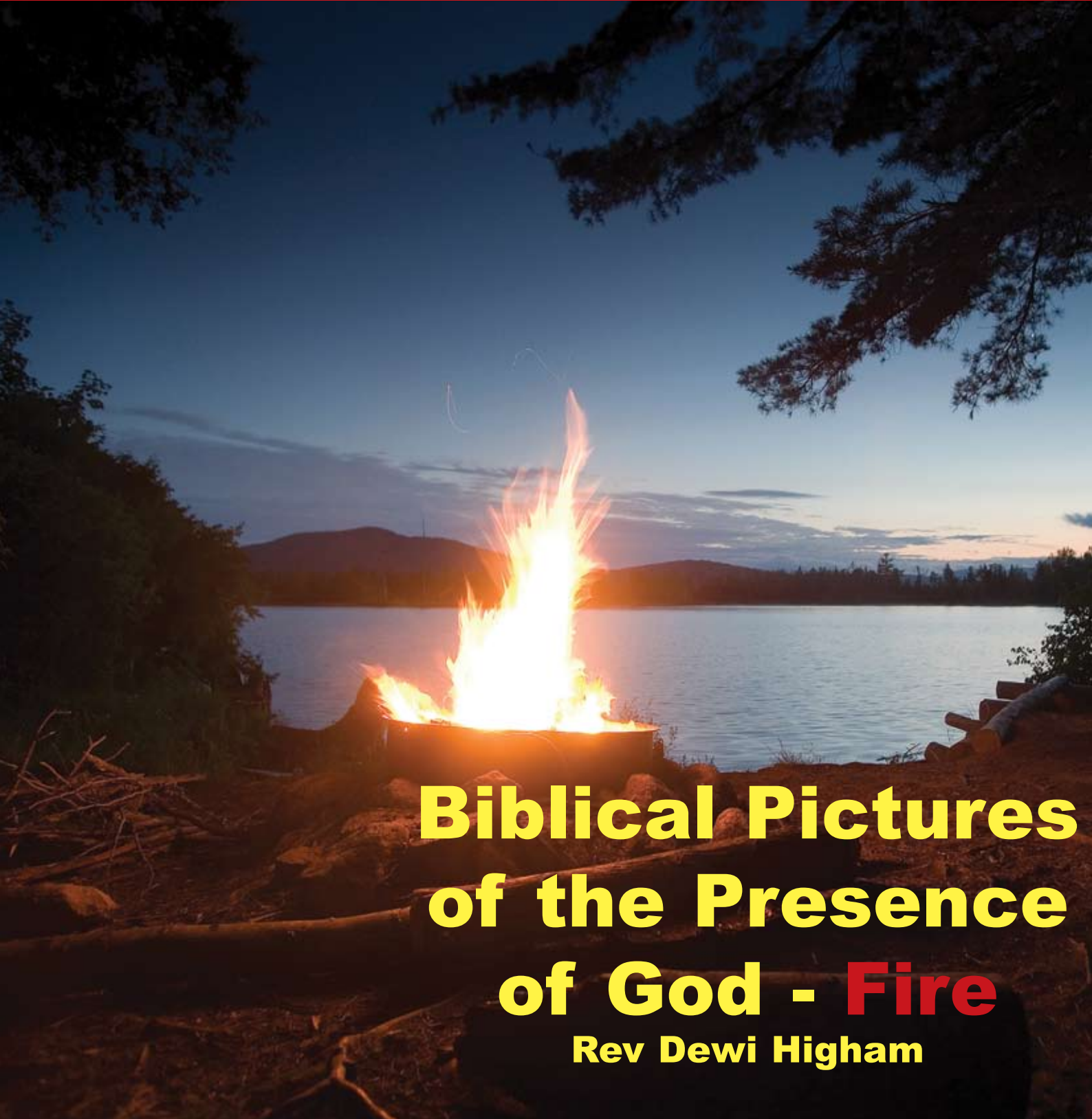


Free Church

Witness



OCTOBER 2008 ISSUE



Biblical Pictures of the Presence of God - **Fire**

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The Lord's Table Restricted or Not?

The common practice today is to invite to the Table all who wish to come and partake of the Lord's Supper. It is left up to the individual's conscience. In many churches the elements are passed round the whole assembly. There is no restriction. However the traditional Presbyterian and Puritan practice was quite different. The Lord's Supper was celebrated only in the church, ie in the formal gathering of the congregation for public worship and under the supervision of the eldership. Nowadays it is quite common to end an interdenominational conference with a communion service. Traditionally only those who were members of the church in good standing were allowed to participate, along with those who could assure the eldership that they were members of other churches and walking consistently with their profession. Those who wished to participate for the first time were examined by the kirk session as to their basic understanding of the gospel and the sacrament. They were required to make a credible profession of faith and had to be known to the elders as individuals whose walk was consistent with their profession.

Catechism

The Shorter Catechism as always is very helpful in answering the question as to who should partake of the supper. In answer 97 it states: 'It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves. The warning of the Apostle has rightly been stressed in our churches. Many in Corinth were sick and others had died because of the chastisement of the Lord for their misuse of this solemn sacrament.'

Not for Everyone

The Old Testament equivalent of the supper is the feast of Passover. This feast was not for the Egyptians, but only for those who trusted in the sacrificial lamb and sprinkled the blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. It was for the covenant people, for those who carried the sign of the covenant, which was circumcision. Jesus fed the 5000 and on another occasion the 4000, but He gave communion only to the disciples – not to the mixed multitudes. Although only the Lord's people should sit at the Lord's Table, Jesus by allowing Judas to be there showed that we can never in this life completely separate the wheat from the tares or the foolish virgins from the wise. That, of course, does not allow us knowingly to add tares to the wheat. That is the devil's work.

Fencing the Table

Although the practice of 'fencing the Table' has been abandoned by many churches it is of more relevance today than ever. 'Fencing' is a legal term which was used for the declaring of who had a right to be present in a court. In its ecclesiastical use the minister sets out, prior to the celebration of the Supper, who should come to the Table and who should stay away. Scriptural justification for it is found in what Paul does in 1Corinthians 11. He states, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.' The Lord's Table is for the Lord's people. Those who trust in their own righteousness for salvation and those who live scandalous lives are excluded. Galatians 5 makes a distinction between those involved in the works of the flesh and those in whom is the fruit of the Spirit.

Paedo-Communion

In the Old Testament children were allowed to partake of the Passover and from this some today argue that little children who have been baptised and so are members of the covenant community should be allowed to take communion. It sounds logical but the problem is that a requirement has been laid down by the Apostle, 'Let a man examine himself' (1Cor.11:28). This requires that the individual coming for communion must have reached the age of discernment where it is possible for him to question himself as to his knowledge and understanding of what he is doing. The Apostle adds the serious warning that it is possible to eat and drink damnation to yourself (v29). Some in Corinth were doing this by coming thoughtlessly, by feasting and drunkenness at the table, by forgetting others who were hungry, by allowing divisions among God's people and by not discerning the Lord's body. Communion is not a converting ordinance. The preaching of the gospel is for that. Rather the Table is for the strengthening and encouraging of faith which is already there. It is not essential for salvation, as is shown in the case of the thief converted on the cross.

Church Discipline

Church discipline is vital to the health of the church, is a means of grace and a mark of the true church. In 1Corinthians 5 we read of a man engaged in fornication. Paul required that he be excluded from the table. Having benefited from the exclusion he was later to be restored again to the table (2Cor.2:6-7). Paul tells Timothy of two false teachers or heretics, Hymenaeus and Alexander, 'whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme' (1Tim.1:20). Open communion makes church discipline impossible.

Closed Communion

Closed communion is practised by some very strict churches. Only those who belong to their denomination are allowed to partake. By this means they are able to guard the table and only allow those to come whom they believe to be consistent Christians. The problem however is that the table is the table of the Lord, not that of any particular denomination. By closed communion true and godly servants of the Lord are excluded. We live in the complicated world of denominations and although we would like to put the clock back to a time where there was only one faithful church these days are far gone and unlikely to return until Christ comes again.

Restricted Communion

The best position is that of restricted communion. The elders supervise the Table. They maintain the honour of Christ in that only those who can make a credible profession of faith and whose life is consistent with that, are allowed to the Table. In this way individuals, as much as is humanly possible, are kept from doing themselves harm. No man can judge the heart, but those who are clearly unconverted, those who are heretics and those who are scandalously immoral in their lives can be kept away. Those in good standing from other churches who are unknown to the local church can come before the eldership and be questioned, profess their faith there, and so be welcomed to the Table.



