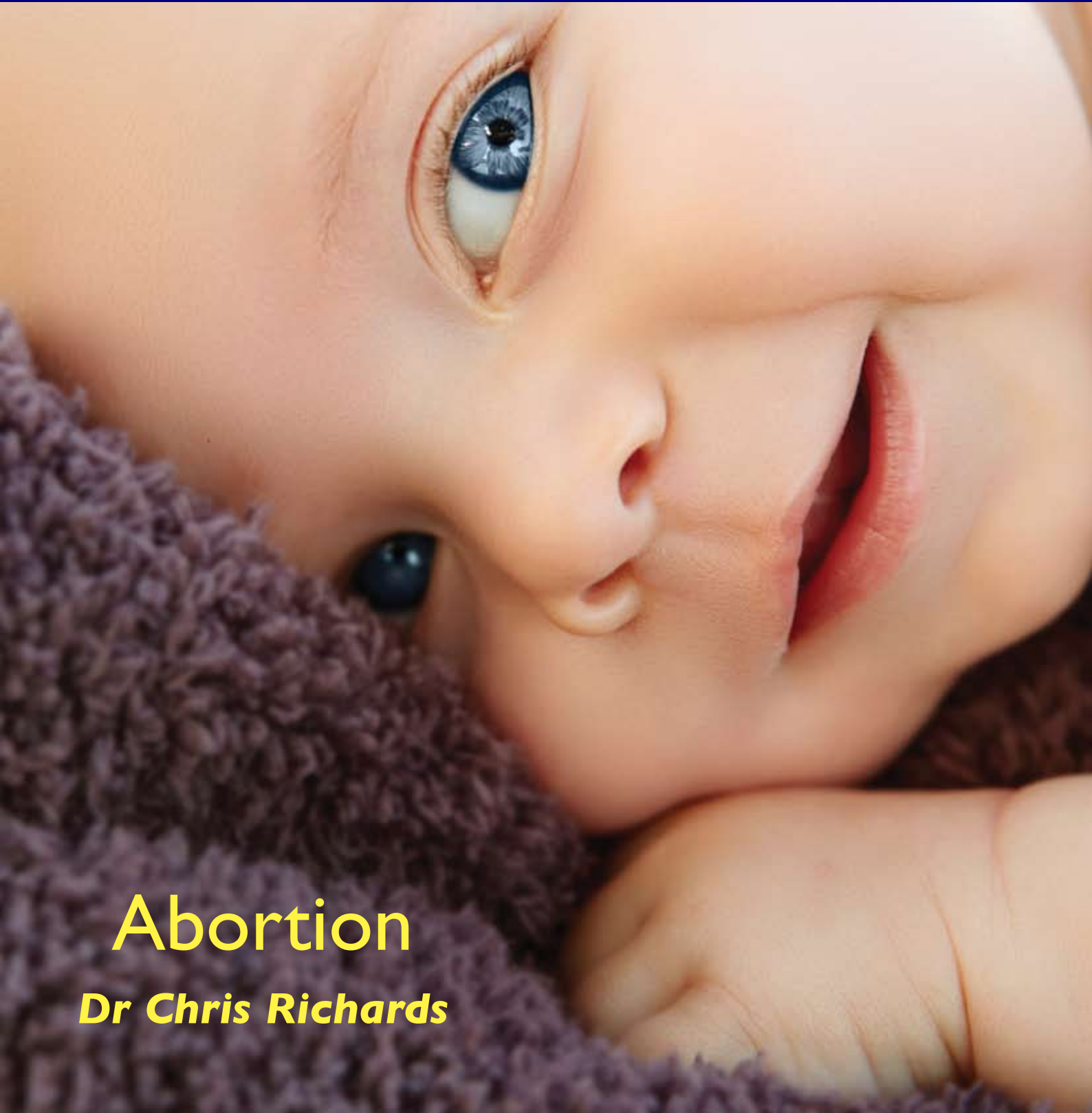


Free Church **Witness**



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Ten Reasons to Rejoice

Why are so many Christians dour and depressed? They should be the happiest people in the world. Constant mournfulness does not glorify God and is a poor witness to our fellowmen. Thomas Brooks said, 'Every murmurer is his own martyr; he is a murderer: he kills many at once, his joy, his comfort, his peace, his rest, his soul'.

When only half way through his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul wrote, 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord' (Phil.3:1). Two more chapters follow. Yet it appears that this was so much on his mind that he gave out a 'finally' when he started to deal more particularly with rejoicing. Already he had spoken several times of joy. In his initial greeting he stated: 'Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now' (Phil. 1:4-5). He said he was willing to continue in this world 'for your furtherance and joy of faith' (1:25). He told them even if he died as a martyr to, 'joy and rejoice with me' (2:18). He knew that Epaphroditus' coming to Philippi after his serious illness would cause them to rejoice (2:28). But now at last he gets properly into the subject of joy. Later he exhorts them, in a summing up and reinforcing way: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice' (4:4).

In this article I would like to give ten reasons, drawn from the context, why the Christian should rejoice.

1. Christ is Lord

Notice that we are to rejoice 'in the Lord'. The fact that Jesus is Lord is stressed from the start of the Epistle. In chapter 2 he relates how Christ who humbled Himself to death will be exalted to that point where all will bow before Him and 'confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (2:11). The Philippians are hated and persecuted by Jews and Romans but they should rejoice that Jesus is Lord. Satan, the world and the flesh tempt the Christian but they can be sure 'that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ' (1:6). 'The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice' (Ps.97:1). As one preacher once said, this is the reason to rejoice and there is no other reason. We do not live in a world of chance and fate, but rather Christ is in control and is working all things for our good (Rom.8:28). Are you rejoicing that Christ is Lord?

2. Christ has accomplished salvation

We are all by nature sinners and on the way to hell. Christ 'being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (2:6-8). All that divine justice required for our salvation He did. In His great love He took our sins and punishment, died on the cross being made a curse for us so that we would be saved from God's wrath and curse. Having finished the work

He rose again. What a cause for rejoicing! Salvation has been accomplished. Rejoice in the Lord!

3. Christ gives us His righteousness

The Jews had been God's special people and for so long salvation was largely limited to them. The Gentiles were despised as dogs. False teachers were troubling the Philippians asserting that they required to be circumcised and to keep the ceremonial law to be saved. Paul responds by saying that there was much of which he could boast: 'Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless' (3:5-6). Few could claim what he claimed but rather than rejoice in these things he asserts that he will rejoice in the Lord: 'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (3:7-9). He puts no faith in his own righteousness but only in the righteousness of Christ imputed to him and received by faith alone. He is not saved by works but by the free gift of salvation. Rejoice in the Lord and the righteousness we have from Him.

4. Christ enters an amazing relationship with us

A relationship with the Muslim God is impossible because he is exalted and far away. Judaism knows no personal relationship with God either, but simply a performance of traditions and penitence. In Roman Catholicism a relationship with priests and the Virgin Mary is offered. But in true Christianity there is one Mediator between God and men, the Lord Jesus Christ. Essentially the true Christian religion is a loving, knowing and relating to Christ. Paul's great ambition is 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death' (3:10). He wants to 'apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus' (v12) and to win Christ (v8) and that is to have a living relationship with the Lord Jesus. We have that only when we are born again and are united to Christ, having His Spirit living in us. Rejoice in your enjoyment of the Lord!

5. Christ provides us with a great future

Paul encourages the Philippians to 'press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' (3:14). The prize has been earned by Christ. It is all of grace. The citizenship of the Christian 'is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself' (3:20-21). Rejoice in Christ the Lord who is preparing a place for us where we will be made

perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity. The best is yet to be – hell-deserving but heaven-enjoying.

6 Christ brings us into a wonderful family

Christ, the Son of God, became the Son of Man that we might be made the children of God. We belong to one another: 'Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved' (4:1). We were enemies full of self-love, jealousy and hatred towards others, and on the way to a hell of hate but the Lord changed us. Now all Christians are brethren in the one family and so 'I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord' (4:2). Godly women, daughters of the King, should not fall out. Act as the wonderful Lord's family.

