

# Free Church **Witness**



JANUARY 2008 ISSUE

## **Right Relationships With God and Men**

**- Jeff Ballantine**





**Editor**  
**Rev William Macleod**  
 B.Sc Th.M

25 Branklyn Crescent  
 Academy Park  
 Glasgow  
 G13 1GJ  
 Tel 0141 959 0292  
[williammacleod@fccontinuing.org](mailto:williammacleod@fccontinuing.org)

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Mrs Mary Gillies B.Sc., C.A.  
 7 Oliver's Brae  
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Page

**NEW YEAR** . . . . . 3

**CHRISTIANS DO GET DEPRESSED!** . . . . . 4

**ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE LORD** . . . . . 6

**ATHLETE BECOMES EVANGELIST** . . . . . 7

**RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS** . . . . . 8

**NEWS DESK** . . . . . 10

**OBITUARY.** . . . . . 13

**BOOKS.** . . . . . 14

**ANTICIPATION** . . . . . 16

**REMITTANCES - NOVEMBER 2007** . . . . . 18

**THE SECRET VILLAGE** . . . . . 18

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<b>13</b>	<b>Washington</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Smiths Falls</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>Atlanta</b>

**February:-**

<b>20</b>	<b>Stornoway</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>Harris</b>

# New Year

The beginning of a new year is a time for reviewing the past and also for looking ahead. Where have we come from and where are we going? Personally, with some nostalgic sadness, I look back to my childhood in the Island of Lewis where the churches then were all large and the influence of the gospel was very evident. The Sabbath was a day of peace and tranquillity with no shops open, no planes flying, no ferries running and no sport practised. Crowds walked to church and iniquity hid her face. Communion times were specially solemn with Christians from all over the island gathering joyfully to remember the Lord's death.

Then came television, providing entertainment in homes and quickly lowering the accepted moral standards. The decadent culture of America with its immorality and love of pleasure drew people away from the things of God. Those who would have attended church because there was little else to do on the Sabbath now stayed at home watching television. Though drink had always been a problem, wild music and drugs intoxicated the young. Divorce, almost unheard of in the past, now became common. Living together while unmarried, at one time regarded as low and shameful, became accepted. The fear of God was largely gone.

Amongst professing Christians, standards fell following the world in general. Zeal for the knowledge of God, studying of the Scriptures, reading theology, exhorting and challenging one another in Christian fellowship, and diligence in secret and corporate prayer declined. The love of money and the pursuit of material prosperity became the passion. Conflict between the old and the new undermined the peace in the churches. The cult of idolising the young took over.

## Great Need for Revival

Our great need today is for revival. We ourselves are as helpless to turn back the tide of evil and spiritual deadness as was King Canute to command the waves to recede. Yes, we are required to repent, to return to our first love, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to overcome our lukewarmness and to preach the gospel to a perishing world. Yet, when we have done all we can do, we have done nothing. We are to be faithful even if not successful, but how hard it is to be faithful in a faithless world. Perseverance against a constant torrent of godlessness requires superhuman strength. 'Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it' (Ps.127:1). Lord, build thy church!

## Ourselves

Some of us as individuals first took our stand publicly against the covering up of scandalous sin in our Church in 1995. Sadly this led to an attempt to discipline us and suspend us from the ministry. The result was the division of 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2000. Since then, and despite many difficulties, we have maintained our witness. We have had encouragements in the Lord's provision for us in material things, in help with the smooth running of the Church, in the development of a Seminary and in many other ways. However the big problem remains. Scotland is perishing and we are seeing little blessing on our attempts to reach our nation with the gospel. Other related denominations also struggle on with small and diminishing congregations. The

churches of our land have all failed. God has largely withdrawn from us as a nation.

## The Answer

### Humility

God hates pride. We have a strange ability to find things to boast of even when it is obvious that there is nothing of which we should be proud. It is dangerous to compare ourselves favourably with others. There is a great tendency to do this especially after a church division. To us belongs shame and confusion of face.

### Repentance

Let us repent of all known sin. Remember how it grieves the Holy Spirit causing Him to withdraw His blessing. Mortify sin in your members. Deal with it in your heart rather than just in outward life. Sin starts with a thought and develops into words and deeds. Recognise times, situations and circumstances where you are tempted. Avoid such like the plague. Realise that there is nothing easier than to sin and that every sin deserves the wrath and curse of God. Flee from idols. Flee from immorality. How easy it is to become hypocrites condemning in others the sin which we secretly practise ourselves.

### Grumbling

God in his providence has bestowed bountifully upon us. In the fullness we enjoy we forget God. It is easier to pray in times of trouble and poverty than in times of plenty. On the other hand when God sends trouble our way do we become angry and complain? Godliness with contentment is great gain.

### Love

Love amongst ourselves is very important. Sharing so much in common it should be easy for us. God delights in love. Nothing attracts the unconverted like love. We must respect one another. Be slow to speak hurtfully of any Christian. Be ecumenically-minded while holding firmly to the teaching, life and worship which you understand the Bible to proclaim. Recognise the grace of God in others. Be generous.

### Prayer

We must pray without ceasing and give God no peace till He will return and bless us. We are assured time and again in Scripture that it is not a waste of time to seek the Lord. Pray in private and public that God will return again in revival and bless this land with genuine conversions and His church with a new passion for His glory. It is easy to become pessimistic and despairing. We keep looking down and fail to see the Almighty on the throne. We concentrate on ourselves and our own inability rather than on God and His almighty power.

### Diligence and Perseverance

While we wait for God to work we must do our work. We must sow the seed or there will be no harvest. God has promised to bless the gospel and His Word will not return unto Him void. Speak to friends and neighbours and pass on Christian literature when you can. Ask the Lord for opportunities to witness and, when they come, use them with God's help. Keep going whatever happens. Remember this life is soon over. There is a crown to be won at the end of the race. Make sure you get it!

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# Christians DO get Depressed

## VI. The Carers

*Rev David Murray*

**H**aving covered so far the Crisis, the Complexity, the Condition and the Causes, we now come to the Carers. For our purposes the carers are the depressed Christian's family, friends, and fellow-Christians, who will be involved to one degree or another in helping the sufferer to get better. Usually these carers will have no medical training and often they will have very limited or incorrect knowledge of mental illness. However, they have a critical role in helping a depressed person get better. Research has shown that mental health patients will get better much quicker if they have someone close to them in whom they can confide and from whom they get support.

This article will consider the first five of ten areas for carers to consider when trying to help a depressed person get better. The final article will give the last five. The areas are Study, Sympathy, Support, Stigma, Secrecy, Self-esteem, Subjectivism, Speak, Suicide and Slow.

### 1. Study

As Christians, we surely want to be the person whom our loved ones turn to in time of need. When they do turn to us, we want to be able to help them and not hurt them further. It is, therefore, imperative that we learn about depression and other mental illnesses in order to avoid the very common mistakes that lay-people often make when dealing with the mentally ill, and in order to be of maximum benefit to those who are suffering.

Apart from studying how Jesus dealt with the ill, the weak, and the distressed you might want to read some of the very helpful books written from a Christian perspective. In order of readability and usefulness they are:

*Overcoming Spiritual Depression*, by Arie Elshout  
*I'm not supposed to feel like this*, by Chris William, Paul Richards, and Ingrid Whitton  
*Broken Minds*, by Steve and Robyn Bloem  
*A Practical Workbook for the Depressed Christian*, by Dr John Lockley (with caution)

Another book, of course, is the well-known *Spiritual Depression* by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. However, you should be aware that Dr Lloyd-Jones does not deal with every aspect of depression as an illness, but mainly with the spiritual consequences of depression. Also, he wrote before most of the modern medical treatments were available. A book which is written from a non-Christian perspective, but which is still useful, is *Mind over Mood* by Dennis Greenberger and Christine Padesky. It is important to remember that reading these books will not turn you into a mental health

professional, but it will make you more useful and helpful to loved ones in distress.