Islam

Part II

Rev John MacLeod (Tarbat)

Last month Rev John MacLeod asked, *Do we know what we are dealing with in Islam? He gave an explanation of beliefs and history. Here he looks at why it is important to study and be aware of the tenets of Islam.*

2. DO WE UNDERSTAND WHY IT MATTERS THAT WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT ISLAM?

Islam is, in terms of the teaching of the Bible, a false religion. Now in one sense, that is so self-evident that it may seem pointless to point it out. But that fact is so fundamental that it really has to be the starting point for all our thinking with regard to how we approach Islam.

i. There are many common points with Christianity, but that makes Islam all the more dangerous, all the more deceiving and all the more liable to lead to confusion.

ii. Islam uses the substance of much of the OT but effectively supplants its authority.

iii. Islam rejects the NT Scriptures except insofar as it ambiguously refers to the *Gospel of Jesus*.

iv. Islam dishonours and degrades Christ.

v. Islam elevates Mohammed to a greater status than Christ.

vi. Islam substitutes ritual for a living faith.

Islam is an integrated religion. By that I mean that religious life and every other aspect of life are very closely interlinked. Now, if the religious belief were sound, having every aspect

of life interlinked with it would be exactly what you'd want to see, but the trouble is that every aspect of life is in this instance integrated with false religion. Islam emphasises **belonging** rather than **believing**.

Islam rejects outsiders - dhimmis (those under control of Mohammedan authorities) and harbis (those living in *dar al-harb* - non-Mohammedan territory). These are to be treated as outsiders, shut out from the life of Mohammedans and second class individuals. They generally go to great lengths to shut outsiders out from every aspect of their lives. Where they have control they do not want outsiders to integrate; where they are in a minority themselves, they go to great lengths to prevent the integration of any of their own people into the culture or cultures in which they're actually living. They take great steps to avoid integration largely through:

(i) Arranged marriages

(ii) Avoidance of learning the language for many of them

(iii) The burka/niqab (face veil) keeps women totally isolated from the society they live in.

Islam is an intolerant religion, making a basic division of the world into *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*. Within *dar al-islam* where Mohammedans are in control, there is no question of equality of treatment for other religions - the aim is to have every area of life subjected to Islamic rule and practice. And the overall aim is that the whole world should become part of *dar al-islam*. The very existence of *dar al-harb* is like a thorn in the flesh. It is there to be destroyed

and it is regarded as part of the reason for their existence that they should extend da'ar al-islam so that da'ar al-harb is wiped out. The concept of toleration is an idea that is foreign to most of mainstream Mohammedan thinking. It is a fairly basic concept to them that non-Mohammedans are the enemy which must be destroyed. And non-Mohammedan religion must be destroyed. And non-Mohammedan culture must be destroyed. To most Sunni Muslims at least, there is no thought of it being inconsistent that they should take advantage of religious freedom in the West, but be unwilling to grant religious freedom within da'ar al-islam and that they should work towards removing religious freedom for others within da'ar al-harb. Da'ar al-harb is *the House of War* - the war zone.

Islam is a religion of conformity. The emphasis is on outward conformity, going through the rituals, fulfilling the legal requirements, and within Shia Mohammedanism, obeying the rulings of the Imams and even more so, the Ayatollahs (top Imams). There is no room for independence of thought or challenging of authority. Apostasy is prohibited, and the punishment for apostasy is death.

Islam is a militant religion

The da'ar al-islam and da'ar al-harb distinction makes Mohammedanism militant by its very nature. The concept of those parts of the world which are not under Mohammedan control being a war zone is very deep-rooted. Mohammedans reckon they belong in da'ar al-islam, in spite of the fact that they may be located in da'ar al-harb. If they're in da'ar al-harb it is still their responsibility to further the interests of da'ar al-islam and it is part of their mission in life to do so. The concept of jihad also makes Mohammedanism militant. You will remember that Jihad means 'to strive' or 'to struggle'. To Mohammedans, Jihad is war against the devil, on behalf of Islam. You will remember too that Jihad is the only form of warfare permissible under Islamic law, and the ultimate aim is to establish the universal domination of Islam. When you appreciate something of the concept of Jihad, you realise that it is no use looking at things in Western terms and asking *Why do they do it when the short term costs are horrendous and the gains very questionable?* By definition, a struggle is something that may take a very long time indeed. It's not a *Blitzkrieg* that they are involved in - it is a struggle that has been going on for 14 centuries and they will keep going on. And we are, by definition, the enemy.

Islam is a wealthy religion. It would be very foolish indeed to imagine that all or even most Mohammedans are wealthy - the opposite is undoubtedly the case. However, the fact of Arab oil wealth has certainly transformed the economic situation of that religion in that there is a constant inflow of Arab funds, especially for prestige projects and for military purposes. Arab Mohammedan nations are armed to the teeth and have the military ability to enforce most of what they want.

Islam is a religion with a vast number of people under its influence. I mentioned a figure of 1,000,000,000, but of course statistics are almost always misleading and are very often used with a view to distortion of the truth. Additionally, of course, in a state of war - which is what the whole idea of da'ar al-harb is about - statistics are likely to be an even greater distortion of the truth. If you took the high-end figures which some Mohammedans would produce, they claim that there are about 1,300,000,000 Mohammedans in the world. Being realistic, that is probably a significantly over-estimated figure. If you take a low-end figure from people who might want to minimise the number they quote, some people quote a figure as low as 900,000,000. So 1,000,000,000 - a billion in European parlance - is a fair enough round figure - out of which there are 30 million in Europe - six times the population of Scotland. 30 million working, officially at any rate, for the destruction of everything non-Islamic, and paying to finance Islam - and, officially at least (in religious terms), owing no loyalty to the states within which they live. But most of all, 30 million souls in Europe and 1,000,000,000 souls worldwide in the tight grip of a religion which is vastly different from Biblical Christianity and leaves them outside of any Christian concept of a right relationship with God through Christ.

This is a situation we cannot afford to ignore because

- i. **we are under attack - we are in the da'ar al-harb**
- ii. **we are commanded by God to order our lives and our society in a way that honours Him in Scriptural terms**
- iii. **we are commanded by God to preach the Gospel to the whole of creation.** However hard it may be (and indeed it may *seem* impossible) to bring the Gospel to the Mohammedans in our midst, we simply do not have the right to set aside a command which the Bible lays quite clearly in front of us.

"The emphasis is on outward conformity, going through the rituals, fulfilling the legal requirements, and within Shia Mohammedanism, obeying the rulings of the Imams and even more so, the Ayatollahs. There is no room for independence of thought or challenging of authority. Apostasy is prohibited, and the punishment for apostasy is death."

My Recent Experiences with Breast Cancer

Jane Newble

About 1 in 8 women are said to get breast cancer, and it is a frightening experience. Here Jane Newble tells of her experiences. When I contacted her to ask permission to print her story she responded: 'I am continually amazed how the Lord helped me through it in such a way, that looking back, I would not have missed that time, since He became so real to me. It is one of the 'all things that work together for good' (Rom.8:38)'.

Discovery

In January 2002 I discovered a lump in my breast. Immediately I thought of the dreaded disease breast cancer. I was not afraid to die, but my first thoughts went to my husband and family, and how they would cope. The doctor did not think it was anything to worry about, which made me feel hopeful, but he wanted it checked anyway. A mammogram was arranged for the 14th of February. I was anxious and felt tearful, and uncertain, but one evening in my Bible reading a text in Romans struck me with incredible force. It was this: 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost' (Rom.15:13). I went to sleep meditating on that verse, and from that moment I knew I was safe in God's hands. I was sure He knew best for me, and I realised that all this would be for a purpose.

