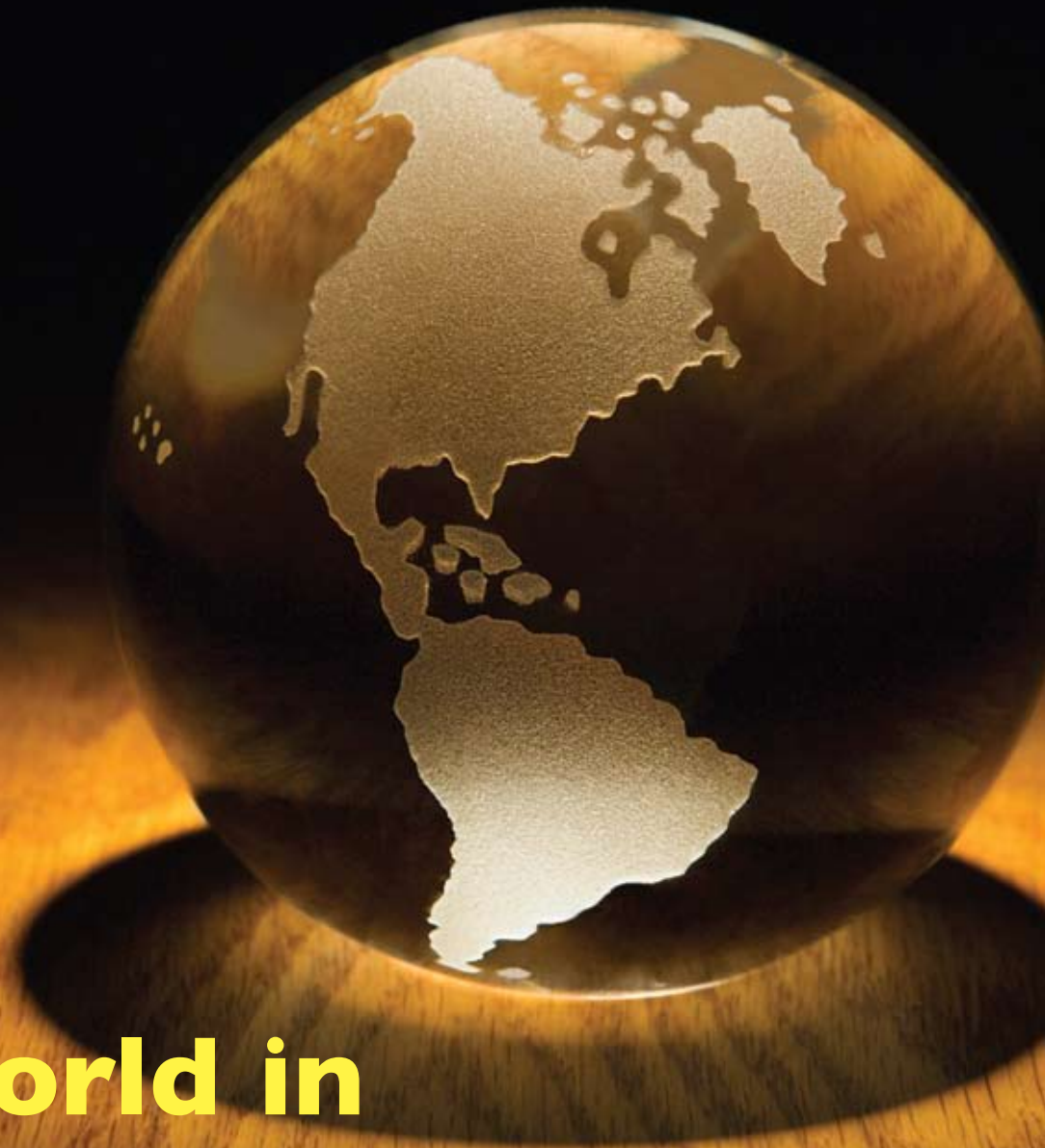


# Free Church **Witness**



**NOVEMBER 2010 ISSUE**



## **The World in the Church**

**Rev John Thackway**



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# The Call of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was despised and detested by most of his contemporaries. There were other prophets who went round proclaiming 'Peace, peace, there is nothing to worry about. All will work out fine. The vessels of the Lord's house will soon be returned from Babylon and those taken captive at that time will soon be back with us. We are the Lord's people. Judah will not be defeated and Jerusalem will not be destroyed. We have a great future before us'. They were very popular but the day came when they were seen to be the false prophets. They themselves suffered in the siege, they experienced the famine, the disease and the destruction and those who survived were taken captive to Babylon to live out their days learning that all Jeremiah said was true. Today Jeremiah is regarded as the archetype of the prophet of doom and gloom. People are looking for encouragement and positive preaching. Those who proclaim a cheap gospel and easy believism are popular. The 'fire and brimstone' preachers of the past have had their day. It is asserted that there is probably no such place as hell. It is assumed that God exists to make us happy. How totally wrong! Surely no book of the Bible is more relevant for us to study than that of Jeremiah. It is so contemporary.

## Jeremiah's background

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, a priestly city in the land of Benjamin, two or three miles north east of Jerusalem. Belonging to a priestly family he would receive a good education in the religion of Israel – the sacrifices, the priesthood, the temple and indeed the Scriptures which were available up till that point. The word of the Lord came to him in the days of Josiah, in the thirteenth year of his reign and on until the carrying away of the people to Babylon, ie from 627 to 587BC. In his childhood Manasseh was king. He reigned for fifty-five years and was Judah's most wicked king, encouraging idolatry and persecuting the prophets of the Lord. In God's amazing grace he was converted at the end of his life. His son Amon reigned for just two years and did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Then came Josiah, crowned at the tender age of eight, beginning to seek the Lord at sixteen and starting his great reformation at twenty. How this must have filled the heart of young Jeremiah with overflowing joy after the dark days of king Manasseh! But then what sadness came over him when Josiah was killed at thirty-one in a foolish battle with Pharaoh Necho. His successors were wicked and judgment was certain.

## Jeremiah loved

God said to Jeremiah, 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee' (Jer.1:5). But where was Jeremiah before he was in his mother's womb? Obviously only in the mind of God. It does not say that God knew something about him but that God knew him. It is the intransitive use of the verb. We find an example of this use of 'love' in Amos 3:2: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth'. God, of course, knows everything about every family on the earth. But Israel is special. God loves them. Here God is stating that he had a loving

relationship with Jeremiah even before he was born. It speaks of foreknowledge on the basis of which He elects, and that foreknowledge is nothing short of infinite love.

## Jeremiah sanctified

Amazingly God adds, 'Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations' (v5). The unborn child is not a mere lump of the woman's body but a real human being with body and soul. When Elisabeth was carrying John for six months Mary visited her and Scripture states that 'the babe leaped in her womb' (Lk.1:41). Elisabeth explains that it was for joy (v44). There can surely be no clearer evidence of faith on the part of the yet unborn John. He is already a prophet and the forerunner of Jesus. Even more wonderful is the fact that, although the foetus Jesus could just have been days old, Elisabeth calls Him my Lord, 'the mother of my Lord is come to me' (v43). How wicked abortion is! There is no doubt that it is murder. While still in the womb Jeremiah was 'sanctified' ie set apart for God, just as vessels in the temple were taken from secular service and devoted to religious use (Jer.1:5). He was ordained a prophet before he was born. He was regenerated or born again before he was born the first time. Normally faith comes by hearing (Rom.10:17) but in the unborn child or in an infant who is unable to understand the gospel message God can and does operate directly applying the redemption of Christ to the souls of the elect whom He has chosen to save at that point.

## Jeremiah – A prophet to the nations

Jeremiah's parish was first and foremost the house of Judah but he also had a role to the nations. God gave him words to speak to Babylon, Moab, Ammon and Egypt. He is of course today a prophet to the whole world. God's ministers must be careful not to confine their ministry to their congregations and must realize that the world is their parish. They are never off duty.

## Jeremiah's response

Jeremiah feels totally inadequate for the task: 'Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child' (v6). Moses too felt he was unfit to speak for God. Isaiah cried 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips' (Is.6:5). Paul exclaimed 'Who is sufficient for these things' (2Cor.2:16). There is something far wrong if we feel we are fit for the great work of proclaiming the Word of the Lord. Inadequacy forces us to cast ourselves on God in faith.

## Jeremiah reassured

The Lord reassures Jeremiah: 'But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth' (Jer.1:7-9). We must obey the call of God even

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when we feel totally unfit for it. As far as speech is concerned Jeremiah is assured that God will provide him with the message and words. God states that He will be with him. God's hand touched his lips. Isaiah was touched on his lips with a live coal from the altar. Then he was ready to go – 'Here am I; send me' (Is.6:8). If we are sure God is calling us to the great work of the ministry what a help that will be when the opposition is crushing! The call to the ministry is not simply a matter of gifts. There must also be the inward call of God: 'How shall they preach except they be sent?' (Rom.10:15).