7 Christ takes away all our worries

All of us are troubled by worries – our health problems, work problems, financial problems, family problems and many more. But rejoice in the Lord because there is a wonderful answer: 'Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God' (4:6). Bring your cares to Christ in prayer. Pour out your troubles to Him. As Lord He has the answer. Let joy fill your heart as you leave your burdens on His almighty shoulders.

8 Christ gives peace

The most essential peace is peace with God. He is angry with sinners every day and the wrath of God is something we cannot endure. Praise Him! God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (2Cor.5:19). Christ gives us peace. We may have this peace yet not feel it through our unbelief. Another need is contentment – being at peace in our circumstances.

It is the opposite of covetousness and flows from the peace which we have with God. Paul states: 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' (Phil.4:7). Here is a peace which is rich indeed. It is so great that our minds cannot grasp it. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace' (Gal.5:22). Rejoice in the Lord who gives us peace!

9. Christ gives victory

The Apostle says, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me' (Phil.4:13). He had suffered hunger, imprisonment and pain but was enabled to endure. Whatever troubles would come his way he was confident in the One in whom he trusted. He knew he would achieve all kinds of victories. 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us' (Rom.8:37). Rejoice in the Lord!

10. Christ supplies all our needs

Paul in prison had received a wonderful gift of provisions from the Philippians: 'I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God' (Phil.4:18). He rejoiced in this not so much out of any sense of need which he had but rather as it expressed the Christian love of that church and was a demonstration of God's grace in their lives. He assures them in return: 'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus' (4:19). The Christian will never be left in need. What is good for us the Lord will give. We may want certain things which we don't have but if they will be beneficial to us the Lord will ensure that we receive them. This verse is an amazing blank cheque for our needs. Rejoice in the Lord who gives you all you need in this life and the next!

'All of us are troubled by worries. But rejoice in the Lord because there is a wonderful answer:

Bring your cares to Christ in prayer. Pour out your troubles to Him. As Lord He has the answer. Let joy fill your heart as you leave your burdens on His almighty shoulders.'



The Christian's Response to an Encroaching State (Part II)

Rev David Silversides

Last month Mr Silversides explained the Biblical view of the State.



The Current Exaggeration of the Role of Civil Government

Firstly: exaggeration or expansion of the role of the civil power is inevitable when men forget God

A godless society is inclined to enlarge the importance of most things in order to paper over the gaping hole that godlessness leaves. Where God is ignored, that is the living God who speaks in Holy Scripture, then everything becomes out of proportion. This is true of everyday things. People's homes are no longer simply places to live in comfortably but become objects of endless pride and vanity beyond anything that relates to comfort or convenience. In the realm of sport, people will go to immense lengths in their devotion. Instead of sport being a diversionary recreation, it becomes a vehicle of idolatry. They idolise their favourite football players or other sports personalities. The forgetfulness of God must lead to a disproportionate place being given to other things.

This applies to civil government. In the absence of the fear of God, civil government becomes wildly extended in its role and expected range of cures for all ills. If you want an illustration of that, you need go no further than the run-up to the election of President Obama in the USA. His election to the presidency was spoken of as bringing in a new era and all our problems, or all America's problems at least, were going to be solved. Even if Obama was a good President (which we frankly do not believe he is), he could never have fulfilled the expectations that many people had of him. And that is why this phrase turns up, 'What are they going to do about it?' Exaggeration or disproportionate expectation of civil government is inevitable where godlessness prevails.

Secondly: subtraction and addition to the role of civil government go together as a general rule

It is self-evident that the government of the United Kingdom is not punishing evil in anything like a Biblical manner. Its definition of evil is wrong and punishment is rather feeble, to say the least. Murderers are not put to death and we all know that all manner of crimes receive a very minimal response at the hand of the legislature and judiciary. This subtraction from the God-given role of punishing evil goes hand in hand with addition. If evil-doing is not adequately punished or not punished at all, then it is hardly surprising if an increasing

number of measures, functions, 'initiatives' and quangos appear in an effort to compensate for the dreadful effects of this failure to punish evil.

Thirdly: the part played by social conditioning in explaining bad human behaviour is given excessive prominence when God, the Scriptures and God's definition of evil, are ignored

Crime is seen, not as the outworking of sin because man has rebelled against God, but as due to physical, psychological and social factors. It all comes down to factors working on people rather than anything essentially corrupt within them. In order, therefore, to cure this anti-social behaviour, there must be adjustment of order; there must be changes made in those various circumstances that act upon people and which allegedly cause anti-social behaviour. This is not to deny, of course, that some circumstances bring out the sin of man more than others, but the denial of Biblical Christianity means that all has to be explained in terms of external influences or at least this together with internal physical elements in the person's make-up, since the existence of the soul is denied.

Fourthly: monitoring of the population with the aim of preventing crime is substituted for punishment of crime

The idea is to create the conditions which will make people good and law-abiding and therefore there is need to monitor much of society and its activities in order to know how to adjust circumstances to produce the desired effect. By contrast, Scripture actually does maintain the deterrent aspect of punishment, though this is not the only reason for it. In Deuteronomy 13:10-11, speaking of the idolater, we read, 'And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you'.

The question of the extent of the obligation to reproduce the penalties of the Old Testament is a big one and we shall not enter into that here. Suffice to say, our own view is that many of the penalties (especially the death penalties) in the Old Testament were a mode of church excommunication rather than purely civil punishment and therefore not directly applicable as a template for purely civil penalties today. The point here is, however, that the deterrent aspect is not dismissed in the Word of God, not even in New Testament

church discipline, although such church discipline aims to be remedial for the offender in the first instance (and does not involve the death penalty), 'Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear' (1Tim.5:20). Both civil punishment and church discipline are ultimately to be done because the Lord requires it, but the deterrent aspect is not irrelevant.

When prevention of unacceptable behaviour by social conditioning and monitoring of the whole of society is dominant, then punishment of crime recedes into the background. This stimulates a cycle. The minimising of punishment increases crime and increases the perceived need to engage in further social adjustments and the increase of governmental monitoring and surveillance of human activity in general. It is virtually inevitable, therefore, that government will become more intrusive when the fear of God is absent. The awareness of God-given authority within His appointed limits is not in place and so the expansion of power by Government results. Because the thought process of the population must be moulded and lifted up, it is thought, to a better level, the behaviour of the populace is monitored to steer the people in what is regarded as the right direction as to their thought-patterns and behaviour. An unbelieving populace can be all too ready to accept this and approve the expansion of the role of the state and even if some begin to see the danger, it is too few or too late: power ceded to the state is not easily recovered.

This partly explains why governments tend not to like home schooling, for example, because the schools act as a means of monitoring the children in order to trace potential parental wrongdoing. But generally speaking, an army of social workers tries to forestall crime rather than the police arresting and the judiciary significantly punishing evildoers. (This is not to disparage all that is done by social workers.)

Fifthly: we need to be aware of the Trojan-horse method of encroachment

This involves the use of noble-sounding language to justify harmful, ungodly and encroaching legislation.

'Equality' or 'diversity' agenda

One example of this is the 'equality' or 'diversity' agenda. We would not choose to dwell on these things, but it would be madness to ignore the fact that sexual morality, or the lack of it, is one of the major areas of difficulty for the people of God in this country at present. Under the old pretence, 'Ye shall be as gods' (Genesis 3:5), man is still trying to be independent of God and refusing to take God at His word and so he 'does his own thing'. So much within our nation can be explained when we grasp this; the idea abounds that independent man is competent to judge what is lawful to man because he is competent to judge what is harmful to man.

Gone is the idea that anything is wrong because God says so. Gone is even the idea that anything is wrong because it is repulsive to nature. The only rule that now seems to govern

sexual conduct is that of adult human consent. So paedophilia is criminalised, rightly so of course, but only because a child is deemed unable to give informed consent. Do we understand how low we have come? The fact that the paedophile's behaviour is as instinctive to him as the homosexual's behaviour is to himself doesn't seem to be allowed to come into the picture. The homosexual's instincts have a 'right' of expression whereas the paedophile's do not. The difference is because one involves only consenting adults whereas the other does not. In other words, the rights of God, who condemns both, are not mentioned. Even the self-evident and God-given distinction between male and female is no longer decisive. Man sees himself as competent to decide what is harmful and, on that basis alone, differentiation is made between what instinctive behaviour must be criminalized and what need not. 'God is not in all his thoughts' (Psalm 10:4).

