

# THE MONTHLY RECORD

January 2009

£1.50



## TREASURE IN HEAVEN

CREDIT CRUNCH | THE INERRANCY DEBATE | INTRODUCING ST VINCENT STREET

- 3**     **Welcome to *The Monthly Record***  
**Meditation Moment**
- 4**     **The Freedom of the Christian Market**  
Carl Trueman
- 7**     **News & Information**
- 10**    **European Churches Encouraged**  
David Miller
- 11**    **Closing Statement:**  
**European Conference of Reformed Churches,**  
**Soest, 2008**
- 12**    **Byzantium, Past and Present**  
Neil DM and Dayspring MacLeod
- 14**    **The Preaching of Jesus**  
Malcolm Maclean
- 15**    **Urban Plant Life**
- 16**    **Introducing St Vincent Street**
- 18**    **The Inerrancy Debate**  
Andy McGowan, Carl Trueman, Iain D Campbell
- 21**    **Feedback**
- 22**    **Taingéalachd**  
Janet MacPhail
- 23**    **Jenny's Jottings**  
Jenny Wilson
- 24**    **From the Frontiers**
- 28**    **Book Review**
- 29**    **Prayer Diary**
- 31**    **Conference on Precenting &**  
**Congregational Singing**  
Evan Macdonald
- 32**    **Bird on a Wire**

**Front Cover:** St Vincent Street Free Church, Glasgow  
Photograph by Evan Macdonald

## Contact

**The Editor**  
**The Monthly Record**  
**St Peter's Free Church**  
**4 St Peter's Street**  
**Dundee**  
**DD1 4JJ**

**Email:** [edrecord@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:edrecord@blueyonder.co.uk)

Unless you indicate otherwise, we will assume that, if suitable, your letter is available for publication, either in the magazine or on the website.



**Editor - David Robertson**  
*Contact details below left*

### **Mission Editors - Charles & Daphne Douglas**

28 Learmonth Crescent, Edinburgh, EH4 1DE  
Tel: 0131 718 4141 (*work hours*) 0131 343 2099 (*evenings*)  
Email: [cag.douglas@btinternet.com](mailto:cag.douglas@btinternet.com)

### **WFM Editor - Alison Macdonald**

Email: [alison.cm@ntlworld.com](mailto:alison.cm@ntlworld.com)

### **Gaelic Editor - Janet MacPhail**

24 North Bragar, Isle of Lewis, HS2 9DA  
Tel: 01851 710354

### **Prayer Notes - Dayspring MacLeod**

Tel: 0131 226 5286  
Email: [dayspring.macleod@btinternet.com](mailto:dayspring.macleod@btinternet.com)

### **Reviews Editor - Malcolm Maclean**

*All books for review should be sent to:*  
Free Church Manse, Cearcall A Chuain, 1 Kyles, Scalpay,  
Isle of Harris, HS3 3BS

### **Design & Layout**

Catherine Pearson

### **Copy Editor**

Dayspring MacLeod

### **Policy**

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the editors and contributors, which are understood to reflect generally the theological position of the Free Church of Scotland. The magazine also publishes from time to time the Church's official policies and statements. No material can be published unless the full name and address of the contributor is supplied. The preferred method of submission is in electronic form.

### **Advertising**

Anyone wishing to advertise in *The Monthly Record* should contact the editor.

## Subscriptions

**Free Church Offices**  
**15 North Bank Street**  
**The Mound**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH1 2LS**

**Tel : 0131 226 5286**

**Email:** [emma@freechurchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:emma@freechurchofscotland.org.uk)

The annual subscription price for *The Monthly Record* is £25. This includes postage and packaging.

Cheques should be made payable to Free Church of Scotland.

Please contact us for overseas subscription costs.