### **Jeremiah's great task**

God clearly explains to Jeremiah what is expected of him: 'See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant' (v10). Four verbs describe the destroying work that Jeremiah must do and only two the positive work. When a large building is being constructed in one of our cities, there are often weeks of excavation in order to lay a solid foundation. The actual building can go up in a very short time. In the building of the church of Christ it is the same. People's false hopes must be described and destroyed. Hypocrites must be shown that what they have will not stand the test of time. No one likes being shaken to the point where only that which cannot be shaken remains. Thankfully Jeremiah's

task does not end with destroying people's hopes and making them miserable; it goes on to plant and build. Christ says 'I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Mt.16:18).

### **Jeremiah strengthened**

God shows Jeremiah a branch of an almond tree, the first tree which flowers in the spring. His word will soon be performed (v12). He then reveals to him a seething cauldron pouring southward. A terrible invasion is coming. 'Gird thy loins', Jeremiah. Get ready for action. Do not be frightened or ashamed, 'lest I confound thee before them' (v17). We love our dignity and out of concern to retain it we are afraid to speak in certain situations, but if that is the case God threatens to confound us and make us truly ashamed.

Great words of comfort are added: 'For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee' (vv18-19). This is the case for every servant of the Lord. As God's servants doing God's work we are 'more than conquerors' (Rom.8:37). 'Be strong and of a good courage' (Josh.1:18).

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## Christian Education A Crisis of our Time, Part 3 **The Conflict** *Rev Gavin Beers*



In our previous articles we have approached the issue of Christian Education by first introducing the concept we are arguing for and then establishing that Christian Education is commanded in Scripture. The implication of both Old and New Testaments for us today is that God requires His people to give their children a Christian education in all things. The third area that we wish to look at in this article is 'the Conflict' of Christian Education.

Christianity has been fitly described and is rightly viewed as 'Total War'. As believers we are engaged in a war that must be fought on every front of human experience because Jesus Christ is Lord of All and His rightful claim to sovereignty over every sphere of our existence is going to be challenged by His enemies. It follows that this war naturally extends into the realm of education.

### **This War Extends to Education because there is no Neutrality**

R J Rushdoony was correct when he wrote: 'There is not a

square inch of ground in heaven or on earth or under the earth in which there is peace between Christ and Satan... If you say that you are "not involved" you have taken Satan's side. If you say you are involved in the struggle in the area of the family and in the church, but not in the school, you are deceiving yourself'. This is stark and confrontational language but it is language Scripture requires us to use.

In Matthew 12:30 our Lord Jesus Christ said 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad'. From this we can conclude that any man that is not with Christ or for Christ is against Him; similarly we can say any institution that is not for Christ is against Him, because there is no middle ground. Applying this to the realm of education it means that a non-Christian education is in fact an anti-Christian education and the whole idea of a 'secular' 'non-religious' education is impossible and a complete non-starter. The thing that is most important to us, indeed the thing that we ought to deem indispensable – God, is entirely left out of such education. It actually prides itself on its pursuit to be

godless!

All this begs a simple question. What are our schools today? Are they for Christ? They are clearly not, and so we must be bold enough to take the next step and conclude that they are actually against Christ. This in turn begs another question. If this is so then why do we continue to send our children to them? There is no neutrality.

### **This War Extends to Education because there is Open Hostility**

We have seen through the pretended neutrality of secular education. Having done so, a brief glance at the fruit of this education system in our own country will confirm its open opposition to God. Consider the lack of respect, the teaching of 'alternative sexualities', the wholesale promotion of Evolutionary theory, the increasing immorality and teenage pregnancies. Yet when we observe all these things we must also recognise this to be the fruit of educational philosophies and curricula that have been developed over the last one hundred and fifty years upon the philosophy of Humanism. God has been positively abandoned and man has been affirmed in his place.

For this reason Doug Philips warns that we should see 'The government school as an institution that is at war with Christianity. It is a reflection of evolutionary and humanist faith'. The irony here is we have long ignored this and buried our head in the sand while our opponents have known it all along. It seems that in the UK, Christians and the church have still not identified the enemy who has been destroying them even though for all this time that enemy has not been hiding. Hostility to the Christian Faith was explicit in the writings of the educational philosophers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Men like Horace Mann and John Dewey in America together with their counterparts in the UK knew exactly what they were trying to do and they told us so. Their stated aim in many cases was to overthrow the influence of the Christian religion in society. More recently educational philosophers have put these same intentions into print. John Dunphy, a chief architect of the state school system in America, wrote in *The Humanist* in 1983: 'I am convinced that the battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers that correctly perceive their role as proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and new — the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism, resplendent with the promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian ideal of 'love thy neighbour' will finally be achieved'.

It is clearly not a secret. They are at war in the arena of education. They know Joseph Stalin was correct when he said, 'Education is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed'. We too need to understand this and take the education of our children back into our own hands, to employ it as a force for good.

### **This War Extends to Education because there is a Total Antithesis**

Usually Christians highlight a few key areas where they think their children might face a problem in the public school system but closer analysis reveals that our children are indoctrinated

in opposition to the Christian worldview at every point of their education. This is what we refer to as a total antithesis. Consider these examples.

**1. We Teach Different Religions:** Ours is Christianity while theirs is Humanism. We glorify God and they deify man.

**2. We Differ on the Goal of Education** – We believe that the end of education is godliness which has the promise of this life and the life to come (1Tim.4:8). They believe the end of education is to be successful in this life and to be a good citizen.

**3. We Differ on What is to be Taught:** We teach all things from a Christian perspective while they teach all things in the vacuum of a meaningless world without God.

**4. We have a Different view of Who is to be Taught:** They believe the child is inherently good and that education and the right environment will set him on the right way. We believe the child is created in the image of God, fallen in Adam and needs to be restored by God's grace in Christ.

**5. We have a Different Sociology, Pedagogy, Psychology & Ethics:** For example we teach Biblical ethics, or what God says is right and wrong. They teach pagan, godless ethics and steep our children in a complete relativism of all things, all the time numbing their conscience to the clear teaching of God's Word.

**6. We have a Different view of the World:** We believe in the creation of the world by an infinite, personal God and the government of all things in His providence. They reject creation and view the world as a closed system governed ultimately, if at all, by chance events.

It is vital we see the contrast and antithesis here, for this is the fundamental assumption of all Humanistic education. Van Til calls it 'the godless relativism and impersonalism of the non-Christian worldview'.

Now it is clear that we do not like the fact that Evolution is being taught in the public school. From here we go on to argue that Creation should be taught alongside it, but even in this I fear we miss the point. 'Evolutionary theory', Van Til pointed out ninety years ago, 'is only one particular manifestation of this general tendency'. Because of this he writes, 'It is quite hopeless to fight evolution in the public schools and think that by doing so you have got to the bottom of the trouble'. 'The philosophy assumed by evolutionists is a far more dangerous thing than the evidence that they bring'.

It would be good if this were engrained in our mind, that we perceived that this philosophical assumption affects not only a small part, but permeates the whole curriculum of public schools. It is at the beginning, middle and end of every subject taught. God is either dead or irrelevant to it all! This brings us back to the point these articles are designed to make. God calls us to give our children a Christian education and this demands that we recognise this conflict and make a complete break from this educational philosophy and the system that is built upon it, to establish one that does not insult God but places Him at the beginning, middle and end of all that is taught. 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen' (Rom. 11:36).

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# The World in the Church (Part 2)

**Rev John P Thackway**

**W**e know from our own hearts how readily we 'mind earthly things' (Phil.3:19). Moreover, we see in others and ourselves the conformity to this world's fashions that is 'enmity with God' (Jas.4:4). Our great concern is to belong to churches where the Lord can walk among us as people 'delivered from this present evil world' (Gal.1:4) and showing forth his praise (Is.43:21).

Last month, we identified some symptoms to show that the title of these articles is warranted. While a boat is in the water, it goes along safely; if the water is in the boat, serious danger looms. We fear the same is true of today's church. Instead of the church being in the world, the world is too much in the church. Having seen the symptoms, we need to ask how things have come to what they are now. 'Is there not a cause?' Let us in this second article see that there is more than one cause.

## **I. Highlight some causes**

We can identify these in two realms: in society and in the church itself.

### **1) In society**

When this is deeply affected by a sense of God, it is the beginning of moral wisdom (Prov.9:10). This affects the ethical climate in which we live. When respect for the sanctity of civil government, life, marriage, truthfulness prevails then these absolutes elevate standards of decency and order. Even when the church worships and witnesses in such an environment she finds worldliness challenging enough.