No longer does homosexuality bring disapproval; even the older generation amongst the ungodly are falling over themselves to show that they are not behind the times and are tolerant of things that they would have found disgusting in their youth. Above all, it seems, one must avoid the stigma of being accused of 'homophobia'. We could call this the 'Phariseeism of breadth'. The old Pharisees liked to show how narrow they were. Today's Pharisee wants to show how broad he is and display his 'equality awareness' credentials.

Homosexuality is now recognised as a valid form of human partnership with increasing legal safeguards for homosexuals and increasing legal penalties against those who dissent from this 'equality agenda'. This is morality without God. We make it up for ourselves. We are not as clever as we think we are, but are very loath to face up to this. The investment of human pride in the whole 'diversity' dogma is exceedingly great. That is why the hostility to Biblical Christianity is increasing – because we do not and cannot fit in! We get some idea of the extent of the pride involved when we consider the response to the problem of AIDS. People have been dying, but the response has not been, 'Maybe we've got it wrong and permissiveness is a problem' but rather 'we'll work out a safe-sex policy; we can handle it'. Inconvenient facts, such as that of homosexuals being significantly more promiscuous than even heterosexuals, are ignored. Nothing must be allowed space that may suggest that the agenda is disastrously wrong.

Nationally, we are in love with darkness. Pride prevents all reconsideration. We can be on the verge of collapse as a society, but neither permissiveness nor the 'equality agenda' must be called in question. 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God' (Psalm 10:4). Sodomite couples can run B & B establishments in our cities without hindrance, but Christians who will not accommodate such couples await the knock at the door. They are seen as bigots who oppose equality and so are viewed as enemies of society who need to be re-educated and delivered from their

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time warp.

We must notice, at this point, the official and much trumpeted tolerance of Islam, even though Islam is officially intolerant of homosexuality. How do we explain that? There is an element of fear, no doubt. By comparison, Christians will not issue a *fatwa* and are a soft target. Even so, there is a strange contradiction in such a welcome being given to a religion that is so intolerant of homosexuality by a society that has gone to such lengths to show itself tolerant of it. We must not, however, expect rationality where human pride reigns. Another feature is that Islam keeps quite a low profile on opposing homosexuality. They are rarely involved in protesting against it. No doubt this is because consistent Muslims have little interest in cleaning up British 'infidel' society. Their real interest is domination followed by the imposition of Sharia law.

To summarise, then, Christians are viewed as opponents of equality and the state has assumed the right to intervene in the realm of private business to impose its pro-sodomite agenda. This, surely, is iniquitous state encroachment.

Child protection

A second example of the 'Trojan horse' method of encroachment is the issue of 'child protection'. Like 'equality', 'child protection' sounds noble. Don't we all want to look after children? Only the worst people in the world would object to protecting children. What about the requirements of child protection, however? In Northern Ireland, from 2003 criminal record checks were required for employment in state-run educational institutions and any other 'child-care' organisations. Many churches assumed, probably correctly, that the legislation applied to them and felt they should follow the prescribed procedure. This was seen as 'best practice' for insurance purposes and legal safety in the event of anything going wrong. Similar legislation is in place in the rest of the U.K. The Labour Government was in process of bringing in the 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act'. This, if it had been passed, would have required vetting through the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), which would have two lists: an

adults' barred list for those working with vulnerable adults and a children's barred list for those working with children. And this would apply, at least, to voluntary organisations meeting with children on a weekly basis. The coalition Government has put this 'on hold' because they think it is too cumbersome and too expensive. One of the few benefits of the recession may be that it restricts Government interference due to financial constraints. There are variations between different parts of the UK, but the general pattern is clear.

But this raises questions, for example, about the State's definition of who is suitable to work with children. If there was a smacking ban and a Christian is prosecuted for giving Biblical correction to his children and he goes on the 'banned' list, what are we going to do then? We don't think that is a Biblical reason for barring someone from working with children. Are we going to have elders who can't teach children and members who can, or are we going to bar such people from being elders? Is this not the State telling the church who can hold office in the church of Christ? And what of the idea that someone in the church is appointed to relay matters in the church to the civil power without necessarily going through the officers of the church? Does it not belong to the church-officers to deal with church matters and to decide whether there is a criminal matter that must be reported to the police? 'The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate' (Westminster Confession 30:1) and is not that appointed church government adequate to deal with child protection matters and report crime as necessary and without an appointed State agent in the membership of the church?

Are we alert to the very encroachment of the civil powers into the government of the church against which our forefathers so heroically contended, but now coming under the guise of looking after children rather than the 'Divine right of kings' as in former times? We do have to wake up to State encroachment into the province of the church by stealth and noble-sounding policies.

To be continued

Soul-winning

Rev Andrew Allan

The substance of a devotional talk given at the School in Theology in September 2011

'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise' (Prov. 11:30)

When we address the subject of soul-winning or of the need to be engaged in personal witnessing there are some fundamental points that we would do well to bear in mind.

1. We believe in the absolute sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners. It is clearly taught in Scripture that God has chosen a people in eternity out of the mass of humanity and has given them to Christ. This number is definite and exact and cannot be diminished or increased. They are called Christ's people or sheep or church and they, and they alone, shall be saved. They will be called by God and in His perfect time will come to believe in Christ.

2. We also believe in the responsibility of man, ie that every man has a duty to repent and believe the Gospel. No man can save his own soul, yet he can damn his soul. We do not profess to understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, nor can we explain it. It is possible that even in eternity we will never be able to reconcile these two truths. But they are clearly revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures and we will therefore believe and preach both. The Bible is our manifesto and we will seek to be like Paul who said, 'For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God' (Acts 20:27).

3. Furthermore it is also believed among us that every Christian has an obligation to do all that is within his or her capabilities to spread the good news and to seek to win converts to Christ and His cause. The Puritan, Thomas Watson, said, 'We glorify God by labouring to draw others to God; by seeking to convert others, and so make them instruments of glorifying God'.

With these points in mind let us examine the words that were penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by Solomon, the wisest man.

The Righteous

Firstly, the text would mark out to us the description of a believer. He is described as 'righteous'. There is none righteous except they be in Christ. Only the true-hearted Christian can be described as righteous in the sight of God. From this new relationship with God the life of the believer is, or at least should be, a life of soul blessings. By this I mean that if anyone is truly to be a soul-winner his own soul must first be saved. The soul-winner must be a Christian, one who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. He must first of all know from first hand experience that his sins are forgiven, that he has new life in Christ, that he has salvation from sin. He must know peace with God and have confidence in his own relationship to Jesus Christ the Lord. He does not need to know these things in an absolutely perfect sense, but he or she must know these things

to some extent.

Furthermore, the believer must be one who is walking in obedience to His Lord's commands. We know that we are justified by faith and declared righteous in a legal sense the moment we believe. Nevertheless, there must be a practical righteousness or holiness clearly evident in the believer's life in order to be a soul-winner. In other words the believer must practise what he believes or preaches in order to be effective. The soul-winner must be a fruit-bearing Christian, one in whom the fruit of the Spirit is seen. How can any believer be a fruit-bearing Christian? It is only by abiding in Christ that a believer can bear fruit. All believers are united to Christ in their effectual calling, but some believers know little communion and fellowship with Christ. None know as much as they should of communion with their Lord. The believer who abides in Christ and knows intimate fellowship with Christ will bear much fruit. It is this kind of believer, under obviously the sovereignty of God, that will know the joy of soul-winning.

The first part of the text implies an overflowing in the life of the fruit-bearing believer who is walking closely with his Lord. And this overflowing affects others who are in contact and come in contact with the believer.

