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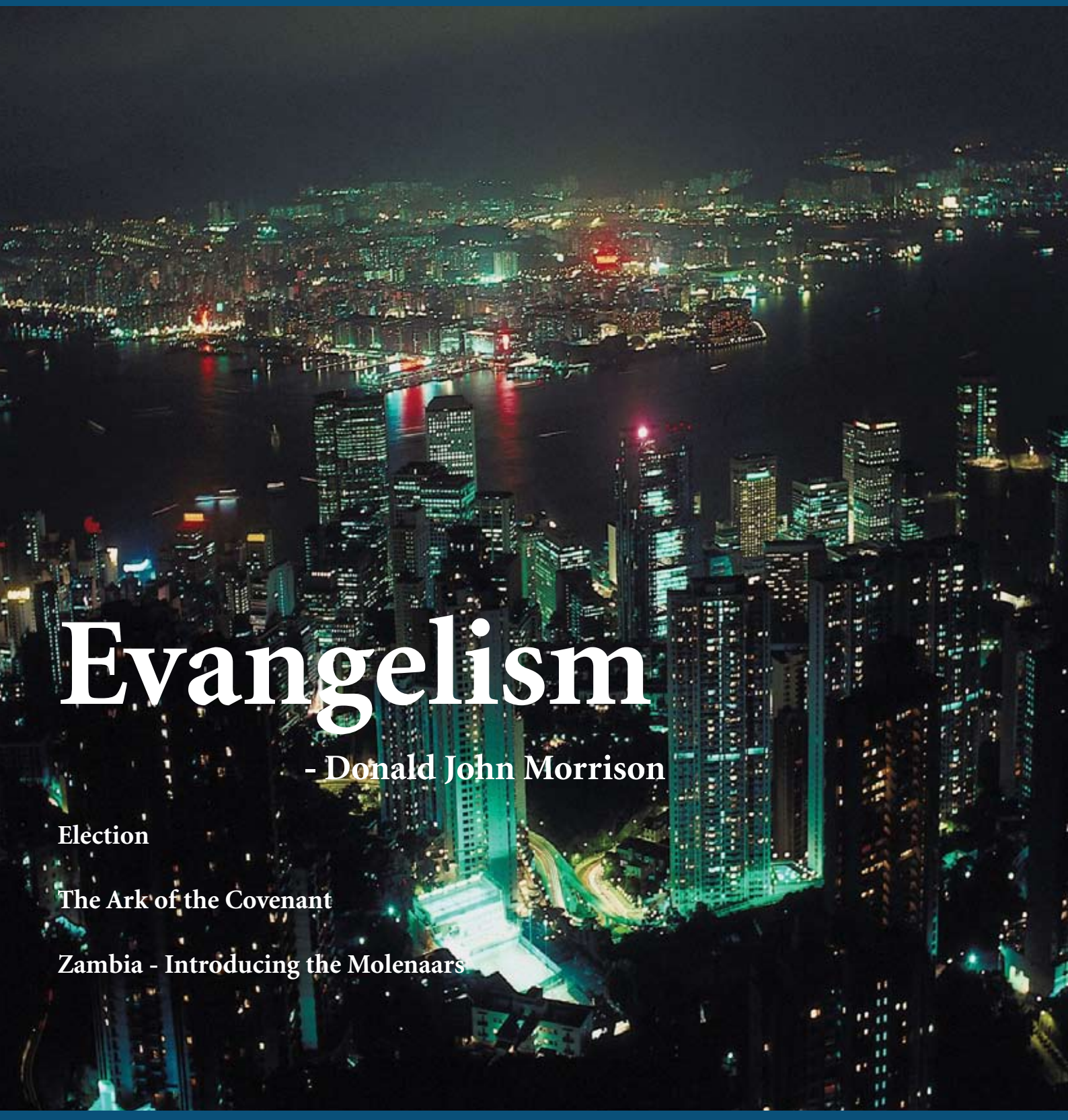

Evangelism

- Donald John Morrison

Election

The Ark of the Covenant

Zambia - Introducing the Molenaars

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Election

A friend of mine asserts that no truth of Scripture moves him like that of election. When he thinks of the ignorant home in which he grew up, his friends and relatives still in darkness and his good-living neighbours still on the broad road to hell, tears of joy well up in his eyes at God's amazing sovereign love that chose him and bypassed others more worthy than he. Election is truly a precious doctrine for it guarantees our salvation. Those whom God loved from all eternity He will bring at the end of the day to heaven and they can never be lost. It ought to provoke praise and worship in our hearts. Meditate and think deeply upon your election by God. Surely it will stir us up to love Him who first loved us.

What is Election?

Election is God choosing out of mankind a people for Himself, to be His beloved, His children, enjoying eternal life and everlasting fellowship with Him in heaven. He planned to make the world for His own glory, to show forth His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. He made man to please Him and to enjoy Him and to respond to Him in worship. In His inscrutable wisdom, and for the revelation of His own glory, He also planned the fall of man. From amongst the masses of fallen and perishing mankind whom He must damn to hell for their sins he set his love upon some, the elect, whom He determined to save though because of His own infinite justice the cost would be massive. It is set out in Romans 9:10-13 with great clarity: 'And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated'.

When were we Elected?

Before Jacob and Esau had done good or evil, and irrespective of any good or evil that they might do, God loved Jacob. Election took place before we were born, before we were conceived or had any existence, before the world was created, before time began. Since it was before time there never was a time when God did not love us. Amazing! God is eternal and from all eternity we were chosen. When there was nothing but God we were in the mind of God as His beloved. This is a great mystery.

Election and the Cross

The cross is at the very centre of the Christian gospel. Some people believe in election but refuse to accept limited atonement – the teaching that Christ died specifically for the salvation of the elect and for theirs alone. Informally they are known as 'Four Point Calvinists'. However if Christ died for everyone, then everyone will be saved. He has paid the price that divine justice demands for their sins. Alternatively all that Christ achieved on the cross was to make salvation possible and what really saves, and distinguishes between one person and another, is something else eg a person's faith. Faith then becomes a work which merits salvation. The praise and glory for saving a man is at least in part transferred from Christ to the man who believes. Away with such a thought! 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen' (Rev1:5-6). Jesus distinguishes between those who are and are not his sheep. The Father has given the sheep to Him (Jn.10:26). He states that as the good Shepherd He lays down his life for the sheep (v11). Election and limited atonement cannot be separated.

Election and Arminianism

Calvinism and Arminianism are opposites. Calvinists fully accept and rejoice in election. Arminianism is unhappy with unconditional election. Surely, it is argued, such election undermines completely human responsibility and turns men and women into robots who cannot be held responsible for their lost condition. This point is countered by the Apostle Paul when he says: 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?' (Rom.9:20-21). Arminians argue from what Paul says earlier, 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom.8:29), that election is based upon God foreknowing something about us, eg that we were going to believe. However the Scripture does not mention that God predestinated on the basis of foreknowing something about us, but rather just that He foreknew us, ie that he foreloved us and knew us in a special way. God's foreloving is God electing us unconditionally, setting His electing love upon us, and all the good that we will ever do is because of this electing love. It is not that we drew out His love to us. There is nothing in us as fallen human beings that attracts God to us. We deserve nothing and salvation is all of grace.

"There never was a time when God did not love us"

Election and the New Birth

Scripture clearly describes the state of the unconverted as dead in trespasses and sins (Eph.2:1) and therefore totally unable to save themselves or even to take one step in that direction. 'There is none that doeth good, no, not one' (Rom.3:12). The first thing that must happen before someone can be saved is that they must be born again or be spiritually raised from the dead. This is the new birth and Jesus explains that it is being born of the Spirit, by God the Spirit's work (Jn.3:6). All who are in the elect, and only those, are, when God's planned time comes, born again and that is the beginning of the work of God in their souls. The Holy Spirit irresistibly applies to them the redemption purchased by Christ specifically for them.

Election and Human Responsibility

Some unconverted people argue that since salvation is all God's work there is nothing for them to do but to sit back and enjoy life and if they are in the elect they will eventually be saved. This is never taught in Scripture. Everywhere the message to the sinner is, 'Repent and believe'. The wicked are commanded to flee from the wrath to come. Men and women are exhorted to seek the Lord while He may be found. Encouragement is given: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (Jn.6:37), and 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Rom.10:13). Men and women will not end up in hell because they were not elected, but because of their sins and their refusal to repent and believe the gospel. Election is not meant as a barrier to keep the sinner from Christ but is a great comfort to the battle-weary Christian that God will surely save him and that he will never perish. 'My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand' (Jn.10.29).

Evangelism

A Challenge by Donald John Morrison

A great Puritan pastor and theologian once said that 'no man preaches his own sermon well to others if he doth not first preach it to his own heart'. Equally I hope that my own heart is moved and stirred by this self-same spirit as I write on this subject which, I have to say, is deeply engraved on my own heart.