However, when society slides into ungodliness, its secularism bombards the church with pressures and stresses that make conformity to it much easier. We live in such a time, as the apostle said we would (2Tim.3:1-5). Given this is so is it not extraordinary that so little is heard about worldliness these days? Our forebears just fifty years ago lived in markedly better times, yet they were very aware of the danger and constantly said so.

How, then, have things become so bad in our society today – and so dangerous to us? We only need consider the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In its second half, some seismic shifts happened, and much of the church has succumbed to these changes.

### **a) Emergence of the youth culture**

This came in the late 1950s. Until then, children growing into adults did not have a separate identity. Older sons and daughters were smaller versions of their parents in dress, tastes, and lifestyle. They were just called a 'young man' or a 'young lady'. It made for a fairly easy navigation through adolescence into adulthood. This was no different in the church, and respect for parents meant respect for the minister and elders, and older Christians.

However, that began to change in the 1950s, and the catalyst was the advent of Rock 'n Roll bands. These were spearheaded by Bill Haley, Elvis Presley – and the young Cliff Richard, who modelled himself on Presley. With this new brand of music

came a new grouping in society – the 'teenager' – aged 13 to 19.

Teenagers had Rock 'n Roll as their music (which exuded rebellion against conventional standards, parents, authority in general), their own distinctive clothes (which fashion designers would exploit to the full), their own hairstyles, lifestyle, language, etc, all designed to shock the older generation. By the 1960s, and the advent of the Beatles and the hippie culture, the scene was set for a massive revolution in morality and every other biblical norm. As David Samuel put it: 'Popular music was no longer simply a medium of light relief, but a battering ram for moral and social change'.

And this change affected the church. 'The Young People' became the concern of everybody. The trouble was, the young people often had the teenage attitudes, which wanted change in local churches. And for fear of losing 'the young people', pastors and congregations pandered to them, flying in the face of Scripture and the wisdom of past generations. It still is astonishing how many seasoned believers can see no further than 'livelier services', 'more people coming in', 'young people using their gifts' – and fail to assess this biblically and in the longer term.

Worse was to come in the 1990s with girl bands like the Spice Girls. These were the most successful and influential since the Beatles. It was the progression from 'teen power' to 'Girl Power': a new *female* attitude. They exploited physical attraction to the full, with bare midriffs, provocative postures, tattooed and pierced bodies, and an obnoxious assertiveness. It produced a generation of pre-teen girls losing their innocence and being sexualised. Teenage magazines fuelled this by pressurising girls to be promiscuous, and female virtue became a laughable anachronism. This too has spilled into the church, making the notion of female modesty, deference to male headship and leadership out of date for modern females.

### **b) The Television**

Again during the 1960s, the BBC and the new ITV created a moral upheaval through satirical programmes that challenged traditional boundaries of taste and decency. A liberalising agenda came into every home with a TV. It was the driving force for the permissive society.

Now endless barbarity, foul language, blasphemy, vulgarity, marital infidelity, lewdness can be seen and heard on TV channels. Added to this are programmes that caricature, marginalise, or rationalise biblical Christianity. Add in programmes that promote Evolution as a fact, and TV amounts to a concerted attack on the fundamentals and morality of real religion. It is the world's audio/visual propaganda machine – insidious and potent.

Dr E S Williams, a respected writer on these matters, has recently highlighted another facet of this onslaught: 'The BBC has admitted that it is biased against Christianity. In a secret meeting, BBC executives admitted that the corporation is dominated by homosexuals. They acknowledge that ethnic

minorities held a disproportionate number of positions and said the BBC deliberately encourages multiculturalism, and is careful to avoid offending the Muslim community, while offending Christians is simply part of the culture. Tossing the Bible into a garbage can on a comedy show would be acceptable, they said, but not the Koran'.

The latest affront is that the BBC has appointed a Muslim as Head of Religion and Ethics! With these things in mind, we should be greatly exercised about our use of the media. Television especially has great potential for worldliness in Christians through its programmes, as have many DVDs and video games.

Undisciplined use of TV will undermine biblical thinking, carnalise the affections, and weaken spiritual desire. It can make us desensitised to sin. Another writer expressed it this way: 'Do you find yourself desiring to watch, and fill your time with, endless television programmes? Do you "have" to see almost every film that comes out, in order to seek physical pleasures or escape life? If so, you are caught up in the world, caught up in "the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes". You cannot live your life through television and cinema, which glorify killing, stealing, gambling, seducing and drinking to excess! It will affect your character and produce a worldly attitude'.

## 2) In the church

The biggest enemy is always within, and, tragically, the church's holiness has been wounded in the house of its friends.

### a) The Billy Graham Crusades

Throughout the 1950s and 60s – and into the 80s – mass evangelism burst upon the church. Coming in contrast to the small numbers and slow progress of local congregations, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association could mobilise huge numbers, provide impressive resources, and sport a good-looking, eloquent figurehead. Suddenly the church was taken notice of by the media, as thousands attended the campaigns and came forward as converts in vast numbers.

However, Graham's preaching was Arminian, with its emphasis upon the emotions and free will. The choir conditioned the masses, the preaching culminated in the call to the front, and those signifying they had been converted were processed accordingly. The 'easy believism' of Charles Finney a century before, which blighted the churches of that day, was repackaged for the 20<sup>th</sup> century and sent to the UK.

Few discerned the new evangelism, and those who raised their voices and pens were often dubbed as 'not interested in winning souls'. Yet, all these faithful men did was to call for God's work to be done God's way – evangelism through the local church. While we concede that numbers were genuinely saved, some even going into the ministry and onto the mission field, yet God seeming to bless does not prove that He is pleased. Moses drew water from the rock when he *smote* it instead of speaking to it, and the people were refreshed – however, that was sin, and it cost Moses and Aaron the land of Canaan (Numb.20:7-13).

The real fruit of the Billy Graham era took longer to be seen. We can see it now very clearly. Many 'converts' joined local churches, and even became office-bearers. However, they were unspiritual people whose hearts were not renewed (Ezek.36:26; Gal.1:14). It was a breed of Christian with worldly wisdom and attitudes that brought things down. Generations of unregenerate church members and officers have taken their toll upon the Lord's work.

After the 1966 Crusade at Earl's Court, London, the evangelist exultantly said, 'It will take a generation to fully assess its impact'. It certainly has, but not in the way he meant it. By the *Mission England* crusades of 1984 and 1989, churches were very different, and these later campaigns made things worse still. By now, the ecumenical nature of the crusades was blatant, including Roman Catholics professing conversion being sent back to their own churches. These were the crusades that produced the wretched *Mission Praise* hymnbook – the forerunner of many like it, with the modern worship that so expresses the ecumenical worldliness afflicting our churches.

(Continued on p.13)

'Undisciplined use of TV will undermine biblical thinking, carnalise the affections, and weaken spiritual desire.'



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## Pastoring the Dying and Bereaved (Part 2)

**Rev Arthur Bentley-Taylor**

**J**ob, for 35 chapters (3-37), wrestles with the problem of suffering at the hand of God Almighty. His friends said much about God, some of which was sound but they were theorizing. Job also said much about God but he wanted more; he constantly appealed directly to God; he wanted a face-to-face meeting with God. And in the end, God granted it to him: 'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind'. How did God counsel Job?

### **Be a man**

God said (38:3-4): 'Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?' The Lord graciously appeared to him and called him to stand and gird his loins and answer Him like a man.

1) God puts Job in his place. Be a man; do not play at being God. Each question God puts to Job puts him in his place. 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?' God is saying, 'I am God; I laid the foundations of the earth; I knew what to do. You were not there. You do not know what to do'. The problem with humanity is that we want to put ourselves in the place of God; we want to do what only God should do or can do aright. It comes down to morality; to who decides what is right and what is wrong. That's the big issue! God told Adam not to eat of the fruit of a tree in the Garden; Adam decided it would make him wise, so he ate. He put himself in the place of God and decided what was right for himself.

So do we. God says, 'You shall not kill'. Millions of unborn babies are murdered each year. Our society discreetly practises euthanasia; infanticide is increasing – doctors are allowed by law not to feed sick babies rejected by parents! We refuse to prosecute those who assist suicide. Soon those who burden society will be encouraged to end their own lives. For years, the sign 'Nil by mouth' has been used to starve certain patients to death. We are not far from doing what Germany did before the Second World War, putting people down like animals.

Leave aside the extreme cases; it goes on all the time in human society. We make our own rules and live by our own standards, so putting ourselves in the place of God. God asks, 'Where were you' at creation? Are you God? Are you Creator? No; let God be God and man be man.