Duty of soul-winning

Secondly, the text would remind all Christians of their great duty of soul-winning. In order to do that we are reminded that it will take time, effort and energy. The text says 'winneth' which implies expending some force to achieve an end. If a young man wishes to woo his sweet-heart he may have to win her affections. He may face opposition from the lady in question and from other suitors. He may well have to stir himself up to persuade her that it would be in her best interests to agree to marry him. So it is in soul-winning. The sinner must be made aware and convinced that it is in his/her best interest to close in with Christ as He is freely offered in the Gospel. The riches and grace of our glorious all-powerful, all-willing Saviour must be declared to all who will hear. The businessman who seeks to win or obtain his fortune must work day and night to achieve his goal. The general who seeks to 'win' the battle must be fearless and bold in his endeavours. The young person who seeks to obtain a first-class education must put effort, enthusiasm and drive into his/her studies to achieve the desired edge. All of these examples can be applied to the soul-winner. It will take all our physical, mental and spiritual resources because there is nothing more difficult than seeking to win persons to Christ. In the text the word 'wise' is used implying that those who engage in soul-winning need to be wise and have chosen a wise pursuit. To be successful as a soul-winner one must be taught of God. 'And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men' (Mk. 1:17). As in all biblical matters a sense of balance is required. The soul-winner must be taught before he can successfully engage in seeking to draw the lost to Christ, yet the believer does not need to wait years

or a life-time to begin. Nor does the believer need a formal theological training. The woman of Samaria began to witness with success moments after her conversation with Christ, 'Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?' (John 4:29). The blind man whom the Lord cured was able to say to the Lord's enemies, 'Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see' (John 9:25). The attitude of the Psalmist should be the attitude of the new or old convert or of the theologically uneducated or educated believer, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul' (Psalm 66:16). Even the penitent thief on the cross became an evangelist and he died the day he was saved.

Anyone who chooses to strive to be a soul-winner has chosen a wise pursuit or activity. Why? Because there can scarcely be any joy like the joy of leading a soul to Christ. The doctor, nurse, surgeon and dentist all seek to do physical good and relieve the pain and suffering of their patient. But, however good and valuable their work is, it only has limited value in that it pertains to this life. Not so with the soul-winner; his work has relevance in this world and supremely in the eternal world to come.

We need more soul-winners. Young people, are you considering a career? There is no higher calling than to be engaged in soul-winning!

Christian, let us look at our lives and see if we know anything of soul-winning. Ministers of the Gospel, you have taken solemn vows at your ordination and induction. If you are a Free Church minister one of them was: 'Are not zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls, your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the function of the holy ministry, and not worldly designs and interests?' When was the last time you preached the Gospel with as much earnestness as if the salvation of your hearers

depended on you? Do you preach a full and free Gospel so that the unlearned and ignorant know the way of salvation? Do all your hearers know that Jesus Christ is willing and ready to save all that will come to Him? Does the chief of sinners in your congregation know there is forgiveness for him in Christ?

Do ministers need to re-assess their workload and commitments and make adjustments? Are you spending too much time on secondary issues and neglecting the salvation of your hearers? On that great day the Head of the church will evaluate your ministry and He will deem it unwise if you have kept the church and manse grounds clean and tidy, attended to minutes and committees at the expense of soul-winning! What will it matter if you were the greatest of theologians and possessed vast amounts of biblical knowledge and did not engage in soul-winning? What will it matter if you could answer all the questions posed at fellowships and did not lead a soul to Christ? It is not wise to neglect soul-winning!

Maybe the minister has lost some of his former zeal and passion for evangelism? What should he do? Repent! Meditate on what Christ has done to secure the salvation of souls. Meditate on eternity! Think on the value of one soul, 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' (Matthew 16:26).

Christian, do you seek to speak a word in season to your husband/wife, sons/daughters? What about your neighbours? Work colleagues? Your enemies? The devil will seek to dissuade you from trying. You're too old! You're too young! Who is going to listen to you, for you can hardly put two words together! You don't know your Bible well enough! Leave it to the minister or elders! These are some of the excuses he will use. Do not listen to him but trust in the Lord and reach out.

Maybe the minister has lost some of his former zeal and passion for evangelism? What should he do? Repent! Meditate on what Christ has done to secure the salvation of souls. Meditate on eternity! Think on the value of one soul, 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' (Matthew 16:26).





News



Rev John W. Keddie

New children's book by Rev John Keddie

Rev John Keddie has written a new children's book entitled Eric Liddell - Finish the Race (Christian Focus, 160 pp, pbk, £5.99).

As a young child Eric Liddell lived in China where his parents worked as missionaries. Eric's life from then on brought him to boarding school in England, university in Edinburgh and the fame of Olympic Stardom in Paris. But with that fame came trouble as he struggled to stand up for his Christian faith. Eric's strong, biblical, belief in

keeping the Lord's Day as a day of worship was challenged when his 100 metres race was scheduled for the Sabbath. Eric's strength of conviction and his subsequent win in the 400 metres have made him a hero and a role model for many young men and women. But his life was so much more than winning races – his whole life was a race for God. This race took him back to the country of his birth – China. This country became the country of his death in a Prisoner of War camp. The man who became known affectionately as the 'Flying Scotsman' in the end lived and died in China – thousands of miles from his native land and his athletic

conquests.

John Keddie's previous works include a highly-regarded centenary history of Scottish Athletics. His public connection to Eric Liddell comes through an advisory position that he held for the film Chariots of Fire. He has also written a biography of Eric Liddell, Running the Race, published by EP. Rev John W. Keddie is the Minister of the Bracadale congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) on the Isle of Skye.

Arbroath Away Weekend

The next young people's Away Weekend in Arbroath takes place

Desk



from Friday 10th till Monday 13th February. The speaker expected is the Rev Trevor Kirkland of Templepatrick Reformed Church and the topic is 'Paul as an Example to Believers'. If you require any further information please contact: Martin Fraser, Telephone: 07794 016 191 or 0141 573 7903. Email: glasgowfcyf@gmail.com.



Dr Charles Chao, co-founder of Reformation Translation Fellowship

Pray for China Weekend

On 13th November a fascinating 'Pray for China' weekend was held in Glasgow. Rev Dr Samuel Chao (President of Chinese Ministries International (CMI) in the US) preached in Partick Free Church (Continuing) on the Sabbath evening and then spoke at a joint fellowship afterwards along with Tony Lambert (Head of the OMF Research). They spoke of the amazing work that God is doing in China today. On the Monday evening a meeting was held in St Silas' Church, Woodlands where these two men spoke along with Ton Chen (President of CMI-UK). China has a population of almost 1.4 billion. It is reckoned that there are

around 70 million evangelical Christians in China which means there are more Christians in China than in any other country, more than the whole population of Britain and more than those who would claim to be born again in the USA (around 60 million). There are more Christians now in China than Buddhists and even than members of the Communist Party. Interestingly they told that around a third of the Christians in China are Reformed in persuasion. One third would be Charismatic and one third somewhere in between. Dr Samuel Chao's father, Dr Charles Chao, along with Dr J G Vos founded the Reformation Translation Fellowship and he translated many Reformed books into Chinese. Samuel's wife has also been involved in this work, translating for example Dr Lloyd-Jones' sermons on Romans and on Ephesians. Between them around 150 books have been translated. These books are printed in underground presses in China and have been a great blessing to the church there. When Samuel was a young boy he suffered from a terrible disease. His parents dedicated him to the Lord to be a missionary and then his health returned. His work as an active missionary in China began only after the death of his older brother Jonathan five or six years ago by which time he was almost sixty. However he had a thorough preparation for his missionary challenges through working as a university teacher and pastor in the USA and Taiwan. It was

stirring to hear of meetings where hundreds were baptised confessing their faith. The church is growing rapidly. Also China is beginning to send out missionaries. For example some have gone to Egypt. Because they are not from the West they are more readily accepted in Islamic countries. They have seen considerable numbers of Muslims turning to Christ.

Pray for China! It could well become the great new centre of Christianity which has declined so much recently in Western Europe.



Adrian Smith

Demoted Christian gets Backing

Christian Institute

A Christian who was demoted and subjected to a 40 per cent pay cut over comments he made about civil partnerships on Facebook has received the backing of the Government's Housing Minister. Grant Shapps agreed with homosexual activist Peter Tatchell who had branded the disciplinary action given out to Christian Adrian Smith as 'excessive and disproportionate'. Mr Smith was disciplined by Trafford Housing Trust for using his personal Facebook page to post the comment 'an

equality too far' in relation to an article on the registration of civil partnerships in churches. Mr Smith also said on Facebook: 'I don't understand why people who have no faith and don't believe in Christ would want to get hitched in church. The Bible is quite specific that marriage is for men and women. If the state wants to offer civil marriage to the same sex then that is up to the state; but the state shouldn't impose its rules on places of faith and conscience'.