### 2. Sympathy

Thoughtful and prayerful study of mental illness should naturally and automatically increase our sympathy for those who suffer from it. By sympathy we mean an ability to communicate that we truly understand the problem and the symptoms, that we are deeply concerned, and that we will do all that we can to help. In many cases, such sympathy can have a powerful therapeutic effect on the sufferer. The lack of it can only multiply the pain and deepen the darkness. Consider the following quote from Russell Hampton, who suffered himself from depression: 'If there were a physical disease that manifested itself in some particularly ugly way, such as pustulating (weeping) sores accompanied by pain of an intense and chronic nature, readily visible to everyone, and if that disease affected fifteen million people in our country, and further, if there were virtually no help or succour for most of these persons, and they were forced to walk among us in their obvious agony, we would rise up as one social body in sympathy and anger. There isn't such a physical disease, but there is such a disease of the mind, and about fifteen million people around us are suffering from it. But we have not risen in anger and sympathy, although they are walking among us in their pain and anguish.'

It will greatly help you to sympathise if you always remember that you could just as easily be in the same position, suffering the same illness: 'For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' (1Cor.4:7). If you treat depressed people with impatient contempt, you may, like many others before you, have to learn sympathy the hard way.

### 3. Support

Support follows sympathy. It involves being available to listen and talk either in person or at the end of a phone. It includes praying with the person, especially as the mentally ill may find it impossible to put words and sentences together in prayer. It means unconditional love, love which is maintained even when you do not agree with every decision your loved one is making, and even when they may unjustly turn on you. It requires practical help such as child-minding to enable a young mother to get a few free hours each week, or such as taking an elderly person out in the car to give them a refreshing change of scenery. It demands wisdom to know when you are getting out of

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# "It will greatly help you to sympathise if you always remember that you could just as easily be in the same position, suffering the same illness."

your depth and more professional support is needed from medical services. The benefits of such supportive friendship cannot be overestimated. J Lockley states: 'The presence, the availability, just the existence of a friend like this provides a tremendous degree of comfort to the depressed person, as it demonstrates in physical terms how much he is cared for, accepted, loved, as he is, warts and all. It is not difficult for the depressed person to go on to realise that if individual Christians can love him that much, how much more will God do the same... Unconditional friendship is the key, as is loyalty. The real friends are the ones who can accept the depressed person as he is – on good days, bad days, sad days, frightened days and angry days. Friends like this don't put pressure on in any way, but allow the sufferer to be himself, however horrid that may seem to be. As one of my depressed friends said, "It's a relief not to have to put on a disguise".'

On a congregational level, pastors and officebearers should encourage a supportive atmosphere. Williams, Richards and Whitton write: 'For our churches to be really effective in supporting those with mental health difficulties, we need to establish a culture where everyone in the local church knows that it is acceptable to have problems from time to time, and that the church as a whole – and especially its leadership – is there to support church members during these times as well as in times of success.'

The church should be especially aware of the need to 'support the supporters'. To be an effective support to the mentally ill is physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually demanding. As Christians we need to be conscious of the need not only to support the depressed person but also to minister to the needs of their nearest and dearest.

## 4. Stigma

There is still a stigma attached to mental illness, and depression in particular. Ignorance and misunderstanding have filled the public mind with many prejudices and falsehoods. As a result, many still view mental illnesses such as depression as a choice, or as a sign of weakness, or as an excuse to opt out of life. The depressed person may also share these mistaken beliefs, and so double their sense of guilt and failure. Consequently, they will often be very reluctant to admit what they are feeling, and so go for many long months or even years without asking for help or seeking treatment.

Following steps 1-3 above will help to reduce this stigma. But the church can also help by making clear that Christians do not have to be perfect with no problems, and by demonstrating that when people do experience problems they will not be ignored or avoided.

Also, the preacher should present a balanced view of the Christian life, as represented in the Psalms, over a third of which deal with fear, anxiety, and despair. This is part and parcel of normal Christian experience in an abnormal world. Let us remind ourselves again and again: 'For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' (1Cor.4:7). Williams, Richards and Whitton argue: 'Almost anyone can experience mental health problems, given the wrong sequence of life experiences and stressors.'

## 5. Secrecy

As is clear from the above, it often takes a huge amount of courage for someone to admit to depression, often due to the fear of what people will say. If someone, therefore, trusts you enough to confide in you, then you must maintain the strictest confidence. There must be no 'sanctified' gossip – 'I'm just telling you this so that you can pray about it...!' It is tragic that so many depressed Christians have to prolong their secret suffering because of a justified fear that no one can keep a secret in the church! The church is in desperate need of Christians who are known to have this simple talent – they keep confidences.



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# Encouragement in the Lord!



*C H Spurgeon*

I occasionally meet with brethren who are tempted to commit the sin of Uzzah; as if God could not protect His own cause. Some say, 'What will become of the church? My Father! My Father! The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!'

## **The Holy Spirit**

You know the good Methodist woman's outcry at the funeral sermon when the minister said, 'Now that this eminent servant of the Lord is departed we know of no one to fill his place?' The worthy mother in Israel called out from the aisle: 'Glory be to God, that's a lie'. If all the men who preach the Gospel today were struck down tomorrow, the Holy Spirit would still qualify men to preach the Gospel.

## **The Spartans**

Christians ought to be as confident as the heroic Spartans. The old men advanced in procession, and they said, 'We have been brave', and they showed their scars; and then the strong men in the prime of their days followed and said, 'We are brave', and they bared their arms for war. Then if any one wondered what would happen when the old men were gone, and when the strong men were slain in battle, there came the striplings, and they said, 'We will be brave, for we are Spartans'.

## **The Spread of Error**

Many are in distress about the spread of error. The signs of the times are very bad, and the would-be prophets say that a dreadful storm is coming on. But God is not dead, and He will beat the devil yet. It is true it is a hard time for Christianity, and infidels are fighting us with new arguments; but when I think of them I feel inclined to say what the Duke of Wellington said at Waterloo to the generals, 'Hard pounding, gentlemen! Hard pounding, but we will see which will pound the longest'.

## **Discouragement**

Sometimes workers who are labouring for Christ get cast down. 'I have taught a class for years', says one, 'and seen no fruit'. 'I have been preaching for months, but have never heard of a conversion', says another. Well, do you think that you have preached Jesus Christ, and nothing has come of it? I do not believe it for a moment. I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me, and He has said, 'My word shall not return unto me void'. Be not so cowardly as to say, 'I will leave the work'. You are not to win a battle in a moment, or reap a harvest as soon as you sow the seed. Keep on!

## **A Mighty Fortress is Our God!**

*Martin Luther*

A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and pow'r are great,  
And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

And tho' this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph thro' us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim—  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly pow'rs,  
No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Thro' Him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.