2) Be a man, not an animal. The pivotal verse in Job 38-39 is 38:36, 'Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?' Before it, vv 4-34, God asks Job questions about the created universe, about the sea and its bounds; about the rising sun revealing earth's features; the weather in many aspects and the stars. After it, 38:39-39:30, God asks questions about the animals. The distinguishing characteristic of man is the God-given capacity to think; the potential for wisdom and understanding. Man is made in the image of God for fellowship with God. Unlike the animals, man is a responsible, thinking being. God holds us to be morally accountable to Him.

Be a man; be a thinking, responsible being; act with intelligence

and integrity, dignity and sobriety as man/woman made in God's image. Remember Adam? When God questioned him over his disobedience, he hid from God and blamed his wife! I'm not responsible – she is! That is sub-manly behaviour; it's denying moral responsibility. These days we are experts at passing the buck: blame parents; blame your upbringing; blame circumstances; blame the weather, the taxman, the government – but never play the man and accept responsibility! Yet God calls us each to stand as a man in His presence to answer His questions.

Above all, 38:36, 'Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?' From whom do you derive your intelligence? How can inanimate things produce intelligence? Can a thing made be greater than its creator? Can a non-thinking thing, without wisdom, create a thinking person with wisdom? Surely not! We thinking beings must have originated from a greater Mind! God made man in His own image with the capacity for understanding and wisdom.

How then does God comfort Job? For 37 chapters, Job has wrestled with the problem of suffering and in 38-41 God says nothing about his sufferings! Is there then an answer to the problem of suffering in the book of Job? Yes there is! God speaks about Himself. Brethren, the answer to suffering is God Himself. Therefore speak to them about your God.

### **Speak to them about your God**

Think about it. Let me stimulate your thoughts:

1) God is under no obligation to explain to us why we are suffering. He knows the reason why. It is sufficient for us to know that God most Merciful is the ultimate cause behind all that comes to pass.

2) Job asked the question 'Why?' – 'Why is this happening to me?' It is not wrong to ask the question 'Why?' But God spoke about Himself. God changed the question to 'Who?' When you suffer, you do not need to know the reason why but you do need to know WHO is ultimately behind your troubles – God most Merciful.

3) God tells Job repeatedly that He is God the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Is that the doctrine that you tell those who suffer? Well, No! But it is what God told the suffering Job. And that is the basis for all comfort – that this is God's world which He sustains and over which He reigns, doing His will, achieving His purposes.

4) Job spoke of God as creator of all things. He knew that; he had learnt that; he had assented to that; he had ticked that box. Why then did God state it over and over again? Iain Murray spoke about preaching to the conscience. That is what God is doing! When we preach we make a point and we move on. The people know it, but when God makes a point, He hammers it home until the man cries out with an awakened conscience, 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth' (40:4).

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### **The answer to suffering is God Himself**

Brethren, the answer to the problem of suffering is God Himself. When we suffer, we need God. I do!

Job's friends talked endlessly about God; they theorized about God. Job talked directly to God; he questioned God directly. He cried out for a face to face meeting with God. That is what we need when we are suffering!

Listen to Psalm 23:4: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me'. You are with me! The Good Shepherd is with me! Christ is with me! In the day of trouble, I need Him; I need His felt presence, the reality of God with me.

Haven't you had the experience of reading Job 38-39 or 38-41 and found yourself stunned, overwhelmed; your objections are silenced; your complaints dried up; your sin exposed; your tears flow; you cannot speak because you have experienced God to be God and now you know yourself.

We talk about doctrine endlessly but have we experienced the God of that doctrine? We need an experience of God in relation to every doctrine we claim to believe. We need to know the felt presence of God in connection with the truths we say we believe. In all our afflictions, we need to know the presence of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Walk for a moment on the Emmaus Road. Jesus draws near to comfort two grieving disciples. Before He reveals His own identity, He expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And their hearts warmed within them as He opened to them the Scriptures.

We need that felt presence of Christ, that experience of the life-giving word of Christ quickening our hearts. That is true comfort!

### **You need to experience God**

Brethren, I expound the Scriptures by the grace given to me but I cannot give people the experience of God. Job knew what I am talking about. In 42:5 Job says, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee'. He is not talking about ear-gate and eye-gate and claiming that it is better to see than to hear. That is not the point, though of course it will be best when we see His face, face to face. He is talking about the difference between theorizing about God and experiencing the felt presence of God. Listen to the prophet Isaiah in chapter 43:1-2, 'But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. The Lord goes on to say, 'For I am the Lord thy God Ö I have loved thee ... for I am with thee' (vv3-5). I cannot give people that experience; only the Spirit of God can make God known to them. I count the presence of Jesus Christ the most precious thing in life! When we hear the Word of God in the house of God, the Spirit of God draws near and warms our hearts within us and humbles us and comforts us and teaches us to trust in the Lord; He is my Shepherd King and if He is with me, I am content whatever happens in life.

Notice I have stopped talking about counselling the bereaved. Their suffering grieves me to the heart. I am the mortal man who needs the comfort of the experience of God. Only then can I minister to others with the comfort wherewith I have been comforted of God. We must minister to ourselves before we are able to minister to others.

Through suffering, God puts us in our place as man in the presence of God. I love the refrain that Ezekiel used repeatedly: 'and ye shall know that I am the Lord'. After judgment, after blessing, 'and ye shall know that I am the Lord'. That is what our people need to experience in the day of affliction.

'These days we are experts at passing the buck: blame parents; blame your upbringing; blame circumstances; blame the weather, the taxman, the government – but never play the man and accept responsibility! Yet God calls us each to stand as a man in His presence to answer His questions.'





# News



Above: Alan Wilson presenting the portrait to David & Marion Fraser. Right: The portrait

## David Fraser 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Ewan Wilson

On Saturday, 11th September 2010, the Redstones Hotel in Uddingston, Lanarkshire was the very pleasant venue for a surprise luncheon to mark the 40th anniversary of the Rev David S Fraser in the active ministry of the Free Church of Scotland.

His Shettleston congregation had succeeded in keeping all preparations for the occasion secret from Mr Fraser so when he arrived at the hotel and saw his son-in-law, Matthew he just imagined it to be a great coincidence until he was greeted by around 30 well-wishers from the congregation in the dining room!

A very convivial meal and time of fellowship followed and thereafter elder and art teacher, Mr Alan M Wilson presented an overwhelmed Mr Fraser with an oil-painted portrait of Mr Fraser. There was also a fascinating display of photographs of him from childhood through to his time in Africa as a

missionary. The congregation enjoyed viewing them.

On Sabbath 12th, it was Mrs Marion Fraser's turn to be surprised when the Session Clerk was able to present her with a bouquet of flowers, remarking on the fact that behind every good man there is usually a good woman and that Marion has loyally supported her husband from the outset out in a foreign land and culture (South Africa), then in the tough conditions of Zambia, only to end up in the wilds of Shettleston!

Mr Fraser continues to pursue an energetic ministry in tough conditions and though officially partially-retired, to his congregation and helpers it never feels like it and his personal programme would exhaust many a man half his age! The congregation were delighted to show their affection for both Marion and David in this way.

### Papal Visit Witness

Donald J Morrison

On 16th September 2010 one white-haired old German man of 83 years brought Edinburgh and Glasgow to a standstill. It was an appalling spectacle to witness the extravagant acclaim and adulation afforded to this man in the capital city that was once the heartland of Protestantism. With Scotland celebrating the 450th anniversary of the glorious Reformation his arrival at this time was not a coincidence. If 1560 was 'the greatest year in Scotland's history' then 2010 is bound to be one of the darkest this nation has seen. The deeply disturbing presence of Pope Benedict XVI welcomed by a Protestant Queen in a Protestant country, where multitudes gave their lives in defence of truth and spiritual liberty, bears witness to how far we have fallen as a nation.

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# Desk

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It was not all bad news. There was also good news, which was shared with countless multitudes from all walks of life. It was a real joy to give out some 17,000 items of gospel materials, along with 27 Bibles, to the many thousands who lined the streets of Edinburgh in the morning, and who congregated at Bellahouston Park for the open-air mass later that day. The witnessing outreach was supported by a group of zealous Christians from a variety of evangelical churches. There was a sea of people in both places and it was therefore a wonderful opportunity to reach out to many Roman Catholics and Protestants alike with the gospel of God's saving grace. There were countless conversations with perishing souls, with many interesting contacts made.