The Monthly Record is produced by the Free Church of Scotland  
Scottish charity SC012925 [www.freechurch.org](http://www.freechurch.org)

Welcome to the January *Record* and another New Year. Many people at this time of year find themselves struggling with sadness and depression. The weather, the lack of light, post-Christmas blues, and memories of those who have gone before us all combine to create in some people a feeling of heaviness. In 2009 that sense of foreboding has another cause – the economic decline, stock market collapse and credit crunch are only just beginning to play through in the real economy. Those who will lose their jobs will soon be paying the price of the bankers' gambling and the government's profligacy. For the Christian, none of this should come as a surprise – if you build your life and society on sand, then it should come as no surprise that when the storm arrives, it all falls down. Those who trust in Christ will still experience the storm, but because our joy is in the Lord and our treasure is in heaven, our whole perspective is different.

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul,  
steadfast and sure whilst the billows roll,  
fashioned to the rock which cannot move,  
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

#### IN THIS MONTH'S RECORD

In addition to the usual features, Carl Trueman reflects on the causes of the current economic crisis, Malcolm Maclean tells us about the preaching of Jesus, we introduce St Vincent St. Free Church – a congregation which is growing and developing in Scotland's largest city – and we have a review of Leonard Cohen and also of the Byzantium collection currently on display in London. We also have reports of two stimulating and encouraging conferences in London and the Netherlands.

#### THE FINAL WORD ON THE DIVINE SPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

We have also given more space than usual to the *Feedback* section. This is because we want to close the debate that has arisen over Andy McGowan's book on the inspiration of Scripture. Regular readers over the past year will know that we have covered this extensively. This is because the nature of Scripture is not just some obscure academic debate, but right at the heart of our faith. The letters from Andy McGowan, Carl Trueman and Iain D Campbell are self-explanatory. We would wish to add the following. Firstly, we pray that the Lord will use and bless Dr McGowan as he moves from HTI to being the minister of the East Church in Inverness. We thank God for him and pray that his extensive gifts will be used for the upbuilding of the Church there and indeed throughout the rest of Scotland and beyond. Secondly, we believe that in this matter Dr McGowan was wrong. The last thing the Church needs right now is an attack on the inerrancy of Scripture. We still do not understand why someone who does not regard the Bible as being in error finds the term 'inerrant' to be unsuitable. For those who are interested, the best review for the ordinary mortal that we have read is on Amazon.co.uk (look up *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*), by Rev. K Watson. Finally, we would like to thank Dr Trueman and Dr Campbell (and others who have commented – on both sides) for their understanding, graciousness and clear explanation of these issues.

Read and enjoy. May the Lord grant you a prosperous and profitable 2009, in every way.

David



## BABYLON'S BURNING

### READ REVELATION 18:1-20

The book of Revelation is not an easy book. However, sometimes we make it more complex than it is – struggling to see the wood for the trees. In some ways it is a straightforward story of the conflict throughout humankind's history – the conflict between good and evil, God and the Devil, and Jerusalem and Babylon, the city of God and the city that is described as the great prostitute. In Revelation 8 the judgement on that latter city is described in detail.

Verses 9-19 describe the various laments of those who have trusted in Babylon – they are in despair because their great hope and their material prosperity has gone. Their life support machine has been switched off. Shedd states, 'The history of human civilization is to a great extent the history of human luxury; and the history of human luxury is the history of bodily appetites growing more and more inordinate, and growing by what they feed upon'. Remove the prosperity and it all comes tumbling down.

Firstly (v.9-10), the kings of the earth lament. Those who have relied on politics without God. Those who have used the Church and religion, not in order to serve God, but to bolster their own political power.

Then the merchants lament (v.11-17). All the business and cargoes have gone. Six categories of commerce are mentioned: treasure, expensive fabrics, materials for furnishing, perfumes and spices, foods, and livestock, including human slaves. The latter was where life was cheap and so could be bought and sold. These slaves were recruited as the workforce of the rich; they filled the brothels and ministered to the brutal pleasures of the amphitheatre.

Finally the seagoing men lament (v.17-19), the traders who never had a home in Babylon but liked to visit. They participated in Babylon but only as visitors, not residents. So what does all this have to say to us? In a world that is dominated by commerce, trade, luxury, wealth and the exploitation of human beings, we need as Christians to remind ourselves that we cannot serve both God and Mammon. We are to be separate from Babylon. If God grants us wealth we are to be good stewards of it, using that wealth to serve Him and His people, not using 'religion' and exploiting the people of God in order to serve ourselves. In a society that seems to place all its trust in the stock market, money, and the things that money can buy, we need to demonstrate that we not only believe in, but also belong to, a different Kingdom.





