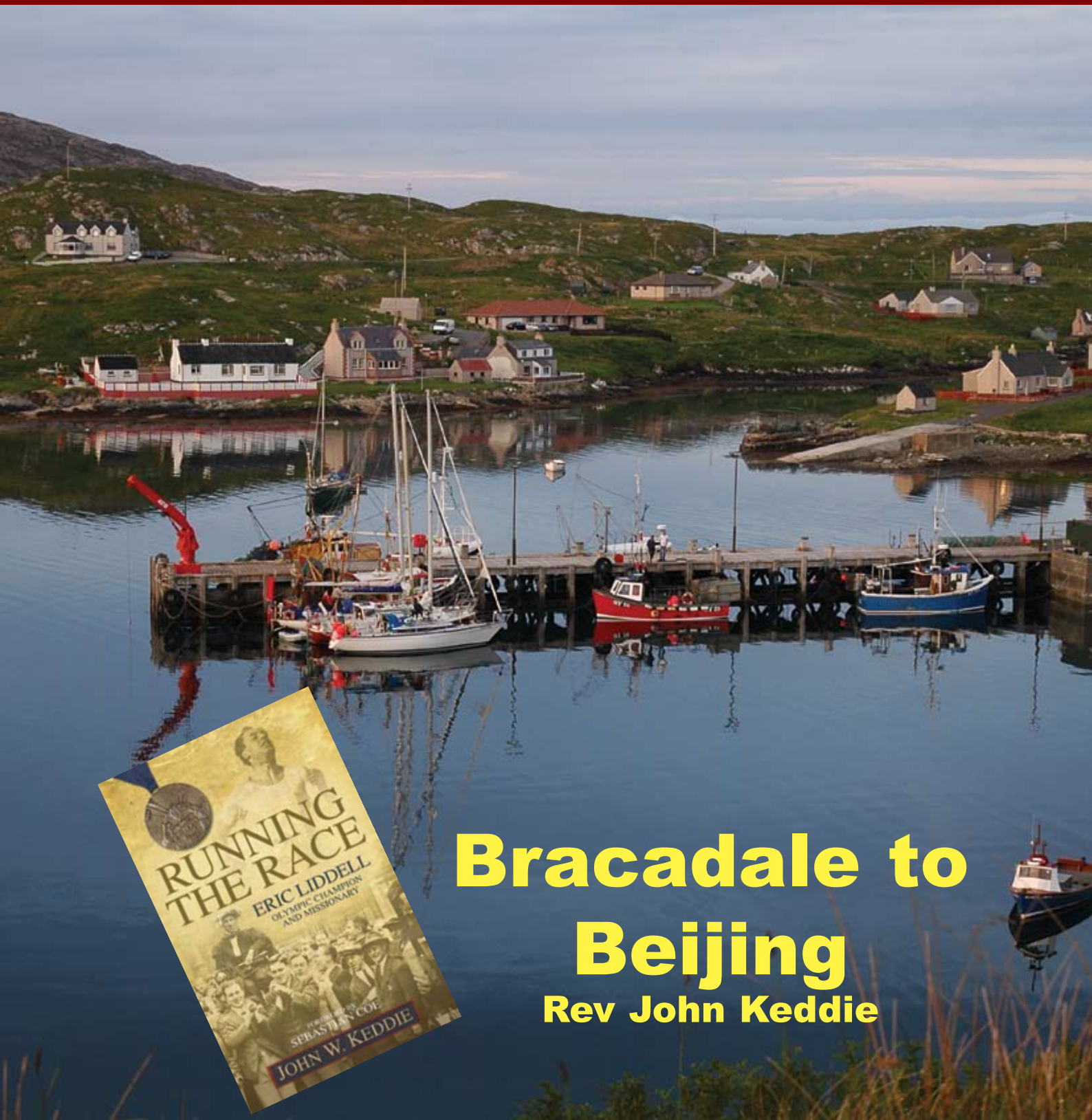


# Witness



DECEMBER 2008 ISSUE



## Bracadale to Beijing

Rev John Keddie



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# Uncertain Riches

**D**ominique Strauss-Kahn, the head of the International Monetary Fund, said recently that the world's financial systems were teetering on the 'brink of systematic meltdown'. The Bank of England has estimated that the world's financial firms have now lost £1.8 trillion (£1,800,000,000,000) as a result of the continuing credit crisis. At least that was the situation as I write this article on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October. Who knows what the situation will be by the time you read this article. Crisis seems to follow crisis with incredible speed. The Bank adds that 'total spending by central banks and governments to shore up banks now totals £5 trillion'.

Who would have believed a few months ago that before the end of the year we would be in this situation? The banks were making huge profits, house prices were steady and stocks and shares were increasing in value. Anyone attempting to predict what has happened would be thought of as a ridiculous pessimist, indeed a wild extremist. Surely God is speaking in all this! Do we have ears to hear? As I read my Bible recently in my private worship two words struck me with great force – 'uncertain riches' (1Tim.6:17).

## Uncertain Riches

Wealth used to be defined by the number of acres one possessed, or the number of cattle or sheep he had. Today it is the house you own, the car you drive, the salary or pension you receive, the money you have in the bank or the stocks and shares you possess. But what if the bank collapses as the Iceland banks did and the Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank threatened to do? What if inflation or a run on Sterling reduces the pound in your pocket to a fraction of its value – as has already begun to happen? What if the FTSE 100 continues to tumble? Already it has lost one third of its value. One commentator estimated that 25 trillion pounds had been wiped off the world's stock markets in one week. Pension funds and investment funds have fallen drastically as a result. The Bank of England has warned that '1.2 million homeowners in the UK now face going into negative equity if house prices continue recent sharp falls'. Advisors say it is time to buy gold. Huge queues formed at the doors of institutions selling gold. The price rose fast. But what happens if some big player starts selling and the news gets around that you should have land rather than gold? The herd mentality takes over again, everyone sells, no one wants to buy and the price collapses.

Paul rightly warns against trusting in uncertain riches. Jacob had great wealth but when famine came he was desperate. He said Benjamin would never go down to Egypt but he had to let him go. Job was the richest man in the

east but in one day, through the attacks of Satan, he lost it all. Thankfully he was able to say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1:21). Jesus tells a parable about a rich farmer whose fields produced a bumper harvest. He asked himself, 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry' (Lk.12:17-19). Here is a man trusting in uncertain riches, but God said to him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' (v20).

Timothy is exhorted by Paul to beware of the danger of riches: 'But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness' (1Tim.6:9-11). I read recently of one Lottery winner advising another. She said, 'When you don't have money you worry about getting it and then when you have it you worry about losing it'. The love of money is behind so many problems in our society. Think for example of illegal drugs. Why do people, sometimes friends, persuade others to take them? It's so that they can sell drugs to them. Once addicted, the individual often has to steal or prostitute themselves in order to pay for their drugs. Sometimes they sell drugs to others to feed their own habit. Violence is then involved in obtaining payment for the drugs. Money seems to be behind so much evil – how greatly it is desired and how easily it is lost!

## The Living God

Instead of trusting in uncertain riches we are to trust in the living God, 'Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy' (1Tim.6:17). At the end of the day it is God that makes one rich and another poor. Better therefore to trust in God rather than in your own wisdom, the certainty of your salary or the security of the banking system. As a congregation we were recently given the gift of a church building worth many hundreds of thousands of pounds. We could have had to save up for many years to be able to afford a deposit on a building of our own and then been in debt for decades to pay it off but instead God gave this gift to us. And it is not that we worked for it, or used clever means to acquire it,

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but rather, out of the blue, the Lord granted it to us. But then 'cattle upon a thousand hills' are his (Ps.50:10). There is no limit to His wealth. He is not made poorer by giving to us. This was just one of His many gifts to us and most of them pass without our notice. Jesus wisely taught us to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. We are dependent on Him for everything. But who is He?

Our Father is 'the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen' (vv15-16). He is the supreme Ruler of the universe. To Him belongs all its wealth. Indeed He is the Creator of it, and He made all simply by the word of His power. Trust Him. He is more solid than the rocks

under our feet. He was there before they were and He will be there after they are folded away. Inflation, recession, war, fraud and famine can cause your wealth to disappear in a day but if you have God as your Father you are wealthy forever. Be satisfied with what God gives you for 'Godliness with contentment is great gain' (v6). Death will part us from all earthly wealth but if we possess the Pearl of great price Paradise is ours. There is no uncertainty with the banking system of heaven – neither recession nor fraud can trouble it. Are you saving through heaven's bank? Blessed are those who are 'rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life' (vv18-19).