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# Running the Race

## Eric Liddell: The Athlete Becomes an Evangelist

*Rev John W. Keddie*



*This is an extract from a chapter of the Rev John Keddie's latest book, the just-published biography of the Scottish Olympic athlete and missionary, Eric Liddell (1902-1945). The biography is entitled **Running the Race**. It is published by Evangelical Press in a large paperback format, with 256 pages and 68 illustrations. The cost is £8.95. There is a Foreword by former Olympic champion Sebastian Coe who is chairman of the London Committee for the 2012 Olympic Games.*

D P Thomson [Eric Liddell's colleague in evangelistic work in the 1920s and later his first biographer] identifies the Spring of 1923 as a rubicon for Eric, spiritually: 'Eric ... passed through what was perhaps the first great spiritual crisis of his life', says Thomson. It had to do with a group of Scottish University students who were members of what was known as the 'Glasgow Students' Evangelistic Union'. They were bound for a mission in Armadale in West Lothian, an industrial town of some 5,000 souls. The mission was to be concluded with a meeting for men in the Town Hall on the Friday night. No doubt through Rob [Eric's brother], who had already taken part in the G S E U Campaigns, it was believed that Eric was a Christian. Given Eric's profile in the world of sport – by then he was a Scottish Internationalist in both rugby and athletics – it was suggested he might speak at the closing meeting in Armadale. D P Thomson, who knew Rob already, made for 56 George Square and spoke to Rob first. 'Will Eric come and speak for us?' 'You'll have to ask him for yourself'.

A few minutes later D P was meeting Eric for the first time and asking him directly. A moment's silence. 'All right, I'll come'.

Thomson felt relieved. That was 6<sup>th</sup> April 1923, a crucial day in the spiritual life of the young Christian athlete. Thomson believed that at that time Eric did have real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but had been something of a secret disciple. 'Of his influence for good there could be no question – it was acknowledged on every hand – but he had never disclosed its secret, and he had never openly confessed his Lord'.

Whatever understanding Eric had then of the nature of Christian experience, he certainly later expressed himself clearly on the necessity for the new birth, repentance and faith, and the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit and the Bible for Christian discipleship.

In relation to the new birth he was later to write this: 'True Christianity starts with the new birth. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). The new birth is God coming into your life and giving you a new nature, a nature of love to God and man. Nothing in life can make up for the lack of this; nothing can take its place ... Christian living is made possible by the new birth. You never can understand the meaning of Christian living until God comes into your life.'

'When you are converted and give your life to God', he says in another place, 'this is the work of the Holy Spirit'. In this Eric was clearly speaking from his own experience. He also maintained the imperatives of the moral law in the life of the Christian. At any rate, after Armadale there would be no turning back. Both Rob and Eric spoke at the Armadale meeting.

'Eric did remarkably well for a first appearance, and said some telling things', recorded D P Thomson in his diary. He recorded elsewhere that 'both brothers spoke, and Eric made a deep impression more by his simplicity and sincerity, than by any words he actually uttered. Next day the news flashed around Scotland in the press – Edinburgh University's great runner had appeared on an evangelistic platform'. No doubt Eric learned what is spoken of in the Bible: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe

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in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed' (Rom.10:9-11).

At a farewell meeting for him in June 1925, Eric related his feelings on that first occasion. This is what was reported: 'Years ago he had been faced with the greatest problem of his life. He had been asked to assist at a campaign in Armadale, and at that time he had not addressed a gathering and was very reluctant about accepting. On the following morning he received a message from his sister, which contained the text: 'Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I will guide thee.' That text had helped him to make his decision, and since then he endeavoured to do the work of his Master'.

The text referred to is found in several verses from Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but most likely it is from Isaiah 41:10. The verse reads in full: 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness'. We can well appreciate how such a verse would have been a great encouragement to him, faced with D P Thomson's challenge. At any rate, that was the start of Eric's involvement in evangelism, something he sustained in the years he remained in the United Kingdom. Indeed it was the principal reason for his remaining in Scotland in the year after he graduated, though at that time he was also engaged in some theological studies at the Scottish Congregational College in Edinburgh.

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# Right Relationships with God and Men

*Rev Jeff Ballantine*

Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Bangor, Northern Ireland

This is Part I of a lecture given at the School in Theology at Larbert in September 2007

In a sense these two subjects more or less summarise the main goals of true religion. If you were to ask me what the two most important matters in life are I would say 'pursuing a right relationship with God and our fellow men'. Leave these two matters out and there isn't much which is important left to pursue, other than the way we relate to ourselves and creation, both animate and inanimate. If we succeed here in these issues, we have surely attained 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph.4:13). Virtually every page of the Bible speaks about these two subjects. Genesis opens with Adam and Eve enjoying a right relationship with God and one another. Everything was harmonious but the Fall soon changed all that. After they ate of the forbidden fruit they 'hid themselves from the presence of the Lord' (Gen.3:8). Their relationship with God became seriously marred and their relationship with one another fared very little better. The blame game began. As another has said: 'Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent and the serpent hadn't got a leg to stand on'. Sin had impacted everything in both the vertical and horizontal realms.

The rest of the Bible elaborates on the terrible consequences of these alienations, as well as telling us the glorious news of how they can be put right. In fact the book of Revelation

ends with the description of the redeemed enjoying a right relationship with God and man. These two great objectives have now been achieved: 'And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God' (Rev.21:3). Everything in between Genesis and Revelation speaks to these two same issues – the attaining of a right relationship with God and man. So if you want a perfect treatment of this subject read and meditate upon the entire Bible from beginning to end – the subject is as vast as that. It would be impossible to over-emphasise the importance of the subject matter of this lecture. There is nothing more important in life than pursuing these two goals. The two great commands which summarise the law relate to these two very issues: 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Mk.12:30-31, Deut.6:5, Lev.19:18). May God help us to pursue these two great objectives because if we succeed here we will have no regrets on Judgment Day. However, it's also true to say that virtually all regrets at that Grand Assize will have to do with one or both of these matters.

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## I. A Right Relationship with God

### a) The Basis of this Relationship

Its basis is the Person and work of our Saviour. Perhaps you think it strange mentioning this at a ministers' conference. After all we preach this theme day in, day out. We're all familiar with the facts, yet I dare not presume anything. Those final words of the Sermon on the Mount frighten me: 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (Mt.7:22-23). Many, not a few, will be deluded on that day – because they trusted in gifts while possessing no grace. Our only hope for time and eternity, and this is the same for ministers as everyone else, is God's grace alone on the basis of Christ alone, through faith alone, to the glory of God alone.

By nature we are 'far off' (Eph.2:13). This is true in two ways. Firstly, we are 'far off' objectively. By this I mean that we are natively removed from the means of grace without which salvation is impossible: 'being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world' (Eph.2:12). But we are also 'far off' subjectively and this in two senses: God is angry with us and we are angry with God. God is angry with us: 'God is angry with the wicked every day' (Ps.7:11). But we are also angry with God: 'alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works' (Col.1:21). It is only through Christ that these problems are resolved: 'But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ' (Eph.2:13).

Once again there are two sides to 'being made nigh'. We must be made nigh objectively. Before we can enjoy this 'so great salvation' we must have access to the means of grace which make it known to us, hence Paul's assertion that 'faith cometh by hearing' (Rom.10:17). Christ has been given 'power over all flesh' for this precise purpose 'that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him' (Jn.17:2). This power Christ possesses ensures that those given to Him by the Father in the counsels of eternity are brought into contact with the word of salvation. Consequently, it can be said of them 'the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach' (Rom.10:8). But even this blessed privilege isn't sufficient to save. We need to be 'made nigh' subjectively too. Alas, many who hear the word do not obey it, but when the Spirit through the word applies these great truths to our hearts we are 'made nigh' personally. Then we can say: 'Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy' (1Pet.2:10). May we never lose sight of the wonder of God's grace in bringing us into a right relationship with Himself.