# THE FREEDOM OF THE CHRISTIAN MARKET?

CARL TRUEMAN REFLECTS ON THE CURRENT CREDIT CRISIS. (THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON [www.reformation21.org](http://www.reformation21.org))

Since arriving in the US some seven years ago, I have become accustomed to people asking me what it is like to come from a socialist country. Now, I'm not sure exactly what constitutes a 'socialist' country, but in the popular American imagination it seems to focus on the provision of a national (or 'socialised') health service. The merits and demerits of such a system are often debated on anecdotal evidence – good experiences here, bad experiences there. Few Americans (or British people) I have met have any real mastery of the economic arguments, pro and con, but passions run deep on both sides of the debate.

## **THE MARKETS HAVE FAILED, AND THIS SHOULD (I HOPE!) GIVE THOSE CHRISTIANS WITH A BLITHE FAITH IN THE FREE MARKET SYSTEM AT LEAST SOME PAUSE FOR THOUGHT.**

Ironically, of course, the last few weeks have seen America become more of a socialist country than the UK has ever been. After a series of catastrophic crises on the financial markets, the federal government seems to be stepping in to bail out the banking system. In short, one could provocatively state this in the following terms: the government is in the process of nationalizing the banks. Forget the NHS; when the government buys the banks, your savings, and your debts, that is socialism.

The irony is, I hope, not lost on those on the Christian Right who so closely identify biblical Christianity with the American way of free marketeering. I suppose that, in the US, it is perhaps a little difficult to do anything else, given the fact that both of the major political parties essentially agree on the virtues of capitalism, democracy, etc. It is the air that everyone breathes, and, to be honest, there are no realistic alternatives out there; it is therefore perhaps not surprising that they have taken on the status of absolute, non-negotiable truths, with differences appearing rather in other areas, be they identity politics, details of tax allocations, etc.

Yet the current banking crisis indicates that the system is not infallible. Of course, we have seen tremors like this before: the number of airline companies that have been on the verge of bankruptcy and kept afloat by government intervention just seems to keep growing. They are too big to fail, or so

the wisdom has it; well, if airlines are too big to fail, then for sure those companies that basically underwrite the country's mortgage debt and determine the price of money are too big to fail. Hence, the need for government bail-outs.

The markets have failed, and this should (I hope!) give those Christians with a blithe faith in the free market system at least some pause for thought. Why, we should ask, has this system that is supposed to be self-regulating been so badly shaken? Who is responsible?

Now, I have studied history too long to believe that it is ultimately driven by great individuals. The Great Man Theory of history, so ably expounded by Thomas Carlyle in the nineteenth century, has a certain romantic appeal, and might still speak to the benighted followers of such as Ayn Rand, but it can scarcely account for the facts. History is shaped by much larger social, economic, and cultural forces than can ever be summed up, focused, or determined by a single individual. The role of Hitler and Stalin as individuals was critical in the Second World War; but had they never existed, in all likelihood, the ongoing crisis in European politics that was the aftermath of the First World War would have caused some immense conflagration – Goebbels could have been a Hitler; Molotov or Mikoyan a Stalin. It goes without saying that one lunatic with a deep-seated hatred of the Jews could not organise the Holocaust all by himself; rather, the social, cultural and economic conditions all had to be aligned for such a thing to take place.





*The subprime mortgage crisis is a function of a society built on greedy and unrealistic material aspirations.*

All of this is to say that, when we look at the crisis in the markets and try to play the blame-game, we should avoid reducing the problem to one individual or even to a group. Cries of 'It's the President', 'It's Congress', 'It's the Democrats', 'It's the Republicans' and 'It's the banks' all have a certain appeal. After all, it's always good to blame 'them' rather than 'us.' Indeed, speaking for myself, I reckon it was the Welsh wot dunnit all along; and any evidence to the contrary merely shows how deep and subtle is the vast Welsh conspiracy behind it all. Well, no, actually I don't believe that at all, for the simple reason that any attempt to apportion blame to an individual or to isolate blame on to a particular group or organization is ultimately too simplistic. Governments, banks, political parties, mortgage traders – they are all intertwined in a way that makes such a crisis as we now face a result of a synthesis of mistakes committed by a multitude of miscreants, not the monumental miscalculation of a few.