# Lamentations

## Part I

*Rev Gavin Beers*

**L**amentations is one of those forgotten and neglected books of the Bible. Nestled as it is between the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel it is easy for us to pass over. As one of the most tragic books in the inspired record its dark themes are not naturally appealing and this may create a tendency to shy away from it both in private study and in preaching. However, Lamentations will greatly reward whoever stops to ponder its content, and that is what these two articles are designed to encourage you to do.

In introducing this book Matthew Henry gives us some wise advice on its importance and the manner in which it should be approached: 'Since what Solomon says, though contrary to the common opinion of the world, is certainly true, that sorrow is better than laughter, and it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, we should come to the reading and consideration of the melancholy chapters of this book, not only willingly, but with an expectation to edify ourselves by them; and that we may do this, we must compose ourselves to a holy sadness and resolve to weep with the weeping prophet.'

### **Date**

The book was written in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 BC. Following a long siege, the city had been decimated. Her walls were torn down, her palaces burned and her temple plundered and destroyed. As for the inhabitants of the city, the majority had been slain or enslaved while a remnant remained struggling for existence in the face of cruel persecution and famine.

The national, social, physical, psychological and spiritual devastation of Judah and Jerusalem was horrific. To the Jew the unthinkable had happened, even the impossible; Zion, the city of God had fallen!

### **How did it get its Title?**

The title of Lamentations in the Hebrew Scriptures is the first word '*ekah*' which means 'How'. This is not a question but an exclamation of astonishment, 'How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!' 1:1. Chapters 2 and 4 also begin with the same exclamation. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek (The Septuagint) and there the title is 'The tears of Jeremiah'. The Latin Vulgate follows the Septuagint, calling it 'the Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet' and it is from this tradition that we get the title in our English Authorised Version.

### **Who Wrote Lamentations?**

Whereas other books of the Bible clearly identify their author, Lamentations remains anonymous. Traditionally Jeremiah has been recognised as the author. We traced this tradition above when dealing with the title, and learned that Jeremiah has been identified as the author from at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. To the title in the Septuagint was added a preface which reads 'And it came to pass, after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation.'

It was almost universally accepted that Jeremiah was the author of Lamentations until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since then

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it has been objected that certain differences in phraseology, style and theology between the prophecy of Jeremiah and Lamentations mean that they could not have the same author. E J Young critiqued a number of these objections and found the arguments offered against Jeremiah being the author to be of insufficient weight to reject the traditionally held view that Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations.

### **What Kind of Book is it?**

It is not immediately obvious in our English Bible but Lamentations is a poetic book. Its position in the Hebrew Bible hints at this, where it is found in the 3<sup>rd</sup> division of the Scriptures known as 'The Writings' or more generally as 'the Psalms' (Luke 24:44).

More specifically it is a collection of Funeral Dirges or Laments. There are five in total and these are marked by the chapter divisions in our Bible. Together they sing of the destruction of Jerusalem as though she had died. Those of us familiar with Scots Irish culture have an illustration in the piper. He plays for the fallen in battle, you may find him at the head of a funeral procession but his strain is not a reel, it is a slow painful lament. Here are five laments for Jerusalem and to this day the Jews turn to them to read on the anniversary of a later destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

### **The ABC of Sorrow**

There is a very particular alphabetic structure underlying each of these poetic laments which is hidden from the English reader. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and each lament is built around this. Chapters 1, 2 & 4 each have 22 verses and the verses begin with each of the letters of the alphabet in turn. Chapter 3 is three times longer than the other laments having 66 verses but the same pattern is followed here with groups of three verses. Chapter 5 is different. It has 22 verses (the number of letters in the alphabet) but it does not follow the alphabetic sequence as the others do.

This alphabetic structure is not specific to Lamentations. It is found elsewhere in the Bible eg Psalm 119, and when it is used by the Spirit of God we should take note as there is a reason for it. We suggest three possible explanations for the alphabetic structure of these laments.

#### **1. Conscious sorrow**

Sometimes in grief we can lose control and are not quite sure what we are saying, or how to describe our pain. Lamentations is not the product of such uncontrolled grief. Instead each lament is the product of conscious reflection, not impassioned outbursts. The grief expressed is no less painful for being reasoned. That pain would rather be increased as the full extent of the city's destruction has been considered and digested. Time has been taken to evaluate the situation fully and describe the emotions of the heart.

#### **2. Comprehensive Sorrow**

Jeremiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were brought to great depths of grief. As one reads these laments a picture of comprehensive grief is also painted. The various causes of grief are described in detail together with the extent of the emotional responses provoked in the afflicted soul. In the

underlying alphabetic structure of Lamentations the Holy Spirit may be suggesting that what is given here is a brief compendium of spiritual grief, an A-Z of sorrow.

#### **3. Commemorative Sorrow**

The design of this alphabetic pattern is also an aid to memory. The destruction of Jerusalem was monumental in the history of the Jewish nation. They must never forget the reasons for this devastation and the consequences of it. So God gave them a book in a format that could be easily committed to memory from childhood, a book of commemorative sorrow. Although we do not benefit from these features in our English Bible, the fact that it exists in the original ought to impress upon the church in all ages the importance of this neglected book.

#### **Why Study Lamentations?**

1. Because we need to be schooled in the art of godly sorrow.

The contemporary church appears not to understand the place of grief in the Christian life. What should we grieve for and how should we grieve? In Lamentations God teaches us vital lessons about the place of godly sorrow in the life of the Christian and it should be studied in preparation for when sorrow comes, and to help those who sorrow now. We also learn about the place of godly sorrow in the life of the church. We are not just to be individualistic in our sorrow but the broader interests of the church and our nation should be kept on our hearts.

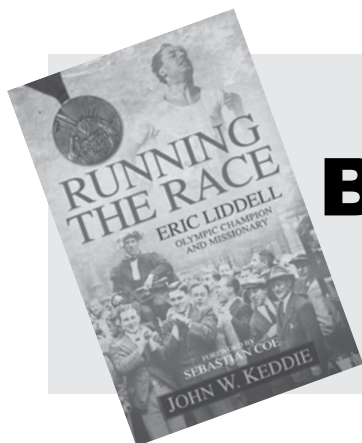
2. There is a time to weep for the cause of Christ and that time is now.

Think of the nation of Britain as a whole and Scotland in particular. Is there any nation under heaven, save Israel, that has been more favoured with the privileges of true religion than she? Covenanted to God, His law was once paramount in our national life. But consider her today fallen from such great heights and shall you not weep?

Consider too the church. The number and size of past congregations in contrast to the scattered handfuls that constitute congregations today. From this church, Scotland gave to the world some of the greatest theologians, preachers and missionaries it has known and now we stand in need of missionaries! If ever there was a time to weep for the cause of Christ it is now and Lamentations is an example of such grief by those to whom Zion meant so much.

3. There is a time for us to repent and it is now.

The situation we have just described has not happened by accident. The same God of history who sacked Jerusalem in 587BC is the one who has brought us to where we are today. For all her unfaithfulness God has brought the church to its knees. This is not a pleasant thought, and there is a temptation to say 'we are the remnant who endeavour to stand faithful' as though we did not share the guilt. Yet in Lamentations the remnant were all who were left to lament and repent. Together we need to recognise it is time to repent and Lamentations shows us what that repentance should look like: 'Let us search and try our ways and let us turn again unto the Lord' (Lam.3:40).



# Bracadale to Beijing

*Rev John Keddie*

It stands to reason that a new biography of a former Olympic champion should create some interest in an Olympic year – especially so in a year in which the Olympics are held in China and when the athlete in question was born in China and spent most of his life there. However, there is still something unusual about the continuing fascination for Eric Liddell. After all, it is more than 80 years since his Olympic triumph at Paris in 1924, and more than 60 years since his untimely death in a Japanese Internment camp at Weifang in 1945. What can account for this? There is the fact that his success is so rare for a British athlete on the track at the Olympics. There is also the point that he was ‘more than an athlete’. The fact that on Christian principle he would not compete in sporting events on Sundays, and that he subsequently forsook fame and fortune to go out to China as a Christian missionary, caught the imagination and admiration of succeeding generations. Besides this there was the success of the award-winning sporting movie, *Chariots of Fire* (1982) which thrust Eric Liddell before the public eye as never before. Since then there have been several biographies produced about this great sportsman and missionary.