Diagnosis

I had to come back to the hospital for the results a few days after our daughter's wedding. The doctor said that the mammogram and the ultrasound looked suspicious, and that he would do two biopsies, a needle one, and a core biopsy under local anaesthetic. The nurse was sitting on my couch and held my hand and talked to me. The thought of cancer kept coming to my mind, and I found it difficult to suppress the tears. I was told to get a cup of coffee, and to come back in 45 minutes. A few days before I had started reading one of the old Puritans, William Bates, on 'The Great Duty of Resignation'. It was all so appropriate, and I read some more in the waiting room, trying to keep calm and trusting in God despite the possible bad news. When I was called back in, the doctor confirmed my fears, and talked in more detail. I was assigned a breast-care nurse, who took me to a small room, and went through all sorts of things with me. All the time it was hammering in my brain: 'I've got cancer!' It was impossible to take in, let alone remember all the things she told me. The worst thing was then having to go home and tell my husband. Of course he was incredibly understanding

and loving. At least I now felt we were in this together, and that also helped a lot. The breast-care nurse would arrange a home visit, as soon as the results of the core biopsy were known, and I started preparing for the surgery. Our daughter and her husband came home from their honeymoon a week before the surgery. Everything worked out in an amazing way.

Surgery and Recovery

The surgery (mastectomy) was arranged for 28th March. By this time I had told all my friends and relations, and lots of people were praying for me. I was also in a few internet quilting groups, and the support and encouragement was wonderful. When I hit a low point in the hospital, which is apparently normal after a few days, one elderly lady in the ward said her prayers out loud that evening. I felt so strongly that the Lord was with me, and it was such an encouragement that my low point did not last long. My husband was kept busy informing all my friends about my progress after the operation. One small group of internet quilting friends from all over the world had arranged to make a quilt for me, and one of the ladies, who lives near us, came to present it to me in the hospital. I burst into tears when I saw it, and realised how incredibly caring and generous people can be. So I had a beautiful quilt over my bed, instead of a hospital blanket! Most of the time I just felt tremendously grateful for everything, for getting through the operation, for caring and praying friends, for the ability to read my Bible and for the flowers and cards that surrounded me. I was thankful to be able to help some other ladies in the ward who were struggling. After five days the drains were taken out, and I was allowed home. My husband did everything from cleaning and cooking to washing and ironing, and was an incredible support to me. The cards and gifts kept pouring in, and I felt quite overwhelmed by God's goodness to me and all those caring friends. One morning we went for a walk through a little wood near our home, where the bluebells were absolutely beautiful, and reminded me of God's continual providence.

Chemotherapy

The next shock came when I was told that some of my lymph nodes had been affected by cancer, and I would need four lots of chemotherapy treatment. To me, chemotherapy had always been one of those ultimate nightmares that one prefers not to talk or think about. Now I had to face it head-on. Again, my first refuge was prayer and the Bible, and I

was not disappointed. I had to come to terms with losing my hair, and we had fun going to choose a wig. Again, friends were sending lovely turbans, scarves and hats to help me face this new adventure. I have now had four treatments, and although I would not wish it on anyone, and although the side-effects are not pleasant, I have felt God's upholding strength all the way through, and even feel positively joyful most of the time. The nurses at the chemo-centre could not have been more sweet and caring. Because at times I felt very tired and wiped out, my husband bought a La-Z-Boy recliner chair for me – what a difference that made!

Radiotherapy

On Friday 26th July I was marked up for the next joyful event – radiotherapy. I had to go to the same strange oncology centre with all the paintings of cats, dogs and birds. They took me into a 'simulation room', where I had to lie down on a VERY hard couch, with my arms stretched back, holding on to a handle about two miles behind my head. Well, that's what it felt like. There were three women and one man, all very friendly, and they started running around, measuring up the chest area with rulers and wire, and drawing lines all over it. At times I thought that I couldn't possibly stay in that position any longer, but then I thought of all the martyrs in history, and it didn't seem so bad then. Every so often they would all disappear behind a glass screen when the machine took an x-ray of my chest. Halfway through the proceedings my oncologist came in to check it all over. At the end of an eternity, they said it wouldn't be much longer. Then one of the women asked permission to give me two pin-prick tattoos, that would stay there forever. I really didn't care what they would do, as long as I could get off that couch, so I gave my permission, and she tattooed a mark in the centre of my chest, and one underneath my arm. Then I could sit up. I had to lower my arms very slowly and carefully, as they were so painful. But what a relief when I sat up again! It had lasted about half an hour. The radiotherapy started on Monday 12th August, every day (except weekends) for three and a half weeks. But I really felt very happy with the chemo behind me, and I was sure I would cope with this in the same way.

Treatment

The treatment itself was no problem, and I got quite used to the whirring and beeping sounds of the machine. The nurses were very kind and considerate, and my husband remained an unfailing source of strength and support. The most tiring aspect was the 50 mile round trip to the hospital every day, especially as the treatment only lasted for about two minutes. The weeks after the treatment had finished were more difficult. My skin was very sore, like a severe sunburn, and I felt very tired. It was a good time for more Bible study, and for refreshing my Biblical Hebrew and Greek, and I am finding that very uplifting. Around the same time we found a wonderful assembly of Christians not far from us, with Biblical teaching and fellowship, and an unusual reverence for God and his Word. The support and prayers from relatives and friends all over the world really helped me through this testing time, and I feel enriched and thankful to have experienced all this.

The Future

What of the future? I have recently had a bone scan, which was clear. But the cancer might still have spread or come back. I might die of it, like my grandmother did. On the other hand, I might get killed in a car accident or a plane crash. We do not know when our end will be. I am not worried about



Jane on a recent holiday at Ballantrae

the future, because I know that my times are in God's hand. I have been put right with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and have nothing to fear, only a wonderful eternity to look forward to. Either I die and will be with Him or He will come back before I die, and take me to be with Him. I am very excited to be still alive, because there are so many things to do, and every day is a gift which I am learning to use for the glory of God and in obedience to Him. My hair is growing back too, but it will take me a few years before it is long again, and will be once again my 'glory' in the Biblical sense. In the meantime, it is a miracle to see it grow, and very exciting!

Update December 2003

So far, all is well. I now have to come back for check-ups at six monthly intervals, instead of every three months. After recovering from the far too hot summer, I have now more energy than I have had for years! We are hoping to move to Scotland in the spring of 2004, to a lovely farmhouse with six acres, where I can have a vegetable garden and chickens, and Alan can enjoy driving a tractor! My hair is dark and curly, and already a lot longer again. Alan thinks it's wonderful, and we are very grateful for every day that we can be together.

Update September 2004

Well, in March we moved to Scotland, and we have to keep telling ourselves that we are not on holiday! The air is lovely and fresh – not like the South, where I always had trouble with asthma. The house is wonderful, and the farm needs a lot of work, but Alan loves using his tractor, and has created an orchard. We also have our own brook ('burn' in Scottish) and waterfall. I have a calf to look after, and also have some Dutch Welsummer hens, so we get lovely dark-brown eggs. I do a lot of home-baking, enjoy gardening and looking after the livestock. In our four acre field we have sheep belonging to our neighbour. We might get our own one day. The neighbouring farmers are all amazingly friendly, and the whole way of living is so relaxed, and very peaceful. We really feel with the Psalmist, that 'we were like them that dream' (Psalm 126:1) and we thank the Lord daily for bringing us to such a wonderful place!

The Office of Eldership (Part I)

Rev Maurice Roberts

I. THE OFFICE OF ELDER IN GENERAL

The term 'elder' became an official title for the men in Old Testament Israel who represented the people and made important decisions for them. The earliest reference to 'elders' as a political body is at the time of the Exodus. The seventy elders mentioned in Exodus and Numbers formed a sort of governing body or parliament. As time progressed the supreme council emerged which we know as the Sanhedrin. At the time of Christ these elders of the Jews had great authority and influence. There are at least twenty references to them in the Gospels and early chapters of Acts. In every case these elders of the Jews are shown to be opposed to Christ and to the Christian faith. This is a sad reflection on the fact that the Jews were now largely blinded.

In the Acts of the Apostles we meet elders in the Christian church. These elders, or presbyters, were men of standing and leadership within the newly-emerged Christian church. It would appear that their office was derived from the Old Testament Jewish usage of elders, or rulers of synagogues. There are about ten references to them in the New Testament. Their importance is shown from these two quotations, selected as examples of the rest: 'Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men' (Acts 15:22). 'Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord' (Jas.5:14).

As the gospel spread in New Testament times it was necessary for the evangelists and church-planters to select from among the male believers suitable men for eldership in the newly-formed congregations. So, Paul can instruct Titus: 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee' (Tit.1:5).

The work appointed to these elders was to 'take care of the church of God' (1Tim.3:5). It was essential that they should be persons of suitable character and maturity. These persons had the following characteristics:

- (1) They must be *males*. 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence' (1Tim.2:12). This restriction is by apostolic authority.
- (2) No accusation of scandal must be entertained against them except 'before two or three witnesses' (1Tim.5:19). I do not think this means for each alleged offence but means there

must at least be more than one party complaining of similar offences.