**HUMAN BEINGS, BEING AS DEPRAVED AND AS BLINDED AS THEY ARE, GENERATE MARKET FORCES THAT REFLECT THAT DEPRAVITY**

So why did the markets not stop the problem? After all, according to some conservative pundits, the markets are like the force of gravity – neutral, impersonal, scientific, perpetually moving towards an economic equilibrium that promotes freedom, prosperity and all-round good health – social, cultural and, above all, financial. The answer, of course, is that market forces are ultimately functions of human behaviour, albeit on a macro-level; and human beings, being as depraved and as blinded as they are, generate market forces that reflect that depravity. Now, the response will no doubt come from some conservatives that the market actually provides a mechanism for mitigating, or even obliterating, this depravity by the fact that competition leads to a canceling-out of depravity. For example, those who argue that the free market will solve environmental problems

will make the valid observation that it is in no-one's best interest to so pollute the planet that we die of toxic fumes or global warming. So Mrs Ruth Less-Exploiter, CEO of Megadirt Factories Incorporated, will, by virtue of self-interest, curb her use of fossil fuels, etc, because she does not want to live in a world where she can hardly breathe; nor will she be able to sell products made in an environmentally destructive way to the wider public.

The argument, even in the brief and simplistic way I have expressed it here, has a certain specious force. But I would argue that the problem with such arguments is that they take no real account of the radical nature of human depravity. They assume we know what is best for us and how to achieve it; and that, possessing that knowledge, we will abide by it. Both assumptions are woefully naïve and unmitigatedly Pelagian. As a human being in rebellion against God, I automatically assume that I am the centre of the universe, the measure of all things, that I know best what is good for me and for everyone else, and that 'it' – whatever bad thing we care to think of – is not going to happen to me. Indeed, at times, I might even take a perverse pleasure in running the risk of 'it' happening to me in order to prove that it cannot, and that I am special. You only have to look at the sporadic rise in unprotected promiscuous sex amongst gay men, even those with an acute understanding that AIDS is an ever-present risk, to see that the thrill of the risk, the ecstasy of the moment, trumps notions of self-preservation and radically distorts our understanding of what is and is not in our best self-interest. A system that assumes that equilibrium and stability can be achieved by my self-interest being curbed, restrained, or even neutralised by your self-interest is woefully naïve. It fails to understand the narcissism that lies at the heart of fallen human existence; it fails to understand the fact the hedonism is always a more powerful drive than prudence; and, in its silly belief that competing market forces will neutralize evil, it falls vulnerable to that folksy-but-true adage, 'two wrongs do not make a right'.

So who is responsible for the current disaster? We all are. We are all complicit in a world that has increasingly taught people that value in life is a function of the market. This is

not a return to the Great Man Theory of history; none of us as an individual carries all responsibility; but just as every mass event in history is both the result of macro-economic and social forces, and the result of countless individuals behaving in particular ways, so this crisis is both a product of our times, and an action in which we have all had a hand. We are all complicit in creating and fostering a culture of material acquisition and a world which, in order to ensure insane levels of economic growth, instills insane levels of material aspiration in its people. An easy sell to a fallen race that now naturally exalts greed and hedonism as virtues and sees quality of life in terms of how much we can consume in comparison to others. Every time you turn on the television, somebody is trying to tell you in some commercial or other that your life is imperfect, and is imperfect because you do not possess this food-mixer, that car, this holiday, that size or number of houses. The credit boom is part and parcel of the con-trick that modern consumer society has played on us, the notion that material acquisition is what makes life meaningful. It has provided the fuel, as untrammelled free market theory has provided the rationale, for the mess in which we now find ourselves. And we are not victims of this; we are all at best hapless and willing dupes, at worst active perpetrators, whether borrowers or lenders; we are all part of a system that is designed simultaneously to satiate greed and exacerbate avarice.