My own interest in Liddell ante-dated *Chariots of Fire*. I got to know Eric’s first biographer, D P Thomson, who had collaborated with Liddell in the student evangelism of the 1920s and wrote the first substantial and splendid biography of the man in 1970. I subsequently wrote a series of articles about Eric’s life and track running record in *Athletics Weekly* early in 1977. As a consequence I became involved with the writer of the screenplay of *Chariots of Fire*, Colin Welland. In appreciation for my help with the characterisation of Liddell, Colin wrote in to the film a character with my name (Colonel John Keddie)! As an athletics historian and Christian minister, as well as a former athlete, I felt constrained to produce something on the life and sporting career of this great athlete. I was therefore happy when Evangelical Press agreed to produce my work under the title *Running the Race* in advance of the year of the Olympics in Beijing. Early in 2008 this was translated into simplified Chinese. This was very timely given the focus on the Olympics in China in 2008 and not least given the connection between Eric Liddell and China.

It was therefore a great privilege and opportunity to be able to go, with Peter Cooper representing the publishers, to Beijing at the time of the Games. The experience was quite overwhelming, to go from a place of relatively sparse population, Bracadale, Isle

of Skye to the thronging seemingly endless urban conurbation that is Beijing. We were very favoured in having a charming companion and interpreter throughout our stay. Joy Kuang, a Christian girl from Shanghai, had translated the book into simplified Chinese. She was an invaluable assistant in all our comings and goings during our stay in China. It had already been arranged by the Chief Executive of the British Olympic Association that copies of the book should be made available to the British athletes at the Team GB athletes’ lodge. We were invited along to the lodge by a previous arrangement for the visit of our Prime Minister. It was an honour to be introduced to Gordon Brown and to present him with copies of both the English and Chinese editions of the book. Mr Brown, a fellow Scot and a son of the manse, said that he had read the book and had a great appreciation for Eric Liddell. It was a thrill also on that occasion to meet with the British Ambassador to China, Sir William Ehrman, who spoke enthusiastically of his great admiration for Eric’s life.

We did get to the ‘Bird’s Nest’ Stadium during our stay. It was striking that as we made our way there the music booming from the stadium was the *Chariots of Fire* theme tune. The Stadium was impressive. I was left wondering, however, whether it was not all a bit ‘over the top’ for what after all was just a sporting event. In fact the seats we had were quite well back in the Stadium, though they were right above the finishing line. The view from the upper regions was great, but really without binoculars it was a bit like looking at an animation of an L S Lowry picture! The feature of the events that night in the stadium was the final of the men’s 200m. This saw an amazing performance from the wonderful Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt. He fairly romped away with it in a new world record. Naturally his celebrations afterwards on the trackside were exuberant. Yet it was such a contrast to the modest Liddell, who after his triumph posed for one or two photos, shook hands with the other competitors and ‘with every haste took his leave of the cheering multitude’. It was suggested that he was going off quickly to do some preparation for the address he was due to give at the Scots Kirk in Paris that coming Sunday! On one occasion he was asked by a journalist: ‘Are you glad you gave your life to missionary work? Don’t you miss the limelight, the rush, the frenzy, the cheers, the rich red wine of victory?’ To this came Eric’s telling reply: ‘Oh well, of course it’s natural for a chap to think over all that sometimes, but I’m glad I’m in the work I’m engaged in now. A fellow’s life counts for more at this



*Mr Keddie at Liddell's memorial in Weifang, meeting the Prime Minister at the Athlete's Lodge, and in front of the "Bird's Nest", Beijing.*

than the other. Not a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible, you know? How rare is such a perspective today!

In connection with the Chinese translation of the book we had occasion to visit one Christian bookshop in Beijing where the book was stocked. It was encouraging and surprising to learn that there were 30 such bookshops in Beijing! One of the first things I noticed on the shelves of the bookshop was a Chinese translation of Thomas McCrie's *Life of John Knox*! Our travels, however, took us beyond Beijing. I was very keen to see some of the places associated with Eric's life and work. One day we went to Tianjin (formerly Tientsin) where he had taught at the Anglo-Chinese College, a Christian school run by Eric's missionary society. He was there from 1925 to 1937 when he went into country district evangelistic and church ministry around Zaoqiang (Siaochang). We received generous friendly hospitality from members of the local government and YMCA, and were taken first to the school (No. 17 Middle School now). In point of fact the original school is there no longer. We passed a presently vacant site where the school had once stood. It had apparently been destroyed, along with the Union Church, in a great earthquake in 1976. The school which had replaced it did have a board commemorating the association of Eric Liddell with the College. The local television station had sent round a crew and we had the opportunity of an interview. They seemed to film our every step! From there we went to the house in which Eric lived after he was married. This remains one of the very few buildings associated with Eric Liddell which is more or less as it was. Nearby is the Min Yuan Stadium. In 1925-26 Eric had made suggestions about the design of the sports field and track there. Apparently he took his ideas from Stamford Bridge! It was quite an experience to stand on what is now an all weather track and imagine that 80 years before Eric had lined up there with such stars as Otto Peltzer. One of the exciting things about this trip was our taking a new 'bullet' train from Beijing – 100 miles in 30 minutes!

Another day we travelled to Weifang (Weihsien) where Eric with others had been interned during the War, and where he passed away early in 1945. The site originally was the facility of the American Presbyterian Mission. Naturally after 1949 this became disused as such and most of the original buildings have gone. Part remains, and we visited what is now a museum mostly commemorating Eric Liddell. Again we were royally entertained by representatives of the municipal government and were followed around by a film crew from a local television station.

This was a very moving experience which the falling rain did not dampen. Nearby the authorities have erected a memorial to the internees of the former camp, their names being in Chinese at the foot of the obelisk-style memorial and in English on wall plaques nearby.

In an officially atheistic state Christianity is not formally accepted. The degree of toleration seems to vary from place to place. There do appear to be many Christians in China, notwithstanding this disapprobation from the authorities. We were not able to make contact with any house-church groups. There was, however, a Beijing International Christian Fellowship in Beijing and we made our way to it on the Sunday. It was not open to Chinese nationals, only to foreign passport holders. It met in the theatre at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Hotel. I was given the opportunity of speaking at two services, the first at 9.30 (English and Mandarin) and the second at 11.30 (English only). The place appeared full both times (around 500 each time) with different congregations. The form of service was very contemporary but not charismatic. I spoke for about 8-10 minutes on Eric Liddell's life and testimony and the purpose of the book in making that Christian testimony better known. I urged the congregation to 'run the race' of faith, following Eric as he followed Christ, in terms of Hebrews 12:1-2. It was interesting afterwards to be approached by Mrs Madeline Manning Mims, 1968 women's 800m Olympic champion. Mrs Mims is a devout Christian strongly concerned for sports chaplaincy. This was just one of the many contrasts between experience in Bracadale and experience in Beijing.

Before we returned we had a taste of Chinese life when we did a bit of sightseeing around Tiananmen Square in central Beijing. The Silk Market was something else. It was a large building divided up into all sorts of stalls with a great variety of goods. Nothing prepares a Westerner for it. You feel completely hustled by the stall-holders (mostly younger women). Their desperation for sales seemed to know no bounds though for the greater part they were quite charming. Certainly the displays of silk products were wonderful. However, to home we had to return after what was really a brief visit. As we were going to the Airport we passed under a huge electric storm. For all the achievements of men so evident, with state-of-the-art airports and communications, the plane was held up by the storm – the finger of God. We are thankful to the Almighty for the experience and for opportunities for witness given through Eric Liddell.

Truly 'he being dead yet speaketh!'

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# The Sanctity and Dignity of Human Life Part I

*Humphrey Dobson, Deputy Director of the Christian Institute*

**D**uring 2008 the House of Commons has been considering the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. Key votes on major ethical issues took place in a Committee of the Whole House in mid-May, and the final stages of the Bill were completed in the autumn. As the extensive media coverage has made clear, this Bill liberalises the existing law covering the use of human embryos. It applies to technologies ranging from in-vitro fertilisation to animal-human cloning. It also offered the first opportunity in nearly 20 years to significantly amend the law on abortion. This Bill is a comprehensive assault on the sanctity and dignity of human life.

Four key areas encompassed by the Bill are:

1. Creating animal-human embryos for research
2. Cloning human embryos for research
3. Creating 'saviour siblings'  
(where children are selected through IVF and brought to birth to provide cells or tissue for an older sibling who is ill)
4. Changing the law on abortion.

## **1. Creation and Man in the Image of God**

We know instinctively, guided by conscience, that such things are wrong. Before we consider these individual issues raised by the Embryology Bill we should start by looking at the Bible's doctrine of man – who are we and when does human life begin?

The Bible opens with God's creation of the universe in six days. As God creates living creatures on the fifth and sixth days, each is made 'after their kind': fish, birds, animals, insects and so on. But the pinnacle of creation is mankind. In Genesis 1:26-27 we read this: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.'