### b) The Importance of this Relationship

It would be absolutely impossible to overemphasise the importance of this. The great end of life itself is to possess a right relationship with God once and for all through

conversion, and to have an increasingly right relationship with Him through growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2Pet.3:18). Everything else dwarfs into absolute insignificance in comparison to this great objective: 'that we might glorify God and enjoy him forever'. This is the basis of our eternal hope, it is the basis of our ministerial labours, it is the basis of our usefulness, it is the basis of our acceptance on Judgment Day, for without him we can do nothing (Jn.15:5). When we make progress in this area we do well, but if we fail here we've lost the plot. What our people think of us, our apparent usefulness to others, our gifts and abilities, all these things are secondary in comparison to this great burning issue – the possession and development of a right relationship with God. This is fundamental and foundational.

It's interesting to note that C H Spurgeon begins his *Lectures to my Students* on this very theme. His first chapter is entitled: 'The minister's self watch'. His emphasis is totally biblical. Our relationship with God comes before doctrine, although doctrine is vital: 'Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine' (1Tim.4:16). It comes before pastoral duties even though that is our calling: 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock' (Acts 20:28) It comes before evangelism because it's only insofar as we follow Christ that we become fishers of men: 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men' (Mt.4:19). In fact a right relationship with God equips us for all these other areas: 'the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits' (Dan.11:32). Al Martin was surely right when he said: 'The soil out of which powerful preaching grows is the preacher's own life'. McCheyne's emphasis was similar: 'It is not great talents which God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God'.

You're doubtless familiar with the incident that took place immediately after McCheyne's death. Bonar describes what happened as follows: 'After his death, a note was found unopened, which had been sent to him in the course of the previous week, when he lay in the fever. It ran thus: "I hope you will pardon a stranger for addressing to you a few lines. I heard you preach last Sabbath evening, and it pleased God to bless that sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said, as your manner of speaking that struck me. I saw in you a beauty in holiness that I had never seen before. You also said something in your prayer that struck me very much. It was this: "Thou knowest that we love thee". O sir, what would I give that I could say to my blessed Saviour: "Thou knowest that I love thee"'. "

McCheyne had his priorities right and that made his ministry useful and memorable. He took Proverbs 4:23 seriously: 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life'. The most tragic thing that could ever be said of a minister or anyone else is this: 'but mine own vineyard have I not kept' (Song 1:6). May God grant us a fresh realisation of the importance of this matter and in grace may we even know the fulfilment of Joel's promise 'I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten' (Joel 2:25).



# News



## Copperfield House

### New Church Building, Inverness

After worshipping in Inverness Royal Academy for eight years it looks likely that Inverness congregation are to obtain their own beautiful and very suitable building. They have had their offer for Copperfield House, Culloden Road, Inverness accepted in principle. They now await the granting of their application for 'Change of Use' by the Inverness Planning Department. It is not anticipated that there will be a problem with this but prayer is requested. Copperfield House has a large room which was formerly used as a restaurant and which would be very suitable for use as a place of worship. There are in addition four rooms which could be used as classrooms, two further en-suite rooms on the first floor and an owner's house which is a substantial and beautiful property. There are plenty of essential facilities, an industrial kitchen, and ramps for the disabled. The property is situated in three and a half acres of ground with a fine view overlooking the Moray Firth. The congregation hopes this property is a gracious answer to their prayers. They are now trying to collect as much

money as they can to minimise the size of loan and therefore the interest charges which are required to conclude the purchase. Hopefully the building will be a great asset to the Church as a whole.



Rev M.J. Kater

### Visit to Holland

The Moderator, the Rev Maurice Roberts, paid a brief visit to Nunspeet in Holland in October this year to represent the Free Church (Continuing) at the General Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CGKN).

Mr Roberts was one of several overseas church delegates invited to convey fraternal greetings on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007. He was introduced to the rostrum by the Rev Dr HGL Peels, Professor of Old Testament at their

Church's theological institution situated in Apeldoorn University. A warm and welcoming speech in response was given to Mr Roberts by the Rev MJ Kater, CGKN minister in Zeist.

The CGKN Synod have afforded a high status of brotherly fellowship to the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), by which they accord us pulpit exchange, admission to the Lord's Table, attendance at their triennial Synod and assistance with ecclesiastical problems. Mr Roberts spent two happy and profitable days at the Synod, noting with interest the debates relating to the possible future approval of a new Dutch translation of the Bible, the relation of the Church to its own theological University at Apeldoorn, the task of evangelism and its fraternal relationship with a sister church in Holland.

The following was the Finding (translated) of their General Synod concerning the ecclesiastical difficulties of the FCC as they are understood by them:

'The General Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands decided to commission their delegates of the Foreign Relations Committee with the task of continuing to follow the developments between the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), and if possible, to contribute to the process of reconciliation.'

### Gaza Bible Society

#### Bookshop Manager Killed

The small Christian minority in Gaza (approximately 3,000 people) has been shocked by the kidnapping and murder of Rami Ayyad (aged 30). Rami, who

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# Desk

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ran the Bible Society's bookshop in Gaza, was kidnapped after leaving the shop on the afternoon of Saturday 6th October. The next morning his body was discovered, showing knife wounds and bullet wounds. A colleague at the Bible Society said, 'Rami was the most gentle member of the team, the ever-smiling one. He was the face of our Bible shop, always receiving visitors and serving them as Jesus would'.

Pray for Rami's widow, Pauline, who is pregnant, and for their two children, George (2) and Wisam (9 months). Rami's death has received much coverage in the local media and the Christian community has received many messages of condolence, prayer and support. Pray that God will somehow bring good out of this tragedy.



**Rami Ayyad**

## **Portree Induction**

*Rev K MacDonald*

A large gathering of friends and family came together on Friday 2nd November in Portree to witness the ordination and induction of the Rev Richard Ross to Portree Free Church (Continuing). The Rev David Blunt



**Rev Richard Ross (Portree)**

presided, preaching from 1 Timothy 1:11 and taking his theme as the 'Glorious Gospel'. Afterward Mr Ross, having satisfactorily answered the usual important questions asked of ministers on such occasions and having signed the formula, was suitably addressed by the Rev John Keddie emphasising particularly the need to be free and full in his preaching of the Gospel. The Rev John Morrison then addressed the congregation reminding them of their responsibilities and especially to encourage their minister by letting him know when they have been blessed under his preaching. The congregation of nearly two hundred then adjourned to the Skye Gathering Hall next to the church where a wonderful three course sit-down meal followed by tea, coffee and an abundance of sweet things had been prepared by the hard-working ladies of the congregation. What a fine token this was of their love and esteem for their new minister! A good time of friendship and fellowship was had by all. The usual presentations were

made including a gift to their new minister presented on behalf of his congregation by Mr Iain Macpherson (Elder). It was encouraging to see so many ministers from other presbyteries present and also friends from other denominations. The occasion was obviously remembered by friends throughout the world, evidenced by many messages not only from our own country but also from Australia and America. Mr Ross had the Rev Allan Murray, the Rev Harry Woods and Mr John MacKenzie say a few words. This memorable evening was brought to a conclusion with Psalm-singing led by Mr Marshall Macdonald (Deacon) and then the Benediction pronounced by Mr Ross. It was mentioned by an older minister present that 'in all my years I have never been to an induction where there was such a wonderful spread', but we are sure that the prayer of all will be that the new work begun in Portree will bear much fruit and that the Gospel Table will continue to be spread with spiritual dainties and that many

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will come to taste of this food that has a heavenly origin.

## **Iraq**

### **Anti-Christian Violence Continues**

The threats and violence against Christians continue, and huge numbers are fleeing the country. Those who are leaving now are mostly poorer than those who fled earlier. Many are sick, disabled or have been injured in anti-Christian violence before they left their homeland. They arrive in Syria, where rent and food prices have shot up because of the influx of refugees. The Iraqis are allowed to work in Syria, but find it difficult to get jobs with a decent wage. Huge numbers turn to the churches for help with their basic needs.