*Your life is imperfect because you do not possess this food-mixer, that car, this holiday ...*

**THE CREDIT BOOM IS PART AND PARCEL OF THE CON-TRICK THAT MODERN CONSUMER SOCIETY HAS PLAYED ON US, THE NOTION THAT MATERIAL ACQUISITION IS WHAT MAKES LIFE MEANINGFUL.**

How should Christians respond to all this? I want to sow three thoughts in your minds. First, realize that, while free markets might be the best way of organizing economies at the moment, they are simply the best of a bad lot. Anything human beings create is going to be more or less a mess. Fascism, communism, feudalism, jihadism – all are worse than what we have, and thus, in relation to these options, I am *relatively* happy to live where and when I do; but what we have in America or in Britain is no divinely-sanctioned paradise, no foretaste or anticipation of the eschaton. There will be no free markets in heaven (indeed, if the imagery of Revelation 18 is anything to go by, free market philosophy is quite at home on the streets of Babylon!). Free market economies are a provisional and contingent form of economic organization, valid, so it seems, at this moment in time. Are they ‘the end of history’, as some have claimed? Well, to invest them with absolute eschatological significance shows more indebtedness to post-Marxist right-wing Hegelianism than to the Bible.

Second, let’s abandon the bombastic bunkum of ‘the morality of the markets’, language that is particularly embarrassing when it comes from the lips of professing Christians. Morality is a predicate of people, not impersonal economic systems. Markets have no morality above and beyond that which is

exhibited in the lives of those who buy and sell in them; and as these people are fallen, we should not be surprised that the markets ultimately reflect that fallenness, just as any other human-designed-and-staffed system does. And make no mistake: economic libertarianism and social conservatism are uneasy and volatile bedfellows, whatever the Christian Right might like to tell you. When you can save money by killing babies in the womb and by euthanizing the old and the weak, and when you can make oodles of dosh by selling designer clothes to the ‘gay community’ and by marketing fragrances bearing the name of a beautiful but promiscuous Hollywood actress, then guess what? In a market-driven world, the case against abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and a beauty that is only skin deep and allied to a sleazy lifestyle becomes increasingly difficult to make; indeed, the morality of the market would dictate that a day will come – and perhaps has already come – when it will appear immoral even to try.

Third, let’s avoid naive versions of the blame game for the current crisis. I know that saying this will win me few friends, but, frankly, to blame the politicians is massively to overestimate their importance; and the banks could not have done what they did without a large, compliant, and greedy population to jump into the whirlpool of easy credit that they created. The subprime mortgage crisis is a function of a society built on greedy and unrealistic material aspirations. It is the society we have all helped to make, even those who didn’t lie on their mortgage application. We are all guilty. Our greed and the banks’ easy credit: the dream team for economic self-destruction. It is not a financial bail-out that is needed; it is individual repentance by countless thousands of people.

# NEW MINISTER AND NEW HOME FOR NORTH UIST, GRIMSAY & BERNERAY CONGREGATION

The ordination of the Rev. Ewen Matheson and his induction to the pastoral charge of North Uist, Grimsay and Berneray Free Church took place on Tuesday 30th September in Clachan Church of Scotland, the use of which had been kindly granted for the evening.

The weather was favourable, and many friends from Lewis and beyond made the journey to be with the congregation on this happy occasion. In addition, many friends from local congregations were also in attendance, and a full church heard a rousing sermon from the Rev. Dr Iain D Campbell, focusing on the Year of Jubilee. The oratory was reminiscent of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. as we were commended 'to let freedom ring' throughout the land and to all nations. We were urged to ensure that the Gospel trumpet was sounded to young and to old, to rich and to poor alike. The singing, led by the Rev. Calum Iain Macleod and the Rev. Ruairidh Maclean, was also very uplifting.