Man is unique. He is special in the whole of creation because he alone is made in God's image. In the words of Louis Berkhof: 'According to Scripture the essence of man consists in this, that he is the image of God. As such he is distinguished from all other creatures and stands supreme as the head and crown of the entire creation.'

The opening of Genesis also sets out what we call 'creation ordinances' for example: 'And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing

that moveth upon the earth' (1:28). Chapter 2 goes on to give the specific account of the creation of Adam and Eve, and of God's provision of marriage for the procreation of children, summarised in verse 24: 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.'

We then reach Genesis 3, which records the Fall of man, 'the crash' when we disobeyed God, believed the Devil, and sin was unleashed on the whole creation. Mankind fell and yet man is still made in the image of God and those creation ordinances still hold good. As if to underline this point, God restates them to Noah after the worldwide Flood brought judgment on 'the world that then was', Genesis 9:6-7: 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.'

As Berkhof explains, the image of God in man consists of:

- a) the soul or spirit of man, that is in the qualities of simplicity, spirituality, invisibility and immortality;
- b) his moral and rational nature, that is the intellect and will with their functions;
- c) the intellectual and moral integrity of man's nature, revealing itself in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10);
- d) the body, not as a material substance, but as the fit organ of the soul, sharing its immortality; and as the instrument through which man can exercise dominion over the lower creation;
- e) man's dominion over the earth.

Most elements of the image are intrinsic to man – we would not be human beings without them. They remain, though corrupted by sin. Man is 'noble in his ruin'. However, in Berkhof's words, 'the good ethical qualities of the soul and its powers' have been lost. At his creation Adam possessed this original 'righteousness' which is the moral perfection of the image – 'true knowledge, righteousness and holiness'. This righteousness was lost at the Fall but is regained in Christ (see Eph.4:24 and Col.3:10).

A key implication which flows from this doctrine is explained by Anthony Hoekema: 'What makes sin so serious is precisely the fact that man is now using God-given and God-imaging powers and gifts to do things that are an affront to his Maker.'

It is important to emphasise that the image of God is not limited to the soul, but extends to every part of man's nature – including his body. As Calvin wrote: '...although the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and

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heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks did not glow.

In fact it is because man is made in the image of God that murder is so wrong. Remember God's words to Noah after the Flood, Genesis 9:6: 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man' (Gen.9:6). The principle is codified in the Sixth Commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill' (Ex.20:13).

Truly, in the words of the Psalmist, we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' (Ps.139:14). Every human being has intrinsic sanctity and dignity, as a creature made in the image of God. That applies to every human who has ever lived – from monarch to peasant all are made either male or female in the image of God. But at what point does an individual human life begin?

## **2. What the Bible says about when Life begins**

Everyone was once an embryo. Embryos are very small. In the first few days they are a fraction of a millimetre wide. By the beginning of the fifth week of a pregnancy the embryo is still just a few millimetres long.

There can be no doubt that a new unique biological human life is created right at conception when the sperm fertilises the ovum. After this point no new genetic material is added. The fundamental characteristics of the new individual are fixed. These characteristics range from sex and the factors which influence height and build, right through to the colour of the hair and eyes.

Everyone was once a human embryo. The undeniable fact is that if the embryo of William Shakespeare had been destroyed, then William Shakespeare would never have been born.

There are several passages in the Bible which refer to the unborn or to the human embryo.

### ***i) God's knowledge of the embryo***

(a) In Jeremiah 1:5 God claims to have foreknowledge of the prophet: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.' Eryl Davies comments: 'One cannot escape the conclusion that the embryo in the womb is a person; it is known to God even before conception and God as Creator is the one who 'formed' the child. And for that child, as for Jeremiah, God has a purpose'.

(b) In Psalm 139:13, David praises God: 'For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb'. God's knowledge of the Psalmist goes back to his creation in the womb: 'My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect.' (Ps.139:15-16). David traces his life right back to the time when he was just a ball of cells a few days old. David's claim is that God had knowledge of him as an embryo.

### ***ii) Man is fallen from conception***

In Psalm 51:5 David acknowledges: 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.' (The word

used for shapen is the verb 'to writhe' which is used of the pains of childbirth.) It is striking that David is referring to himself as 'I ... me' not only at birth but also as an embryo at the moment of conception. There was a direct continuity between himself as an adult and himself as an embryo. This continuity is seen in other Old Testament passages.

Bible commentator Alec Motyer argues that the 'fact of original sin is here more distinctly expressed than in any other place in the Old Testament'. David had sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba but he knew also that sin tainted everything that he did. He believed in the fall and the doctrine of original sin. Henri Blocher argues that Psalm 51 is a 'radical confession' of sin: '...David refers to his birth and conception in the clear realisation that his very being is shot through and through with the tendencies that produced the fruits of adultery and murder. As far back as he can go, he sees his life as sinful'.

### ***iii) The incarnation***

The New Testament passages dealing with the incarnation of Christ unavoidably deal with Christ's conception and humanity. The incarnation is one of the central claims of the Christian faith. Matthew's Gospel records that the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost' (Mt.1:20). The writer to the Hebrews after dealing with the pre-existence and incarnation of God's Son in chapter 1, states in chapter 2 that Jesus is not ashamed to call His followers 'brethren' (v11) and that 'in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren' (v17). This makes it clear that Christ was human in every way that we are human, yet without sin. So if Christ's human life began at His conception (Mt.1:20), this must mark the point at which all human life begins.

Human personhood begins at conception and the human embryo is precisely that – a *human* embryo. This follows from the fact that Christ was both fully God and fully man. To hold that the incarnation did not begin at conception denies the deity or humanity of Christ *at some point*. As Nigel Cameron points out: 'The church has consistently labelled as heresy any idea that a divine 'spirit' was added to the human body of Jesus, or that somehow in some other fashion the human being that began life was mere man and was later 'adopted' to be the Son of God'.

In 1930, Gresham Machen wrote a classic defence of the virgin birth. In discussing the doctrine of the incarnation he said: 'It is essential that the Son of God should live a complete human life upon this earth. But the human life would not be complete unless it began in the mother's womb. At no later time, therefore, should the incarnation be put, but at that moment when the babe was conceived. There, then, should be found the stupendous event when the eternal Son of God assumed our nature, so that from then on He was both God and man'.

To summarise, we alone out of all creation are made in the image of God and our lives begin at conception. Next month we will consider how these truths relate to the specific issues raised by the Embryology Bill.



# News

## Arbroath Weekend Away

*Andrew MacLeod*

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October a group of over forty young folk gathered at Arbroath Windmill Christian Centre for the biannual weekend away. The speaker this year was the Rev David Silversides, and his first address was 'Abraham's Faith in Christ' (Jn.8:56).

We continued our focus on Abraham the next day with the speaker taking 'Abraham a Sinner declared Righteous' (Rom.4:1-3) as his theme. Following the talk we then split up into small groups to discuss a series of questions which had been prepared by the minister. After this Murdo Macleod chaired a plenary session where each group was invited to share their answers. Taking advantage of the fine sunshine and free time in the afternoon, some delegates went for a walk on the beach, others to sample what Arbroath's fine tea rooms had to offer. Others still were happy to relax and catch up with friends in the surroundings of the Windmill Centre. The evening talk, taking James 2:21-23 as the text, was 'Abraham's Faith shown in Works', after which the minister was invited to answer a number of questions which delegates had prepared for him. This was highly beneficial for many and Rev Silversides' clear, cogent and concise answers were much appreciated. Much appreciated too were the testimonies of Martin Fraser, Anne Macaulay, Esther Semmens and Sam Smith which provided encouragement for us all.

On Sunday the speaker spoke on 'The Dividing Line of Love to Christ' (1Cor.16:22), and in the evening a very practical lesson on 'Where Self-Righteousness leads' (Jn.5:40).

Following a delicious lunch, Iain Taylor spoke on the evangelism work he and others are carrying out in Glasgow, and Andrew MacLeod spoke on the Chinese Christian organisation, Amity.

Special thanks are due to the cooks, Sandra Mackay and Sam Smith, to Rev Silversides for his helpful and informative addresses, and Nathan Roberts for organising the weekend's activities. Thanks too to all who came, many of whom travelled from far afield to enjoy fellowship with us. All five talks are available online at [www.bible-sermons.org.uk](http://www.bible-sermons.org.uk). Next year's event will take place on 6th to 9th February 2009 DV when the speaker will be the Rev William Macleod and the subject 'The End of the World'.



## Induction

The induction of the Rev Sampson Amankwaa to the Presbyterian Methodist Church of Modena, Italy was performed by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Rt Rev Dr Frimpong-Manso. Samson is one of the Seminary's former students. He studied by correspondence. His ordination took place in Ghana on 13th July and his induction in Italy on 29th October.