I don't think I need to tell you what evangelism means; we're all involved in it in one way or another. It means the preaching or spreading of the gospel, the proclaiming or making known the good news of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to needy sinners in a lost, sinful and perishing world. And of course it was Jesus Christ Himself who gave the command to do this, just shortly before He physically left the world and ascended up to heaven: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'. And we read in Acts 8:4 that this was exactly what the early Christians did: 'therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word'. It's maybe worth noticing in the context here who the 'they' were that went 'everywhere'. It was not the apostles for, as we see in the first verse of the same chapter, they remained in Jerusalem. The 'they' were 'rank and file' Christians, ordinary believers who were genuinely saved and converted to Christianity and who knew the grace of God in their own hearts. 'Go ye' was our Lord's command and their response was that they 'went everywhere'.

They Went Everywhere

One writer says that 'people who don't believe in mission or evangelism have not read the New Testament. Right from the beginning Jesus said the field is the world. The early church took Him at His word and went North, South, East and West'. They went everywhere, near and far, cities and towns, communities and villages, into the highways and byways, into the murky hedges and the darker lanes of life. They not only went 'everywhere' but we also believe that they went and spoke to 'everyone', young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, intelligent and ignorant, high and low. God's word in fact testifies to this truth. In Matthew chapter 22 we see how they were told to 'go into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage, so those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good'. And in Luke chapter 14 we read that a similar invitation was given to 'call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind'. What kind of call was this? It was a personal call and also a compelling call, to lost and needy sinners, to trust and believe in a personal and precious Saviour. Of course Jesus was the greatest ever Evangelist and He led the greatest ever evangelistic crusade that this world has seen or will ever see. All of Billy Graham's crusades put together couldn't even begin to compare with it! 'I have come', Jesus said, 'to seek and to save that which was lost'. We all know that this crusade and mission is one that is still on-going and He's called us, and every Christian, to be His ambassadors to tell the greatest story ever told. 'Ye are my witnesses' says God through the prophet Isaiah, 'I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God'.

'And they went everywhere preaching the Word'. Should we not all be deeply challenged and arrested in our hearts by these words? I personally believe that these faithful believers went 'everywhere' all because of an unfathomable compulsion. It was their love, concern and compassion for the souls of men and women who were lost, and on the road to a hopeless and Christ-less eternity. This broad missionary vision was aroused by their own deep love for Jesus Christ and what He had done for them at Calvary. They had a message of hope for the hopeless and their earnest heart-felt burden and desire was to share it with others. Why, I wonder, were they so faithful and earnest in their witness and missionary zeal wherever they went? Well, let's hear their own testimony through the words of the apostle Paul:

'He hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins'. What a moving testimony! They had found the most precious gift on earth – 'the pearl of great price', their sins had been forgiven through the blood that was shed by their Saviour on Calvary, by the grace and mercy of God they had been saved from hell and they were now destined for heaven to be forever with the Lord. There's no other greater testimony that anyone, anywhere can have.

That thou should love a wretch like me –
and be the God thou art,
It is darkness to my intellect –
but sunshine to my heart.

All this they just couldn't keep to themselves. They wanted to speak about it everywhere, and share it with everyone. I can't think of anything greater, or more important, to speak about with anyone anywhere in life. Can you? 'Come and hear', said the Psalmist, 'and I will declare what he hath done for my soul'. 'If you found a cure for cancer', said a burdened evangelist 'wouldn't it be inconceivable to hide it from the rest of mankind? How much more inconceivable to keep silent about the cure from the eternal wages of death'.

"These believers had one great ambition: To win souls for Christ"

One Great Ambition

For these believers they had but one great ambition: and that ambition was to win souls for Christ. And of course the Bible assures us that 'he that winneth souls is wise'. I wonder if this is one of our greatest ambitions? I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that the great mass of Christian people in our day do not appear to feel the slightest responsibility or concern for the eternal well-being of the unsaved, the un-reached and the un-churched. It would, sadly, seem that 'a deep passion for souls' is a rare thing in 2006. The founder of the Sudan Interior Mission, Dr Rowland Bingham, referring to this desperate lack of spiritual concern for others said: 'Today this consciousness seems to have almost died out. The natural eye cannot see souls. The ethical veil of society, the cloak of self-righteousness, or the thin veneer of legal morals are impenetrable to the natural sight, and when accompanied with the rosy flush of youth, the glitter of prosperity and the joys of home and social life, it is hard to realise that in the midst of all these … are lost souls. Christians, as a whole, do not act as though they believed … that anyone was lost and on the road to hell'.

The story is told of Charles Peace who was a notorious criminal in England long ago. He was found guilty of the charges held against him and was sentenced to death. As he walked to the gallows to be hanged, his chaplain turned round to him and assured him that, even at this late eleventh hour there was still 'spiritual hope' left for him if he repented of his sin and trusted in Jesus Christ as his own personal Lord and Saviour. Charles Peace turned to him and said: 'Do you believe it? Do you really believe it? If I believed that, I would willingly crawl across England on broken glass to tell men it was true'. J Oswald Sanders goes on to say, 'Thank God it is true. But if the reality of our belief in its truth were measured by the strenuousness of our efforts to win men to Christ, then the professed belief of many could hardly be described as vital'.

It is important for us all to bear in mind that when the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Go ye', that he meant 'Go ye'. Sadly, this command to 'go' is today generally understood to mean 'Ask them to come in and hear'. I personally don't think that's what the Lord meant. As Christians and labourers in the harvest fields we need to remember that our responsibility is not to bring the lost to the Gospel, but rather to take the Gospel to the lost. That's a great challenge for us all. This simple principle of going and taking can be found again and again in various passages of Scripture. Some of these can be found in Psalm 126:6, Matthew 13:3 and Romans 10:15.

Challenging Examples

The command 'Go ye' was an unwavering conviction in the lives of those missionaries and evangelists who obeyed and responded to God's call in a bygone era of the church's history. In doing so they were mightily used in winning souls for Christ. They were faithful to their calling, because they had fire in their bones. Can we not hear them echoing the same intense feelings as that of Jeremiah, 'his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay'. Listen to the following moving heart-felt convictions, sometimes mingled with joy, of seven men who surrendered their lives when they heard the command to 'go':

Robert Moffat, Missionary to South Africa – 'In the vast plains to the north I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been. Oh that I had a thousand lives, and a thousand bodies! All of them should be devoted to no other employment but to preach Christ to these degraded, despised, yet beloved mortals'.

C T Studd, Missionary to India – 'If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him'.

Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf, Founder of the Moravian community – 'I have but one passion, it is He, it is He alone. The world is the field and the field is the world: and henceforth that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ'.

John G Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides – 'At the moment I put the bread and wine into those dark hands, once stained with the blood of cannibalism, now stretched out to receive and partake of those emblems and seals of the Redeemer's love, I had a foretaste of the joy of glory that well nigh broke my heart to pieces. I shall never taste a deeper bliss, till I gaze on the glorified face of Jesus Himself'.

James Calvert, Missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands – The captain of the ship he was on tried to turn him back, saying 'You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages'. To that, Calvert replied, 'We died before we came here'.

Jim Elliot, Missionary Martyr who lost his life in 1956 trying to reach the Auca Indians of Ecuador – 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose'.

The Apostle Paul, the great Evangelist – 'Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some'.

What a Vision!

What a big heart Paul had – and what a vision! 'Where there is no vision the people perish'. Paul must have prayed to God as Christ is instructed to do: 'Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession'. I once read that Paul's overwhelming concern to win souls for Christ sprang from a three-fold conviction. Firstly, that it was constantly before his mind that everyone that he met, wrote to and spoke to would one day stand before the judgement seat of God. Secondly, he saw them all as hurtling to an endless eternity. Thirdly, that their destiny would be sealed in either one of two places – heaven or hell. I wonder how many of us see this? Do we see it at all?

When we consider any aspect of evangelism, we remind ourselves that men, in and of themselves, cannot do anything to save souls, 'Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but GOD ALONE giveth the increase' and 'without me ye can do nothing' and 'it is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing'. We all know it is Divine power that is behind every successful evangelistic mission and the salvation of souls – the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Responsibility

These truths, however, don't teach us that we fold our hands and do nothing – no, not at all. On the contrary, because God commands us: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'. God always uses instruments and these instruments are sinners, just like you and me. We see in Acts chapter 17 the extraordinary and powerful effect that such 'instruments' had on the people of Thessalonica when a church was established there. The claim of those who opposed these 'missionary instruments' was this: 'these men have turned the world upside down' – an astonishing claim and it was all true! We should never forget that there was another force behind the claim that was made here. That force was the power of prayer. They worked while they prayed and they prayed while they worked. Praying and working cannot be separated. Hudson Taylor prayed about things as if everything depended on the praying, but worked also, as if everything depended on the working. 'I used to think', said James O Fraser, 'that prayer should have the first place and teaching the second. I now feel it would be truer to give prayer the first, second, and third places and teaching the fourth'. Another missionary said that 'In no other way can the believer become as fully involved with God's work, especially the work of world evangelism and personal evangelism, as in intercessory prayer'.