Church leaders are a particular focus of attack by Islamic extremists, which is seen by Christians as confirming that their community is being targeted for religious reasons. Two church ministers were kidnapped at a funeral in Mosul on 13th October, but released unharmed on 21st October.

Pray for peace, stability, law and order in Iraq, and for all who are victims of the chaos and violence. Pray in particular that our heavenly Father will meet the needs of Iraqi Christians, those in the country and those who are refugees. Barnabas Fund is assisting churches in Iraq and Syria to meet the needs of these desperate Christians. Thank the Lord for the safe release of the two church ministers. (Several other ministers kidnapped in the past have been killed.)

## **India**

### **Hindu Extremists Attack Christians**

Reports continue to come in every week concerning attacks on church leaders and other Christians in India. Here are just two examples. On 16th September evangelist Ajay Topno was shot dead in Sahoda village, Jharkand state. On 14th October at 2.30am, Pastor TC Joseph (57) and his wife Ammini (50) were attacked in their home in Mananthavady, Kerala state. The attackers had first disconnected the phone and power supply, then broke down the door and severely beat the couple.

Pray for all who are bereaved and injured because of their faithful service for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank the Lord that the police were quick to act in the case of Pastor Joseph and pray that the police in every Indian state will follow their example.

## **Queen's Speech**

Abortion, IVF for lesbians, genetically-modified babies, and a proposed incitement to 'homophobic' hatred offence can all be expected to feature in the coming session of Parliament. These issues relate to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill and the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, which were announced by the Queen as she officially opened Parliament for its 2007/08 session. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill proposes changes to the law on fertility treatment. It would remove the assumption that a child needs a father, making it easier for lesbian couples and single women to become pregnant by artificial means. The Bill also opens the door for the creation of animal-human hybrid embryos for research, and it proposes to allow cloning techniques which will result in some babies having two genetic mothers and one genetic father. In addition, it is widely expected that MPs on both sides of the abortion debate will take advantage of the scope of the Bill to propose changes to the abortion law. A law against incitement to 'homophobic' hatred has been announced by the Government and is expected to be included as an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill. The free speech implications of these proposals have already attracted much controversy, and are expected to continue to do so over the coming months.

## **Website**

*Rev Greg MacDonald*

It is a year since our Church website [www.fccontinuing.org](http://www.fccontinuing.org) was revamped. During that time it has provided dozens of articles, written sermons, gospel messages and devotional articles. Audio sermons from around our Church are uploaded weekly and items of news are added as headlines on the front page, making it easier to keep up to date with

what is happening in our own Church and events of interest to Christians across the country.

This makes it a good time to thank all those who have helped and contributed to this project and to encourage you by giving a few figures about how the site is used.

We all know the 'www' at the start of web addresses stands for 'world-wide-web' but it is still very exciting to see just how many people from different countries visit our site. In this way we are able to have a ministry well beyond our shores. People visit our site from: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bermuda, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Singapore, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, UAE, UK, USA and Viet Nam.

The numbers visiting our site have continued to rise. We began in January with nearly 4500 unique visits to our site that month. We now have more than 8000. Total visits started off at 15,000 per month and now stand at 25,000. What is most encouraging about these figures is that there are clearly thousands of people who do want to access good, sound, reformed material over the Internet.

The web site has a wide range of features: For example users can subscribe to our News Page and receive alerts when new material is added; children can send photos of their Sunday School Outings for the Kids' Page and visitors can interact with satellite maps to find our local churches. Sermons, Moderators' Assembly Addresses and School in Theology lectures can all be listened to over the web or downloaded as a podcast for later.

Please pray that our site will continue to edify Christians, challenge the thoughtless and call sinners to repentance and the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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**- Obituary -**

**Donald Macsween**  
**(1932-2007)**

**Elder, Scalpay**

*Rev Timothy J. McGlynn*



**T**he passing of Dollie Macsween to his eternal reward took from Scalpay one of its most gracious and beloved sons. In 1954 he professed faith in Jesus Christ, a profession he was to maintain for more than half a century. Dollie and Mary-Bell (née Mackay) were married in November 1957 and shared almost fifty years together. A loving Christian couple, in their love for one another they also shared a love of the Saviour.

They left Scalpay for Glasgow where he worked in the shipyards until 1963. Dollie and Mary-Bell were blessed with five children: Calum (died 1965), Duncan, and Joan, were born in Glasgow, while Christina and Calum arrived following the family's return to Scalpay. Dollie often spoke of his gratitude to God for his family. He loved them deeply, and they reciprocated joyfully. Their love was deepened by the respect in which they held Dollie for his consistent, gracious and godly life. His grandchildren were a source of great joy to him and they adored seanair (granddad).

While at Partick Highland (Glasgow) he was elected to the office of deacon. He returned home to Scalpay in 1963, where he worked as a weaver. Along with William

Mackinnon (elder) and others, he used his great strength in road building. But there was sweetness in his strength, and this became apparent to all when he entered the house of God for worship. Dollie was a precentor of great ability and unusual power. When not precenting his voice would lift the congregational singing and was appreciated by his fellow precentors as well as the congregation.

When first approached, he initially declined ordination to the office of elder. Eventually, in 1976, he was persuaded to accept and faithfully conducted himself in that office before Church and community. As Church Officer, a post he held for 22 years, he was a constant fixture in the house of God in Scalpay, with a warm welcome for all. Communion seasons saw him travel throughout the Presbytery where his fellowship was greatly appreciated, particularly when speaking to the question or leading the singing.

Dollie Macsween ran with patience the race set before him, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of his faith. Scalpay and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) are the poorer for his passing. However, we are all undoubtedly richer for having known him.



# Books

## The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

John Owen

Reformation Heritage Books  
pbk, 448pp, \$26.00

John Owen (1616-1683) was one of the greatest theologians ever. This book is volume 5 of his *Works*. The subject is of vital importance. Martin Luther said justification by faith is 'the doctrine by which the church stands or falls'. Sadly now we again face debate on this subject in our day.

Owen wrote: 'The testimonies which are multiplied to this purpose, sufficiently prove, that the best of God's saints have not a righteousness of their own, whereon they can in any sense be justified before God. For they all, in the places referred to, renounce any such righteousness of their own ... in all that they have done or can do, and betake themselves to grace and mercy alone.'

And whereas, as we have before proved, God in the justification of any, exercises grace towards them with respect to a righteousness, whereon He declares them righteous and accepted before Him, they all respect a righteousness which is not inherent in us but imputed to us.

To understand this doctrine is very important to any preacher. We need solid spiritual food such as Owen provides. Here the doctrine of justification by faith through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is explained, confirmed, and vindicated.

We are children of the Reformation, therefore we have to grasp this doctrine as firmly as we can, and this book is most helpful to those who really want to know the doctrine of justification by faith.