## Iran Death Penalty for leaving Islam

The Iranian Parliament has given provisional approval, by a majority of 196 to seven, to a bill that mandates the death penalty for apostasy from Islam. Until now Iranian judges could impose the death penalty in such cases only on the basis of Islamic law and *fatwas*, not on the basis of Iranian law. The bill prescribes a mandatory death sentence for any male Muslim who converts from Islam to another religion, and lifelong imprisonment for female converts from Islam. It also gives the Iranian secular courts authority to convict Iranians living outside the country of crimes relating to Iranian national security. It seems likely that this could be used against the many Iranian Christians who live outside Iran but are involved in evangelism within it. Apostasy from Islam is viewed by most Muslims as equivalent to treason.

## Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the 2004 merger of the two largest reformed denominations with a smaller segment of Lutherans was the culmination of 40 years of merger efforts. In reaction to this merger, churches representing 60,000 people in the Dutch 'Bible belt' from the Zeeland islands to the eastern border have established a new Restored Reformed Church (RRC) professing true Calvinism.

## Broken Homes

*Christian Institute*

Children from broken homes are almost five times as likely to suffer from emotional disorders as

# Desk



those whose parents stay together, new research shows. The findings from the Office of National Statistics add to the mounting evidence of the damage caused by family breakdown, with experts warning things could get worse. Family breakdown was far more significant than most 'household' factors such as financial circumstances, although having two unemployed parents was also a factor. Children from so-called 'reconstituted' families containing step-parents and step-siblings were also more likely to suffer emotional problems. Patricia Morgan, academic and expert on the subject of family breakdown, said: 'This does not come as a surprise, and things are going to get worse.'

## Ultrasound-Supported Crisis Pregnancy Centre Opened

Tyneside Pregnancy Advice Centre aims to provide much needed advice and support to women with unplanned pregnancies. It is the first such centre in this country to offer women an ultrasound scan. The Centre, run by the Christian charity 'Foundation for Life', was officially opened on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October by Baroness Cox. She praised the generosity of local supporters who contributed to the £71,000 set-up costs and the hard work of volunteers who prepared the Centre ready for use. At the opening Baroness Cox told those present, 'I am delighted that such a service is being made available to the women of Tyneside. The provision of advice about the nature of abortion and its important complications, together with the ultrasound scan,



Left to Right: Dr Olwen Nicholson (Deputy Director and Trustee), Dr Chris Richards (Director and Trustee), Baroness Cox, Rev Dr Alan Munden, & Dr Robert Smith (Trustee)

will allow the women to make a truly informed choice at a time of pressure and high emotion. So often in these circumstances women are told that there is only a blob of tissue in their womb. The scan will help them realise that there is a little life inside them. I hope that this will be the first of many such services around the country.'

The opening was followed by a service of dedication led by the Reverend Dr Alan Munden who gave thanks for the Centre's provision and committed its work to the Lord.

Its opening was welcomed by leading local health professionals. Sandra Bosman, awarded Midwife of the Year 2007, who works at the nearby Royal Victoria Infirmary, comments, 'This Centre will be a great help to women facing an unwanted pregnancy, who are often tempted to consider abortion as a quick fix in a crisis without realising the huge and damaging implications.

Many women express regret and guilt after an abortion and often live with these feelings for the rest of their lives. With support and care, keeping the pregnancy can be much more positive than anticipated – the joy at the end is usually much greater than the initial feelings of despair in the midst of crisis when abortion is being considered.'

Dr Phil Brookes, a GP in Newcastle, comments, 'Many doctors and health workers in Tyneside welcome this new venture. It will bring life-transforming help to many in our region, and a powerful Christian witness to the value of human life.'

Ultrasound scanning has been available in many crisis pregnancy centres across the US for several years, but this is the first centre in the UK to provide such a service. The scan offered is termed 'non-diagnostic' because it is not intended to replace a hospital scan, which is used to assess the gestation and the baby's

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well-being. Rather, the scan offered at the Centre will allow the mother to see the baby's heartbeat only four weeks after conception. Two weeks later she will be able to see her baby's fully formed head, body, arms and legs, and one week after this, the baby moving around in the womb.

The Centre will offer continuing help to women who decide to proceed with their pregnancy through a befriending service provided by local couples.

The Centre, based near the city's universities and commercial district, opened its doors in early August. The Director, Dr Chris Richards, who is a consultant paediatrician, said, 'In our first few weeks we have had an encouraging number of women approach the Centre for help. They have learnt about the Centre from their GP or via internet search engines. Most women who attended chose to have a scan and many said that they found it helpful.'

Further information on the work of the Centre is available on its website at [www.pregnancy-tyneside.org.uk](http://www.pregnancy-tyneside.org.uk).

## **Archbishop of Canterbury Embraces**

### **Mariolatry**

*Christian Observer*

After a recent visit to Lourdes, the first ever for an Anglican leader, Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams asserted that the 18 visions of the Virgin Mary allegedly experienced by Bernadette Soubirous in 1858 were true, and by implication identified his personal acceptance of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception that is explicitly linked to the apparitions. While there, Dr Williams preached at a mass about Bernadette's visions without qualifications. 'Only bit by bit does Bernadette find the words to let the world know; only bit by bit, we might say, does she discover how to listen to the Lady and echo what she has to tell us'. Dr Williams also praised the lives of the Roman Catholic saints, the veneration of saints being another distinctive of Roman Catholic theology. Afterward, the Protestant Truth Society condemned the archbishop's visit to Lourdes, their director the Rev Jeremy Brooks saying, 'Lourdes represents everything about Roman Catholicism that the Protestant Reformation rejected, including apparitions, mariolatry and the veneration of saints. The archbishop's

simple presence there is a wholesale compromise, and his sermon which included a reference to Mary as "the Mother of God" is a complete denial of Protestant orthodoxy'. Mr Brooks added: 'At a time when our country is crying out for clear Biblical leadership, it is nothing short of tragic that our supposedly Protestant archbishop is behaving as little more than a papal puppet.'

## **Gambling**

*Christian Institute*

Problem gambling among the young is an 'emerging public health issue', according to research for the industry watchdog. Experts have blamed the recent liberalisation of gambling laws for the growing problem. A report for the Gambling Commission showed that between five and seven per cent of young people are already classified as having gambling problems, while up to 14 per cent are at risk of developing them. As much as 91 per cent of young people have experienced gambling at some point in their lives, the report said.

## **Sex Education for Five year olds**

*Christian Institute*

The Government has accepted recommendations that sex and relationships education become compulsory from age five onwards. The Christian Institute has joined other campaigners in warning that the plans will lead to the sexualisation of children and will undermine parents. A BBC viewers' poll coinciding with the announcement showed that three quarters of the 2,000 respondents said it should be up to parents to tell children about sex. Less than a quarter thought the responsibility should lie with teachers.

## **Plans to Liberalise Abortion Laws Fail**

*Christian Institute*

Attempts at a sweeping liberalisation of Britain's abortion laws have failed to reach a vote in the House of Commons. The debate on 22<sup>nd</sup> October marked the last chance for pro-abortion MPs to widen the laws using the current embryos Bill, but they did not succeed.

## **Love - George Burrowes**

The effect of sin has been to destroy in the human heart the love of God, and substitute for it the love of unworthy things. The object of redemption is the restoration of man from his condition of enmity against God, and from all the consequences of sin, to the possession and enjoyment of perfect love to God. Hence, as hatred of God is the spirit of sin, love is represented as the essential grace, as the fulfilling of the law. The growth of the soul in holiness must be estimated, not by deep excitement, whether of ecstasy or of overwhelming sorrow, not by burning zeal or untiring activity, not by acquaintance with all mysteries and all knowledge, not by giving our goods to feed the poor

and our body to be burned; but by the love which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Taking the Church as a whole, its love becomes a generality of the vaguest kind, intangible and unsatisfactory. But when we take the exercises of an individual heart, all is intelligible and interesting. Jesus loves the Church, by loving every single member of the Church; and manifests His love to the Church, by a special manifestation made to every member of the Church.