There was an interested Roman Catholic man at the prayer meeting in Magdalen Chapel on Wednesday evening and he appeared again on Thursday with the evangelical Christians on Princes Street in Edinburgh, giving out literature! He is fully persuaded that his Catholic convictions are all completely wrong. He was a wonderful witness in giving out tracts and speaking to Roman Catholics about the Biblical truth of God's Word. One person managed to persuade four priests to accept the booklet *'From Tradition to Truth'* written by Richard Bennett, which they slipped into their long robe pockets. When it was explained to them that the booklet was written by a converted RC priest it seemed to arouse their curiosity. Contact was also made with Scotland's First Minister, Mr Alex Salmond, and he gladly accepted a number of gospel tracts which he placed into his pocket. The plea was made to him, 'Please remember, Mr Salmond, that you have a precious never-dying soul, which is destined for eternity. Do not place your

trust in religion, whatever its badges, but rather in the Bible which is true Christianity. It is not Roman Catholic or Protestant beliefs that will save you but faith in Christ alone for salvation. He alone is the way, the truth and the life – there is no other way to heaven'. He heard and he listened, before saying 'Thanks, I will read them' as he left. Many other engaging conversations and deep discussions were entered into with devout and nominal RC's. This afforded the opportunity to share the gospel and present them with a book *'Preparing Catholics for Eternity'*.

In general people were receptive to the literature given out. Many tracts, particularly the titles *'What every Catholic Should Know'* and *'An Urgent Plea to Roman Catholics'* were distributed in large quantities. The police were more sticky and difficult in Glasgow and wanted to pen some of the brethren inside the cordoned area by the main entrance.

After persuasion they were eventually allowed freedom of movement and continued to witness to the masses without further interruption. The only major 'negative' incident was outside one shop, where a person threatened to murder everyone handing out Christian literature and who opposed the Pope's visit.

The Pope has now left Scotland's soil but God's powerful Word and redeeming grace remain. Readers of truth are affected as the powers of light and darkness war on. This is seen in two phone calls which I have received. One enquired, 'What does the righteousness of Christ mean? What does it mean to be an unrighteous person?' The Gospel was given in reply. Another lady expressed outrage about the materials that had been handed out. She was literally foaming at the mouth with vehement anger and threatening remarks. The Word has been given to many and now we trust the Lord's



New College, Edinburgh

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promise in Scripture, 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it' (Is.55:10-11).

Compared to the countless thousands who followed the 'man of sin' in Edinburgh and Glasgow, those who were witnessing for the truth of the gospel were very few. The inscription however on the Reformation Monument in Geneva reminds us that it is not the 'many' God looks at: 'A man with God is always in the majority'. We rejoice also that even the very smallest light shines brightly in the dark. In both cities it can be said, 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined'.

### **New College, Edinburgh, is 'Scarcely Viable'**

*(See Photograph on p.11)*

The New College School of Divinity at Edinburgh University is understood to have had the lowest intake in its 167-year history this year. Just four people, fewer than a third of last year's 14 graduates, have applied. College principal Reverend Professor David Fergusson revealed the figures recently as he pleaded with Kirk members to listen to the 'call' from God to take up the ministry. The recruitment crisis comes at a time when the Kirk is confronted with axing ministers. The Kirk recently agreed to reduce the numbers of ministers by up to 200 over the next four years as they retire, leaving only 1000 – and to bring in part-time unpaid ministers in the future.

New College has the highest intake of Kirk divinity scholars in Scotland. In 2008, across all years, it had 28 students. Trinity College Glasgow had just two students in total, St Mary's College St Andrews four, Christ's College Aberdeen eight and Highland Theological College in Dingwall three. The last remaining Roman Catholic seminary in Scotland, Scotus College on the outskirts of Glasgow, closed last year after too few candidates came forward.

Fergusson said: 'The number of candidates in training is at a worryingly low level. Unless there is a sudden influx we will have numbers here that are scarcely viable'.

The 900 commissioners at the annual Church of Scotland General Assembly in Edinburgh also heard that alternatives to cutting numbers would include a cut of up to 25% in ministers' stipends, which range between £23,000 and £30,000 depending on years of service.

*If New College taught the Gospel as found in the infallible Word of God and the truths of the Reformed faith rather than the waffle of liberalism there might be some hope.*

### **Opposition to Homosexual Ministers**

*Christian Institute*

Attempts to impose homosexual clergy on the Church of Scotland still face 'very strong' opposition within the church, according to media reports. All public discussion by Kirk clergy about homosexual ordination is banned until a Special Commission publishes a report on the subject in 2011. But newspapers report that a secret ballot of 35,000 senior church members has shown that many Church presbyteries are set firmly against the appointment of homosexual ministers. The

Church of Scotland appointed Scott Rennie, a divorced father-of-one who lives with his homosexual partner, as minister of a church in Aberdeen last year.

Commenting on the ballot, an unnamed insider said: 'My sense is that the Commission is in favour of allowing gay ministers but they are getting results that they didn't want to hear'. Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen all showed opposition, according to the survey. A number of members have said they are considering leaving the Church over the dispute. Evangelical ministers have some of the largest congregations in the Church.

Last year a group of like-minded congregations was set up to oppose homosexual ordination in Scotland. The Fellowship of Confessing Churches says any church which becomes a member should prominently display a covenant agreement making clear its commitment to marriage as the proper place for sexual intimacy. It currently lists 59 churches as members. *We are thankful for the stand the Fellowship of Confessing Churches is making in this dark day.*

### **North Korea**

*Barnabas Fund*

Three leaders of an underground church in North Korea have been executed and 20 Christians have been sent to a prison labour camp in Yodok. Sources say the arrests and executions were carried out in mid-May when police raided a house in Kuwal-dong in Pyungung County, Pyongan Province, and arrested 23 believers who were gathered there. The leaders were tried and sentenced to death, and the authorities wasted little time in carrying out the executions.

### **Pakistan Floods**

*Barnabas*

A Barnabas Fund partner, who is assisting with their relief efforts among thousands of Christian families in Pakistan, shared his concern that Islamists will be able to seize political power because of their effective response to the flooding crisis. If this happened, he said, it would make the situation of Christians in Pakistan even worse.

Over 150,000 Christians have been affected by the overwhelming floods that struck Pakistan at the end of July. Millions are struggling to rebuild their lives in a context that the United Nations has rated as the greatest humanitarian crisis in recent history, with numbers of people affected surpassing the combined total of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and the earthquakes in Pakistan in 2005 and Haiti in January this year. The tally of people affected is now up to 20 million. The scene is increasingly desperate, as 1.2 million homes have been destroyed, leaving at least six million people homeless.

- Pray for all those who have lost everything in the flooding; pray that donations to reliable aid agencies would quickly increase so that flood victims do not have to turn to Islamists for help.
- Pray especially for our already-marginalised Christian brothers and sisters at this time, that they may experience hope and comfort in the Lord as they may feel extremely fearful about the future.
- Give thanks for the generosity of Barnabas Fund supporters to our ongoing urgent appeal, which has so far enabled us to provide immediate aid to thousands of Christian families.

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# The World in the Church

(Continued from p.7)

## **b) Celebrity conversions**

At that Earl's Court Crusade in 1966, the pop singer Cliff Richard announced that he had become a Christian. The world was stunned and the phenomenon of celebrity conversions began. This is not to say that singers, actors or sportsmen had never been converted before: they had. However, their new life in Christ was deemed incompatible with their professions and they almost invariably left them. In Cliff's case, it was different. At first, he was minded to leave show business and become a teacher. However, friends advised him not to give up his career – and the rest we know. The decades of personal compromise show, for instance, in his recent autobiography, where he states that '...many of my friends are gay – let's face it, homosexuality has been legal for more than thirty years. For me, the commitment is what counts – and I'll leave the judging to God'.

Since the 1960s, it has become commonplace for 'converted' celebrities to not separate from their tainted professions but to remain there and 'witness'. This trend has undoubtedly been a bad example to others who make them role models, particularly the young. In fact, remaining in such sordid circumstances has tended to deny discipleship to Christ. Take, for example, the rock band U2. Steve Stockman, reviewing a book called *The Spiritual Journey of U2*, writes: 'There are four members in the band, three of whom are professing Christians: Bono (Paul Hewson), The Edge (David Evans), and Larry Mullen. The fourth member, Adam Clayton, is still searching. The band members smoke, drink and swear! Can they be Christians? One way of telling is to see if they have changed and touched other people's lives. Bono is a man who believes that grace and love win through Jesus' death. He said, 'the Jesus Christ I believe in was the man who turned over the tables in the Temple and threw the money changers out'. He does not believe in a faith that is unaligned to social justice, and has certainly proved that in his life'. With such disgraceful examples, is it any wonder that so many are confused about their relationship to the world?

## **c) The Charismatic Movement**

In the 60s and 70s the Charismatic Movement hit the church scene, with its breaking free of God-fearing, biblically-regulated worship. Multiple musical instruments, catchy songs, emphasis on emotions, man-centred and experience-centred praise were declared evidences of 'the Spirit'. Anything else needed 'liberating'. What really happened was this: the moral revolution of the 1960s was paralleled by a spiritual revolution. 'The Swinging Sixties' in the land entered God's house. What the permissive society did for lifestyle *outside* the church, the Charismatic Movement did for worship and life *inside* the church. Far from being the Holy Spirit, it was (and is) simply the spirit of the age.