*Ewen and Donna Matheson*

## **THE LORD HAS INDEED GIVEN US ROOM IN THE LAND AND WE DO PRAY FOR HIS WORK TO FLOURISH.**

An account of proceedings in the run-up to the evening's events was given by the Rev. Malcolm Macleod, Presbytery Clerk, and the set questions were put to the new minister by the Rev. Dr Iain D Campbell. Having answered satisfactorily, Mr Matheson was ordained and inducted, offered the right hand of fellowship by his brothers and given a seat on the Western Isles Presbytery. The new minister was then warmly addressed by the Rev. Kenneth I Macleod, who counselled him to preach the Gospel without fear or favour, after which the congregation was addressed by their Interim Moderator, the Rev. Iain MacAskill, who based his counsel on the words of Psalm 37 verse 5.

The customary presentations were made in the church, and the congregation then moved down the road to Carinish Hall, where a finger buffet had been lovingly prepared by Mary Macinnes (former cook in the Free Church College) and helpers from the congregation. The retiring Interim Moderator brought greetings from two former ministers – the Rev. Ronnie Morrison and the Rev. Colin Macleod – from the Free Church College, and from other congregations, colleagues and friends who were unable to be present. He then handed the proceedings over to the Rev. Ewen Matheson, who introduced three friends, each of whom was asked to speak for five minutes. Mr Alasdair Stewart from Back Free Church and the Rev. Iain Thomson of East Kilbride both spoke fondly of their associations with Ewen and his wife Donna, commended them to the congregation, and sought God's blessing on the ministry now beginning. The Rev. Kenneth Stewart did likewise, but those who know him as well as we do will not be surprised to hear that he went slightly over the allocated time as he spoke passionately

concerning the need to reach out with the Gospel to our homeland! After the newly inducted minister had thanked all who had made the proceedings possible, a very happy and relaxed evening was drawn to a close with the singing of Psalm 23.

The Interim Moderator introduced the new minister to the congregation on Sunday, 4 October. He preached on the text, 'Now the Lord has given us room and we will flourish in the land'. Recent congregational history has had its share of testing times. The congregation suffered as the result of the 2000 FCC schism, and having been dispossessed of their main properties, were until recently worshipping in inadequate buildings. However, the congregation decided to press on and agreed to petition the General Assembly of 2008 for permission to sell all the congregational property in order to part-fund the provision of one building where folk from the different North Uist districts could gather together to worship as one body. Some of the congregational buildings have now been sold, and although the work has been very challenging at times, the vision is now beginning to take shape. The recent purchase of the property formerly known as the Carinish Inn means that the Lord has indeed given us room in the land and we do pray for His work to flourish.

In conclusion, may we take this opportunity to thank those of you who have given to our building appeal. The appeal remains open and we continue to seek the prayerful and practical support of our fellow believers in this new chapter of Free Church witness in North Uist, Grimsay and Berneray. We are deeply thankful for the many answers received to prayer, for Ewen and Donna's partnership in the gospel and for their willingness to obey God's call on their lives to come over to Uist to help us. May God richly bless them both, and may He glorify His name from Berneray to Eriskay and beyond!

**Iain MacAskill**

# 25 YEARS IN THE MINISTRY

Members of the Helmsdale congregation joined with the congregation of Perth & Pitlochry on Sunday 9th November to recognise and give thanks for Duncan Macleod's 25 years' service in the Ministry.



*Duncan and Morag Macleod*

Duncan was ordained as minister of Helmsdale in September 1983, where he served until 1996 when he moved to Perth.

Gifts were presented to both Duncan and Morag, and a buffet lunch was provided and enjoyed by all their friends.

# COMMISSION OF ASSEMBLY

A special Commission of Assembly on 4 December agreed to remove the suspensions which were imposed upon ministers and office-bearers who separated themselves in 2000 to form the Free Church (Continuing) (FCC). This action was taken on the understanding that the FCC are a completely separate denomination in their own right and have been operating as such for some considerable time.

In connection with this, the Commission also agreed to direct all our congregations, where the FCC have taken possession of property, to make every effort on a local level to negotiate a reasonable arrangement for the use and even transfer of these properties where that is possible; and the Board of Trustees have promised to approve of these agreements as long as they are acceptable. This decision does not concede ownership of properties to the FCC but is an attempt to work out sensible local resolutions where the future of disputed buildings can be secured to avoid continued uncertainty.