*Sees all, as if that all were one,  
Loves one, as if that one were all.*

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# Standing Near to Jesus in Prayer

*Peter Mitchell*

*Elder, Magill Free Church (Continuing), Adelaide*

A friend of mine when he was a young boy of about twelve years of age lived in a Christian home in a little farm house in rural Europe. His father was a big man and a strict disciplinarian and his mother was a caring soul though a woman of few words. It was a difficult life on the farm and food was carefully rationed to the children. Often his mother would struggle to feed her large family but somehow they always had enough. The young boy had six siblings though his father seemed to show a greater softness towards this young boy probably because he showed more interest in spiritual things than did the other children. One day this young boy did a very bad thing – so bad that he never actually told me what it was! He knew he had done a terrible wrong because he had to wrestle with his conscience night and day. He was resigned to the fact that one day he would have to confess to his parents. Many days passed by and the boy worked himself into a terrible state. He could tell that his parents knew something was wrong by the expressions on their faces but they were not saying anything to him. He was thinking to himself, ‘How can I ever tell my parents about this dreadful thing that I have done – they will never forgive me and I will receive such a terrible punishment and may even be banished from home’. Finally, the young boy couldn’t contain himself any longer – the burden was too great for him to carry – he had to tell them all and suffer the consequences.

He sheepishly went up to his mother and said, ‘Mum, there is something that I need to talk to you about – it’s

very important’. His mother looked at him as only a loving mother can, and said, ‘I know you do boy but you must go and tell your father first’. The boy was now in a further state of despair – for what might happen to him now? He mustered all his courage and ashamedly, without looking at his father, said ‘Dad there is something that I must tell you – I have done a terrible thing and I am so sorry that I have not come to you before this ... and...’. Then, at that moment, the young boy felt the strong hand of his father gently grasp his chin and tilt the boy’s head upwards so that their eyes met. To the boy’s amazement, as he gazed upwards to see his father’s face, he saw tears falling from his eyes and one or two drops fell on the boy’s face. He feels the warmth of those tears even still today. Then his father said to him, ‘I have been waiting for you to come to me. I knew there was something wrong, why did you wait so long to come to me?’ The young boy then cried together with his father and a full confession was made. Yes, the boy was disciplined (not as severely as he’d imagined), but first he felt the love and forgiveness of his father.

How long we sometimes wait before going to our Lord! Don’t we have so much to confess, to ask for and to praise Him for? We take for granted that He is waiting patiently for us to come to Him. But, friends, He bids us to come to Him. Jesus said: ‘Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest’ (Mt.11:28).

**"How long we sometimes wait before going to our Lord! Don't we have so much to confess, to ask for and to praise Him for?"**





# Books

## Memories of Sandfields

Bethan Lloyd-Jones

Banner of Truth Trust

pbk, 104pp, £5.50

This is a delightful book, first published in 1983 and now reprinted. Bethan, the wife of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, gives an interesting account of their years in Sandfields, including a visit to America during which Dr Lloyd-Jones' preaching was greatly appreciated and blessed to many.

Not only are we reminded in this account of the importance of uncomplicated biblical preaching but also of the value of prayer-meetings in the development of the congregation. Not only do we get some insight into the Doctor's work, but just as interesting are the memorable descriptions given of some of the characters that worshipped with them in the congregation, including a woman who foolishly took literally the biblical injunction 'if thy right eye offend thee pluck it out'; the man who had such an evil temper before he came to know the Lord that he killed his dog in the most gruesome of ways simply because the wretched animal had eaten the man's dinner; Staffordshire Bill who used such filthy language that even the most godless wanted nothing to do with him, but having heard that the preacher in the local church had said nobody was hopeless, took courage and went to the chapel to hear for himself if this was true, and the Lord worked through the preaching. There are many other similar accounts of what the Lord can do in the lives of even the most wretched.

Through it all we see the God-given wisdom not only of the minister but also of his devoted wife in dealing with varied situations, many of which can still arise in the life of a congregation. A book well worth buying and reading!

Rev Kenneth MacDonald

## Fearless Pilgrim

The Life and Times of John Bunyan

Faith Cook

Evangelical Press, hdbk, 528pp, £16.95

Faith Cook has established herself as an accomplished historian and a readable and edifying writer of Christian biography. Here she tackles the colourful and inspiring life of the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the Bedford tinker who became one of the greatest Puritan authors and preachers. John Owen said he would give all his learning to be able to preach like Bunyan. The life of Bunyan is traced – his wild early days as the greatest sinner in Elstow, his first marriage, his conversion, struggles with assurance, his preaching, his wife's death, remarriage, death of his beloved firstborn daughter, blind Mary, his thirteen long years in prison and his many preaching trips carried on to the end of his life at the age of fifty-nine. His writings are examined, described and assessed. The troubled times in which he lived are portrayed – Charles I, the Civil War, the Restoration, Charles II and James II. He died in 1688 just before the Revolution which at last brought freedom and toleration to nonconformists like Bunyan. One point which interested me was that though Bunyan was a Baptist his children were baptised as infants. Perhaps, as Faith Cook argues, his wife Elizabeth did not share his Baptist views and in this she was allowed her desire.

This is a highly recommended work, readable, informative, and challenging. How inspiring to read of his patience in suffering and the labours in the Gospel of this great man. Though he had little formal education and worked in difficult conditions yet his literary output was enormous. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is ranked as a classic of English literature.

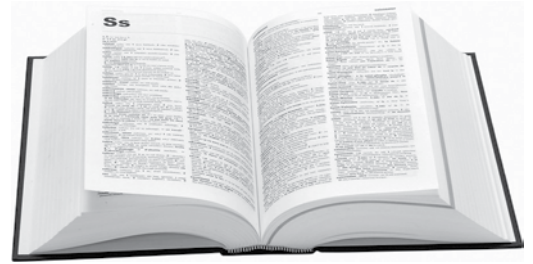
The key to his patient endurance is that he had learned to 'pass a sentence of death



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# Books



upon everything that can properly be called a thing of this life'. He had learned to 'count the grave my home, to make my bed in darkness'. His last words spoken with difficulty and yet with much assurance were 'I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will, no doubt through the mediation of his blessed Son, receive me, though a sinner; where I hope we ere long shall meet and sing the new song and remain everlastingly happy, world without end'.

## Atonement Matters

### A Call to Declare the Biblical view of the Atonement

*Tom Barnes*

Evangelical Press, hdbk, 342pp, £9.95

Nothing is more crucial than the atonement. If we get this wrong we get everything wrong. We live in a day when all kinds of false views of the atonement are circulating. Many of the modern heresies, such as the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul', are essentially false views of the atonement. Nothing defines a true evangelical more clearly than his view of the atonement. In this book we have a clear, easily read, thorough, sound treatment of this vital subject. The author's arguments in support of limited atonement are biblical and convincing. Rather than use the name 'limited' which seems to diminish the work of Christ, some prefer to call it 'particular atonement' and Barnes calls it 'definite' or 'effective, particular atonement'. He traces atonement through the Old Testament and then the New. He shows that the Bible teaches 'penal, substitutionary atonement'. Barnes rightly rejects Amyraldianism which teaches that Christ died for everyone but that redemption was only applied to the elect, and the variant

favoured by R T Kendall which asserts that Christ died for all but interceded only for the elect. Both views are false because Christ actually saved all for whom He died and the justice of God cannot demand that those for whom Christ suffered should also suffer themselves. There is an unbroken chain from election through the cross to heaven. Whom God predestinates He will glorify. Alleged general or universal atonement texts are explained to show that they do not in fact teach that Christ died for every single individual of mankind, past, present and future. How could Christ die for those already in hell? Definite atonement glorifies God and humbles man. All praise be to Him who reconciled us to God through the cross! This is an excellent, readable book and highly recommended. We need to clearly understand the atonement.

## From Grief to Glory

*James W Bruce III*

Banner of Truth Trust

pbk, 214pp, £6.25

Some books deal in an abstract way with the subject in hand but not this one. You will find it impossible to read without tears. The author records the sorrow through which he and his wife walked in 1997 when their 55-days-old son John Cameron Bruce died. That Sunday evening he 'died in the arms of his mother and father; our last act as parents was to commend him (and ourselves) to Christ and his good keeping'. John was born with a genetic kidney disorder and complications affecting his lungs. Many prayers were offered for him and at times it seemed that he would survive but ultimately the Lord took him. Bruce writes, 'Few things match the joy that children bring

to a family. Even fewer things rival the sorrow of a family that buries a child'. In this book they share their sorrow with us and also God's grace enabling them to cope. Their trial came from a loving Father and produced good fruit. Accounts are given of many well-known Christians who lost children – Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, Edwards, Whitefield, Dabney etc. Their words are quoted and the comfort that they found in the Lord in the midst of sorrow. It is a book which would be of immense comfort to one whom God puts through this fiery furnace but also one that you will find helpful in comforting those who have suffered such a loss.