Rev Jaeyoon Kim

## Temptation:

## Resisted and Repulsed

John Owen

Abridged by Richard Rushing,  
Banner of Truth Trust, pbk, 128pp, £5

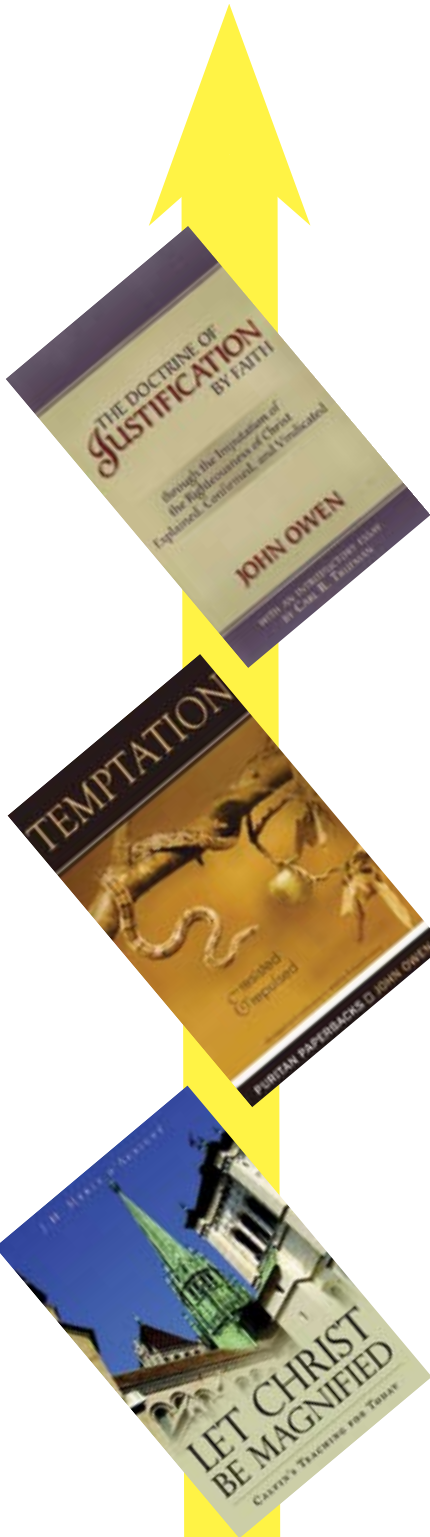
This book is a modern version of Owen – without losing the flavour and tone of the well-known Puritan. It is easy to recommend but not easy to put all the solid solemn advice into practice. There is no point in reading this book to skim it. It is a slender volume with very short chapters and an easy modern style, but thoughtful reading of only a few chapters at a time and then bringing the applications to yourself would be the best way to read this.

Owen himself lays this duty on his reader: 'Anyone who does not resolve to put this direction into practice daily and conscientiously, need read no further'. Simply put, this is a book well-worth reading. Don't be put off by the fact that it is Owen. The modernising has trimmed this volume down into very manageable English, and brief chapters. Yet at the same time do not think that now Owen can be read without thought, study and self-examination.

Here are two of his challenging and helpful quotes: 'When a man can live and plod on in their profession, and not be able to say when they last experienced any living sense of the love of God or of the privileges they have in the blood of Christ, I do not know how they can keep themselves from being ensnared'. And then again: 'Satan may say today, 'You may venture on sin, because you have an interest in Christ', but tomorrow he will be telling you in no uncertain terms that you have no interest in Christ because of what you have done.'

I commend this book and thank God for it.

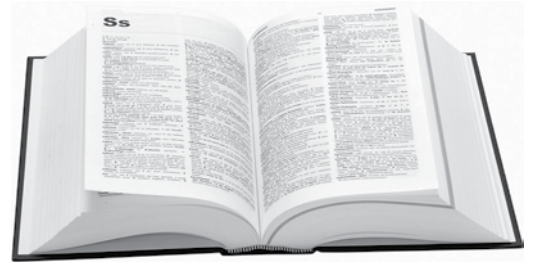
Rev Greg MacDonald



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# Books



## Global Jihad

### The Future in the Face of Militant Islam

*Patrick Sookhdeo*

Isaac Publishing 670 pp, hbk, £15.99

Patrick Sookhdeo has performed a great service for Western civilisation in producing this definitive book. It is obviously a work of great scholarship and the result of many hours of careful and painstaking research. The basic thesis, which he proves with numerous quotations from the Koran, the Hadith (tradition recording what Muhammad and his early followers said and did) and modern Islamic scholars and politicians, is that violence, terror and war are at the heart of Islam. Today many Western political leaders try to describe Islam as a religion of peace and the terrorists as the lunatic fringe. Actually those who interpret Islam as a peaceful religion and jihad as an inner war against temptation are the fringe. The whole world is by Islam divided into the house of Islam and the house of war. There must be no retreat. Where land has been acquired or conquered then, till the judgment day, it remains the property of Islam and a duty is laid upon every Muslim to fight for its recovery. This not only refers to Palestine but also to other lands like India and Spain. Even in Britain areas are being dedicated to Islam. Treaties with other nations are made only for the benefit of Islam and must never be permanent. *Taqiyya* means that Muslims can deceive and lie if it benefits Islam. Muslim leaders will say one thing for the benefit of Western audiences and the opposite for their own people.

This book is aimed at decision makers in politics, security, intelligence and the military. Its great benefit is in showing the true nature of Islam. It is vital in a war against terrorists to know the enemy. The strategies which Sookhdeo proposes to resist the terrorists are such as could commend themselves to Western secularists. Therefore no mention is made of our two most powerful weapons in dealing with the threat of Islam – prayer and the proclamation of God’s Word. Without the knowledge that God is sovereign this book would fill me with fear. The Muslim system shows all the genius of man in inventing a religion to dominate the world. War on the disbelievers is as important as prayer, or fasting, or almsgiving, and death in war brings immense rewards in paradise both for oneself and one’s relatives. An extensive bibliography, a glossary of terms, a useful index and a hundred pages of references are given.

A few quotations are added here to give the flavour of this book. ‘Violence and terrorism do form an intrinsic part of classical Islam’. King Abdullah II of Jordan is quoted as saying that ‘there is no such thing as extremist Islam and no such thing as moderate Islam, for Islam is one’. Colonel Qadhafi, noting the growing numbers of Muslims in Europe, has predicted a victory for Islam ‘without swords, without guns, without conquests’. Sookhdeo writes: ‘Fear is part of the arsenal of the terrorist and, following the precepts and example of early Islam, one of the main strategies of the Islamic terrorists has been to create terror. In this they have been eminently successful for a relatively small number of attacks on Western targets have had a strong psychological impact making Western populations jittery, fearful and

extremely anxious to please’. However, as Sookhdeo says the enemy is ‘not Muslims but the classical interpretation of Islam’.

If you wish to understand modern Islam and its threat, read this book. I strongly recommend it for ministers and Christian leaders as well as for the politicians and military leaders for whom it was primarily intended.

*Rev William Macleod*

## Let Christ be Magnified Calvin’s Teaching for Today

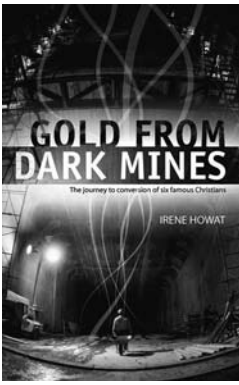
*J H Merle D’Aubigné*

Banner of Truth Trust

pbk, 80pp, £5.00

2009 will be the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Calvin. No doubt with this in view the Banner have produced the present volume. Essentially it is an address given by D’Aubigné (the well known Reformation historian) in Geneva in 1864 at the tercentenary celebration of Calvin’s death. Added to this are short biographies of both D’Aubigné and Calvin. D’Aubigné says: ‘All Calvin’s life proclaimed glory, glory, glory to Christ, and to self confusion of face. Glory to His *Word*, glory to His *Person*, glory to His *Grace* and glory to His *Life*. These four points of his address form the four short chapters in this book. He concludes with the prayer, ‘Breathe upon these half-consumed embers, and may a heavenly fire burn in your people!’ D’Aubigné briefly discusses and criticises Calvin’s support for the death of Servetus the heretic. He notes that Calvin was a child of his age: ‘There is no longer a Jerusalem and there cannot be one. We desire the truth, but we desire it in liberty’.