We mentioned earlier the power of the Holy Spirit. And every evangelist must learn what it means to be filled with the Spirit, walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. Various passages of Scripture tell us that these are commands. As I was preparing this paper I was deeply struck by words written by Hudson Taylor as he searched his own heart in the light of Scripture to find out to whom God gives His Holy Spirit. His findings are, maybe, a rebuke and a challenge to us all. 'God', he says, 'gives His Spirit not to those who long for Him, not to those who pray for Him, not to those who desire to be always filled with Him – but He does give His Holy Spirit to them that obey Him. He makes reference to Peter's address before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 5:32 when he spoke of the Holy Spirit 'whom God hath given to them that obey him'. 'The great commission', therefore he states, 'is not an option to be considered; rather it is a command to be obeyed'.

"God commands us: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature'"

I personally believe that if we saw the image of God stamped on the hearts of everyone we met every day, then we would never dither in sharing the gospel message with them, whilst also zealous in compelling them to come to Christ. We have much to be taught in these spiritually barren days but there is one thing I fervently believe that we need to be taught above everything else and it's this: the worth and value of a soul.

O teach me what it meaneth, the cross uplifted high,
with One the man of sorrows, condemned to bleed and die,
O teach me what it cost Thee, to make a sinner whole
and teach me, Saviour, teach me, the value of a soul.

Arbroath Weekend 2006

***Pictured** (left to right): **Back Row**: Martin Fraser, Murray MacKay, Sam Smith, James Ritchie, Avril, Stephen Campbell, Sam, Jenni, Nathan Roberts, Mike Reeve, James Boyd, Murdo MacKenzie, Philip Mackereth, Murdo Macleod, Christine Macleod, Rev Allan Murray, Mrs Maureen Murray, Pastor Soon-Jo with Esther, Alasdair Macleod, David Woods (and friend!), Iain Taylor.*
***Front Row**: Sandra MacKay, Derick Maclean, David Keddie, Bruce MacKenzie, Ann MacAulay, Becky Wilson, Kerry Martin, Fiona Taylor, Irene MacKinnon, Suzanne Fraser, Fiona Smith, Mrs Hunmi Soon-Jo, Esther Boyd.*
***Seated**: Flora Macleod, Sandra MacAulay, Jo Hancock*

Report by Kerry Martin

The young people's biannual 'Weekend Away' was held again in Arbroath, at the Windmill Christian Centre. This time it was hosted by the Rev and Mrs Allan Murray. Mr Murray based his talks on Christ in the Psalms. We all arrived (40 in total) from different parts of the country eager to listen to the talks, have fun, participate in the activities, and get involved in the discussions as well.

The talks were centred on the Messianic Psalms which give the readers an insight into Christ's innermost thoughts and feelings – something that we cannot grasp as clearly from the Gospels. The Psalms switch between Christ's and David's experiences. His death on the cross was His triumph over death and hell combined. The barrier between God and man was broken down through His death enabling sinners to enjoy the Lord's forgiveness and to have peace with Him. The Sabbath services were on, 'Love never faileth' (1Cor.13) and 'Life is short' (Jas.4:14). The preciousness of life was highlighted ('it is even a vapour') and also that we should come to God with an urgency. He will receive us, embrace us, and not let us go, and when we have Him we cannot lose Him.

The weekend also involved insightful discussions in which we reasoned on how to praise God and the issue of backsliding. We also viewed DVDs that informed us of some of the marvellous work in which Christians are involved and the benefits which can be seen via the intervention of charities such as Bethany Christian Trust (www.bethanychristiantrust.com) and the Barnabas Fund. Worship was taken each morning and evening, and Flora Macleod, James Ritchie, Sandra Macaulay, and Alasdair Macleod also gave their testimonies. These were very interesting as we noticed similarities and differences in their individual conversions.

The Centre is in a lovely location overlooking the sea. We had time to admire the scenery and had fun in carrying out the various tasks that were required. Overall, the weekend was thoroughly enjoyed by all and proved to be of benefit to all who attended. We learned something new about the Messianic Psalms, and we were able to enjoy one another's company. We also got to ask the minister and his wife various practical or biblically-based questions. This proved to be very interesting as they both teamed up to answer the questions, each providing a similar, but slightly different answer.

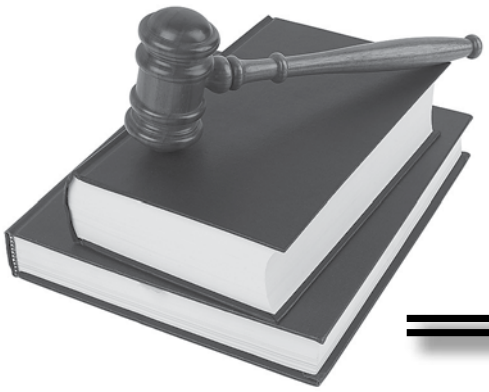
Thanks need to be given to James and Angela MacInnes for the well organised schedule, to the three cooks who provided us with lovely, freshly-made meals and to the minister and his wife for their company, advice and teaching. Next year, February 2007, will be another opportunity for the young and not so young within our Church to meet, and if this short article has whetted your appetite then it will have been worthwhile.

See you there!

The three talks and both sermons can be accessed online through www.Bible-Sermons.org.uk.

Next Young People's Weekend

The next young people's weekend away will be DV Friday 9th February to Monday 12th February in Arbroath. The speaker expected is the Rev Harry Woods and his chosen topic is, 'Christ – Prophet, Priest and King'. Application forms will be made available online at www.fccontinuing.org.



Books

Letters of Samuel Rutherford

Banner of Truth Trust, hbk, 744pp, £18.50

Having been reading these letters in an old well-worn volume printed many years ago I was delighted to see this recently published edition by the Banner. It is beautifully presented and contains all the hitherto published letters as well as a biographical introduction by Andrew Bonar and a glossary that is so useful when encountering old Scottish words. Many will already be familiar with these letters and Rutherford's circumstances when he penned most of them.

This is not a book you should read from cover to cover even over a period of weeks, but is best read over a prolonged period of time, and as you do so, try to enter into the situation Rutherford was in as he corresponded with various people. Some of these he obviously knew well and wrote to them a number of letters, while others were relatively unknown to him, but yet the way he addressed even such shows the wonderful pastor's heart that was his.

Lady Kenmure was one whom he loved much, and writing to her on the death of a child he entreats her to 'look to him who hath stricken you at this time.… I am persuaded your Physician will not slay you, but purge you … for to lance a wound is not to kill but to cure the patient.… I believe faith will teach you to kiss a striking Lord and so acknowledge the sovereignty of God'.

To a John Osburne, he writes: 'I take His cross in my arms with joy; I bless it, I rejoice in it. Suffering for Christ is my garland. I would not exchange Christ for ten thousand worlds! nay, if the comparison could stand, I would not exchange Christ with heaven'.

Writing to another, with thoughts of those who were under his former ministry, he says, 'My soul longeth exceedingly to hear how matters go betwixt you and Christ … whether or not there be any work of Christ … that will bide the trial of fire and water.… My dearest in the Lord, stand fast in Christ; keep the faith; contend for Christ.… Oh that the Lord would fulfil my joy, and keep the young bride that is at Anwoth to Christ!'

Rutherford had such a sense of communion with his Saviour that at times you feel that it is almost as if he was actually physically beside him as he writes. In a letter to William Glendinning he extols the loveliness of the Lord Jesus: 'Acquaint yourself with Christ's love … draw the curtains and make bare His holy face; clear our dim and blearied eyes to see His beauty and glory. He should find many lovers. I would seek no more happiness than a sight of Him so near hand as to see, hear, smell, and touch and embrace Him'.

Such a sense of Christ we need in our day, and yet there is a holy boldness with this Saint of God that some of us cannot enter into. He continues in the same letter, 'I should not refuse ten thousand years in hell, to have a wide soul enlarged and made wider, that I might be … filled with His love'.

Many of his letters conclude with words that say much of the heart of this spiritual giant: 'Yours, in his sweet Lord Jesus'. It is doubtful if many men born of women knew or desired the love of Christ in the way Rutherford did, even as he suffered at the hands of the vindictive, godless yet religious persecutors as a prisoner in Aberdeen.

We cannot recommend this book too highly, but let another great man of God, C H Spurgeon, have the last word: 'Rutherford's Letters (are) the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere men'.

Rev Kenneth MacDonald

Striving Against Satan

Knowing the Enemy
His Weakness, His Strategy, His Defeat

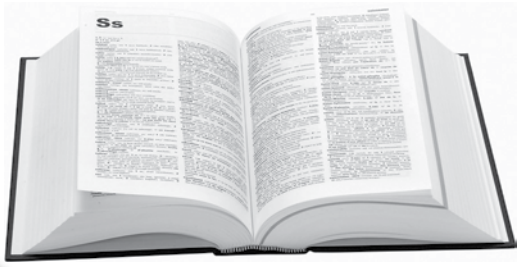
Joel Beeke

Bryntirion Press, pbk, 126pp, £6.95

Every Christian is involved in a holy war. To get victory we must know our enemy. The first part of this book describes the personality and history of Satan. It traces Satan through the Old Testament, the New Testament, Church History up to the present day and also looks at his future. Part 2 considers Satan's weaknesses. Part 3 deals with Satan's devices and their remedies. The final section calls us to recognise Satan's defeat in our personal lives and in the life of our church and of our nation.