The Free Church hopes that by taking these actions further steps have been made to improve relations between our two denominations for the sake of the Gospel throughout Scotland.

**Iver Martin**

## Obituary

### DONALD STEWART, ELDER, BONAR BRIDGE & LAIRG

On Wednesday 16th April 2008 a large congregation gathered at Migdale Church to say farewell to Donald Stewart, who had passed away at Migdale Hospital on 11th April.

Donald was born and brought up in the area, where he was well-known and respected. By nature a quiet man, Donald went about his work in an efficient and unassuming way. Most of his working days were taken up with crofting: a way of life that meant much to him.

But there was more than simply the land that was dear to his heart; the place of worship was important to him. Donald became a member in the Creich congregation in 1961 and nine years later was appointed an elder of the congregation. He was diligent in his duties, always respectful, willing to give an opinion when asked, yet never putting himself forward. We will indeed miss his presence, prayers and loyal support.

We do not sorrow because for him, in the calm serenity of his illness, the stillness of knowing and believing, of faith in his Lord, was clear for all to see. His journey was well run and he has entered that place where tears, pain and sorrow flee away. We extend our sympathies to the family and the congregation.

## Islands Study Conference

**Harris Hotel, Tarbert, Isle of Harris**

**24th to 26th April 2009**

### Speakers

Professor John L Mackay, Free Church College  
*"Wisdom for Living – Studies in Proverbs"*

Rev Derek Lamont, St Columba's, Edinburgh  
*"Thomas"*

**Missionary Speaker** - To be arranged

**Cost = £120**

(Possible Reduced Rates for Students)

### Booking Secretary - for Hotel Residents only

*Application in writing with £10 non-returnable  
Booking Fee per person to*

Miss Sandra B Armstrong, Shanachie, Peinmore,  
Skeabost Bridge, Isle of Skye, IV51 9PG  
Tel: 01470 532411. E-mail: s.armstrong181@btinternet.com

### Booking Secretary - Day Visitors and/or Meals Only

Miss Donna Macleod, Tel: 01851 870261  
E-mail: donnabayble@icscotland.net

RM

# ADULT HOLIDAY 2008

It was the 5th of July, excitement in the air  
The Free Church Holiday began, goodbye to daily care!  
The host and hostess (with the mostest) had hired a mini-bus  
To take us to Aviemore; now they'd take care of us.

MacDonald's "Four Seasons Hotel" was our destination  
And as we already know, it fulfilled our expectation  
The beds were very "comfy", the rooms were very clean  
The staff were all hard-working, to please us, really keen.

After a hearty breakfast, we met for our devotions  
Calum MacDonald, the minister, stirred up our emotions  
As he spoke of Peter, a disciple impetuous  
We could empathise with him – There's some of him in us!

Tom MacLean gave us aphorisms, from Peter first of all  
Then Robert Boyle, the Irishman, and Rabbi Duncan (loved by all)  
And as we started mornings, so we ended at night  
With Rev MacKeddie, on Abraham, giving us much insight.

The fellowship was wonderful and we had super fun  
The weather wasn't brilliant, we didn't see much sun  
Our activities were varied from Pitlochry to mountain tops  
From lunch in Elgin Free Church, to Maggie in the shops.

Calum was our quiz-master, but was he really fair?  
With his wife in one team, to let them lose he wouldn't dare  
But really he was brilliant - TV has missed a star  
To find more cool a character, you'd have to travel far.

We had a ruby wedding, 40 years of bliss  
Douglas and Katie – it all started with a kiss!  
Now this lovely couple, who dearly love their Lord  
Were devoting their lives to spreading His precious Word.

Like everything in this life, holidays come to an end  
But we enjoyed such blessings as we met with the great Friend  
If God spares us, we're hoping to meet again next year  
If YOU'RE looking for a blessing, JOIN US! It's not THAT dear.