*Rev William Macleod*



## Gold from Dark Mines: The Journey to Conversion of Six Famous Christians

Irene Howat

Christian Focus, pbk, 203pp, £5.99

This is an unusual book, well written as always by this author, bringing before us mini-biographies of six well-known Christians; Augustine, Bunyan, the

Countess of Huntingdon, Jonathan Edwards, Spurgeon and Isobel Kuhn. What makes it different is that it focuses on their pre-conversion years and their coming to faith rather than their subsequent lives of faith.

Augustine's faithful mother's persevering prayers for her son for over thirty years despite his many sinful excesses is a lesson to all praying mothers. He lived in open rebellion against the Lord, 'he satisfied his lust because he wanted to' but eventually he came to bow the knee to King Jesus.

We read of Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon's difficult early home life and her later ability as a businesswoman. We know from other books that she was a great supporter

of the early Methodists, though we also learn here that, surprisingly, she was a woman whose temper often got the better of her, but eventually after many years of seeking to please God by her good works she came to be 'filled with all joy and peace in believing'.

Jonathan Edwards looking back on his 'praying five times a day alone' as a boy, recognises this as nothing but 'much self-righteous pleasure'.

Seeing anyone reading 'pious books' was 'intolerable and upsetting' to John Bunyan in early days, and yet 'Christians behaving unchristianly really upset him'.

Many other interesting facts like these are also related about Spurgeon and Isobel Kuhn in this excellent little book, all reminding us that even these great men and women of old were but sinners by nature who by the grace of God became saved sinners.

I am sure many Christians who read this book will be able to identify with situations akin to some of their own pre-conversion experiences, and maybe even some times of 'halting between two opinions'. Reading this publication will encourage all to press on and not to let their past sins be a stumbling block to their developing in faith.

*Rev Kenneth MacDonald*

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# Anticipation

*Rev Kenneth Smith*

*'It doth not yet appear what we shall be' (1John.3:2)*

When we speak of the 'visible' and the 'invisible' church, we must be careful not to think of two Christian churches. The 'visible' church consists of those who profess Christ as Head of the church, hold that He has a divine and human nature, and have their name on the roll as members of the church (together with their children). Within the visible church in this world there will be a mixture of true and false members. Our Lord warns that there will be tares among the wheat, and that the vine will have withering branches as well as true living branches. Like the ten virgins of the parable, going by outward appearance it may be difficult to tell which are the wise. There will be those that know the truth in their heads but not in their hearts. Though in the visible church, they are separated from Christ. The saving knowledge of God is treasured up in Christ. If we have been under the teaching and preaching of the Bible since we can remember, has it led us to put our hope in Christ alone for salvation? Has Christ become the most precious thing in our life? Has the Lord Jesus taken over our heart and life?

### The Invisible Church

The Confession of Faith says, 'The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some

have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth to worship God according to His will'. (WCF 25:5). There will always be those who know the truth 'as it is in Christ Jesus'. He is the way, the truth, and the life and no man comes to the Father but by Him (Jn.14:6).

Because the invisible church consists solely of regenerate persons it follows that, whatever condition the visible church is in, the invisible church will always have a glory though unseen by the world. Every single member of it has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They have been born again by the Holy Spirit and are now united to Christ as living branches of the vine. What is true of the 'invisible church' is true of every true believer. United to Christ every true Christian has a glory not seen by the world. The King's daughter is 'all glorious within' (Ps.45:13). Though they are imperfect in this world they have a perfect righteousness, they are adopted into the family of God, the Holy Spirit leads them and their future is to be glorified.

### The Unseen Glory of the True Church

The church has always had to struggle in this world. The world is like a tyrant always seeking to destroy her and, since

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it cannot, it will try to lead her captive. Sometimes the world attacks with persecution, other times it seeks to infiltrate her to bring her down from the inside. In the history of the church there have been times that she appeared to have been burnt to ashes and destroyed, but she rose out of the ashes again holding up the banner of Christ. 'They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations' (Ps.72:5). We live in a day when the church seems to be a house divided against itself, a tangled heap of wreckage after an explosion. In the hands of liberals and middle-of-the-roaders she has become weak, voiceless and afraid of the world.

However, the church of God on earth is not what she seems. No! She seems to be poor and weak, but she is not! She is a King's bride, although she appears more like a beggar. It was so with our Lord while here on earth. He was not what men thought. He was to many 'despised and rejected of men', and 'a root out of a dry ground'. But to His people He was 'God manifest in the flesh', the King of glory.

### Great Future

No one looking at the church in our day with the eyes of the flesh could guess what she is, or will be. The tree in winter is not what it appears – dead! It is alive and full of vigorous, though hidden, vitality in root, stem, and branch – a vitality which frosts and storms are but maturing, not quenching.

Although leafless, yet summer life is there and autumn fruitfulness. It wraps up within itself the germs of future verdure and

fruit, and awaits the coming spring. So it is with the church of God in this age of wintry night; for it is both night and winter with her. Her present position ill accords with her prospects. No one, in looking at her, could guess what she is or what she is to be. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him' (1Cor.2:9).

No one merely observing the outward appearance of the church, or the treatment she receives from the world, or the chastisements from God, could measure her present glory, or her future happiness. Even with the eye of faith, we find difficulty in realising her prospects. We can hardly at times credit the greatness of her heritage. It must seem strange to unfallen angels that saints should be found at all in such a world as this – a world without God, a world of atheists, idolaters, and infidels, a world that from the days of Cain has been the rejecter of God's Son.

It is not the kind of place where we should expect to find children of God. Next to Hell, it is the unlikeliest place for a soul that loves God to dwell in. If a stranger, traversing the universe in search of God's little flock, were to put to us the question, where are they to be found, would he not be astonished when told they were in the very world where Satan reigned as the Prince of the power of the air, a world that had rejected God?

If we were looking for flowers, we would not go to the desert, or to the polar ice caps. Yet, consider where the church is to be found. It is strange to find a Joseph in Egypt, or a Rahab in Jericho, or an Obadiah in the house of Ahab! It is much more amazing to find saints in the world at all. Yet, they are in this world. In spite of everything uncongenial in soil and air, they are here. They never seem to become acclimatised, yet they do not die out, but are continually renewed. The enemy labours to uproot them, but they survive and bear fruit. It is a miracle, but yet so it is! Here, in this world the great Husbandman is rearing His plants from generation to generation. Here the great Master-builder hews and polishes the stones for His glorious temple.

### A Spirit of Anticipation

The true believer still dwells in the world, but his affections are towards the world to come, the better world where Christ is. Like the rest of the believing church he or she feels that this is not home. His kindred according to the flesh are here, but his heart and soul are set on the kingdom where Christ dwells.

This gives the believing church a spirit of anticipation. Believing the Word of God, and resting on the only Saviour and the blood He shed, she anticipates a full acquittal on the Day of Judgment. Also realising her oneness with the ascended Saviour, she anticipates the glory of heaven, when she shall

see 'The King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off'.

In the midst of the darkness of this world Christ is to her as the 'bright and morning Star',

and looking to Him she anticipates the morning light of heaven. Mocked and shunned in this world, she anticipates the joy and glory of His coming again to this world as the King of kings. All things are mine, she says, 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours' (1Cor.3:22). What the Christian anticipates cheers him when passing through rough waters. They comfort him, or, at least they calm and soothe him.