It is a book of experiential teaching which presents Joel Beeke at his best, dealing as it does with the Christian life and the struggles we all face. He

Books



draws heavily on the Puritans who were experts in this field and, as we know, his knowledge of them is immense. Every Christian will find help here and it is the sort of book to which you could return again and again.

The various parts of the Christian armour are described, for example, the shoes: 'The best way to stand up to the devil is to have the clearest possible understanding of the gospel and to experience the gospel peace that passes all understanding through the blood of Christ'. Satan, we are told, 'though fallen, is still an angel, so he is intellectually far superior to us'. We need the best armour that God provides to overcome him. Above all else, 'Focus on Christ. Remember who you are in Christ. Overcome the world by faith in Christ… Live in such a way that Christ means everything to you'.

When dealing with the church he says: 'The church is a fleet of fishing boats, not a yacht club, it is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints'. He quotes Flavel's very helpful words to depressed Christians: 'Be not too quick to bury the church before she be dead'. He stresses the need for revival as well as reformation: 'When every pin in the tabernacle is brought under the scrutiny of reform-minded people whose hearts are not renewed and aflame with love for God, reformation will produce sterility, formality, legality and perhaps church splits. Reformation can turn ugly and brutal'. There is surely a warning in that. It is not enough to be orthodox. We also need love for God and one another. But he also adds: 'As reformation needs revival, revival also needs reformation. Without constant reforming, revivals can be pulled off track by unscriptural abuses, bizarre phenomena and spurious conversions'.

I warmly recommend this book as one which will help Christians to 'fight the good fight' and be 'more than conquerors through him that loved us'.

Rev William Macleod

Broken Minds

Steve and Robyn Bloem
Kregel, pbk, 301pp

This is a heart-rending book to read. It is difficult for those who have not suffered depression to understand it because we look at it from the outside. This is a book of extraordinary honesty. It goes as near as it is possible to go, to enabling us to see depression from the inside. Steve Bloem was on the verge of accepting his first pastorate, when he was struck down by severe depression. The story is told partly by Steve himself and partly by his wife, Robyn. The result is a book of inestimable value to the pastor. It is very likely to change some of our ideas, mostly for the better, and to make some of us better pastors in that area where we feel so useless: counselling the depressed.

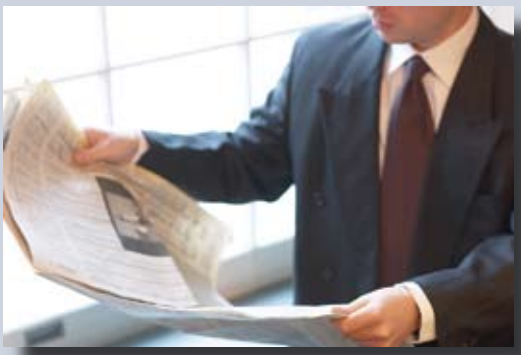
This is no ordinary book. Apart from the story, which I would say is the most instructive part of the book, there is much instruction based on thorough research, which is apparent from the extensive endnotes and bibliography. It examines various approaches to mental illness, some Christian, some not. One 'Christian' approach, known as 'Nouthetic Counselling' and espoused strongly by Jay Adams, is looked at critically. Many pastors who, like myself, had accepted the Adams approach will be forced to think again. Also, many of us have been sceptical about the place of medication in the treatment of mental illness; if so we need to read this book, and re-examine our attitude to such medication.

The problem of whether churches should call those who have a history of recurrent severe depression is examined. This is a very controversial matter, and one where each case must be examined on its merits. The book recommends a much more amicable approach to such candidates than most of us would follow. There is no doubt that they could be much more understanding in counselling those with mental illness, but it would be unkind to forget that the pastoral ministry can involve much stress. The experiences of men who were greatly used by God, notably Spurgeon, are examined. Some of these are extremely interesting.

The whole approach of the Bloems to life and its problems is thoroughly Scripture-based. A number of cases in the Bible which indicate down-heartedness are described as depression. Some of these seem to be a bit 'stretched'.

Despite these slight criticisms, I would recommend this book to every pastor; to use a rather clichéd phrase, this is a *must* read.

Rev Allan Murray



News

School in Theology

Once again, from 11 to 14th September 2006, the Free Church School in Theology took place at the BB Centre, Larbert. Numbers attending were very good, though one or two regular attendees were not able to be present because of other pressing commitments. The Rev Malcolm Watts (Salisbury) gave the opening address which was an edifying presentation of the life and contribution of Oliver Cromwell. The Rev Harry Woods (Beauly) gave an interesting paper on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. The Rev Greg MacDonald (Ness) gave a detailed exposition of Psalm 22. The Rev Trevor Kirkland (Templepatrick) provided a somewhat controversial evaluation of the theology of John Piper. The Rev James Frew (Evanton) outlined the challenging themes of 1 and 2 John. The Rev David Silversides (Loughbrickland) gave a rich paper on the emotional life of our Lord. The Rev Iain Murray (Edinburgh) spoke about something we all long for, 'Preaching with Power and Unction'. We also appreciated the three excellent devotional talks given by the Rev Richard Brooks (Derbyshire). All in all it was a very profitable School, the fellowship was good and we were left with many matters to ponder.

(See Picture on Back Page)

Doctors Call for Baby Euthanasia

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecology (RCOG) have supported a call for 'baby euthanasia', claiming that allowing doctors to kill very disabled babies would spare families the emotional and financial burden of bringing up such children. 'A very disabled child can mean a disabled family', College experts said in a written submission to the Nuffield Council on Bioethics. Sadly Church of Scotland leaders have joined the debate, claiming that doctors should be given the right to withhold treatment from seriously ill newborn babies in exceptional circumstances. Dr Sinclair Scott, a retired GP and member of the Kirk's Church and Society Council, said there was little point in continuing treatment for newborns with severe abnormalities. The Church of England has taken up a similar position. The Bishop of Southwark, Tom Butler, who is the vice chair of the Church's Mission and Public Affairs Council, has argued that there may be occasions when it would be compassionate to allow a severely disabled child to die. He has also suggested that the high financial cost of keeping desperately ill babies alive should be a factor in life or death decisions. These comments have rightly outraged disabled and pro-life groups. A spokeswoman for the UK Disabled People's Council, which represents tens of thousands of members in 140 different organisations, said: 'How can the Church of England say that Christian compassion includes killing of disabled babies either through the withdrawing or withholding of treatment or by active euthanasia? It is not for doctors or indeed anyone else to determine whether a baby's life is worthwhile simply on the grounds of impairment or health condition'. She added: 'If we start killing disabled babies what message are we giving to disabled children with the same conditions whilst they are growing up – that their lives are less valued than non-disabled people? Quality of life is not determined by health condition, but rather by the love, support and access to an inclusive society that a disabled baby will receive and grow up in'. What an evil society we live in when it contemplates murdering babies just because they are disabled!

Desk

Strathclyde Fire-fighter Re-instated After Appeal

Brian Herbert was reprimanded along with eight colleagues who abstained from Pride Scotia in June where they were supposed to be distributing fire safety leaflets. All the officers were ordered to undergo diversity training and Mr Herbert initially had his salary cut. However, after appealing the ruling, he will now be moved from Strathclyde Fire Service to Cowcaddens instead of being demoted. Punishments handed out to the other officers were upheld. The men claimed it was against their 'moral conscience' to attend the event. They did not object to handing out fire safety leaflets but rightly did object to being forced to support a homosexual march.

Conference in Pembroke

A Summer Conference organised by the Tabernacle, Cardiff, is to be held in Westgate Evangelical Church, Pembroke, from 23rd July to 27th July 2007. The Speakers will be Rev Vernon Higham on 'The Fulness of Christ', Rev Malcolm Watts on 'The Last Things' and Rev Dewi Higham preaching the Gospel.

New Interim President of NAE

Dr Leith Anderson, senior pastor of the Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, which has 5,000 regular attendees has been named Interim President of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), following the resignation of Dr Ted Haggard. Haggard resigned after news of his admission that he lied to conceal his 'sexual immorality'. According to Associated Press reports, Haggard denied that all of the allegations against him are true but said 'enough of them are that I was appropriately removed' from church leadership.

New Moderator supports Gay Marriages

Sheilagh Kesting, originally from Stornoway, is expected to take over next May as the new moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Recently she stated that one of her priorities will be to fight for the introduction of gay weddings by kirk ministers. The issue is certain to divide the Church whose conservative wing remains hostile to the sanctioning of homosexual relationships. Kesting, who is a liberal, said she was prepared to lead the Church down the road to acceptance. New figures show that more than 900 gay and lesbian couples have 'married' in Scotland since the Civil Partnership Act came into force last December.