A shrewd observer of these things, Rob Warner, in his *Reinventing English Evangelicalism* refers to their 'exuberant

singing – the charismatic equivalent of clubbing'. How true this is! Prominent among the new worship leaders is Stuart Townend. He says that influences upon his music include David Bowie, The Beatles, Bob Dylan and Stevie Wonder. And words used in relation to his concerts include 'Gigs, lights, DVDs, CDs, song books' etc. And this they call 'praising God'!

The Charismatic Movement's worldly worship found a mass promoter in the annual Spring Harvest event. Begun in 1979, when 2,800 attended this holiday week 'to learn, laugh and worship', by the 1990s it reached 80,000. It caused endless trouble for churches seeking to remain biblical in their practice. Again Rob Warner: 'Churches were exposed at Spring Harvest to contemporary worship, thus increasing the pressure for traditional worship to give ground in the historic denominations. Many guests came from smaller churches, and for them in particular, worship with several thousand was an inspiring experience ... in the idiom of Radio 2 stadium rock....

The contribution of Graham Kendrick in the first decade of SH was immense ... Kendrick's songs facilitated the shift from the traditional hymn sandwich in many churches.

Yet Warner's book, mentioned earlier, chronicles at the same time the decline of good Christian reading among evangelicals and the near-demise of the Quiet Time!

## **d) Lack of teaching on distinctively Christian duties**

For generations, preaching in evangelical churches has lacked specific focus upon practical areas of Christian living. Noble exceptions exist, but generally too much has just been assumed because of the better days in society and church.

How much preaching, for instance, have we heard on matters such as courtship and marriage, the roles of husband and wife, parents and children, daily work as a divine calling, the character of worship and church fellowship, sanctifying the Sabbath? Yet, in Paul's epistles such areas are covered very fully and clearly (eg Eph.4-6; Phil 3-4; Col.3-4). If Christians are not taught the principles of God's word in these matters, and their application worked out for our day, is it any wonder that things are as worldly as they are?

## **e) An inordinate activism**

The slogan 'Saved to Serve', while expressing a truth, has nonetheless led to the idea that the chief end of our salvation is Christian work. However, Scripture tells us that we were predestined 'to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren' (Rom.8:29). Not service but sanctification is the goal here (Eph.5:25, 26), to be completed in glorification hereafter (v27). When living upon one's activities and service overshadows this, it can become mere carnal exertion. It can be more worldly than spiritual. Let us be sure that in all our labours *for* the Master we spend even more time *with* the Master (Lk.10:42).

(To be Continued)



# Books

## **A Day's March Nearer Home**

Autobiography of J Graham Miller

*Edited by Iain Murray*

Banner of Truth Trust,

hbk, 328pp, £16.00

**B**iographies of ministers who have been used by God are always interesting. Graham Miller had a long and varied life and passed on to be with the Lord in 2008 at the age of ninety-five. So highly was he esteemed that a day of national mourning was appointed in Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides) when he died. And yet his ministry was far from limited to these favoured islands.

Born in New Zealand, he grew up in a manse, and was blessed by the godly influence of his father who had spent his life contending against liberalism. He left school in 1929 at the age of sixteen to work in an office and later began training at night-school to be a lawyer. He later became a barrister and was able to use his training on the mission field. In 1941, while still having a year of his theological training to go, he was ordained a missionary to Tongoa in the New Hebrides because of the need there due to his predecessor having to return home. Here he encouraged the church towards independence. God's Spirit moved and revival spread through the island and to other islands. Returning home for his children's education in 1952 he became minister of Papakura near Auckland. Here again he saw the blessing of God with many conversions and daughter churches being formed. At the end of 1965 he moved to Australia to become principal of the Melbourne Training Institute. After only four years, opposition arose against him for his Calvinism and he resigned. This was followed by a three year appointment as Principal of the new Presbyterian Bible College in the New Hebrides. His final ministry was in St Giles Presbyterian Church in Sydney, from 1974-1980. He and his beloved wife Flora then retired to Wangaratta in Victoria. Preaching continued and he was used to encourage the continuing Presbyterian church in that state. Many books were written including a seven

volume work on the history of the church in the New Hebrides.

This book is very readable and edifying. Even the account of his own and his wife's devotional life in their retirement is profitable. He saw his increasing retirement from public work due to old age as an opportunity for a new ministry of intercession.

I was a bit surprised at his involvement with the Billy Graham Crusades and, for a Calvinist, his lack of criticism of the invitation system. I was also surprised at his involvement in and appreciation of the Keswick Convention and its offshoots in New Zealand. There is no mention of the characteristic Keswick holiness theology with its idea of the second blessing, though obviously because of his Reformed theology he would reject these. We admire Miller's faithful life-long stand against liberalism and ecumenism.

*William Macleod*

## **While the Bridegroom Tarrys,**

*R B Kuiper*

Banner of Truth Trust,

pbk, 143pp, £6.25

**T**his book, by the well-known author of *God Centred Evangelism* and *The Glorious Body of Christ*, is a reprint of a series of 10 sermons on 'the signs of the times' published in 1919, following the end of the Great War. Kuiper was at that time the respected pastor of a Christian Reformed Church congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The sermons deal interestingly and challengingly with what the preacher considered relevant issues arising from those times. The sermons were directed to events in the world pointing towards the coming again of the Saviour. There is certainly here a fearless application of truth to the church and society. The sermons are set in the context of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; something evident in the events alluded to. Despite the passage of time they do provide insights into permanent principles of abiding relevance.



There are, however, not a few detectable and controversial points found here and there in the book. For example, Kuiper speaks in one place of hopes for the extension of missionary work after the First World War and the movements bringing nations together. In view of the undermining of so much missionary work in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through liberalism, and the failure of the League of Nations to prevent the Second World War, Kuiper's views now seem rather naïve at these points. This is true also of his comments on Turkey and the Jewish return to Palestine. Of Turkey he comments that, 'Turkey, the political backbone of Mohammedanism ... has been broken'. Of the potential return of the Jews to Palestine he states rather optimistically: 'Add the fact that for some time already the Jewish prejudice against Christianity has been showing signs of breaking down'. In another place Kuiper speaks of the 'ignominious defeat' of Germany (in the First War) and calls it 'the most complete victory ever gained in the history of human warfare'. One cannot help but think of how hollow such a comment now sounds given the huge loss of life *on both sides* of that conflict. Inevitably such statements will detract from the over-all usefulness of the book.

Besides such matters of social history, there are one or two doctrinal matters in the book which will not commend themselves to all Reformed readers. For example, there is his denial of post-millennialism as unbiblical (p44), and his view that the Papacy 'is assuredly not *the* Antichrist' (p60). These positions are explicitly or implicitly found throughout the sermons. Kuiper believed that the Antichrist would only appear towards the very end of human history, a view that seems to be contradicted by 2 Thessalonians 2 (the text used by the *Westminster Confession* in identifying the Antichrist with the Papacy).

There are good things in this book. The sermons do provide a strong message to the world and to the church, albeit limited by some of the conjectural and debatable issues mentioned in this review. These, unfortunately, tend to render the book a bit of a curio.

*John W Keddie*

### **Postmillennialism – An Eschatology of Hope**

*Keith A Mathieson*

Presbyterian and Reformed,  
pbk, 287pp, £10.95

I read the first nine chapters (138 pages) of *Postmillennialism – An Eschatology of Hope* thinking that this was a brilliant book. The author goes through the Old Testament and then the New Testament showing how the Scriptures predict a wonderful age of world-wide blessing ahead. God's covenant with Abraham, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' (Gen. 12:3), promises a day when not just a remnant but a mighty multitude throughout the world will be saved. So many will be saved that all the families will be called 'blessed'. In the Psalms we read, 'All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee' (Ps. 86:9). This cannot just mean a few from the nations but rather the majority. Daniel speaks of the stone that becomes a mighty mountain which fills the earth (Dan. 2) and is referring to the kingdom of God. Daniel 7 speaks of the ascension of the Son of man, His coming to the Ancient of days, 'and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,

that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion' (Dan. 7:14). Many other passages reinforce the argument. Coming into the Gospels Christ taught us to pray, 'Thy kingdom come' and adds words which explain what that means: 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven'. This cannot refer to the eternal kingdom as it speaks of earth and when Jesus encourages us to pray this prayer we can be sure that it will happen. Paul assures us that he must reign 'till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death' (1 Cor. 15:25-26). This cannot refer just to heaven because it is followed by the destruction of death. These and hundreds of other passages are used to show that Christ by the power of His Spirit will reign from heaven, where He was crowned on His ascension, till all are subdued by Him. This does not mean of course an end of sin and temptation but rather that Christ's conquest over the world shall be so full that the whole world will be regarded as His kingdom. What optimistic Christians we should be!