*William Macleod*

## Handfuls of Purpose

Gleanings from the Inner Life of

*Ruth Bryan*

Reformation Heritage Books

pbk, 474pp, \$28.00

Originally published in 1866, this devotional gem provides an insight into the private life of a deeply exercised early 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian. Comprised of extracts from the diary of Ruth Bryan (1805-1860), they reveal a rare spiritual-mindedness in an unassuming, meek, tender-hearted believer whose faith was sorely tried by affliction. Left alone in the world following the death of pious parents and later diagnosed with terminal cancer, she cheerfully and patiently submitted to the will of a loving, all-wise God and Saviour. Possessed of a gifted mind, poetic taste and spiritual discernment, she lived in close communion with her Saviour.

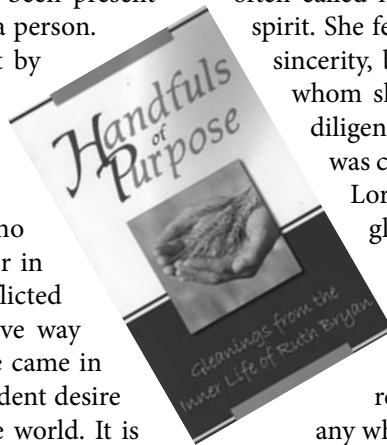
There are some of the Lord's people who are unable to point to a distinct time in their life when they underwent

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a saving change, the work of grace having been present from a very early age. Ruth Bryan was such a person. It is not by eloquent public testimonies but by the fruits of the Spirit that the reality of a Christian profession is proved. Born of pious parents, the Lord drew Ruth imperceptibly to Himself from a very tender age.

But this gentle reticent believer was no recluse. She was active in serving her Master in Sabbath School teaching, visitation of afflicted fellow believers, and in her own unobtrusive way commended Christ to those with whom she came in contact. Her correspondence revealed her ardent desire for the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world. It is refreshing to read the following quotation from the brief sketch of her life: 'The happy Gleaner, a name by which she



often called herself, was peculiarly exempt from all party spirit. She felt union with all who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity, but her heart was *most* closely knit to any in whom she saw His image *brightly* reflected. She was diligent in attending the means of grace where her lot was cast, having been nourished in a field which the Lord had blessed. She scrupled not, however, to glean from other fields any parched ears of corn which were reached her by the Lord's reapers.' Reformation Heritage Books are to be congratulated on reproducing this attractive paperback. It is suitable for daily devotional reading and would prove an excellent present to any who appreciate solid experiential piety.

*Rev Ronald MacKenzie*



## **Biblical Pictures of the Presence of God (3) – Dew**

*Rev Dewi Higham*

**T**he choice of phrase in the Scriptures, when describing the presence of God, provides us with something of an insight into the nature of God. Fire conveys something of the overwhelming power of God, whilst the Dew and the Dove convey His wonderful gentleness. There are also a number of other pictures which we could have noted, such as the Wind and the Anointing. The three selected pictures of Fire, Dove and Dew, will provide us with a view of God which is full of awe and grace. Such is the nature of God's presence, that both awe and grace can be experienced in the same moment.

### **Dove and Dew Contrasted**

The dew and the dove provide a similar picture of the presence of God. The gentleness found in the dove is somewhat reflected in the quietness of the dew. The dew comes unannounced, and silently appears on the ground and the surfaces of the vegetation, as the water vapour in the atmosphere condenses on cool surfaces.

### **The Dew of Hermon**

The dew of Hermon mentioned in Psalm 133 is a most charming picture of blessing, where we read, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to

the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore' (Ps.133:1-3).

To introduce the dew of Hermon, it is worth mentioning the parallel picture of the precious ointment. This precious ointment, and its clear connection with the presence of God, adds some authenticity to our connecting the dew with the presence. The precious ointment was poured on the head of Aaron, and ran down his beard, even to the edges of his garment. The fragrance represents the delightfulness of God. The holy context of the ordination of a high priest adds holy reverence to the picture. The fact that it is poured from above is also indicative of God coming down upon a man, to bless his soul.

Furthermore, this language of anointing is used throughout Scripture, and is associated with the blessing of God upon a man's ministry. We often speak of a man being anointed, which carries the idea of an effusion of God, and outpouring of the Spirit.

It is, therefore, with expectation that we turn to the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion. If the ointment is so clearly a picture of God's presence and blessing, then the dew will surely carry some other

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aspect of God's presence. Even the very mention of the dew descending, brings us again to the thought of God coming down. It is, in particular, the ability of dew to refresh the ground and bring with it fruitfulness, that is most relevant to the presence of God.

As we consider Hermon and the surrounding area, we should note that these arid areas depended much on the heavy dew that was so typical of those parts. The dew of Hermon, it seems, was particularly heavy. This heavy dew would bring much-needed moisture to the parched ground. The shepherds, also, would depend on this dew to refresh their sheep, as they travelled from fold to fold.

### **The Dew that Refreshes the Ground**

With regard to the refreshing of the ground, we might first think of the parched ground as a picture of our poor hearts. The hard ground, interspersed with cracks, could represent the world, and, even to some extent, the church in our day. Yet in the church there is a thirst for God. This godly thirst could be pictured as the readiness of the parched ground to draw in the moisture as it descends.

We gain much hope from this picture, for nature is quickly revived after a heavy shower, or in this case, after the descent of a heavy dew. We will find that the presence of God is an animating presence. It is a feature of our services, where men often arrive weary, but leave full of physical and spiritual energy. This is, of course, more than the body recovering from tiredness, for there is something powerful in the energising of the soul that affects the whole constitution of man. Not surprisingly, we find this animating power in revival accounts, where men abounded with strength in worship and service.

Forgive me for bringing in a personal example with regard to my father, who was also my pastor for many years. I can testify, as many others also can, to the blessing of God upon his ministry. One of the most remarkable features of this ministry, especially as his physical strength wanes, is his appearance in the pulpit. Outside of the pulpit, he shows his age, and perhaps even more than his age, since the wear and tear of a faithful ministry has left its mark. However, a pastor and friend recently remarked that my father sheds twenty years when he enters the pulpit and begins to preach the Word.

This dew can also be widespread, where the lethargic church, full of drooping hearts, suddenly becomes a different place altogether. The people are full of godly interest, the prayer meeting swells in attendance and life abounds.

### **The Dew that Leads to Fruitfulness**

This dew brings fruitfulness. If you see ground saturated with moisture, you just know that there will be fruit. Likewise, when God is present, we have good reason to expect fruit. I recently attended a conference where the Lord was near. I thought to myself, I am sure there will be fruit from this conference. It seems that this has been the case.

We could add the thought that these conditions of heavy dew on the slopes of Hermon would produce certain plants and flowers not found elsewhere. Likewise, you see graces in the

house of God that you do not find in the world. Connected with this thought is the fact that some of the Lord's people seem to capture more of God and display more of Christ than others. I was told by a gentleman who has some knowledge of those parts that a certain type of flower is found on Hermon, where the petals form a cup-like shape. The flower is then able to capture and retain more of the moisture. Such are the hearts of some people, where their hearts become receptacles of the blessing of God.

There are times when the dew is exceptionally heavy. We can think of periods in the history of the church when the fruit and the flower were exceptional. Some evidence of this beauty is captured in the writings of those times.

All this reflects the glory of Jesus Christ. If such beauty can be produced in human hearts, what must our Saviour be like? He is, indeed, the Rose of Sharon.

### **The Dew and Unity**

We cannot pass by the significance of the context of this most special Psalm, where the dew and precious ointment is associated with the unity of brethren. How delightful is this true unity, where men stand on the same truths, with great love for each other! There is much misunderstanding today on Christian unity. Suffice to say, that the unity put forward by many is a pale reflection of what is meant here. Nevertheless, we must say this, that the unity described in Psalm 133 goes hand in hand with blessing and God's presence. How important, therefore, is true unity! How beautiful is true unity! It is like the dew of Hermon.

### **Imagine a Service**

Imagine a service where God is present. The people are attentive and listening, as the dew is descending on them. The Lord is upon the sermon, as the preacher finds ease of utterance. The Lord is upon the congregation, where all untimely interruptions are prevented. The Lord is upon the hearts of the people, as the words sink deeply. Surely, we might reflect, there will be fruit.

### **The Fruit of Revivals in Wales**

This fruitfulness and sense of refreshing was seen in Wales during those two centuries of almost unbroken blessing. It was said that on the Lord's Day you could walk the length of one of the valleys of Glamorganshire, and never be out of earshot of chapel singing. As you drew near one chapel, the singing could be heard, and would grow louder as you drew level. As you made your way past that chapel, the singing would fade, but before fading altogether, the singing of another chapel could be heard. Such was the fruit of God's presence, that chapels sprung up all over the land.

The character of the Welsh people was also greatly affected at this time. Like all nations, the Welsh temperament has its faults, but to a large extent, those faults were submerged in the times of His presence. There were even occasions when the white glove was presented to a county, where no court cases had been presented throughout the year.