Bosses at the Trust ruled his comments had damaged the organisation's reputation and amounted to gross misconduct. They demoted him from his managerial post and slashed his pay. But Mr Tatchell is among a number of critics who have hit out at the Trust's actions. He has made clear that while he does not agree with Mr Smith's opinions, he defends his freedom of speech.

Grant Shapps said: 'I agree with Mr Tatchell's sentiments'. Mr Shapps' comments came in a letter to Stewart Jackson MP – who had raised the issue in Parliament and questioned the Trust's public funding. Mr Shapps added, in a handwritten note at the end of the letter: 'Well done for highlighting this case'.

Mr Smith is taking his employer to court, backed by The Christian Institute. Spokesman Mike Judge said: 'We're not talking about a Christian who shoves his opinions down the throats of his colleagues. Mr Smith made completely tame and inoffensive remarks outside of work time on his personal Facebook page. The comments certainly don't amount to gross misconduct, which is usually reserved for things like theft or fraud. His bosses should get some sense of perspective'.

When the story emerged last October, Guardian writer Ally Fogg said: 'If the Trust was concerned about its reputation for inclusiveness and tolerance, it couldn't have got things more badly wrong'. And a New Statesman writer said the Trust's actions look 'vindictive'.

Barrister Neil Addison, also speaking out on the case, has warned that the 'obsession with hate crime and hate speech has created a new generation of publicly paid heresy-hunters'.

Persecution in India?

Barnabas Fund

A senior leader of a Hindu extremist group in India has demanded a new constitution that allows for 'anyone who converts Hindus to be beheaded', while there are fears for the safety of a Christian pastor over accusations of the forced conversion of Muslims. Praveen Togadia, General Secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), made the inflammatory statement at the conclusion of a three day conference for VHP workers from across the country, held in Gujarat in November. It sparked concern among Indian Christians, who fear it will stir up Hindu extremists to commit attacks against them and other minority groups. A Christian human rights group in India said the speech 'clearly promotes enmity, hatred or ill-will and disturbs public tranquility. It also implies that minorities, especially Christians and Muslims do not bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India and must be denied or deprived of their rights as Indian citizens'. Togadia's statement follows an article in July by Janata Party President, Subramanian Swamy, that recommended a national law prohibiting conversion from Hinduism to any other religion.

All the enmity of hell will not keep the elect of God from being converted.

Couple die together

Christian Institute

A couple who were married for 72 years and 'just loved being together' have died whilst holding hands. After a car crash Gordon and Norma Yeager lay side-by-side in hospital. After Gordon died, his heart monitor was still beeping as Norma's heartbeat was passing through his hands. An hour later Norma died too. Their daughter Donna commented: 'Neither one of them would've wanted to be without each other'. Mr and Mrs Yeager, who were born in Iowa, USA, "believed in marriage", their youngest son Dennis said. "They chose each other and once they had committed, that was it", he added.

How beautiful to see such devotion to each other! This is the Christian pattern and vastly superior to modern selfishness with its broken promises.

Redefining Marriage

Christian Institute

Ruth Davidson, the new leader of the Scottish Conservatives, supports redefining marriage for the sake of same-sex couples. Miss Davidson, a lesbian, says she does not want religious organisations to be forced to carry out same-sex wedding ceremonies against their wishes.

However, opponents of redefining marriage say if the definition were changed

the new definition would be promoted by the state as the standard, with huge implications for what is taught in schools and for wider society.



Ruth Davidson MSP

Call for Islamic power-bloc

Barnabas Fund

Iran's supreme leader has called on the world's Muslim-majority nations to form an 'international Islamic power-bloc', laying down an ominous challenge to Western powers. Speaking to more than 2.5 million Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said that Islamic countries should 'make the most of [the] opportunity' created by the Arab Spring, as well as the anti-capitalist movement across the world. He said that Islam has become the guiding principle of the Arab uprisings despite the efforts of secular rulers to curtail the influence of religion in their countries. And pointing to the victory of the Islamic Ennahda Party in Tunisia's recent elections, he predicted similar outcomes elsewhere: 'Without doubt, free elections in any Islamic country will result in nothing but what happened in Tunisia'. Heralding a global power shift and issuing an ominous challenge to Western powers, the Ayatollah said that 'the West, the United States and Zionism are weaker than ever before'.

We are thankful that God is on the throne. Yes and we note that despite the persecution the church is growing rapidly in Iran – the Ayatollah's own back yard. Jesus Christ is Lord!

Abortion

Dr Chris Richards

Deacon of Gateshead Presbyterian Church,
Consultant Pediatrician,
and Director of Tyneside Pregnancy Advice Centre



Abortion – ‘The greatest single offence that is being regularly perpetrated in Britain today and the first thing that an Old Testament prophet would reproach us for’ (Raymond Johnston).

What is this atrocity? How many babies are being killed by abortion? What does the Bible say? What does British law say? What consequences are being suffered?

The current situation

At the moment, UK law—though not in Northern Ireland, where abortion remains illegal—recognizes several ‘grounds’ for abortion. One ground is when the mother’s life is threatened; but this is rarely the case. About 98% of abortions are justified by the assessment ‘that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of the family of the pregnant woman’. This can be applied only to pregnancies of under 24 weeks’ gestation. The law also allows for abortion at any gestation when there is ‘substantial risk’ of the child suffering ‘physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped’. In 2010 in England and Wales 482 babies were aborted on account of Down’s syndrome.

‘Thou shalt not kill’

This law is a full assault on the Sixth Commandment.

1. In permitting abortion, our society has rejected its duty to restrain sin through law. What should be prohibited now becomes an agonizing temptation for every woman who finds herself pregnant under less than favourable circumstances.
2. By leaving the interpretation and implementation of the law to the medical profession, it has given abortion a respectability it should never have.
3. It gives no ethical consideration to the life of the unborn child (except in a negative way, when the baby is expected to be disabled) and takes into consideration only the circumstances of the mother and family.
4. It leaves doctors with the uncertainty of risk assessment. Those who originally argued for the Abortion Act said that it would only allow abortion when the mother’s life was clearly at risk. But risk assessment is so vague that in effect we have abortion on demand. Giving birth to an unwanted baby is seen as a greater threat to the mother’s mental or physical health (or her children’s) than having an abortion.
5. In fact, abortion carries with it substantial physical and mental complications. Nursing mothers have much better

health. It could be argued that risk assessment should always favour continuing the pregnancy.

How many abortions?

Since the Abortion Act 1967 was passed, over seven million abortions have been performed. Currently in the UK around 210,000 are carried out every year: approximately one abortion for every four live births. 77% of these abortions were carried out at less than 10 weeks gestation. That is not all. There are three other causes of abortion not included in the official figures.

1. IVF. Since 1991 IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation) has ‘created’ over three million embryos. For every IVF baby born, on average 20 embryos have been created. Nearly 1,500,000 have been destroyed and over 760,000 are currently being stored. Many of these embryo orphans have little or no prospect of ‘womb adoption’.

2. MAP. We do not know how many early abortions are caused by the so-called ‘morning-after pill’. Otherwise known as post-coital or emergency ‘contraception’, this high-dose progesterone tablet has been developed to be taken after intercourse. It can work in a number of ways—usually by preventing fertilization, but sometimes by preventing implantation of the already fertilized embryo, thereby causing an early abortion.

3. Some contraceptives effectively cause early abortion. Although a biochemical means of preventing the sperm from reaching the egg has been sought, none can guarantee that an already fertilized embryo will not be destroyed.

The progesterone-only or ‘mini’ Pill and the intra-uterine device both commonly act by preventing implantation and therefore cause an early abortion.

We also know that the more commonly used Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill may prevent implantation of a newly-formed embryo. Even women who take it reliably may become pregnant, confirming that breakthrough ovulation does occasionally occur. Therefore, though seemingly rare, the possibility of induced abortions through its use cannot be ruled out.

How is an abortion performed?

For many years, most early abortions were performed surgically—using powerful suction or by scraping out what was in the womb. Nowadays, when the pregnancy is still in the early stages (it can also be used later on), a medical method is preferred, usually by means of an oral hormone tablet

'The Bible teaches that man is unique—distinct from all other life—created in the image of God (Gen.1:26). God forbids the deliberate taking of human life. God said to Noah, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood,, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man' (Gen.9: 6).'



followed by a vaginal prostaglandin tablet. This may avoid hospital admission since most of the process takes place at home over a couple of days. In effect the medications induce an early labour, which may culminate in the explicit passage of the foetus, to the shock of the woman.