The believer may say to himself, 'I am not what I seem. I am not the beggared outcast the world takes me for. I am richer far than they. They have their riches now; but mine are coming when theirs are gone. They have their joys now, but mine are coming when theirs have ended in eternal weeping. I live in the future; my treasure is in heaven, and my heart is gone up to where my treasure is. I shall soon be seen to be what I now seem not. My sun is about to rise, and the joy of my promised morning will make me forget that I ever wept'. Faith has no horizons; it looks beyond life, beyond the earth, and beyond the ages, into eternity. Beyond the deathbed, and beyond the grave she sees heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ her Saviour. The poor world does not see the glorious heritage of the weakest believer. The poorest saint may say, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain'.

## Congregational Remittances - November 2007

	2007 Nov	2007 Total	2006 Total to Nov				
<b>Presbytery of Sutherland</b>				<b>Presbytery of Lewis</b>			
Brora	1,600	17,512	18,252	Cross	2,058	21,345	21,859
Assynt & Scourie	1,800	7,552	6,720	Harris - Leverburgh	1,000	10,817	10,322
<b>Total Sutherland</b>	<b>3,400</b>	<b>25,064</b>	<b>24,972</b>	Harris - Scalpay	1,540	18,001	12,203
<b>Presbytery of Inverness</b>				Knock & Point	800	10,481	8,650
Duthil-Dores	1,104	17,656	17,641	Stornoway	4,236	62,035	47,063
Inverness	2,000	28,000	29,337	<b>Total Lewis</b>	<b>9,634</b>	<b>122,680</b>	<b>100,097</b>
<b>Total Inverness</b>	<b>3,104</b>	<b>45,656</b>	<b>46,978</b>	<b>Presbytery of Lochcarron</b>			
<b>Presbytery of Ross</b>				Glenelg & Arnisdale	191	1,562	1,709
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,300	16,467	14,393	Lochalsh & Glenshiel	890	12,899	12,325
Kiltearn	1,700	21,707	18,460	Poolewe & Aultbea	988	11,654	12,197
Tarbat	1,500	8,313	8,402	<b>Total Lochcarron</b>	<b>2,069</b>	<b>26,115</b>	<b>26,230</b>
<b>Total Ross</b>	<b>4,500</b>	<b>46,486</b>	<b>41,255</b>	<b>Presbytery of Skye &amp; Uist</b>			
<b>Presbytery of Edinburgh</b>				Bracadale	1,000	12,378	11,213
Aberdeen	0	5,867	6,275	Duirinish (Waternish)	400	4,400	3,637
Edinburgh	6,000	26,655	20,598	Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	15,661	13,974
<b>Total Edinburgh</b>	<b>6,000</b>	<b>32,522</b>	<b>26,873</b>	North Uist	800	9,154	8,718
<b>Presbytery of Glasgow</b>				Portree	3,081	13,421	22,743
Ayr	200	2,012	1,119	Snizort	1,650	19,206	17,310
Arran	232	6,261	5,527	Strath	0	6,123	21,192
Dumfries	0	85	768	<b>Total Skye &amp; Uist</b>	<b>8,231</b>	<b>80,343</b>	<b>98,787</b>
Glasgow - Partick	4,700	26,200	27,300	<b>Total Congregations</b>			
Glasgow - Shettleston	1,200	11,800	9,830	<b>Total Congregations</b>	<b>44,950</b>	<b>447,897</b>	<b>431,588</b>
Glasgow - Thornwood	1,680	20,672	19,800	Other Donations	600	22,863	12,645
Rothesay	0	2,000	2,051	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,550</b>	<b>470,759</b>	<b>444,232</b>
<b>Total Glasgow</b>	<b>8,012</b>	<b>69,030</b>	<b>66,395</b>	Including Gift Aid:		48,417	48,178

# The Secret Village

*Rev Maurice Roberts*

During a recent visit to Holland as Moderator I had hospitality kindly given to my wife and myself for a few days in a town called Nunspeet situated in the central 'Bible Belt' area of that country. We both enjoyed warm and spiritual fellowship during our days in the home there of one of the church elders. This in itself was memorable. But something came out in conversation while we were there which added a dimension of surprise and delight to my wife and myself. It is worth relating.

In the course of conversation we mentioned the name of a Dutch naturopath named Professor de Vries, whom we had known many years ago during our time in Ayr. To our astonishment the gentleman with whom we stayed knew

him well! This brought us to speak of a touching story which took place during the Second World War in Holland in which the de Vries family were involved.

### **Protection of Jews**

During the war many Dutch families very kindly took Jewish people into their homes and gave them protection from the Nazis, who attempted to gather all European Jews and have them put into concentration camps. The de Vries family were given the use of a large area of woodland in the area of Nunspeet in order to protect Jewish families. They had had small dug-out homes constructed in their woodland in order to give safe hiding to refugee Jewish families during the war.

Such families were given bicycles to enable them to travel conveniently. But one rule they were required to observe was not to have any valuables concealed in their homes. This was for the security and safety of all concerned. There were hundreds of people in this way hidden from the Germans. 'The miracle,' writes Professor de Vries in a recent letter, 'still is that Rommel himself walked over the huts and never found what he was looking for!' O happy providence of God!

### **The Love of Money**

All went well till towards the very end of the War when a very tragic event took place. One day the children of these Jewish families were playing on the edge of the wood when they were alarmed to see Nazi soldiers. They fled back to their secret homes and immediately warned their parents. Bicycles were swiftly manned and all were on their way to escape to safety when one family, which had broken the rules, turned back to get their valuables stored in their underground home. Sadly they were caught and shot. Several members of the de Vries family were also shot.

### **Honoured**

After the war the state of Israel was set up in 1948. The Government of Israel planted a wood in their country in honour to the de Vries family and in recognition of their kindness to refugee Jewish people. In addition, the Government of Israel made a plaque to commemorate this event. The plaque, written in Hebrew and Dutch, was displayed on the wall of the waiting-room of the de Vries family's medical centre in Troon, Ayrshire. It was noticed by my wife and myself on a visit to the surgery of Professor de Vries – perhaps some twenty-five years ago. When we made enquiry to find out what the plaque was for we were told the above story!

### **A Visit to these Woods**

Little did we think that, years later, in October 2007, we would meet a friend of this same de Vries family who was able to take us actually to the very wood where this had



happened all those many years ago! Professor de Vries himself, on hearing of our experience, very kindly sent us some photos showing us a picture of his aunt who at that time had 'done a wonderful job' of looking after the Jews in the wartime underground. In one of these photos also was the handsome figure of a young Jewish man. He was the youngest member of the village. In after years he became a surgeon in Glasgow, having survived it all.

A short drive took us to the very wood where all this had happened! When we got out of the car we were able to walk into one of the dug-out homes which those Jewish families had occupied in wartime. Here these poor dear Jewish people had lived in fear and trembling at the possible approach at any moment of hostile German soldiers. Here these Jews had brought up their families. Here no doubt they had said their traditional prayers to God.

It was a tearful moment as we stood in that underground home.

As it happened there were a number of English tourists on bicycles in the immediate area. They too, previously ignorant of the story above, came with me into the home. I was able to tell them a little of the story I am telling you here. It gave me also the opportunity to mention to them the name of the blessed Jesus who had died for sinners on the cross.

### **We Love the Jews**

Poor beloved Jewish people! How we should love them and how we should pray day and night that God would open their eyes to see by faith the Saviour whom their forefathers ignorantly crucified!

Jews are our elder brothers in the gospel. They had the truth for centuries before we Gentiles had it preached to us after the Day of Pentecost. God has told us that the day will come when He will again open their spiritual eyes. When that happens they will 'look upon Him whom they have pierced' (Zech.12:10). It will be the happy time of their national re-entry into the church of Christ. (Read again Romans 11).

Hasten that blessed day, O Lord!



**Aunt of Dr de Vries with the youngest Jewish survivor**

**'In the beginning God ...'  
Genesis 1:1**