(3) Elders who are shown to have sinned are to be rebuked 'before all, that others also may fear' (1Tim.5:20). 'Before all' may mean the other elders, or before all the congregation.

(4) Elders are to be treated fairly and impartially as to matters of discipline: 'observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality' (1Tim.5:21). Partiality (that is, prejudice) might arise because one elder was wealthy, gifted or popular, while another was not.

(5) Elders must not be ordained hastily: 'Lay hands suddenly on no man' (1Tim.5:22). It takes time really to know a man's true character. If a man is ordained hastily he may do much harm. Those who so ordain elders hastily may in this way 'be partakers of other men's sins' (1Tim.5:22).

(6) The office of eldership is one of honour in the sight of God and therefore it should be highly esteemed by men: 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward' (1Tim.5:17-18). This text, which we shall come back to later, indicates what a preacher's work is – to 'tread out the corn' from Scripture and so feed God's dear people. It also proves that, contrary to the views of some, a minister is entitled to a salary. He is 'worthy' to be given a wage; and some are worthy of a 'double honour'. The word for honour here in the Greek is '*time*', which bears the sense of 'remuneration'. This text about 'treading out corn' is used again by Paul in 1Corinthians 9:9. It is warrant for a ministerial salary (see 1Cor.9:14). We should note that the honour attached to being an elder is reflected in the fact that, in Revelation, there are about eleven references to elders about the throne in glory. These are the heavenly representation of the church below.

Happy are the churches which have faithful and godly elders serving God and His people and so caring for the precious flock of Christ. All such will be rewarded in time, or eternity, or both.

II. THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

Since an elder's work is so vital to the wellbeing of the church it is to be expected that God would inform us in some detail of the kind of man who should be appointed to office. There are two key passages: 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These required characteristics are:

- (1) BLAMELESS: above reproach – in the view of the church.
- (2) HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE: not a bigamist or immoral.
- (3) VIGILANT: watching for any harm to the church.
- (4) SOBER: no bad habits.
- (5) OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR: courteous and well-mannered.
- (6) HOSPITABLE: welcomes people into his home.
- (7) APT TO TEACH
- (8) NOT GIVEN TO WINE: not lingering beside his wine.
- (9) NO STRIKER: not given to blows.
- (10) NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE: not fond of money.
- (11) PATIENT: many things can annoy the impatient.
- (12) NOT A BRAWLER: averse to fighting, squabbling.
- (13) NOT COVETOUS: like Gehazi.
- (14) RULING WELL HIS OWN HOUSE: a good husband and father.
- (15) HAVING HIS CHILDREN IN SUBJECTION: controls the children wisely.
- (16) NOT A NOVICE: not in danger of arrogance.
- (17) HAVING A GOOD REPORT: even the unbelieving world respects him.
- (18) NOT SOON ANGRY: controls his temper.
- (19) SOBER, JUST, HOLY, TEMPERATE: all these are excellent virtues.
- (20) HOLDING... THE WORD: sound in the faith.

It is very clear that no female members and only some male members should be made elders. The standard is high and takes account of all aspects of a man's life: what he is in church / at home / before the unbelieving world / as a husband / as a father / in his personal habits and behaviour / in his own heart and daily life. He needs to be self-controlled, warm-hearted, a lover of good men, sound in the faith and mature in his profession of Christ. He must shun all pride.

Examples

In the *Memoirs* of Thomas Boston of Ettrick he refers to one of his elders, William Biggar, who accompanied him to the sacrament at Penpont in July 1709, took ill, and died there: 'Among his last words were, "Farewell, sun, moon, and stars! Farewell, dear minister! And farewell the Bible!" He blessed God that ever he had seen my face. Thus the Lord pulled from me a good man, a comfortable fellow-labourer, and a supporter, or rather *the* supporter, of me in my troubles in this place. He was always a friend to ministers. Though he was a poor man, yet he had always a brow for a good cause, and was a faithful, useful elder; and as he was very ready to reprove sin, so he had a singular dexterity, in the matter of admonition and reproof, to speak a word with a certain sweetness, that it was hard to take his reproofs ill. He was a most kindly, pious, good man. May the blessing of God, whose I am and whom I serve, rest on that family from generation to generation!'

Archibald Alexander of Princeton (1772 – 1851) gives a similarly lovely portrait of a godly elder:

'About middle age he was elected a ruling elder in the church to which he belonged, and in this office he received

grace to be faithful. He held up the hands of his minister, and defended his character from calumnies attempted to be heaped upon him. He visited the poor and contrived methods of relief; wherever there was sickness, he was to be found sympathising with the sufferers, and offering up fervent prayers for the recovery of the sick, and for a blessing on the rod of affliction. By this means prayer was introduced into families where the voice of supplication had never before been heard.

'When few professors [church members] kept themselves unspotted from the world, this man and his wife stood firm in their adherence to truth and duty. Worldly amusements were introduced by some influential professors; strict religion was scorned and the *liberal* professor was lauded; but our elder could not be moved to favour dancing and cards. He set his face resolutely against all such practices as inimical to the spirit of true religion. He faithfully warned professors against the deadening influence of these *innocent amusements*, as they were called; and when private exhortation and remonstrance failed, he had the fidelity to present the cases of such professors to the session to be dealt with as acting inconsistently with their Christian profession. This exposed him to a load of obloquy; and he was clamoured against as an enemy of all cheerfulness and enjoyment. Some ministers also took sides against him, and their opinions and example were published by multitudes who never remembered any of his pious sayings. He, however, went on his course unmoved; and though hated and dreaded by the wicked, whenever anyone became serious he was immediately sought out, and his counsel and sympathy and prayers were always cheerfully bestowed. The state of religion in the land seemed to grow worse and worse just after the close of the revolutionary war, until he and his wife and a few others seemed to be left alone. But even in this time, the presence of this tall grey-headed elder would strike an awe into the minds of the most careless. One day he had business with a man who was at a dancing party in a private house, and when he approached the house consternation seized the company, and at once the fiddling and dancing ceased. He, however, administered no reproof to the company, but transacted his business and departed.

'It pleased a gracious God, about the year 1789, to revive religion with extraordinary power in all the country around where he lived. It was what he had prayed for night and day, but scarcely hoped to see, for he had never before witnessed what is called a revival. Almost his whole time was now spent in conversing with the new converts. I have known him often to ride six or seven miles to see persons under religious impressions. And he would labour with them in the most earnest and affectionate manner, and would bring to them suitable books, for he was much conversant with the most spiritual and experimental authors. Many were deeply indebted to his faithful labours, and none more than the author of this article.'

May God grant us such elders!



News

Northern Reformed Fellowship

The Northern Reformed Fellowship hold their annual conference on Saturday 18th October at Copperfield House (FCC), Culloden Road, Inverness from 11am till 3pm. The speaker is the Rev Iain H Murray, and the subjects are: 'Apostasy' and 'George Whitefield and Christian Unity'. Contact Dr Wayne Pearce at wayne.pearce@sky.com

Seminary – New Building

Over the past few years the Free Church Seminary has met in 85 Old Edinburgh Road, Inverness, a house kindly provided by anonymous donors (and more recently purchased by the Church for its initial purchase price). However, the building was getting crowded and there was no room to expand the library. So it was with interest that the Seminary heard of the acquisition of Copperfield House by the Inverness congregation as a place of worship. Further examination of the property revealed that there were in the building rooms which would be suitable for the next stage of the Seminary's development. An arrangement was made which would allow the Seminary to use the building. The Church as a whole pays a monthly rent for the use of the building which in turn is helpful to the local congregation in paying the mortgage that had to be taken out to purchase the building. So a team of volunteers moved the books, computers, etc, from Old Edinburgh Road. They have erected bookshelves and have prepared the building for the new Seminary term which begins on the 16th of September. We as a



Rev Gavino & Mrs Elisabetta Fioretti with his mother Giovanna

Induction in Duthil-Dores

Rev John MacLeod (Tomatin)

On Friday 7th March 2008 a large assembly representative of the different congregations of our church met in Culduthel Christian Centre, Inverness, for the ordination and induction of Rev Gavino Fioretti. After sermon, preached from 2 Timothy 4:2 by Rev Maurice J. Roberts, the questions appointed to be put to ministers at their induction to a pastoral charge were addressed to Mr Fioretti, and, these having been satisfactorily answered, the Presbytery did then proceed to ordain Mr Fioretti to the office of the holy ministry and to the pastoral charge of Duthil-Dores. Rev John MacLeod (Tarbat) gave the charges to the minister and to the congregation. Thereafter fellowship was enjoyed by those present around an ample buffet meal prepared by the ladies of the congregation. Presentations were made

to Mr and Mrs Fioretti and to Rev John MacLeod, the Moderator of the congregation during the vacancy. After speeches had been made by Messrs William McQueer and Hector Campbell and by Rev Kenneth MacDonald welcoming the new minister into the fellowship of the Church Mr Fioretti responded with fitting and appropriate words. Thereafter a pleasant evening was drawn to a close with a short time of public worship. We wish Mr Fioretti, who hails from Sardinia, every blessing as he settles into his ministry in Duthil-Dores.