What does God's Word say?

There is no direct mention of abortion in the Bible; but much may be deduced. It is important that Christians think biblically about this subject for at least two reasons.

First, we are commanded to search God's Word thoroughly and obey it diligently (Ps.119: 4). We must expect to wrestle until we see clearly how to apply God's law to the pressing ethical issues of our day.

Second, confidence in God's Word will strengthen us so that we do not capitulate under pressure to sin, even in the hardest circumstances. In this way we can avoid incurring guilt.

The sanctity of life

The Bible teaches that man is unique—distinct from all other life—created in the image of God (Gen.1:26). God forbids the deliberate taking of human life. God said to Noah, '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 protection and honouring of life is further demanded by the Sixth Commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill' (Ex.20: 13). The case law of the Pentateuch penalises even the accidental taking of life (Num.35:15, 32) and permits deliberate killing only in self-defence (Ex.22: 2), in war (Lev.26: 7), or in judicial punishment for serious crimes (Lev.20: 15).

The Bible teaches us to respect the sanctity of human life not only by not taking life but also in the positive protecting and compassionate upholding of life, most clearly expressed by Christ in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk.10:25-37). We are called to care sacrificially for others, especially those who are weak and helpless. This goes against man's fallen instinct to abuse his power for selfish ends. Providing such care is the positive intent of the Sixth Commandment.

God requires all people to obey his moral law, which is 'summarily comprehended in the ten commandments' (Shorter Cat.41). It is by the standard of the moral law that sin is exposed and defined. Therefore, God's demand to respect life applies to the believer and non-believer alike. A righteous and wise nation will use God's moral law to inform its state laws (2Sam.23:3).

When does life start?

Does life actually start at conception? If it does, then abortion, including early abortion, is murder. The Bible recognizes life from conception. We have further support for this, which earlier generations lacked, from scientific knowledge of the process of the formation of human life in the womb.

1.The Bible recognizes life at conception. Scripture repeatedly declares the creative activity of God at the very moment of conception and recognises that life in the womb is a precious gift from God. Psalm 139:13-16 describes actual, not simply potential, life from conception. These verses beautifully and movingly express God's involvement in the growth and development of the unborn child, the personal continuity of a unique life—before as well as after birth—and the Psalmist's special relationship with God even before birth. In Psalm 51:5 we read, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me'. David recognizes his own life and sinful nature from conception. Of course, he had to be a person and alive to possess a sinful nature!

In Luke 1:41-44, we read of the astonishing, joyful recognition of the unborn baby Jesus (perhaps only a two-week-old embryo), by John, still in his mother's womb (six months), thus denoting the 'womb life' of both boys. Matthew 1:20 predates this in describing the conception of Jesus by Mary 'of the Holy Ghost', thus identifying the commencement of Jesus' life with His conception.

Are we in danger of forming a circular argument if we assume that biblical conception equals the start of pregnancy, and that equals life?

Today the event of a mother conceiving is taken to coincide precisely with the biological event of fertilization when the sperm unites with the ovum to form one new cell (ie the mother conceives when the egg is fertilized). The biblical writers may not have known these biological details. However, they did make a clear connection in time between sexual intercourse and conception, which is particularly clear in 2 Samuel 11:4, 5, and in David's desire to cover up the deed by urgently recalling Uriah so that the baby's origin might be concealed (vv 6-13). From this temporal association we may infer that the writers were using the word 'conception' to describe the start of the pregnancy that resulted.

In the biblical description of early life in the womb there is no hint of an early body dissociated from the spirit or soul (or of a later ensoulment, as postulated by Aristotle and

others). Throughout the Bible, an individual is recognized as a single body-soul unit, until his or her death indivisible and interdependent. The end of our earthly existence, death, is defined by the separation of the body and soul. There is no suggestion of identity without life from conception. The embryo you were, is the human being you are!

2. We have scientific knowledge of the process and nature of the formation of human life. All that man has learned over the last few decades regarding early life confirms what the Bible reveals. God, in His kindness, has in recent years enabled us to discover more about how He skilfully creates each one of us (Ps.139:15). Those of us who have looked through this window on our substance yet unformed (Ps.139:16) are privileged indeed, and can confirm that the process is 'fearful and wonderful' (Ps.139:14). Such knowledge establishes the identity of the baby from conception in at least three ways.

First, the genetic sequence formed at fertilization is unique (except in the case of identical twins, though even they eventually develop a somewhat different sequence). Although our nature is not defined solely by our genes, our conception determines innumerable aspects of what we are and how different we are from all other persons on earth.

Second, the process of development is continuous. Beyond the moment of fertilization, there is no point at which one could obviously say there could be any distinction of life from non-life. Attempts have been made to argue the legitimacy of abortion by defining the start of life by the acquisition of certain qualities such as pain awareness. This approach is arbitrary (who chooses and how?), based on uncertain science, variable for the individual baby, and leads to an unbiblical 'you are worth what you can do' view of life. There are dramatic events in the development of the unborn child, such as the

start of the heartbeat at four weeks after fertilization, the first spontaneous movements at six weeks, and, of course, birth. But all serve to further the continuous process of the baby's development.

Third, development is progressive, each stage laying the platform for the next and all straining towards maturity beyond puberty.

Scientific observation, then, confirms the declaration of Psalm 139 that development in the womb is both individual and purposeful.

Ethical conclusion

In the light of God's Word, supported by scientific observation, we need to recognize abortion for what it is, the intentional and wrongful killing of an unborn child between conception and birth. Legalizing this has allowed the unborn child's God-given advocates, his parents, and particularly his mother, to reject him, and so allow the murder of the smallest, most vulnerable and most dependent members of our society.

How do they try to justify the Abortion Act?

The widespread practice of sex outside marriage in the 1950s and 60s led to an increasing number of women with an unwanted pregnancy. Abortion could supply what contraceptives could not—the guarantee of 'pregnancy-free' sexual intercourse. Contraception was never going to be fully effective due to practical failures and the indiscipline that goes along with sexual licence.

Some used to seek an abortion illegally (and not always safely) though many others kept their pregnancies. Arising from the personal consequences of breaking the Seventh Commandment ('Thou shalt not commit adultery') came a demand for the state to allow the breaking of the Sixth Commandment by making abortion legal.

Proponents of abortion did not tend to make such observations.



'We need to recognize abortion for what it is, the intentional and wrongful killing of an unborn child between conception and birth. Legalizing this has allowed the unborn child's God-given advocates, his parents, and particularly his mother, to reject him, and so allow the murder of the smallest, most vulnerable and most dependent members of our society.'

Rather they used arguments still common today:

1. The need to offer a compassionate way out (other than adoption) of the hopelessness of a woman with an unwanted child, especially in hard cases of rape or foetal abnormality.
2. The moral obligation of the state to provide a healthy alternative to illegal abortions, which were sometimes complicated by infection—a ‘harm reduction’ approach.
3. The right of the mother to autonomy over her body, including over her unborn child—whose life was denied or whose rights could in no way be balanced against the right of the woman. In practice for many women this was a right to a convenient life, freedom from embarrassment, or to be able to continue her education.

How should we respond?

With confidence in God’s commandments, we must assert that no consideration of personal circumstances (except perhaps the extraordinarily rare situation of the imminent death of the mother herself), nor the knowledge of possible disability in the child, should be allowed to threaten that precious life in the womb.

Pregnancy after rape or incest is a tragedy and demands the most-tender response. But we must remember that the most-wise God of love has defined compassion as obedience to His commandments (1Jn.5:2, 3). We must resist a pragmatic response contrary to God’s laws.

How did the church respond in the 1960s? Battered by liberal theology, which had already weakened the church’s voice against the change in sexual ethics, the church’s opposition to the introduction of legal abortion was generally muted or confused. This was true of some prominent churchmen who held to Reformed doctrine. Whilst ministers of religion prevaricated, secular politicians strengthened their hand in this moral vacuum. Perhaps most damaging of all was the fact that some professing Christian doctors (enjoying public respect for their medical profession) displayed a lack of confidence in God’s law as they broadcast their moral agonizing (in contrast with Ps.119:113).