Italian Passagio Conference

Some 140 brethren gathered at the evangelical centres near Naples and Florence to hear pastor Jerry Marcellino from Aduboun Drive Baptist, Laurel, Mississippi, USA speak on the theme of 'Spiritual Leadership'. The first session focused on the duties and responsibilities of those who are leaders in the church. Not only is the minister to possess a saving knowledge of Christ, but he must also constantly remember that he is dependent on God's grace in his ministry. His progress on a personal level is to be manifested before the people of God. He must maintain an attitude of repentance and a willingness to be always preparing, as an assiduous student of God's Word. Prayer is a wonderful aspect of the faith, but the presence of indwelling sin demands that the leader keep refocusing his life on the Lord. The minister's life is truly the life of the ministry. Spiritual leadership is then to be applied in the minister's family. Based on personal experience (Jerry and Dawn have seven children) and his responsibilities towards some sixty church families,

Jerry & Dawn Marcellino

Pastor Marcellino stressed vividly the importance of leading the family in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Children are living messages sent to future ages, and fathers must not shy away from their Scripture-given task of teaching and leading their families with conviction. Drawing from Psalm 78:1-7, Mr Marcellino duly emphasised the importance of not hiding God's Word from our children, thus setting spiritual leadership in the family within a transgenerational context. Our children must see our passion and excitement for the Lord and His Word. In his third session, Pastor Marcellino dealt with leadership among church elders. Every elder ought to be apt to

teach, whether for edification, evangelism, counselling or Bible study, thus showing he possesses a commanding grasp of the Scriptures. Always mindful that his gifts are from the Lord, the elder must cultivate them so as to promote growth in the church and to equip God's people. While unity and collegiality among the counsel of elders is to be pursued and preserved, the spiritual leader or pastor should nonetheless take ultimate responsibility for the church's decisions. As a *primus inter pares*, he must be seen as the one whom God has set aside to guide and shepherd the flock. Basing his comments on 1Corinthians 9, Pastor Marcellino urged churches to appoint brethren to the full time ministry and meet their responsibility of supporting them adequately, both in prayer and in practical terms.

Edinburgh University Ban CU Course

Following a recent complaint by the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Trans-sexual Society of Edinburgh University that the Christian Union's Pure Course (A course written by a UCCF team leader covering orthodox biblical teaching on sex and relationships) was homophobic and discriminatory, the Students Association decided to uphold a motion to ban the Christian Union's course. Since the course was due to take place in University property not run by the Students Association, they agreed to pass the complaint on to the University Senior Management requesting a ban of the course. Without reference to, or discussion with the Christian Union, the university took the shocking decision to ban the CU course from all university premises. They made the following Press Release (20/10/06):'The university has a clear commitment to ensuring that our students and staff are treated and treat each other with dignity and respect. It also attaches considerable importance to the values of free speech and open debate. In this case, the university has looked into the matter, in parallel with an enquiry by the Students Association (EUSA), and has decided that the course is contradictory to our Equality and Diversity values. It was decided that it is not appropriate for this course to run on university or EUSA premises'.

What is at stake is the continuing opportunity for free speech for those who want to teach the Bible on Scotland's campuses. This new 'tolerant society' is increasingly intolerant towards evangelicals. This quote from the Edinburgh University Student newspaper report into the Pure course sums it up: 'Thankfully society as a whole has realised that the Bible is not the literal word of God and believes that the bigotry and intolerance within its pages is unacceptable'. UCCF, in association with the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship are currently preparing a legal challenge to the decision. Pray for them, and especially for Andy and Laura the CU Leaders in Edinburgh CU, and Matt the CU staffworker in Edinburgh.

Egypt jails Christian convert from Islam

A Muslim sheikh who was jailed in Egypt for 18 months has declared from his prison cell that he is under arrest for 'Insulting Islam' by becoming Christian. Egypt's secret police transferred Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad (57) to Wadi el-Natroun Prison last month. He was told he would remain there indefinitely unless he agreed to work as a government informer against other converts to Christianity. According to the prisoner's Cairo attorney, his client remains incarcerated in this desert prison 'only because he has chosen a different belief, to be a Christian'. When courts ordered el-Akkad's release from provisional detention ten weeks ago, State Security Investigation authorities ignored the ruling.

Rev & Mrs Jaeyoon Kim with Chino

Seminary Opening

The 2006-2007 Session of the Free Church Seminary, the fourth session of our Seminary's short history, began with an opening lecture by the Principal on 'The Essence of the Ministry', dealing with the central importance of prayer and preaching. Three new students have begun this year. Davide Ratti comes from Northern Italy where he gave up his job as an accountant to come with his family to Scotland to study for the ministry. Jaeyoon Kim is from South Korea. He is already a minister and has a Master's degree in theology. He wishes to do more study of experimental theology to prepare himself further for ministry in Korea. We also have a new student from Singapore, Michael Ooi, who is studying by distance learning.

Apologies – Late Magazines

The editor would like to apologise for the late arrival of several recent issues of the magazine. This problem was due to factors outwith his control. He has had difficulty in finding volunteers with sufficient time and expertise to take on the design and layout of the magazine. He would like to express his gratitude to the Rev James Frew and the Rev Harry Woods for helping out with this task recently despite their many other commitments. Problems have also arisen from the transition to a new firm of printers who have themselves experienced technical difficulties with new machinery. However, he hopes these problems have now been solved and that subsequent issues will arrive on time.

Letter from Australia

Dear Friends,

It was very pleasing to see a letter I wrote, 'Letter from an Antipodean', published in the September edition of the Witness. When we received our copies here in Australia the article was read with great excitement, not so much with the content in mind, but rather because it made us all feel as if we were more a part of the wider brethren of the FCC. We are all delighted that those who read the *Witness*, wherever in the world that may be, will now know a little bit more about Magill Free Church, where it is located, something of the challenges that this small flock have faced in recent years and the goodness of the Lord to us.

At the time of writing the letter we were still awaiting the outcome of our call to the Rev James Frew. Since that time we have had much reason for rejoicing knowing that he has accepted the call. This rejoicing has of course been tinged with empathy for our brethren at Evanton who will lose a much-loved minister. We uphold them in prayer trusting that the Lord will provide for them bountifully, as he has for us.

Waiting

Many months have passed since the call was accepted and we are still waiting for the processing of Mr Frew's visa application. We are expectant that a marvellous work will be done in this corner of the Lord's vineyard under Mr Frew's ministry. Yet it is apparent that the providences of God would have us to wait longer upon him. It is often very unclear why the providences of God are so – how often we murmur and grumble against them! We reason in ourselves that surely the furthering of the work of God's kingdom on earth would be better served if we were in control! However, under the intense light of Scripture we are brought to a different perspective. The Psalmist says, 'As for God, his way is perfect' (Ps.18:30). And so we must humble ourselves under his mighty hand and wait upon Him.

Drought

I mentioned in my last letter that Australia is a vast land, a dry land. Much of the country is currently in the grip of a drought, and in some places the farmers have not seen rain for several years. Regularly photographs appear in the press of cattle and sheep-station owners shooting stock that the parched land can no longer support. Many 'up stumps' and leave the land. Day after day, year after year those that persevere look skywards searching for a cloud that might bring the precious rain. The Bible often draws on drought to illustrate spiritual truths: 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is' (Ps.63:10).

There is a spiritual drought in our land and there is such a need of spiritual rain in the form of sound preaching. We do not always understand why we must wait but the Word of God does indicate that through dark providences we are sanctified. 'He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint' (Is.40:31). And so we wait, asking that God will give us grace to say, 'He hath done all things well' (Mk.7:37).

As Elijah and his servant prayed and watched for rain (1 Kings 18) they first saw a little cloud on the horizon, the size of a man's hand. The Lord was answering Elijah's prayer – a little cloud, but the torrents of rain were on their way. We have been without a minister for nearly five years, the drought has been long, but we know that the Lord has heard our prayers and a little cloud has appeared.

Sincerely,

Richard Bell

(Magill Free Church, Adelaide, South Australia)

Rev Sean Humby

The Rev Sean Humby, originally from Australia, was ordained to the ministry and inducted as an evangelist/church planter in North America on Friday 1st December 2006. He will have special responsibilty for the work in Dayton, Ohio.

Jerusalem Today

The Ark of the Covenant

Rev David Murray (Stornoway)

I. THE COVENANT

At Sinai, God entered into a covenant with Israel. It was initiated in Exodus chapter 19, codified in chapters 20-23, and confirmed in chapter 24. Many mistakenly view this covenant as 'legalistic', giving hope of salvation only to those who can perfectly keep the law. However, this is to overlook that divine grace and divine provision formed the foundation of this covenant. When the covenant was initiated the stress was on all that God had done for Israel when delivering them from Egypt (Ex.19:1-4). It is in the context of this powerful divine initiative that God then sets forth the appropriate response of obedience (19:5-25). As if to underline this, even the Ten Commandments are prefaced with the words 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage' (Ex.20:1). The divine redemption comes before the divine rules. The covenant can then be summed up in two words – relationship (I will be your God and you shall be my people) and then rules (therefore, thou shalt … thou shalt not…).