Music CD

Mrs Isobel Scott intimates that a CD of classical piano music is available from her and the proceeds of the sales will go to the Barnabas Fund. The CD costs £10.00 with p & p £0.85. Copies are available from her at 36 Pinewood Place, Blackburn, Bathgate, West Lothian EH47 7NX.

Desk



Seminary are delighted with our new accommodation.

Death of Principal Boyd

Principal-Emeritus Archibald C Boyd passed away on Tuesday 5th August 2008. He was ordained to Keiss Free Church in 1959 and further ministered in Shettleston and Brora before being inducted to the Chair of New Testament at the Free Church College in 1977. In 1988, he was appointed Principal of the College in succession to the late Principal Clement Graham, and remained in that position until his own retirement in 1999. Even then his health had begun to show signs of the decline which eventually resulted in him spending his latter days in a local nursing home. Principal Boyd was a gracious, gentle Christian.

Smiths Falls Induction

Rev John J Murray

The congregation of Smiths Falls in Canada was received into the Free Church (Continuing) at the General Assembly of May 2002. The core group belonged to a congregation of the RPCNA that had been closed down. The Rev Robert McCurley ministered there from January 2003 until June 2005. The congregation has experienced many difficulties and setbacks during its short existence and was even faced with the threat of closure. It was therefore with a sense of thankfulness and joy that they joined together on Saturday 26th July for the ordination and induction of the Rev Bert Pohl to the charge. Bert had served as an elder in our congregation in Adelaide and had been trained in the Puritan Reformed Seminary and in the FCC Seminary. The May 2008



Rev Bert & Mrs Kryna Pohl, newly inducted to Smiths Falls

General Assembly placed Smiths Falls under the oversight of the Home and Foreign Missions Committee. The Call to Mr Pohl was sustained by the Assembly, and the Committee at its meeting in June requested the Presbytery of Glasgow to undertake the ordination and induction. The Presbytery appointed the Rev John J Murray to preach and preside at the ordination and induction. Mr. Murray conducted worship and preached on 'Christ in the midst of the churches' (Rev.2:1). After setting aside Mr Pohl to the holy ministry he addressed suitable words of exhortation to the new minister and to the congregation. At the close of the service a welcome reception was held. After presentations were made to the new minister and his wife, Mr Pohl thanked the congregation for all the kindness shown to them. The first speaker was the Rev David Compton who had been instrumental in the formation of the congregation

and had filled the pulpit on many occasions. He was followed by Mr Art Hackett who took the opportunity to thank all who had helped in the vacancy. Present for the occasion were Bert's parents from Adelaide, and Mr Tony Pohl expressed their delight at what they had witnessed that day. Greetings were read from many congregations and ministers. We pray that the ministry newly begun will under the blessing of the Almighty be greatly used for the advance of the Gospel in a needy part of Canada.

American Conference

The Free Church (Continuing) in America held its annual holiday conference in the Shenandoah Valley from the 4th to the 8th of August. It was attended by 164 persons, and was an enjoyable time of rich gospel fellowship and teaching. Rev William Macleod gave four addresses on 'Repentance and Humiliation', Rev David Murray

gave four addresses on 'Assurance', Rev Sherman Isbell gave two addresses on 'Recovering Experimental Religion' and Rev Rob McCurley gave two addresses on 'Communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper'. It was fascinating to meet fine Christians from different parts of the USA and even two families who had driven all the 2,500 miles from Mexico. One of these, Pastor Alvarez Valdez, was converted through Pentecostal Christians some 27 years ago but has recently come to adhere to the Reformed faith and even to exclusive Psalmody. Remember his little church in Mexico City in your prayers. Rev William Macleod preached in Washington before the conference and in Greenville after the conference. There are great encouragements in Greenville where at present around 70 attend. It was a particular pleasure to meet a Chinese Christian from mainland China who came along for the first time that Sabbath. He was excited to find such a church. He informed us of his home church in Shanghai which holds to the Westminster Confession and practices exclusive Psalmody. When other churches which have been blessed with a rich heritage are turning their back on the regulative principle and purity of worship it is wonderful how God is raising up a witness to the truth in the developing world.

Punished for Not Praying to Allah in the UK

Christian Institute

Two schoolboys from Stoke-on-Trent have been punished by their comprehensive school teacher for refusing to pray to Allah. The boys, from Alsager High School in Cheshire, were given detention after they said they didn't want to take part in the Muslim prayer as part of their Religious Education class. Parents are furious at how the boys were treated by the state-run mixed comprehensive school. The boys' RE teacher gave out prayer mats and told the year seven class (eleven- to twelve-year-olds) to kneel down in prayer to the Muslim deity. They were also told to wear Muslim headgear during the lesson. One parent said: 'I understand that they have to learn about other religions. I can live with that but it is taking it a step too far to be punished because they wouldn't join in a Muslim prayer.'

Sex Education for Four-Year Olds

Christian Institute

Four-year-old school children should be given sex lessons whether parents agree or not, the Government has been told. The radical suggestion comes from three groups currently advising the Government on its review of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). The charities – Brook, the FPA (formally the Family Planning Association) and the Sex Education Forum – say that all children should be exposed to 'gradual education' from a very young age. A spokesperson for the FPA said children as young as four should learn 'the basics' of sex and relationships, just like they do for maths. There is growing concern that the Government may decide to make SRE mandatory for all primary and secondary schools, even though many critics say that this would have a disastrous effect on young people.

Despite years of ever-more-explicit sex education at ever-younger ages, the reduction in teenage pregnancies is set to fall short of Government targets and sexually transmitted infections have increased among teens.

Visit to Australia

The Rev Maurice Roberts was able to pay a visit to Australia in July 2008. The invitation to travel to the Antipodes had come to him from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia. This is a small denomination adhering to the Reformed faith and concerned also to promote godly living among its people. Although not a large denomination, they have a fine missionary outlook. As a result of their missionary activities in the Pacific Islands, there are now two indigenous Presbyterian Reformed churches in Vanuatu (the name for the New Hebrides since 1980) and one in Fiji, as well as a work among Aboriginal people in out-back Queensland. Mr Roberts preached on the theme 'Christ is All'. His addresses, given in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, were on the subjects: 'Christ the Source of all Spiritual Progress', 'Our Union with Christ' and 'Christ – our Hope of Coming Glory'. In addition he gave a lecture at two of these venues on the vitally important subject of 'Justification in the Modern Church'. This subject was rendered all the more relevant in that the Pope was visiting Sydney at the same time.

'It was a pleasure', says Mr Roberts, 'to meet up with former brethren and to make new Christian friends and contacts over there. Gospel bonds are precious things and serve to draw our Reformed churches together in a helpful way. I make it my practice when abroad to convey the warm brotherly greetings of our denomination to those at whose request I am invited to preach.'

Australian society is very materialistic, like that in the UK. Our countries both deeply need a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit in true and powerful revival, and for this we should pray constantly.

Gangs Replaced Family

Family breakdown is driving teenagers into a 'gang culture based on violence and drugs', warned Barbara Wilding, the Chief Constable of South Wales Police. She said: 'In many of our larger cities, in areas of extreme deprivation, there are almost feral groups of very angry young people ... Many have experienced family breakdown, and in place of parental and family role models, the gang culture is now established ... Tribal loyalty has replaced family loyalty and gang culture based on violence and drugs is a way of life'. Her comments follow a spate of warnings from legal professionals, teachers and other experts that family breakdown is harming children.