If we give in?

Let us make three observations about the result of yielding to the arguments for legalized abortion.

First, the pleading of special cases, such as rape, at the time when the Abortion Act was passed, opened a door, which has since let in a flood of abortions permitted on lesser grounds. This is a clear illustration of the legal maxim that ‘hard cases make bad law’.

Second, the personal and societal consequences of abortion have been terrible. Actions in defiance of God’s commandments never reduce harm, but rather cause harm. In contrast, we are reminded of the kindness of God in the protection from harm that obedience to his commandments affords, even in the most testing of circumstances.

Third, removing the deterrent of an unwelcome consequence of sexual sin, abortion has promoted promiscuity, with increased demand for both contraception and abortion. As with other so-called ‘harm reduction’ approaches, sin begets more sin.

Consequences of the legalization of abortion

Carnage. The quiet carnage of our youngest and weakest! Guilt keeps it well hidden! The walls of otherwise respectable

NHS hospitals guard the terrible secret. The continuing desire for sexual licence keeps it going. Though silent in their death, those aborted babies continue to speak: their blood cries out from the ground (Gen.4:10).

God’s judgment on our society. We cannot underestimate the seriousness of our society’s decision to permit in law a wicked act that is in clear violation of God’s laws. The rulers of the earth are warned to take heed of the Lord and His laws, lest they and their nations face the full blast of God’s anger and ‘perish from the way’ (Ps.2:10-12). Surely we are already seeing some evidence of God’s judgment today. Violence in the womb spills over into violence on our streets, as the implications of moral lawlessness are more openly expressed. The philosophy underlying abortion is used to argue for infanticide and euthanasia (the deliberate ending of the life of a disabled infant is already permitted in at least one European country). And what about the demographic implications? We have an ageing population! There is an imbalance: elderly people outnumber young people. Who will pay their pensions? Who will provide care for them in old age? Already the pension burden is so great that the retirement age must be increased. As life expectancy goes up, the problem is intensified. Dare our society complain, when it has acquiesced in the killing of so many young ones?

God’s judgment on the church. In the run up to the legalization of abortion, the church was complicit in her silence and indifference. Since then, despite pro-life declarations from some denominations, our response has remained muted, perhaps for fear of causing offence or appearing to lack compassion. Genuine repentance is marked by ‘grief and hatred of sin’. How many of us have shed a tear or torn our metaphorical clothes over such an abomination? Let us be warned by Jesus’ prescription for salt that has lost its savour: ‘good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men’ (Mt.5:13).

God’s judgment on individuals. It is well documented that women who choose to have an abortion experience spiritual, emotional and physical consequences. They are often plagued with guilt and regret, sometimes accompanied by low mood and anger. The father of the unborn child may suffer similarly. Only those who repent find genuine relief from this burden of guilt. Some attempt to deny or suppress their guilt through drugs and alcohol, but the memory and guilt can eat away and eventually destroy the person. Suicide rates are substantially increased. The woman faces an increased risk of having a premature baby, should she decide to keep a subsequent pregnancy, and may find it difficult to bond with the next child.

God’s judgment on the professions. The state has co-opted the legal and medical professions to enact the provision of abortion services, thereby contradicting and threatening their legitimate role of upholding righteousness and providing healing. Individual lawyers and health professionals become complicit in the process of abortion itself.

Despite the conscientious objection clause, many Christian doctors who oppose abortion find it impossible not to be drawn in somehow—even in the state’s demand to refer women seeking abortion to a colleague (who will refer them for abortion instead). Their professional codes expect them to swallow the double-mindedness of clinical care in

a 'non-judgmental' manner, as the service treats one unborn child as 'him' or 'her' but another as merely an inanimate 'product of conception'. They are asked to clothe themselves with emotional indifference, while the God of glory thunders His judgment. It is staggering to read the web site of one abortion clinic that never mentions the baby, but only refers to the pregnancy as a condition to be corrected, and—how cruel!—frequently uses the word 'gentle'. Gentle murder is a strangely evil concept.

The Christian response

Repent and pray. We need to repent of any commission of, or indifference to, this sin. We must then 'bring forth fruits worthy of repentance' (Lk.3:8). Only then will our repentance be proved genuine. With boldness and perseverance we may declare that 'It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law' (Ps.119:126). May the Lord grant a full repeal of the Abortion Act.

Speak out. All of us, but especially our ministers, need to intercede on behalf of the unborn child, proclaiming and arguing the wrongfulness of abortion. Whilst supporting organizations such as Christian Medical Fellowship and the Christian Institute in their determined opposition to abortion, how good it would be to see the churches united in one voice of evangelical opposition, since that is not happening at the moment.

Act. We must seek to obey the Sixth Commandment with absolute diligence by not causing abortion through the use of certain contraceptives, the 'morning-after pill' or IVF. We must seek to 'deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those

that are ready to be slain' (Prov.24:11) by supporting the work of pregnancy centres which help women in so-called crisis pregnancies. Many women find themselves under pressure from family and circumstances, as well as ignorance of the nature of the life inside them and the implications of choosing an abortion.

Help available

1. www.tyneside-pregnancy.org.uk The author is director of a centre in Newcastle upon Tyne, whose Christian advisers provide information about the nature of early life, the nature of abortion and its consequences, and available support services. They commend the moral imperative to choose life rather than abortion, often conveyed implicitly, for example, through an ultrasound scan which is offered to all women. The sight of her baby's heart beating—the size of a poppy seed, it starts beating just three weeks and six days after conception—can be pivotal in a mother's choosing to spare the life of her baby. There is support also for women who need friendship, or practical or spiritual care. Others who have had an abortion need to know of the grace of God through Christ as the only and necessary route out of despair and guilt.

2. www.lovese.org.uk We need to teach the next generation of children about the importance of marriage and of sexual purity, remembering the contribution of sexual immorality to the current demand for abortion. See the lovese web site for school and youth group material.

From *Presbyterian Network*, Autumn 2011

Congregational Remittances - November 2011

| | 2011 Nov | 2011 Total | 2010 Total to Nov | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------------|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Presbytery of Inverness | | | | Outer Hebrides Presbytery | | | |
| Aberdeen | 900 | 13,888 | 12,640 | Cross | 1,728 | 21,473 | 21,356 |
| Duthil-Dores | 1,681 | 22,078 | 20,144 | Harris - Leverburgh | 1,150 | 15,934 | 14,646 |
| Inverness | 4,000 | 28,000 | 33,000 | Harris - Scalpay | 1,800 | 24,492 | 22,988 |
| Kilmorack & Strathglass | 1,000 | 16,331 | 18,846 | Knock & Point | 1,125 | 15,293 | 15,049 |
| Total Inverness | 7,581 | 80,297 | 84,630 | North Uist | 800 | 13,164 | 13,646 |
| Northern Presbytery | | | | Stornoway | 5,845 | 78,703 | 79,801 |
| Assynt & Scourie | 0 | 4,364 | 1,283 | Total Outer Hebrides | 12,448 | 169,059 | 167,486 |
| Brora | 2,000 | 21,515 | 21,834 | Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron | | | |
| Kiltearn | 1,000 | 10,257 | 18,000 | Bracadale | 0 | 12,191 | 12,785 |
| Tarbat | 1,000 | 11,478 | 10,186 | Duirinish (Waternish) | 0 | 6,215 | 4,500 |
| Total Northern | 4,000 | 47,615 | 51,303 | Kilmuir & Stenscholl | 1,300 | 17,181 | 9,946 |
| Southern Presbytery | | | | Lochalsh | 150 | 8,275 | 9,299 |
| Arran | 258 | 8,455 | 7,584 | Poolewe & Aultbea | 744 | 10,714 | 10,510 |
| Ayr | 200 | 3,137 | 3,660 | Ullapool | 0 | 102 | 400 |
| Dumfries | 0 | 0 | 600 | Portree | 1,400 | 19,165 | 18,589 |
| Edinburgh | 0 | 27,817 | 37,713 | Snizort | 6,200 | 24,552 | 18,290 |
| Glasgow - Partick | 1,687 | 32,500 | 35,000 | Strath | 350 | 1,785 | 2,257 |
| Glasgow - Shettleston | 2,000 | 23,705 | 18,385 | Total Skye | 10,144 | 100,180 | 86,575 |
| Glasgow - Knightswood | 2,500 | 24,779 | 25,728 | Total Congregations | 40,818 | 518,183 | 518,957 |
| Rothsay | 0 | 639 | 293 | Other Donations | 1,260 | 26,746 | 26,810 |
| Total Southern | 6,645 | 121,032 | 128,964 | Legacy | 0 | 18,153 | 0 |
| | | | | TOTAL | 42,078 | 563,082 | 545,767 |
| | | | | Including Gift Aid | | 98,058 | 91,090 |