Not surprisingly these two ideas are prominent in the 'Ark of the Covenant'. Indeed, we might say that it was so named because nowhere else were these two ideas of relationship and rules so clearly expressed in the nation. The Ark was the ultimate and highest expression of God's presence with them and, as we shall see, it contained the laws which guided their relationship to Him.

Figures of the True

As the enfleshed Ark of the covenant, the Lord Jesus symbolised both God's presence with His people (Immanuel) and His laws for His people (yea that most holy law of thine I have within my heart). His great redemption brought God's people into relationship with God and also gave them power to obey His rules out of love. 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him' (Jn.14:21).

II. THE CHEST

The Hebrew term for 'ark' signifies a wooden chest or container of any sort. In this case it was a gold-covered wooden box (4.5 feet long, 2.5 feet wide, 2.5 feet high), and in it was deposited a copy of the commandments God gave to Israel (Ex.25:16,21). Aaron's rod (signifying priestly leadership during the wilderness wanderings) and a golden pot of manna (signifying God's provision in the wilderness) were deposited there temporarily, until the nation was established in the land with a king and temple (1Ki.8:9).

The most common name for the ark is 'the ark of testimony' (Ex.25:22), for in it were the two stone tables of the law which testified to the holy nature of God and His demands upon the people. As the visible symbol of God's presence with the nation, it was to lead them whenever they went forward (Num.10:34-36). It was closely associated with the parting of the Jordan (Josh.3) and the fall of the walls of Jericho (Josh.6). Idols fell down in its presence (1Sam.5:4), and men were cut down who handled it irreverently (2Sam.6:6ff). However, it brought joy and blessing to both Gentiles and Jews who received it reverently (2Sam.6:11-12).

Figures of the True

Christ had the law in His heart perfectly and so testified to the holy nature of God and His demands upon His people. He goes with His people wherever they go (Mt.28:20). He leads His people through the wilderness of this world and through the Jordan into the promised land of heaven. He brings down the walls and idols of His enemies. He demands reverence and is a blessing to both Jews and Gentiles who receive Him with joy.

III. THE COVERING

If there was just a chest with the law in it there was no encouragement for sinners to approach God there or even look to God there. Witnessing to their guilt and proclaiming their condemnation, the law could only thunder, condemn and terrify.

But there is a covering! The tables of stone having been placed in the ark, the law was then covered with a golden lid, a slab of pure gold (Ex.25:17-21). In the Authorised Version the word is translated 'mercy seat' which explains its function. However, the literal translation is simply 'covering' or 'lid'. Being the same size as the ark, it fitted perfectly and so completely hid the law contained in the ark. And just to be sure, a golden rim encircled the edges of the ark to make sure that the lid stayed on.

However, more was needed than just hiding the law out of sight. The law needed to be satisfied. So, once a year on the Day of

Atonement, the golden lid was sprinkled with sacrificial blood of atonement, so making the lid 'the mercy seat'. It is the most important item of furniture in the whole Tabernacle. So much so, that in 1Chronicles 28:11, the Tabernacle is designated 'the place of the mercy-seat (covering)'.
On this golden, blood-spattered mercy-seat, God met with and communed with His people (Ex.25:22). As such, it was His throne here on earth, a throne which spoke of God's just demands and also of God's merciful provision. God was able to dwell among sinners because He sat on a blood-sprinkled throne of grace. On this throne, then, met the most contrary forces – law and mercy, righteousness and peace, God and sinners.

Figures of the True
The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible translates mercy-seat with the same Greek word used in Romans 3:25 (translated 'propitiation') and Hebrews 9:5 (translated 'mercy seat'). In other words, Christ is our mercy-seat. He is the blood-sprinkled golden lid which not only hides but satisfies God's demands upon sinners. 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need' (Heb.4:16). In Him meet the most contrary forces – law and mercy, righteousness and peace, God and sinners.

IV. THE CHERUBIM

On either side of the mercy seat were two golden cherubim (Ex.25:18). Cherubim are usually associated with the administration of God's justice (Gen.3:24; Ezek.1:5-10; 10:7). For example, in Genesis 3:24 they bore the flaming sword of vengeance and judgment in the aftermath of the first sin. However, in the Most Holy Place they are disarmed and their posture is not one of righteous hostility but of subdued wonder. They bow their heads as they gaze in holy contemplation upon the blood-stained golden mercy-seat covering the law of God.
The empty man-sized space above the mercy seat and between the cherubims was filled by a symbol of the glory of God, the glory-cloud which the Jews called the Shekinah (literally the dwelling). From the words of Psalm 80:1 'Shine forth, thou that dwellest between the cherubim' it appears to have been a supernatural brightness or splendour, a very luminous object, resembling a bright cloud or flame.

Figures of the True
The redemption of the church is a matter of research and study, wonder and amazement to the angels of God. Peter tells us that the sufferings and glories of Christ are things which 'the angels desire to look into' (1Pet.1:11,12; cf. 1Cor.4:9; Eph.3:10).

The 'man Christ Jesus' has come to fill the man-sized space and now shines forth from between the cherubims as the luminous and splendid glory of God.
In Revelation 11:19 we are told that even now in heaven can be seen the 'ark of his testament'. This of course cannot be the ark of Exodus 25. That symbol is gone but the One symbolised remains forever. The wooden ark, covered with gold, sprinkled with blood, and enhanced by golden cherubim is gone. What it symbolised, however, remains forever – the everlasting covenant and the everlasting covenant keeper. There we see His humanity (the wood) and His divinity (the gold), a kept law, a slain Lamb, and a throne of grace, grandeur and glory.

Thanksgiving for the Righteousness of Christ

Fountain of never-ceasing grace, Thy saints' exhaustless theme,
Great object of immortal praise, essentially supreme;
We bless Thee for the glorious fruits Thy incarnation gives;
The righteousness which grace imputes, and faith alone receives.

Whom heaven's angelic host adores was slaughtered for our sin;
The guilt, O Lord, was wholly ours, the punishment was Thine.
Our God in flesh, to set us free, was manifested here;
And meekly bare our sins, that we His righteousness might wear.

Imputatively guilty then our Substitute was made,
That we the blessings might obtain for which His blood was shed:
Himself He offered on the cross our sorrows to remove;
And all He suffered was for us, and all He did was love.

In Him we have a righteousness by God Himself approved
Our Rock, our sure Foundation this which never can be moved.
Our ransom by His death He paid, for all His people given,
The law He perfectly obeyed that they might enter heaven.

As all, when Adam sinned alone, in his transgression died,
So by the righteousness of One are sinners justified,
We to Thy merit, gracious Lord, with humblest joy submit,
Again to paradise restored, in Thee alone complete.

Our souls His watchful love retrieves, nor lets them go astray,
His righteousness to us He gives, and takes our sins away.
We claim salvation in His right, adopted and forgiven,
His merit is our robe of light, His death the gate of heaven.

Augustus Toplady

Worship (2)
Biblical and Reformed

Rev Malcolm Watts (Salisbury)

The Scriptural Law of Public Worship

Now the question before us is, How should we worship God in a church service? This is a most important matter, particularly in the present day when there appears to be such diversity – and, I am sorry to say, such hopeless confusion.

Before attempting to answer the question raised, perhaps we need to consider another, namely: What is the Scriptural law of worship? Now I strongly suspect that many people never give a thought to that. I raise this because of the unbelievable awfulness of what often passes today for Christian worship. My dear friends, it is absolutely vital that we consider this matter, for otherwise we ourselves will almost certainly be caught up in the modern dumbed-down and God-dishonouring phenomenon presently sweeping through our evangelical churches.

The Normative Principle

What is the Scriptural law of worship? Historically, two answers have been given. If we go back to the time of the Reformation, we shall find that Martin Luther said one thing and John Calvin another. Luther held to what has now become known as '*the normative principle*'. In the public worship of God, he believed that in worship, '***What Scripture does not forbid, it permits***'. In other words, Christians may follow their own mode of worship, provided it is not forbidden. This led him to say in 1528, 'I condemn no ceremonies except such as are opposed to the Gospel; all the rest I retain intact within our church'. On one occasion, Carlstadt (whose full name was Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt), one of Luther's contemporaries, put this question to the great Reformer: 'Where has Christ commanded us to elevate the host and exhibit it to the people?' It was a very important question. And Luther's answer? He simply said to Carlstadt, 'And where has Christ forbidden it?' Thus, by his own words, he declares his position to be this: 'What Scripture does not forbid, it permits'.

Church history and Christian experience demonstrate that this is a wretchedly loose and lax principle. Under this principle – 'the normative principle' – we can, in our worship, light candles, christen church bells, wear elaborate vestments, use the sign of the cross, sprinkle with holy water – and allow all manner of other Roman practices and absurdities. How so? Well, none of these things is expressly forbidden in God's Word. They can therefore be allowed.