Society Needs Braver Church

Christian Institute

Western Christians need to recover their nerve in the face of 'militant secularism', the Bishop of Rochester has said. Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, who recently talked of British 'no go' areas for non-Muslims, refused to be apologetic for his obligation to witness to Muslims about the Gospel. All that is of value in western culture, he argued,

'largely depends on its Judeo Christian heritage'. He added that the Christian view on issues such as the sanctity of life was being rejected in favour of utilitarian arguments – 'the greatest good for the greatest number' – or 'leaving the "yuck" factor to decide what is permissible for people'. He recently wrote an article for *Standpoint* magazine, in which he said that the rejection of Christian values in British society had left a vacuum which could be filled with those of secularism or radical Islam. Speaking of social changes over the last fifty years, he said: 'While the Christian consensus was dissolved, nothing else, except perhaps endless self-indulgence, was put in its place.'

Civil Partnerships

Christian Institute

The number of civil partnership registrations dropped by almost 50% last year. It means fewer than 0.1% of unmarried adults took out a homosexual civil partnership in 2007. If the numbers continue at the present level they will fall well short of the Government's initial high take-

up target which was based on the assumption that 5% of the UK population is homosexual. However, an official Government survey published earlier this year found that only 1% are homosexual. The last census revealed that only 0.2% of UK households were headed by a same-sex couple.

Pubs - 24 Hours

Allowing bars and pubs in England and Wales to serve alcohol around the clock has largely failed to tackle late night violence, say police, councils and the NHS. Half of police authorities say that far from creating the promised continental-style café culture in the UK, the new laws have simply pushed alcohol-related violence later into the evening. Seven in ten police authorities, PCTs and councils say that 24-hour drinking has either increased or failed to change levels of alcohol-related incidents. And councils say that £100 million in taxpayers' money has been paid out to implement the changes.

- Obituary -

Mrs Maurine Murchison (Kilmorack & Strathglass)



Earlier this year folk in the little congregation of Beaulieu bade farewell to Murdo and Maurine Murchison as they prepared to leave for a well-deserved holiday in Egypt, little knowing that this would be the last time they would see Maurine on this earth. Not long after their departure word began to trickle through that Maurine had taken ill in Egypt and we waited anxiously as we heard that she was to be flown home to the UK for urgent medical attention. The situation seemed hopeful as she was immediately scheduled for heart surgery on the 17th April. Two days later, to our great sorrow, we were informed that Maurine had died, never having recovered from the operation she had undergone.

It is difficult to convey the sense of loss we have even now. A mother in Israel has been taken from our congregation and we feel it keenly. However we do not sorrow as those who have no hope and rejoice that she is now with the Lord, which is far better.

Others have written of Maurine's contribution in other areas — her work in connection with the Children's Panel in Scotland for which she received the O.B.E. — as well as in the wider church. But I would like to focus on her contribution to the Beaulieu congregation. Maurine was full of life and she

channelled it into her service for the Lord amongst us. She played a major part in the Ladies' Bible study and fellowship group. She organised support, both prayerful and financial, for a women's group in India and she regularly contributed to the back page of the Explorer. In the weeks before her death she organised a series of meals to which every person in the congregation was invited. These meals were helpful in fostering closer fellowship amongst us. Yet for all this Maurine was unpretentious and content to work behind the scenes for she sought her Lord's glory and not her own.

The night before her operation she was writing letters of encouragement to others from her hospital bed and in them she expressed her readiness to submit to her Lord's will whatever that might be. In God's good providence she was never restored to us but was taken to be with Jesus whom she now beholds face to face.

Maurine is dearly missed by us all and we commend to the prayers of God's people Murdo, her husband, John, Alison, Elizabeth, Murdoch and Andrew, her children, as well as her numerous grandchildren whom she loved so much.

'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1:21).

Rev Harry Woods



Books

The Diary and Journal of David Brainerd Banner of Truth hbk, 792pp, £17.00

This is a great book. It contains the *Diary of David Brainerd*, the *Journal of David Brainerd*, and other related writings. David Brainerd was a wonderful missionary. John Newton said about this book. 'Next to the Word of God, I like those books best which give account of the lives and experiences of His people. No book of this kind has been more welcome to me than the life of Mr Brainerd of New England'. Robert Murray M'Cheyne also recommended it: 'Life of Brainerd. Most wonderful man! O to have Brainerd's heart for perfect holiness!'

Dr Lloyd-Jones always emphasised the importance of reading a good biography. Such reading makes us to be humble and to grow as healthy Christians. When I read this book, I felt ashamed of myself. I felt I had not started yet as a man of God. We can see God's purpose for the Christian through this book. He wants us to be holy. He is holy. Holiness is a sign of the true Christian.

Between 1742 and his death in 1747 David Brainerd took the gospel to the North American Indians of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. He willingly ran any risk and accepted any hardship to fulfil his calling as a missionary. The amount of work which he achieved in such unpromising and difficult circumstances now seems almost incredible.

We are very grateful to the Banner of Truth for republishing this excellent book. Let me give just one quote from this great treasure:

'Friday, September 25: I was unspeakably weak, and little better than speechless all the day; however, I was able to write a little, and felt comfortably some part of

the day. It refreshed my soul to think of former things, of desires to glorify God, of the pleasures of living to Him. O my dear God, I am speedily coming to Thee, I hope. Hasten the day, O Lord, if it be Thy blessed will. O come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen.'

Jonathan Edwards says, 'He was brought to see the glory of that way of salvation by Christ that is taught in what are called the doctrines of grace; and thenceforward, with unspeakable joy and complacency, to embrace and acquiesce in that way of salvation.'

We are thankful to God for this great man. Sell your shirt and buy this book! Then you will have a spiritual shirt in your wardrobe!

Rev Jaeyoon Kim

Heaven – A World of Love Jonathan Edwards Banner of Truth pbk, 120pp, £3.25

This is a new Banner series of 'Pocket Puritans'. The books are of small size and can easily be put in a pocket or handbag to read on the bus or train. It is an interesting new venture and we hope that in days when fewer and fewer books are being read that this will help to reverse the trend. Though the books are small in size their contents are weighty. Edwards is always fresh. Heaven is enjoying every gem snatched away from us here below but especially it is enjoying Christ forever.

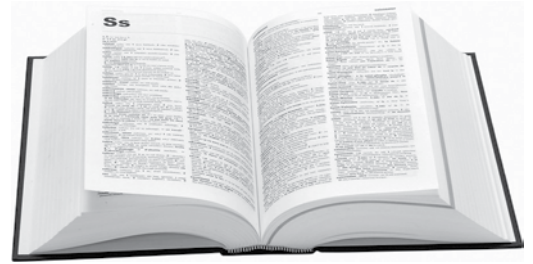
Rev William Macleod

Living Faith Samuel Ward Banner of Truth pbk, 96pp, £3.25

This small booklet (Pocket Puritan) wonderfully sets faith before us. It



Books



begins by answering a few doubts or fears as to coming to a saving faith, then outlines the foolishness of not using your faith in everyday life. This whole booklet is full of scriptural examples and similes, so making every point understandable instantly. Benefits which flow from living by faith and encouragements to do so are warmly set before the reader. The booklet closes with a small account of the life of Samuel Ward, giving what little is recorded about him. One quote to sum up: 'Faith is the doorway to the power of God, first to save us, and then to strengthen us.'

James Boyd

Lloyd-Jones Messenger of Grace

Iain H Murray

Banner of Truth

hbk, 288pp, £16.00

It is always a pleasure to read Iain Murray's books. His style is easy, the meaning is clear, the quotations are apposite and the steady development of thought keeps the interest of the reader. Here he deals with Dr Lloyd-Jones' view of preaching, his understanding of the full assurance of salvation and the claim that Dr Lloyd-Jones' view of the church was needlessly divisive.

Having served as an assistant with Dr Lloyd-Jones and also having written the definitive, two-volume biography of the Doctor, Iain Murray's contributions on this subject are valuable and worthy of careful consideration.

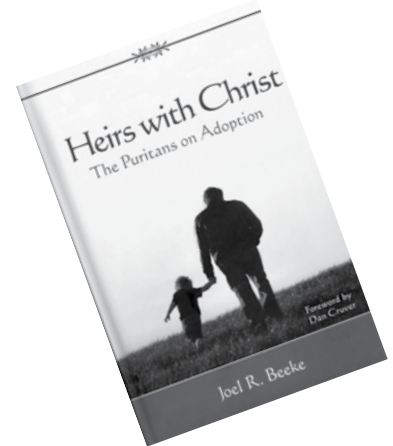
There is an interesting chapter comparing Dr Lloyd-Jones and Spurgeon. Their styles were quite different and yet each served their generation. As one who enjoys reading Spurgeon I was surprised to learn that

the good doctor never read Spurgeon. His series of sermons on Romans and Ephesians are quite different from anything in Spurgeon's writings and yet Spurgeon has his own appeal.