What could be the cause of such a change as this? It is the dew of Hermon. It is the presence of God.

## Congregational Remittances - October 2008

	2008 Oct	2008 Total	2007 Total to Oct				
<b>Presbytery of Inverness</b>				<b>Outer Hebrides Presbytery</b>			
Aberdeen	1,350	7,981	5,867	Cross	2,514	19,295	19,287
Duthil-Dores	7,578	23,245	16,552	Harris - Leverburgh	1,000	10,884	9,817
Inverness	4,000	24,000	26,000	Harris - Scalpay	3,080	16,377	16,461
Kilmorack	500	13,863	15,167	Knock & Point	850	9,671	9,681
<b>Total Inverness</b>	<b>13,428</b>	<b>69,089</b>	<b>63,586</b>	North Uist	800	9,459	8,354
<b>Northern Presbytery</b>				Stornoway	4,173	48,797	57,799
Assynt & Scourie	0	2,570	7,252	<b>Total Outer Hebrides</b>	<b>12,417</b>	<b>114,483</b>	<b>121,400</b>
Brora	1,600	15,568	15,912	<b>Presbytery of Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>			
Kiltearn	1,800	17,400	17,000	Bracadale	1,000	12,229	11,378
Tarbat	1,500	7,974	6,813	Duirinish (Waternish)	400	4,400	4,000
<b>Total Northern</b>	<b>4,900</b>	<b>43,512</b>	<b>46,977</b>	Glenelg & Arnisdale	191	1,636	1,371
<b>Southern Presbytery</b>				Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	14,075	14,361
Arran	574	5,609	6,029	Lochalsh & Glenshiel	1,407	12,792	12,009
Ayr	0	2,460	1,812	Poolewe & Aultbea	478	9,792	10,666
Dumfries	0	0	85	Portree	1,200	16,006	10,340
Edinburgh	7,685	23,761	20,655	Snizort	1,650	18,411	17,556
Glasgow - Partick	2,000	25,000	21,500	Strath	800	4,016	6,123
Glasgow - Shettleston	2,940	10,740	9,100	<b>Total Skye &amp; Lochalsh</b>	<b>8,426</b>	<b>93,356</b>	<b>87,804</b>
Glasgow - Thornwood	2,130	19,162	18,992	<b>Total Congregations</b>			
Rothsay	0	1,331	2,000	<b>Total Congregations</b>	<b>54,499</b>	<b>408,502</b>	<b>399,940</b>
<b>Total Southern</b>	<b>15,328</b>	<b>88,062</b>	<b>80,173</b>	Other Donations	1,745	18,439	22,263
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56,244</b>	<b>426,941</b>	<b>422,203</b>
				Including Gift Aid	3,624	41,983	48,417

## The Basic Assumptions and Effects of Education

*Rev James Clark M.Ed.*

There can only be two viewpoints about the education of children. Either education is Christian or it is non-Christian. If it is non-Christian, it is secular and humanistic. If the curriculum is not based on God's truth it must be based on something else! God's truth is uncompromising towards worldly opinions.

The purpose of Christian education is godliness in mind, and thus in behaviour. Non-Christian education has clearly some other purpose in view. Christian education is based on reality as it is interpreted by God in His Word. What reality has any other interpretation of this world's origin, history or destiny?

Non-Christian education speaks about 'values' and the training of character. But the 'morality' propagated is not the absolute and unchanging morality of the Ten Commandments. Their 'standards' are not standard at all, as they vary according to human opinion. Their values are 'relative' to majority, epoch or culture. Indeed many of these 'values' are anti-Christian. What is justice if it does not agree with God's law? What validity has 'tolerance' if God is opposed to it?

Christian education gives God the pre-eminent place in His own world. We believe in the 'Establishment Principle', that the state is duty bound to support and protect God's

church, not to oppose the biblical standards of the church by manufacturing its own and then tyrannically imposing them.

'The carnal mind is enmity against God' (Rom.8:7) and the British Government basely betrayed its promises to the church when the former took over the running of the latter's schools under the 1872 Education Act. We now see the ghastly effects of non-Christian education in contemporary society. Young people in particular demand their 'human rights' but deny God the right to educate His own creatures. Can we really expect society to be any different from what it is, when knowledge of the character and claims of the true God is suppressed in school from age 5 to 17? Psalm 2 and Romans 1 describe what is happening and but for God's restraining grace things could be a lot worse.

Let us not protect the pagan basis of the modern education system. In 1843 one of the first priorities of the Free Church of Scotland was to establish its own schools. Decline was already clearly evident (in doctrine and worship) when in 1872 the church thought the state could be trusted with its schools. The Scottish church and society are now reaping the consequences of what was then sown.

# Letter from Zambia

*Phil Bailey*

Dear Friends,

## **PTI Conferences**

Pastor Training International aims to strengthen the Christian church in the poorest regions of the world – where resources and assistance are most needed, and in many cases, simply unavailable at present. PTI provides pastors and church leaders from village and small town churches with their own ‘in country training’. This is carried out by experienced trainers, carefully selected by PTI, who have pastored churches themselves. Their literature division (incorporating Christian Books for Africa) backs this up with doctrinally sound book sets, and the pastors also have the option to participate in ‘distance mentoring’ according to choice and personal needs.

August was the time for four PTI conferences in Zambia, from Mongu to Mansa, and from Chipata to the Copperbelt. Alan Levy and Ken Brownell came to do the first two and Peter Seccombe the other two. I helped with the organisation of the Chipata conference. Meetings earlier this year helped us set up an organising committee of church leaders from the town. Praise God they did a faithful job and the conference went well. I met Peter Seccombe at the airport on Saturday 9th August and we travelled straight to Petauke and then on to Chipata the next day.

The conference was held in a secondary school and 75 pastors attended, mostly from the rural areas around Chipata. Peter’s main teaching was from the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and two Zambian Pastors, Kabwe Kabwe and Gilbert Mbangi, tackled pastoral issues, particularly relating to cultural difficulties where there are clashes with the Bible. Further information on PTI can be found on their website at [www.pastor-training.org](http://www.pastor-training.org).

## **Old MacDonald’s Farm**

For the first week and last two weeks of August I was at Old MacDonald’s Farm. The boys were on holiday and helped with various jobs. The large area now under drip irrigation is starting to produce a lot of the vegetables required to feed them all.

They also helped to construct two Haygrove poly-tunnels which will be used to grow tomatoes, cucumbers and other vegetables that do much better in the rainy season under cover.

## **Zambian President Dies**

August also saw the passing away of President Levy Mwanawasa. He died in a Paris hospital following a

massive stroke. He was a good President and fought hard against corruption. In what turned out to be his last speech to the nation he spoke of the reconciliation with his political rival who had publicly wronged him. He told the nation that he himself was a sinner who needed forgiveness! He also said he wanted to leave one legacy – ‘a peaceful Zambia’. He then left to go to the Southern African Development Community meeting in Egypt not knowing that the way he would return to Zambia would be in a coffin amidst a cavalcade of about 200 vehicles. His body arrived back on Saturday 23rd August and we went up to the Great East Road to see it pass.

Thousands lined the street, there was a true sense of loss and there was peace. May it remain during the forthcoming elections and in the future. Many waved flags with the picture of Mwanawasa.

## **Prayer Points:**

Pray for the nation of Zambia at this time of uncertainty.

Pray for the MD’s and all the children they look after.

Pray that the Pastors taught at the PTI conferences will be faithful with what they have learnt.

Thank you for your continued support.

Love

Phil

*Below: The Molenaars’ new baby, Obed Cornelis.*



# Arbroath Youth Weekend, October 2008



**Front Row** - Esther Semmens, Sandra MacKay, Fiona Taylor, Fiona Smith, Esther Boyd, Sarah Nixon, Naomi Lowery, Rhiann Spencer, Rachel Boyd, Partheepann, Sian Spencer, Thomas Gould, Ruth Martin, Christina, Derek MacLean.

**Back Row** - Kerry Martin, Caroline Morrison, David Woods, Richard Venton, Irene MacKinnon, Rev David Silversides, Sandra MacAulay, Iain Taylor, Alasdair Morrison, Andrew MacLeod, Anne MacAulay, Anna Rowland, Murray MacKay, Alasdair Macleod, Johan Campbell, Nathan Roberts, Kenneth Hutton, Murdo Macleod, Iain MacLeod, Rachel Venton, Cameron, Matthias, David Wylie, Jennifer, Sam Smith, Dafydd Spencer, Ben Lowery, Iain Bannerman, James Boyd.

**“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay for yourselves treasures in heaven”**

**Matthew 6:19-20**