The Regulative Principle

Calvin was otherwise minded. He believed and rigorously applied what is now known as '*the regulative principle*'. According to this principle, '*What Scripture does not prescribe, it forbids*'. Here are one or two quotations from Calvin's great book, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

'If we duly consider that it is unlawful to transfer to man what God declares to belong only to Himself, we shall see that this completely cuts off all the power claimed by those who would take it upon them to order anything in the church without authority from the Word of God'. Again, he says, 'When the right and proper method of worshipping Him is in question, He whom we ought to obey, and on whose will we ought to depend, alone has authority over our souls… The doctrine of true worship is not to be sought from men because the Lord has faithfully and fully taught us in what way He is to be worshipped'. And again, he says in what must be our last quotation: 'Do we think it is a small matter that the Lord is deprived of His kingdom which He so strictly claims for Himself? Now He is deprived of it as often as He is worshipped with laws of human invention, since *His will is to be the legislator and the sole legislator of His worship*.'

Well, what exactly is Calvin saying in these statements? He is saying, and in no uncertain terms, that if, in worship, we do not have positive warrant for something, it cannot and must not be done. 'What Scripture does not prescribe, it forbids'.

If you read Church History, you will discover that this was the principle asserted and applied by the Calvinistic Reformers and, in the sixteenth century, it led to the overthrow of Roman Catholicism and completely transformed the visible church of Christ. It later found expression in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) and, with identical wording, in the Savoy Declaration (1658) and the London Baptist Confession (1689), which state: 'The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in Holy Scripture' (WCF, 21:1).

In the Old Testament

I want now to show you that the Calvinistic principle is the one which is taught in God's Word. In order to do that, we shall look first at the Old Testament and then at the New. Does the Old Testament teach 'the regulative principle'? It most certainly does!

1. The Moral Law

In the Moral Law, which is summarised in the Ten Commandments (Ex.20:1-17), there is a classic statement on the true and proper way of worship. You will be aware that the first four commandments sum up our duty to God. And what do these commandments tell us? Well, they tell us that God is the sole object of worship: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'. They tell us that He is to be worshipped in the right way: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image'. They tell us that God is to be worshipped in the right spirit: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain'. And they tell us the time of worship: 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy'.

Now, it is in the second commandment that God insists that He is to be worshipped in His revealed and appointed way.

Mark carefully these words: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image'. The verb 'to make' literally means 'to constitute' or 'to appoint'. It carries the thought of preparing or arranging something. According to this command, men should not order worship – *thou* shalt not make – constitute or appoint anything. It is *God's prerogative* to do that.

The command actually proceeds as follows, 'thou shalt not make unto *thee*'. Henry Ainsworth, one of the earliest of the Independents and a man of profound learning, explains in his 'Annotations' that 'unto thee' means 'to or for thyself, without commandment from God'. In other words, the point being made is that all worship must be regulated by God and must be according to His revealed will, and not devised by men and women, according to their sinful desires and wishes. Furthermore, God is said to be 'a jealous God', implying that He has a great sensitivity about this, and will not take kindly to others usurping his right in this matter.

Today, a great deal is done in worship which Scripture does not appoint for New Covenant worship: mime, dancing, and dramatic productions, to name only a few. Let God's Law be heard. He says that in worship, '*thou* shalt not make unto thee...'. Some years ago, on a Monday, a man called on a friend of mine who was a minister. Aware that he attended some local 'fellowship' of Christians, my friend asked the man, 'How were the services yesterday?' 'Oh', said the man, we had a wonderful time at church. We whistled in the Spirit throughout the whole of the service'. This is almost beyond belief. Don't we need another Calvin to call us back to the regulative principle!

2. God's Prescription

God has always been pleased to make known the way of His worship. In Psalm 147:19, we read this: 'He showeth his word..., his statutes and his judgments'. And if we go back to the very beginning of time, we find that right from the start God exercised His right to order worship. Genesis teaches us that even Adam was taught how to approach God through sacrifice (Gen.3:21 cf. Lev.7:8). Then, when the tabernacle was erected, everything about tabernacle worship was divinely appointed. Exodus 25:9,40 has God saying, 'According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it'. If in the book of Exodus, God sets out the details of the tabernacle's structure, in the book of Leviticus he takes pains to legislate on all details of actual worship. 'Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall…' etc. etc. (Lev.1:2). Everything was therefore ordered by Him.

"It is God's prerogative to order worship"

The same was true with respect to the temple. Look at these words found in 1Chronicles 28:11,12: 'Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit'. So God spoke. In effect, He said, 'I appoint the way of my worship. And it does not belong to you to do so'.

3. The Additions

The people of Israel were told strictly to adhere to all God's detailed prescriptions. In Exodus 23:13, God's words through Moses are: 'In all things that I have said unto you be *circumspect*'. This means, 'be watchful'. God's people were to submit themselves to the written Word because it contained a perfect revelation of the divine will; and in it God declares how men should make their approach to Him. In Deuteronomy chapter 4, which is a chapter dealing with Israel's worship, these words appear: 'Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them... Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it' (vv1,2). And what is happening in the modern church? Professing Christians are adding to God's Word with their innovations, whether it be the erection of a cross, the formation of a choir, the use of a band, the leading of a procession, or the inclusion of an actor. They introduce such things, not because they think them mandated from Scripture, but because they want them as part and parcel of the entertainment services. And not content with this, they diminish from the Word, in their omission of proper Scripture readings, the singing of the biblical Psalms, and the preaching of a proper sermon!

4. Human Inventions

It is recognised, throughout the Old Testament, that men might be tempted to pursue their own ideas in worship, but they are solemnly warned against such temptations. Numbers 15:39 warns against seeking 'after *your own heart* and *your own eyes*' which would leave them inevitably to spiritual 'whoring'. There is another verse to that effect in Deuteronomy 12:8 where they are told, 'Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, *every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes*'. It is fundamentally wrong – and something to be condemned – to follow human 'inventions' (Ps.106:39). Worshippers must follow only the written and infallible Word of God.

5. Not worship but sin

To allow our own ideas and desires to direct the way of God's worship is nothing short of sin. When Jeroboam decided to make 'two calves of gold' and when he 'offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart', it was adjudged by God to be a sin, and indeed we read of 'the sins of Jeroboam who did sin, and who made Israel to sin' (1Kgs.12:28,30,33; 14:16). This is not at all understood today. What is taking place in many churches on the Sabbath is not Christian worship. It is sin. The minister is sinning and the congregation is sinning with him. Dear friends, for this reason we should not remain in a church where the worship has been corrupted. We should and must separate ourselves from it, for if we do not, we become partakers of other men's sins.

6. The least deviation disapproved

Divine disapproval is upon the least deviation from the Scriptural mode of worship. In Hezekiah's day, for example, it is recorded that Israel kept the Passover, but as they did not follow carefully God's laws of purification (as in Numb.9:6-14), the Holy Spirit says, 'yet did they eat the Passover otherwise than it was written' (2Chron.30:5,18). If we turn the pages, we shall come to the prophecy of Isaiah, and in that prophecy God is heard remonstrating with Israel about the irreverent trampling of the cattle and sheep in the sacred enclosures of the Temple. 'Who hath required this at your hand?' he says (Is.1:12). Indeed, in other prophetical books He censures the people for allowing and doing in worship 'what (He) commanded them not' (Jer.7:31; 19:5; 32:35). As Dr Owen rightly observes when alluding to these words, 'Such evils and corruptions are condemned (because) introduced without any warrant from God's institution or commands'.

7. God abhors what He has not appointed

Worship not regulated by God (in His Word) is altogether spoiled and unacceptable. At the time of the giving of the Law, God ordered the use of 'an altar of earth'. If men tried to improve on that and somehow embellish the altar, it would only be 'polluted' (Ex.20:24,25). As for the worship itself, if men insisted on choosing 'their own ways', then God says, 'he that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol' (Is.66:3). How solemn and fearful this is! We may excuse – and even seek to justify – much of what is called 'contemporary worship', but God utterly abhors everything that He has not appointed in His Word.

8. Punishment

Innovators will surely be dealt with. When Israel took no heed of the commands of God and kept instead 'the statutes of Omri', they were told that they would have to bear their 'reproach' (or punishment) (Mic.6:16). This has always been the way of it. Did Cain (unlike Abel) refuse to be directed by God's Word? Then he must bear the reproach (Gen.4:5-7, 16). Did Nadab and Abihu offer 'strange fire' on the altar of incense, which '(the Lord) commanded them not'? Then they must bear the reproach (Lev.10:1,2). Did the people bring up the ark to Zion upon a cart led by oxen, 'not after the due order'? Then they too shall bear the reproach (2Sam.6:1-8; 1Chron.15:13). The trouble today is that there is no fear of God in many of our churches. If there was, then believers would hasten to reform their practices in worship. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked'.

9. Reformation

Anciently, in times of reformation, there was a return to the Scriptures and a determination to abide by what was written. After the Jews came back from Babylon to Judah, for example, we read how they 'builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God'. Moreover, we also read that 'they kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom (or, ordinance – Numb.29), as the duty of every day required' (Ezra 3:2,4). If people, at the present time, claim to be 'reformed', and to be the successors of the 'reformers', then let them show it by effecting a reformation of their worship. Of course, in today's climate, this will not win them general and warm approval! But for the glory of God and the good of our souls, let us get back to the Bible. Let us re-introduce the godly worship of our spiritual forefathers.