Assurance is an important subject. Personally I remember my own struggles until the Lord granted a measure of assurance. Here I believe the doctor caused more confusion than light. He seemed initially to welcome the Charismatic movement with its emphasis on the baptism of the Spirit which he saw as the coming of assurance. Later developments such as the emphasis on tongue-speaking he did not approve of.

I always have a feeling of sadness when I read of the end of the Puritan Conference and the break between Dr Lloyd-Jones and the Anglicans, Dr Stott and Dr Packer. Yet it was inevitable. There must also be divisions that they that are approved may be made manifest (1Cor.11:19).

The fact that essentially Christianity is a God-centred religion is stressed. Surely if Dr Lloyd-Jones inculcated anything, it was the holiness of God and the need to draw near to Him in fear and trembling. This is a lesson which the church today needs to relearn. Something else which is often forgotten is that Dr Lloyd-Jones wished himself to be seen as primarily an evangelist. We live in a day when many in Reformed circles, ministers and others, seem to regard evangelism as a second-class work. Yet every Sabbath evening the doctor would preach evangelistically. Many came to know the Saviour through his preaching. The apostles were by their teaching to be the foundation of the New Testament church, yet their primary calling was to be fishers of men (Mk.1:17).



Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption

Joel R Beeke

**Reformation Heritage Books
hbk, 134pp, \$13.00**

Some have thought that the Puritans had little interest in the subject of adoption. Joel Beeke, who must be one of the world's leading experts on the Puritans, shows how false this is. From his vast reading he gives helpful quote after helpful quote from these doctors of the soul to demonstrate their enlightened interest in this great doctrine, and then a large bibliography at the end. Such subjects are covered as the transforming power of adoption, the marks of adoption, the privileges of adoption and the duties of adoption. One quotation from this excellent work will show the tone: 'The Spirit teaches us that the Father in heaven is more pleased to see His adopted children come through the door of prayer into His throne room than we are pleased to see our children come through the door into our living room.' He concludes quoting Willard, who exhorts us to be often chewing upon the precious privileges of adoption.

Rev William Macleod

Biblical Pictures of the Presence of God

Part I - Fire

Rev Dewi Higham (Tabernacle, Cardiff)

The choice of phrase in the Scriptures, when describing the presence of God, provides us with something of an insight into the nature of God. Fire conveys something of the overwhelming power of God, whilst the Dew and the Dove convey His wonderful gentleness. There are also a number of other pictures, which we could have noted, such as the Wind and the Anointing. The three selected pictures of Fire, Dove and Dew, will provide us with a view of God which is full of awe and grace. Such is the nature of God's presence, that both awe and grace can be experienced in the same moment.

Old Testament Evidence of Heavenly Fire

The Lord Himself is described as a consuming fire and an unapproachable light. With such references to the nature of our God, it is not surprising that any manifestation of God upon earth often has this ingredient of fire.

The burning bush was an early indication of the burning presence of God, where Moses removed his shoes on the holy ground. The pillar of fire, that led the children of Israel, was a constant reminder of the burning presence of God. The fire and smoke of Sinai were surely terrible manifestations of God, when even Moses trembled. Then, we could mention the sacrifice of Elijah, which was consumed with a fire that fell from the heavens. What awe must have been in the hearts of those who witnessed these things! What awe was in the heart of Isaiah in the vision he received, where the coals from the altar were placed on his lips, indicating the burning nature of our dealings with God!

New Testament Fire

Now, in these New Testament days of worship in Spirit and in truth, such displays of heavenly fire do not occur, with the exception of some very remarkable events in the history of the church, such as in times of divine visitation. There is, however, such a thing as New Testament fire. It is the burning presence within the heart, when God is present. The two men on the road to Emmaus would be one example of this inward fire, as they spoke of hearts that burned within. The most dramatic and most significant example, however, would be the events of Pentecost, where both the visible fire of God and the inward burning were evident. This inward fire, experienced at Pentecost, marked a new era, where the Lord would reveal Himself in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, as we think of these remarkable events at Pentecost, this visible fire, reminiscent of Old Testament manifestations, is worth noting. We see, in the descriptions, mention of a general fire appearing above the men who had met in the upper room. Then, we note the descent of the fire, which rested on the heads of these men, the cloven tongues being a reference to the nature of fire, where the flames divide, with a tongue-like appearance. This, undoubtedly, was a significant emblem of what was about to take place. These men were about to speak with tongues of fire, affecting those who heard them speak, as they cried to God, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' How fiercely this fire burned, in that special period of the early church! This was the first of many divine visitations in New Testament times.

The Fire that Purges, Consumes and Spreads

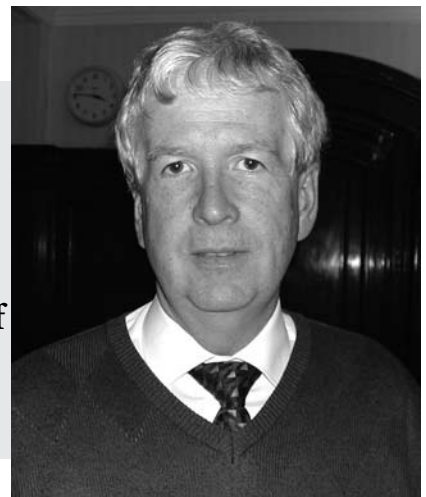
What are the qualities of this spiritual fire that comes from Heaven and falls upon men? It might be helpful to consider the nature of fire. We know that fire purges and consumes, and can be fierce and spread over an area. Such is the presence of God and its manifestations.

The Fire that Purges and Consumes

This fierce purging and consuming can be seen in the preaching of the Gospel. An unsaved man, hearing the Gospel in the power of the Spirit, may become aware of God's holiness and His condemnation of sin. The initial experience of discomfort might increase to a level which he cannot bear. With those who will eventually refuse the Gospel, we could say that this fire is a foretaste of judgment. But in the case of those who respond to the Gospel, the burning presence exposes sin to such an extent, that they run to Christ for relief.

This fire, experienced by the converted man, is only the beginning. A fire has started in the Christian heart that will not be extinguished. These are the fires of sanctification, that purge the heart from sin. Indeed, every time the Word is preached to the new man, this fire is experienced, as the Holy Spirit searches the heart for sin. This burning presence will even burn down those walls, behind which secret sin is hidden. What a good process is this burning of God, which

"What a happy reversal is the spreading of godly zeal! It could be described as fire leaping from the pulpit to the seated congregation, where it spreads from person to person. Such a spreading fire is a sure indication of the efficacious presence of God."



also removes the dross and refines the heart, producing gold within! Ultimately, the heart of the Christian will be everlastingly aflame with sinless purity.

In other ways too, the presence of God will be manifested as a fire within, where hearts will burn with desire and zeal for God. This burning zeal of the devoted Christian can motivate a man to count his life as nothing, and cross the seas to preach Christ. This fire can also be fierce, causing inward discomfort, which is well illustrated in the expression of Jeremiah, 'But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay' (Jer.20:9). The Psalmist, also, provides us with a similar sentiment, 'For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up' (Ps.69:9).

The Fire that Spreads

We are, sadly, familiar with lethargy spreading throughout a congregation, like some infectious disease, but what a happy reversal is the spreading of godly zeal! It could be described as fire leaping from the pulpit to the seated congregation, where it spreads from person to person. Such a spreading fire is a sure indication of the efficacious presence of God. This fire is seen in abundance in a time of divine visitation, where the influence of God spreads from area to area. The title of a recently published book on Welsh revivals, '*Fire in the Thatch*', captures the potential of such a movement. Some fires would burn so fiercely, that the whole roof would be ablaze. In my own land of Wales, three such 'fires' covered the whole nation.

These New Testament manifestations of God can be placed side by side with the mighty manifestations of the Old Testament. Perhaps we could even say that these New Testament manifestations are more remarkable. We make such a statement, based on the fact that the New Testament is the fulfilment of God's eternal plan of salvation, where the Gospel goes forth in mighty power.