But then I came to his treatment of the Book of Revelation. He takes a Preterist approach which means that he refers the prophecies of this book to events which happened leading up to and at the destruction of Jerusalem (70AD). This was a huge disappointment. Despite the arguments he gives it should be noted that the Book of Revelation is addressed to the churches in Asia Minor rather than those in Palestine. It appears to have been written at a later date (around 90AD) with several of the churches in Asia severely backslidden, speaks in world-wide terms, and tells of awesome universal judgments and destructions which cannot refer simply to the destruction of Jerusalem from which most Christians appear to have escaped. Terrible as was the cruelty of the Romans to the Jews yet many of them survived and were able to mount another massive revolt in 135AD under Bar-Kokhba. Matthew 24 certainly should be interpreted in a Preterist way. That passage itself is answering the question as to when the temple will be destroyed and Jesus Himself says 'This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled' (Mt. 24:34). However the Roman destruction of Jerusalem is scarcely the sort of international, universal and in all ages catastrophe of which Revelation speaks. In an appendix Mathieson deals with 2 Thessalonians 2 and the 'man of sin'. Again he takes a Preterist approach and applies this to Nero. Yet Nero did not sit 'in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God' (v4). He rejects a full Preterist approach in a lengthy appendix. He demonstrates the weaknesses of the premillennialist and amillennialist positions.

For Mathieson, the millennium began with the first coming of Christ and will continue till He comes again. Unlike the amillennialists who argue that good and evil go on together and that things will get worse and worse he argues that things will get better and better as Christ bit by bit overcomes His enemies. Mathieson's book is very helpful in much of what it says especially in interpreting the Old Testament, Gospel and Epistles. It would be wonderful if someone would take the good work he has done and complete it with a solid treatment of 2 Thessalonians (seeing the Antichrist as the papacy) and expounding Revelation as a book dealing with some past events but also with events due to take place before and at the Second Coming.

*William Macleod*

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## Remembering the 1859 Revival in Scotland (Part 2)

**Rev Maurice Roberts**

### **The Duchess of Gordon**

**T**he Duchess of Gordon began her life as Elizabeth Brodie. She was born in London on June 20, 1794. Her family were in the Church of England. She became Marchioness of Huntly in due course and came to Scotland in 1815. Wearied eventually with the ceaseless round of empty pleasures which characterised the lives of the idle rich, she turned to her Bible and found Christ.

In 1844 she had become a much more serious Christian. Like other aristocratic ladies of the past she had a zeal to serve Christ. After 1857 she opened her Castle Park for preaching meetings and erected marquees for large prayer gatherings. Sometimes as many as 10,000 were present. She died in 1864. The Duchess not only employed such preachers as Duncan Matheson and Hector MacPherson, but she actively encouraged Grant of Arndilly, Reginald Radcliffe and a large number of other evangelists in their itinerant labours in that period. But of greater significance still, she was instrumental in the awakening of Brownlow North, whom 'Rabbi' John Duncan was later to call an 'untrained theologian' and a 'born theologian'. The Free Church of Scotland, in a unique gesture, recognised Brownlow North in its General Assembly as an 'evangelist' extraordinary. The 'overture' to recognise Brownlow North was laid before the General Assembly of that Church in May 1859 and bore, among many others, the signatures of Robert S. Candlish, George Smeaton and James Begg. The recognition was only just. North was to prove one of the most powerful preachers Scotland ever had. His service to Christ in this period was exceptionally important.

### **Brownlow North**

Brownlow North was a grand-nephew of Lord North, Prime Minister to George III. He was born on January 6, 1810. His mother had taught him to pray but he soon developed worldly habits and turned to a life of gambling and shooting. He might have got through his fortune speedily had not God aroused him to eternal things at the age of 44. The earliest awakenings in his soul are traceable to a conversation with the Duchess of Gordon.

This is how the Duchess herself described the event: 'He was staying in Huntly, engaged in shooting and utterly careless and ungodly. Some friends of his wrote to me, asking me to take some notice of him, with the view to withdrawing him from his evil ways and companionships. I promised to do so, and gave him an invitation to dinner. When we were at dinner, he sat beside me and suddenly said to me with much gravity, 'Duchess, what should a man do who has often prayed to God and never been answered?' I lifted up my heart to God to teach me what to say. I looked him quietly in the face and said, so as not to be overheard by others, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas.4:3). His countenance changed, he became very greatly moved, was very quiet during the evening and thanked me ere he left'.

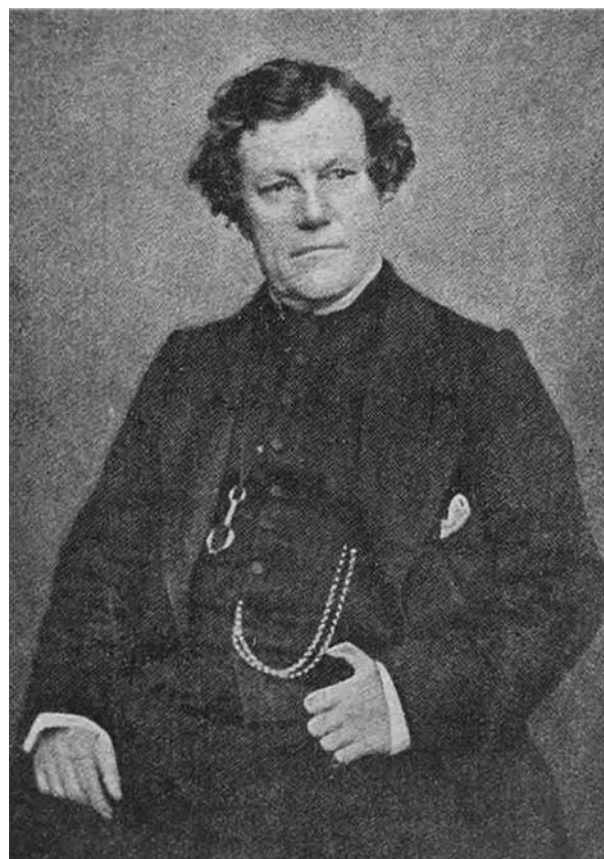
This serious impression was deepened not long after by the death of his son, also named Brownlow, and through a book lent to him by the Duchess. The effect was that he determined to 'change his life' and to enter the Church of England's ministry. He decided to consult his friend, Frederic Robertson (later of Brighton), who was then an undergraduate at Oxford and he accordingly entered Magdalen Hall as a Gentleman Commoner. He was not yet converted however and he later returned to a life of sport. But in 1854, when he was almost 45 years of age, he was awakened and powerfully brought to Christ, as the following narrative in his own words relates:

'It pleased God in the month of November, 1854 one night when I was sitting playing at cards, to make me concerned about my soul. The instrument used was a sensation of sudden illness, which led me to think that I was going to die. I said to my son, 'I am a dead man; take me upstairs'. As soon as this was done, I threw myself down on the bed. My first thought then was, Now, what will my forty-four years of following the devices of my own heart profit me? In a few minutes I shall be in hell, and what good will all these things do me, for which I have sold my soul? At that moment I felt constrained to pray, but it was merely the prayer of the coward, a cry for mercy. I was not sorry for what I had done, but I was afraid of the punishment of my sin. And yet still there was something trying to prevent me putting myself on my knees to call for mercy, and that was the presence of the maid-servant in the room, lighting my fire. Though I did not believe at that time that I had ten minutes to live, and knew that there was no possible hope for me but in the mercy of God, and that if I did not seek that mercy I could not expect to have it, yet such was the nature of my heart and of my spirit within me, that it was a balance with me, a thing to turn this way or that, I could not tell how, whether I should wait till that woman left the room, or whether I should fall on my knees and cry for mercy in her presence. By the grace of God I did put myself on my knees before that girl, and I believe it was the turning-point with me. I believe that if I had at that time resisted the Holy Ghost – of course, I cannot say, for who shall limit the Holy Ghost? – but my belief is that it would have been once too often. By God's grace I was not prevented. I did pray, and though I am not what I should be, yet I am this day what I am, which at least is not what I was. I mention this because I believe that every man has in his life his turning-point. I believe that the sin against the Holy Ghost is grieving the Spirit once too often'.

