students, communicating with the Trust and supporting churches. One Sunday, he joined with Rev Zwemstra and others fighting huge bush fires invading the College's land. Sharing the teaching-burden between two full-time lecturers is a blessing; we thank God for His provision.

Mirjam and the kids are working hard each morning. Home-schooling is a demanding task but also rewarding. It is a delight to have Bilison jr. for the second year in the home schooling programme as he is much ahead of his peers who often don't go to school before they are nine! Joas and Rhoda keep themselves busy every afternoon with the kids of our small community. What a blessing for the mission kids that some local families have moved to 'Covenant College Village'.

Mirjam's pregnancy went well and baby Obed was born on the 12th of August. We decided to stay here for the delivery despite limited medical facilities. It is quite different to expect a baby in this setting as many fun and formal things such as regular checkups and preparations are impossible. Mirjam is still involved in the women and children's ministry and does personal/ pastoral visits now and then to women to build important relationships.

Praise and Prayer

- √ We ask your prayers for perseverance, health, and blessings for the team that works here. Life can be isolated and lonely, and the work demanding.
- √ Thank the Lord for the arrival and settling of the Zwemstra family.
- √ Pray for Mirjam and new baby Obed.
- √ Give thanks for the training of pastors and pray for them and their families.
- √ We pray for sufficient funds to continue the work and thank God for the provisions made.
- √ Pray for the CEF and the Farm, that the Lord will bless these ministries richly for the Zambian people.

Cees Molenaar, Principal

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.

Isaiah 58:13-14