10. Divine favour

God has ever smiled on those who worship Him according to His Word. 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word' (Is.66:2). And see how faithful men like Solomon and Hezekiah, who worshipped by the Book, are approvingly mentioned in the sacred history (2Chron.8:13; 29:25). Are we not in need of the divine favour in these days? Can we not hope that God will bless His own ordinances? Oh that the Spirit may be poured out upon true and faithful churches!

In the Old Testament, as you can now clearly see, God Himself has established and emphasised the regulative principle. Do you know why He did this? I will tell you. It is because worship is intrinsically bound up with His glory. 'Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me'. And, yes, God *is* concerned about purity of worship – and for no other reason than that God is ever concerned for His highest glory. Thus He has determined in His heart, and settled in this Book, what He knows will honour Him in this world. We, for our part, must be subject to His wisdom, so fully expressed in His Word; and we are bound, as His chosen, redeemed and called-out people, to observe *only* what He has prescribed therein. Remember, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God…'

Congregational Remittances	**2006 Nov**	**2006 Total**	**2005 Total to Nov**
Presbytery of Caithness & Sutherland			
Brora	1,800	18,252	18,478
Assynt & Scourie	300	7,320	7,223
Total Caithness & Sutherland	2,100	25,572	25,701
Presbytery of Inverness			
Duthil-Dores	846	17,641	27,051
Inverness	2,000	29,337	19,114
Total Inverness	2,846	46,978	46,165
Presbytery of Ross			
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,200	14,393	12,915
Kiltearn	1,700	18,460	17,960
Tarbat	1,500	8,402	10,467
Total Ross	4,400	41,255	41,342
Presbytery of Edinburgh			
Aberdeen	450	6,275	8,532
Edinburgh	0	20,598	36,458
Total Edinburgh	450	26,873	44,990
Presbytery of Glasgow			
Ayr	0	1,119	6,116
Arran	204	5,527	5,872
Dumfries	0	768	4,318
Glasgow - Partick	2,500	27,300	37,074
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	9,230	12,047
Glasgow - Thornwood	2,300	19,800	24,576
Rothesay	0	2,051	1,652
Total Glasgow	5,004	65,795	91,654
Presbytery of Lewis			
Cross	1,954	21,859	21,196
Harris - Leverburgh	0	10,322	12,463
Harris - Scalpay	1,360	11,613	16,215
Knock & Point	800	8,650	7,845
Stornoway	4,108	47,063	45,939
Total Lewis	8,222	99,507	103,659
Presbytery of Lochcarron			
Glenelg & Arnisdale	272	1,709	1,877
Lochalsh & Glenshiel	606	12,325	12,351
Poolewe & Aultbea	998	12,197	12,620
Total Lochcarron	1,876	26,230	26,848
Presbytery of Skye & Uist			
Bracadale	1,000	11,213	12,113
Duirinish (Waternish)	0	3,637	4,568
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	13,974	11,290
North Uist	700	8,718	6,161
Portree	1,145	22,743	28,050
Snizort	1,650	17,310	20,413
Strath	1,750	21,192	22,671
Total Skye & Uist	7,545	98,787	105,268
Total From Congregations	32,442	430,998	485,626
Other Donations	3,390	12,645	20,109
TOTAL	**35,832**	**443,642**	**505,735**
Included in the above:			
Tax Recovered on Gift Aid Declarations		48,178	81,608

Introducing the Molenaars

Dear Mission Friends,

On April 18, 2006 we arrived in Zambia from the Netherlands. We were just in time to help finish the first-term lecturing at the mission station of Covenant College. The five weeks between terms we used to acquaint ourselves a little better with the area we now call our base, and to survey the huge task set before us – living in Zambia with our two young children, supporting the training of local pastors, assisting in the children's and women's ministry and, as a prerequisite for all this, getting to know the people, their culture and their language. The missionary calling here in Zambia is indeed very comprehensive, as we now, six months later, have started to understand better.

In the midst of the challenges that came our way in Zambia, we have neglected to fulfil our promise to introduce ourselves to the *Witness* readers – and to update all those supporters of God's work at Covenant College, Zambia that are outside our own Church circles. In this brief article we will tell a few things about our family, about our Church and the way we arrived here, and about the present needs of the College.

The Family

We are a family of four: Mirjam (29), Cees (29), Joas (6) and Rhodé (4). Mirjam grew up on the mission field in Indonesia – in an area now called Papua – and lived there until the family repatriated to the Netherlands in 1987. During the time she attended a Teachers' College in the Netherlands, the Lord gave her a strong desire to serve on the mission field as well. I (Cees) grew up in the Netherlands and became interested in missions through various friendships, not the least of which was Mirjam's! From the time we were married, we believed the Lord had called us to the ministry of His Word, either in the Netherlands or abroad. During the time I was preparing for the ministry at a Theological Seminary in Apeldoorn with Mirjam working as a teacher to support our family, the Lord gave us our two children.

In 2002 the Lord directed our path to the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) in North America. For two years I received further training for the sacred ministry at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There, we had our first cross-cultural training as a family and were exposed to the challenges of living away from family and the familiarities that make 'home' so comfortable. With me being busy preaching and studying, this was especially true for Mirjam. Upon completing the M.Div. (Master of Divinity) program in 2004, we were called and sent out by the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey (USA) for missionary labour. Following the plan we returned to the Netherlands to first finish my Th.M. (Master of Theology) degree in Apeldoorn.

Initial Contacts

In February 2005, initial contacts were made with Rev David Fraser and Rev Jan van Straaten, which positively resulted in my visiting Covenant College in May of the same year. After this visit, my wife and I both felt convicted that this was the work and the place where the Lord had called us to serve Him. We were aware – as far as inexperienced missionaries could be after a few months of correspondence and one brief visit – that this was in many ways not the ideal location and situation for our family. Yet, in the end, we could not but obey the Lord's urgings to go and assist with the work, which in itself we perceived as very necessary, crucial and beautiful. In October 2005 the HRC decided to send us to Zambia and to evaluate the church's engagement after a year. After completing my theological studies and some additional cross-cultural training, we finally arrived on the mission field. Having first left the Netherlands and later North America with Indonesia in our heart and mind, we now found ourselves in the Eastern Province of Zambia! We have embarked on a trail not knowing the beginning nor now knowing the end. We go forward trusting that faithful is He that called us, who also will do it.

After spending almost six months in Zambia, we left for a short trip to North America and afterwards to the Netherlands. We are much encouraged by our Church's growing interest and commitment to the work at Covenant College. The HRC has decided to continue our involvement with the work indefinitely beyond the initial trial period. We rejoice in the fact that the relationship between our two denominations (HRC and FCC) yielded practical fruit in this cooperative mission endeavour.

New Home

Early in November 2006 we returned to Zambia. It is our desire to live where we work. To that end, we are now executing the Trust's decision to build a proper house at the mission station. We pray that this, together with the electricity that will be brought in, will enhance living conditions. As we have had time to evaluate and contemplate the task that is before us, we can only rest in dependency on the Lord. We also understand and appreciate, however, that we need additional people to join us in the work. With Principal van Straaten and his wife leaving, the College is again in need of a replacement principal/lecturer. The students are here, they are eager to be further instructed in the Word of God, in sound theology and in the practice of pastoral work.

Others Needed

Besides the demand for a replacement principal/lecturer, we feel an urgent need for a family to take on the variety of ministries that have developed and with which to have fellowship. What a blessing it would bring to have fellowship together as men, wives, and children in serving the Lord in the College, the children and women's ministries, and possibly in educational and medical activities as well. Please consider these needs and opportunities prayerfully and intercede on behalf of the Zambians.

We hope this short introduction leaves you with an understanding of who we are, serving in Zambia. We pray that all who love the Lord and this work – from various continents and different churches – may be united in this service for Him. The Lord calls all of us in particular ways to obey Him in fulfilling the church's missionary calling. Some go, others provide support, but let all be much in prayer and love to see God's Kingdom come! The work of God at Covenant College will by His grace continue. We are frail and tremble at the enormity of this calling. Please, brothers and sisters, pray for us!

With Christian love,

The Molenaar Family

Pictured (*left to right*) Front Row: *Rev Gavin Beers, Davide Ratti, Revs Harry Woods, Malcolm Watts, James Frew, Richard Knodel, Donald J. Morrison, Revs Richard Brooks, Trevor Kirkland, David Silversides, Greg MacDonald.*
Middle Row: *Revs Jaeyoon Kim, Ian MacNaughton, Robert Josey, Kenneth MacDonald, John Brentnall, George Hargreaves, Richard Ross, Dr Donald Boyd, Calum Ian Macleod, Dr Andrew Naylor, Gavino Fioretti, Rev John J. Murray, James Frew Sr., Carlos Colleredo, Rev Maurice Roberts, Sam Semmens, Rev David Fraser, Alasdair Macleod, Revs Sam Watson, Allan Murray, Murdo A. N. Macleod, Marcus McCulloch.*
Back Row: *Revs Aaron Lewis, Jeremy Brooks, William Macleod.*

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

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