Scarcely less wonderful is the way in which he was first led to begin to preach. The incident is related by his biographer, K. Moody-Stuart: 'He had gone up to see his beloved mother, now rejoicing over the conversion of her prodigal, her long prayed for, and now penitent son, and when in London he went on a Sunday afternoon to see a Morayshire young man, who had been appointed secretary to a Young Men's Christian Institute. This young man had himself been converted in a sudden and

remarkable manner; and, filled with zeal for God and love to souls, used to spend his Sunday afternoons in street preaching. When Mr North called on him he was just preparing to visit one of his stations situated at Kings Cross and asked Mr North to accompany him. They went together. The young man took up his station at his accustomed corner, and after devotional exercises began to address a promiscuous but not very numerous assembly. His words did not tell, and were received at first with indifference, and soon with angry opposition and a torrent of the foulest blasphemy. Mr North was beginning to doubt the wisdom of thus casting pearls before swine and giving occasion to the worst blasphemy he had ever listened to, when several voices were heard calling upon him to speak. 'We'll hear that stout man with the dark eyes'. Thus called on, he felt constrained to speak. Instantly every eye was fixed on him. He riveted and retained the attention of all'.

Such was the improbable start of his life-work as a great evangelist. Once begun, he never stopped preaching. His early labours were in the North East, in and around Dallas. Here he preached in congregations of the Free Church of Scotland and elsewhere. But he was to become an evangelistic preacher of exceptional power. Before long his fame was so widespread and his popularity and usefulness so great that he was being compared to George Whitefield. His zeal and service only ended with his death in 1875, twenty years later. In the intervening years he was instrumental in bringing hundreds and, more probably, thousands, to Christ.



Brownlow North

## Remittances - September 2010

	2010 Sep	2010 Total	2009 To Sep
<b>Presbytery of Inverness</b>			
Aberdeen	900	9,179	7,932
Duthil-Dores	1,240	15,466	17,374
Inverness	5,000	25,000	23,000
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,600	14,344	12,556
<b>Total Inverness</b>	<b>8,740</b>	<b>63,989</b>	<b>60,861</b>

<b>Northern Presbytery</b>			
Assynt & Scourie	0	563	2,325
Brora	1,500	15,692	13,253
Kiltearn	1,800	16,200	16,200
Tarbat	900	7,223	8,022
<b>Total Northern</b>	<b>4,200</b>	<b>39,677</b>	<b>39,800</b>

<b>Southern Presbytery</b>			
Arran	279	5,228	4,814
Ayr	200	1,748	613
Dumfries	0	0	0
Edinburgh	4,800	25,671	23,079
Glasgow - Partick	2,000	23,000	22,000
Glasgow - Shettleston	1,500	14,143	7,400
Glasgow - Knightswood	2,230	19,294	18,424
Rothsay	0	147	73
<b>Total Southern</b>	<b>11,009</b>	<b>89,231</b>	<b>76,403</b>

<b>Outer Hebrides Presbytery</b>			
Cross	1,814	16,900	17,667
Harris - Leverburgh	1,100	10,758	9,774
Harris - Scalpay	1,700	17,500	14,821
Knock & Point	1,100	10,973	8,200
North Uist	1,000	10,278	8,641
Stornoway	7,578	60,610	52,871
<b>Total Outer Hebrides</b>	<b>14,292</b>	<b>127,019</b>	<b>111,975</b>

<b>Presbytery of Skye &amp; Lochcarron</b>			
Bracadale	1,000	9,607	9,688
Duirinish (Waternish)	500	3,500	3,600
Glenelg & Arnisdale	177	1,520	1,448
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	0	7,646	12,562
Lochalsh & Glenshiel	270	4,717	4,889
Poolewe & Aultbea	660	7,590	6,972
Ullapool	0	400	0
Portree	1,200	10,800	10,800
Snizort	1,200	13,243	11,033
Strath	0	2,037	4,074
<b>Total Skye/Lochcarron</b>	<b>5,006</b>	<b>61,060</b>	<b>65,066</b>

<b>Total Congregations</b>	<b>43,247</b>	<b>380,976</b>	<b>354,106</b>
Other Donations	4,776	14,242	20,738
Legacy	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48,023</b>	<b>395,219</b>	<b>374,844</b>
Including Gift Aid		49,344	22,121

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# Letter from Zambia

## Rev Dr Heinrich Zwemstra

### Dear Friends,

*'I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing'* (John 15:5).

These words of Jesus are a special encouragement for each Christian. They assure us that everything is **for** God and everything is **from** God. We receive everything **from** God to bear fruit, and by bearing fruit we live **for** His glory. With these words we encourage the students who work in difficult circumstances and live in isolated places.

### Visit to student

Heinrich had the privilege of visiting a student who recently completed his three years of studies. Heinrich left at 7:00 in the morning and it took him 3 hours to drive 100km because of the bad road. The service started at 10:30 and continued for two and a half hours. In this time there was a lot of singing, prayers, Bible reading and preaching. Heinrich preached for more than an hour (with an interpreter) and the congregation listened attentively. Afterwards he also had the opportunity to speak to the congregation.

After the service everybody greets each other. The children touch him because they want to know what a white man feels like. They are also very interested in the vehicle and get in to drive the 2km to the student's house even though they didn't really want to go there. At the house they waited for a meal of *nshima* (porridge) and chicken to be prepared. During this time Heinrich used the opportunity to talk to the student about his life and work. Later in the afternoon he drove back, thinking about this student who faithfully came to the college every week by bicycle. He used the short cut but it is still 70km.

### Winter

We are now in the third term at the College. This is also the warm season. At the end of July the winter blew past us. Really! We had some windy days! We do not experience the winter as very cold, but for the locals the picture is different. Shivering children at the children's ministry and Nelson sitting very close to the fire, remind us that they do not live in nice warm houses. Their bathrooms and kitchens are outside. They do not have a lot of warm clothes and some of them do not even have a blanket. The orphans especially suffer a lot. We realise again that we have a lot to be grateful for!

We have learned that in a very practical manner. We were complaining about the electricity. In Zambia we have load-sharing instead of load-shedding. There is not enough power, so we share the power! Sometimes in the day our share is 150 Volts (instead of 220V). With that you can switch on a light (not a fluorescent light, because they need 220V to start), you can boil water in the kettle very slowly and the fridge works. In the afternoons or in the evenings after 21:00 we can use

the washing machine. But then the power went off for two whole weeks! We are glad that we have a good generator so that we could still pump water and have lights in the evenings. But we had to plan very carefully to make sure we have fresh food, clean clothes and warm water. Now we are not complaining any more.

### College Break

We want to tell you what we do when the College has a break between terms. We are very happy about these breaks, because it gives us time for administrative work, preparation and other tasks on the mission. During the break we went to Lusaka for a few days. While we were there Nelrie turned 5 and she was very excited, because she had a birthday party with the children there.

For the rest of the break Jacomien and the children continued with school. Anel is getting used to our routine now, but we still struggle to keep up with hers! She joins us in school and sometimes she is the star of the class, but other days she can upset everything. Cobus is working hard on his Grade I work while Nelrie is doing some pre-school activities. She is very eager to learn and will sometimes try to work with Cobus.

### Our school

While Jacomien was home-schooling during the break, Heinrich was cycling from one place to another. Why? To adjust the pump of the borehole: to make sure the printer and copy machine keep on working; to add locks to the doors of the college buildings after someone realized that it was very easy to break them; to prevent the fires from destroying our fields; to make sure the work at the old library continues (we are changing it into a guest room); and to fix an electrical cable that looked like the root of a tree for someone who was digging a trench. Heinrich and Phil had a fight with bees, because the bees did not want to share the honey they made. We are not exactly sure who won the fight. The men were in a lot of pain, but the bees paid with their lives. The good news is that we got very nice honey a week later.

### Women

In July we had a very successful women's meeting. The meeting was for two days. During this time we have Bible Study (with the women alone and together with their husbands), we talk about medical issues and we do a craft. There is also time for singing and fellowship.

### Conference

The first week after the break (16-20 August) we held a conference for church leaders. This time it was not at the College but in a town about 80km from here. Our goal was to reach church leaders in that area and to encourage pastors to train at the College. 95 leaders attended this conference. It was a blessed conference and also very educational (for the pastors and for us). The theme was: 'The Church and the Offices in the Church'. Cees spoke about the church and

Heinrich about the offices in the church. There were a lot of questions and discussions. Rev Charles Zulu (missionary of the Reformed Church Pretoria in Lusaka) was also part of this conference. He and a pastor from Petauke (a graduate of our College) spoke about church planting. The Lord gives us wonderful opportunities to proclaim the gospel without fear of persecution.

Pray for us, that whenever we open our mouths, words may be given us so that we will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which we are ambassadors. Pray that we may declare it fearlessly, as we should (according to Ephesians 6:19-20).

**Christian greetings,**

***Heinrich, Jacomien, Cobus, Nelrie and Anel***



'Being confident of this very thing,  
that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

**Philippians 1:6**