Imagine a Service

Imagine a service, where God is present. The service is proceeding, the preacher is preaching and the people are listening. The hearts of the people are quietly being warmed with the themes presented. Then He draws closer, and hearts are on fire. Somewhere in that fire, a man is being saved on

the left side of the church. Then another towards the front is being saved. The Lord's people are deeply affected, some in deep conviction and some in heavenly enjoyment. It seems evident to some that the Lord has come to visit His people again. Such is the presence, that the Lord's people might cry out like Jacob, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' (Gen.28:17) As we look around the congregation, we see signs of hearts ablaze with the holiness of God and feelings of devotion.

Some Welsh Examples of this Fire

The Welsh people of the 1700s and 1800s had no need to imagine. They experienced these services and manifestations of heavenly fire many times over. The presence of God was so manifest that there were occasions when the preachers fainted, and other occasions when the congregation fell to the floor. I trust the reader understands that I am not speaking of some modern imitation of blessing but rather the genuine experience of what happens when a holy God visits a sinful generation. We only have to think of God and His nature, to understand how such a presence would affect us.

This heavenly fire was evident for a prolonged period in the land of Wales. The period in question witnessed an almost unbroken sequence of revivals that lasted the best part of two centuries. The people born into that time were marked out as different. They had, for one thing, an unusual degree of zeal, which caused both preachers and people to travel over hills and mountains to proclaim, or hear, of Christ.

A neighbour in West Wales, a godly lady, known as Ann Sunnybank (Sunnybank was the name of her house), recounted how she remembered the old people, saved in the revival, making their way to chapel after a severe snowstorm. The snow lay as deep as the height of the hedges. She recalled how the people seemed to be walking on top of the hedges, determined to worship at the house of God! The younger and more prudent stayed at home, but these elderly revival people had a deeper desire to know the Lord.

These same people handed down to us a form of worship, filled with awe and worship. To be sure, there was also Christian joy. You could call this marriage of godly fear and Christian joy, a trembling joy. These people had experienced God, and it showed in the way they worshipped.

Congregational Remittances - August 2008

	2008 Aug	2008 Total	2007 Total				
Presbytery of Sutherland				Presbytery of Lewis			
Brora	1,400	12,668	12,712	Cross	1,762	14,981	15,265
Assynt & Scourie	0	2,570	6,652	Harris - Leverburgh	1,200	8,684	7,217
Total Sutherland	1,400	15,238	19,364	Harris - Scalpay	1,540	13,297	13,381
Presbytery of Inverness				Knock & Point	850	7,971	8,081
Duthil-Dores	1,374	14,077	13,042	Stornoway	5,830	40,254	49,781
Inverness	2,000	16,000	20,000	Total Lewis	11,182	85,187	93,726
Total Inverness	3,374	30,077	33,042	Presbytery of Lochcarron			
Presbytery of Ross				Glenelg & Arnisdale	126	1,319	1,169
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,300	11,863	12,567	Lochalsh & Glenshiel	1,189	9,913	9,576
Kiltearn	2,400	13,800	13,600	Poolewe & Aultbea	1,000	8,631	9,082
Tarbat	2,250	6,474	6,313	Total Lochcarron	2,315	19,863	19,827
Total Ross	5,950	32,137	32,480	Presbytery of Skye & Uist			
Presbytery of Edinburgh				Bracadale	0	8,229	9,378
Aberdeen	550	6,631	5,867	Duirinish (Waternish)	0	2,800	3,200
Edinburgh	2,500	16,076	20,655	Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	11,475	11,761
Total Edinburgh	3,050	22,707	26,522	North Uist	800	7,859	6,754
Presbytery of Glasgow				Portree	1,200	13,606	8,840
Ayr	0	2,460	1,408	Snizort	1,650	15,111	14,256
Arran	190	4,810	5,238	Strath	0	1,716	5,123
Dumfries	0	0	85	Total Skye & Uist	4,950	60,795	59,312
Glasgow - Partick	1,500	20,500	20,000	Total From Congregations			
Glasgow - Shettleston	600	6,800	6,900		37,631	317,358	335,396
Glasgow - Thornwood	2,120	15,452	15,492	Other Donations	300	12,611	18,881
Rothesay	1,000	1,331	2,000	TOTAL	37,931	329,969	354,276
Total Glasgow	5,410	51,352	51,123	Including Gift Aid		38,359	48,417

Old MacDonald's Farm Zambia, June 2008

Phil Bailey



Don and Christine MacDonald opened their home some years ago to homeless street children from Lusaka. These young boys had been sniffing glue and their life was in a total mess through this addiction. Here Phil Bailey tells something of the development of this great work of love reaching out to these most needy children. This work surely deserves our prayers and support.

The MacDonalds moved in December 2006 to a small farm in Ibx Hill which is on the outskirts of Lusaka. This enabled them to look after more boys who have come from the streets. Attached are about three acres of land which we have developed in the last eighteen months into a small integrated farm holding.

The two main aims of the farm are to serve as a training place for those boys interested in farming and to provide food to help with the cost of feeding them all.

Tuesday Banda is the farm manager. He moved from Petauke and started work at the farm in August 2007. He was joined by his wife Barbara and their two boys Ezra and Joas. Their baby Christina was born last October. In early May this year the house we have built for them on the farm was completed. Godwin helps Tuesday on the farm and a couple of other local lads work on a daily rate when necessary. The boys staying with the MacDonalds also help during their school holidays and on Saturdays. This helps to keep them busy and is a way for them to learn about working in general and also to earn some pocket money.



Farm Work

Fruit trees have been planted – grapefruits, oranges, guava, lemons, avocados etc which we hope will grow into a full orchard. The boys help in preparing the land for planting which will take place during the rainy season. When this year's maize crop was harvested the dry stalks were left in the field to protect the soil during the long dry season. Once the maize was shelled it produced twenty-three 50kg bags. This was ground into mealie meal which will be used to make *nshima* for the boys. However this number of bags is only enough for about two months' meals, which shows how much thirty-five boys can eat and what a task it is for Christine MacDonald to organise the feeding of these very hungry mouths. After the rain-fed crops- maize, sunflower and groundnuts- they started to prepare the land for vegetables. A large portion is now laid with drip irrigation. Holes were dug and chicken manure placed inside before planting the vegetable seedlings which Tuesday had sown earlier in the vegetable garden nursery. This is the same way as we grow maize using the 'Farming God's Way' method. The principles of planting in well-prepared holes apply for all crops. We have a vegetable garden for Christine MacDonald as well, where we are trying to produce different vegetables, herbs and salads for her kitchen.

Animals

The farm has a male and five female goats which between them produce several young a year. This provides good barbecue meat for birthday parties. The sheep we hope will also do the same in the future. Unfortunately the first two lambs born last month died as the mother didn't feed them. We have several little helpers who will be more than willing to bottle feed them in the future. The piglets born in March are doing well although we lost one that was bitten by a large cobra. Not a problem UK pig farmers face! The larger ones will be sold off for meat. Christine has a friend at the 'Real Meat Company' who takes the pigs, weighs them and gives her back the same in pre-packed bacon and sausages etc. This way some can pretend we don't actually eat our little piggies! The rabbits continue to breed like rabbits! Some of

the boys also have guinea pigs as pets but we do stop at eating them!

We now have four houses of 50 laying hens. The egg money we hope will eventually cover most of the farm inputs. Once they stop laying they will provide meat for the boys. We've recently added turkeys, ducks and geese to the menagerie. One of the female turkeys is sitting on ten eggs which we hope will hatch soon. Should be good timing for the festive season!

With all the birds and animals we have one male and two or more females. Polygamy is a common cultural problem faced in Africa; however when it comes to farming we approve of it!

Workshop

The future carpentry and welding workshop is also situated out on the farm. The roof is now on and hopefully will be completed soon. Then we will be looking for two craftsmen to come and set up businesses and to show the boys how to work with wood and metal.

It's not all work and no play: recently someone gave us the money to buy a table tennis table which is in constant use – well, except for when they are meant to be doing their homework!

PRAYER POINTS

Praise God for the funds that have been available to be able to set the farm up.

Pray that He will give the 'increase' as we sow and plant.

Pray for the boys and the MacDonalds as they all live together in this busy home.

Pray for God's saving grace in the children's lives.

Thank you for your continued support,

Love Phil



“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”.

2 Corinthians 6:14, 17-18