Letter from Zambia - Street Children

Dear All,

Today is a sweltering hot Zambian summer's day with the temperature in the high 30s, the humidity up and the air conditioning and fans churning sluggish heavy air. We all sit around complaining about the heat and longing for the rains to arrive – when of course the humidity will become unbearable, so we will have something else to complain about. It is 24th October – the day when Zambians celebrate gaining independence from Britain way back in 1964. The other really important thing that happened that year was that I was born. We have just had an election which saw the incumbent president lose to Michael Sata the leader of the opposition. The election process and handover of power went very smoothly and gained Zambia a great deal of respect internationally as a result. Many of you may have heard about the elections which were notable internationally in that Zambia now has the first ever white Vice President in Africa – a Zambian of Scottish extraction called Dr Guy Scott whose forebears were missionaries here. The new government has made a promising start and has vowed to clean up the corruption which has affected much of national life in the country. We hope and pray that the country will continue to enjoy the peace, stability and tolerance which has marked its history and that poverty and corruption will be tackled effectively leading to an increase in prosperity for the ordinary citizen.

Last time I wrote I told you about the sad news of the death of one of our boys – Kondwani (he broke his leg playing football and then took pneumonia). A lot of time has passed since then and we have been able to come to terms with his absence in a way although of course we still miss him, and think about what could have been. His older brother Gershom has now started working with us at the Farm. He is a larger-than-life character, very cheerful and noisy, much like Kondwani, and has been working hard to finish the college course he had to abandon when his father died some years ago. In return for his board and lodgings and the payment of his college fees, he stays at the dormitory with the boys and acts as a boarding supervisor, meaning that he is able to deal with many issues and save Christine and me from having to do everything. This has been a great help to us. He is well liked and respected by the boys, and as a young Christian man he has been a very good influence on life in the dorm.

Abigail Brown

Abigail has been at home in England for a visit to her family, and on her return was granted a further two-year work permit by the government, meaning she is able to continue her work in developing her little school. She will go home again in November, spend the festive season with her folks and see her little brother safely married off (we hope) to a young lady called – of all things – Abigail! After that she is going to be chained to her desk for the rest of her work permit duration. Abigail of course helps Christine a great deal on the domestic side and also works on our website which is at www.omfzambia.com. On the website you will find lots

more information on all our activities and of course lots of photographs.

For two weeks in August our friends from the Heskethbank Christian Centre in Southport, England, came out again to run a Summer Camp of activities for our children, including fitness, music, drama and IT training. The camp was a great success and both the visitors and our children made friendships that we hope will last. The team also provided us with a gift of 10 laptops, which we intend to use to create an IT lab for our children and the small Community School Abi is developing.

Success of the boys

Most of our lads are continuing well in school. Lucky is in his last year and is writing his final exams just now. He was Head Boy at his school in his final year and we were very proud of him. So imagine how we felt this year when it was announced that his successor would be another of our lads – Lingson – who is also Lucky's cousin, and that the Deputy Head Boy would be Owen who is also one of 'the MacDonalds'. Not only that, but we now have a further six youngsters as prefects, and a Head Boy in another school. And if that sounds like a proud Dad boasting – that's exactly what it is. We attended the annual graduation at Lucky's school where most of the kids go, and were pleased to see a number of prizewinners, including Lucky as best athlete, Memory (Lucky's sister) as spelling champion AND mental maths champion, and Humphrey for coming third in the senior spelling competition where he competed against pupils 2 and 3 years older than him.

Of course it is not all plain sailing. Many of our lads are getting particularly stressed as the combination of heat and exams leads to short tempers and irritability, and we have had the usual quarrels, and with such a large group there are always those who are going through the delightful teenage phase of being bored with school, studying, chores, parents and in fact anything they should be doing, but by and large they are a well-behaved bunch.

New Boys

We have also taken in two new lads, Christopher Mbolela who is 17 years old; and Nickson Powanga who is 14 years old, both of whom Social Welfare sent to us.

Christopher is a stable and pleasant young man with difficult family circumstances and as a result of poverty was unable to continue living with his mother. He has successfully adapted to life at the Farm and we anticipate he will resume school in January. In the meantime, he is revising at home under Abigail's supervision, and getting invaluable help in the basics of education which so many children seem to miss in Zambia.

Nickson comes to us with a very troubled background. He has been HIV+ from birth and has a history of being in various centres but absconding from these to live on the street. He has a regular supply of ARVs but because of his erratic behaviour, he did not take these regularly and his health suffered as a result. He was also extremely malnourished and growth-retarded. Since his arrival at the Farm he has detoxed from



glue, which was a difficult process for him, and has stabilised remarkably, having now completed four months with us with only one attempt to run away. His behaviour is still poor, with outbursts of temper, and chronic sulking if he feels slighted or crossed in any way, but he is gradually learning to socialise, and is making great efforts to fit in and settle down. He has been 'adopted' by Rommy Phiri one of our older lads and seems to enjoy having a big 'brother'. He enjoyed the Camp run by our friends from Heskethbank, and showed great interest in the IT training. He will go to school depending on his progress in the next few months.

Suspensions

Unfortunately we have also had to suspend two of our residents, Owen and Davies Lusenga who are brothers. As I mentioned in a previous letter Owen has made one attempt to commit suicide while staying with us and has on several occasions threatened to try again. Following medical evaluation we were advised that his behaviour was manipulative and aimed at allowing him to dictate how he behaved, and as a result he was sent to boarding school during term, and asked to return to his uncle's house in Ng'ombe compound during holidays. He has stopped all threats to kill himself, and was behaving in a stable manner until we allowed him to attend the Camp, when he assaulted another boy for talking to a girl Owen believed was 'his'. As a result we had to suspend him although we are still paying for him to be educated as a boarding pupil. The fact that he has since been appointed Deputy Head Boy at school suggests that he is able to behave himself when he sees it in his own interests and this makes us particularly annoyed as it seems that the psychiatrist was correct in his assessment that his behaviour was manipulative.

Davies is an extrovert character who seems unaware that his

behaviour is inappropriate in some situations. In particular he has displayed defiance and disobedience to Christine when she has asked him to behave himself, and after a series of such incidents and several warnings, he was also sent to boarding school, where he has excelled in the end of term tests! He returned for the Camp without any problems, and we are not sure how we should proceed with him.

Another young man, Emmanuel Chola, who has been at the Home since the start of this year, has been doing very well, and took position 3 in his Grade 8 class at Tina Trust School. Unfortunately, following the end of his exams, he drank several sachets of alcohol and became very drunk while attending the school end of term party. He was hospitalised at Coptic Hospital as a precaution but suffered no ill effects apart from severe embarrassment. This episode was out of character for him, and he has sworn never to drink alcohol again! He was suspended for a week by the school at the start of the following term but has managed to stay out of trouble since then.

Christine, the girls and I were able to have a lovely family holiday in Cape Town – our favourite destination – in July. We are so thankful to Bruce and Heather Barrow for the use of their house by the sea in Betty's Bay and to Ann Mayo from Edinburgh who braved the ordeal of running the house while we were away. Sarah is now in her last year in school and is working harder than seems fair. She is also looking at possible colleges and universities where she can study Music and Theatre. Rachel is in her last year at Primary school, and will go to secondary next August all being well. Christine's little bakery enterprise is taking off and she gets several orders for cakes and bread most weeks.

Well, that's it for another letter.

Our love to you all and thanks for all your support.

Don, Christine Macdonald and all the kids

“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:
marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well...
Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect;
and in thy book all my members were written,
which in continuance were fashioned,
when as yet there was none of them.

Psalm 139:14,16