**Chrissie Smith  
Back, Lewis**



A BOOKING FORM FOR THE 2009 ADULT HOLIDAY  
IN LARBERT (4 - 11 JULY) WILL APPEAR IN THE  
NEXT ISSUE.



## Desktop Calendars

The Women for Mission group from Lochbroom & Coigach  
have produced colourful Desktop Calendars with a  
different Scripture and Free Church Building on each page.

**£2.50 each**

All proceeds will go to WFM

To order please contact  
**gwenthompson@tiscali.co.uk**  
or tel/text: **07793743951**



## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY:



### PA to the in-house solicitor

*(salary dependent upon qualifications and experience)*

The Christian Institute is a registered charity,  
committed to promoting historic, biblical Christianity  
in the public arena.

We are seeking a committed biblical Christian who is  
well-organised, able to communicate with supporters  
and the public by letter and telephone, and computer  
literate. Applicants with audio-typing skills may  
be at an advantage. The post will be based at our  
headquarters in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Please contact The Christian Institute for details of the  
post. The closing date for job applications is 12 noon  
on **Friday 16 January 2009**. Interviews will be held on  
Thursday 29 January.

**The Christian Institute**  
Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road,  
Gosforth Business Park,  
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG  
Tel: 0191 281 5664 Fax: 0191 281 4272  
Email: tracey.holding@christian.org.uk

# EUROPEAN CHURCHES ENCOURAGED

## A REPORT ON THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES.

From 4 to 7 November, the second European Conference of Reformed Churches met in Soest, a town about an hour's journey south-east from Amsterdam. Around 70+ delegates gathered for three days of intense interaction in both formal sessions and informally. These were a representation of churches seeking to uphold the principles of the Reformed tradition, all the way from Sweden (north) to Italy (south), and from Northern Ireland (west) to Russia (east).

The core group was the seven member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC, see [www.icrconline.com](http://www.icrconline.com)), of which the Free Church of Scotland is among the founders. The member churches also invited churches or other groups (such as mission enterprises) with whom they have associations. For example, there were two Italians who were introduced at the first conference in March 2007, through the contacts of Kenny and Fiona Boyd of Govanhill.

### ANNIVERSARIES

This conference had been especially called on account of two important anniversaries approaching: 2009 sees the 500th anniversary of the birth of the great Reformer John Calvin, and 2010 is the centenary of the World Mission Conference that met in Edinburgh in 1910. So 'Soest 2009' placed special emphasis on Calvin's work, and particularly on his contribution to mission-thinking, while aiming to apply it in our current European settings. The intention is to meet again in 2010, in Edinburgh, hosted by the Free Church of Scotland, and to set out some objectives for more effectively spreading the gospel through Europe in the years that follow.

### CONFERENCE OUTLINE

There were three main addresses, with speakers from Northern Ireland (Prof David MacKay of the Reformed Presbyterian Church), Scotland (our own David Robertson), and the Netherlands (Prof Eric de Boer of the Reformed Churches Liberated). A further major session was allocated to discussion relating to theological education and more effective theological reflection and advances in the 21st-century European context.

A number of smaller group sessions were offered, giving several churches or other organisations opportunities to present their work. This served for information towards better understanding of needs and approaches in gospel ministry, and also for discussion and sharing of ideas that may be of wider benefit.

Perhaps most importantly, delegates had periods released to engage in their own discussions, useful for strengthening existing links between churches and/or mission bodies, and also for making new connections, especially with churches represented for the first time.

One notable feature was being invited to share in the mid-

week harvest-thanksgiving service of the local congregation of the Reformed Church (Liberated), also seeking blessing on the labours of the churches for the growth of the gospel through Europe.

The main papers offered attempts to learn from the understanding and work of John Calvin, as one of the great leaders of the heritage common to the gathered churches, in the Reformation. Mission endeavour and evangelism was integral to his ministry: training, sending out and supporting many men in ministry in other parts of Europe, and looking to use a variety of opportunities to spread Reformed doctrine wherever possible. However, the conference was also reminded of the need to understand the situation prevailing in 21st-century Europe, and to be sure to apply Reformation principles in appropriate ways.

### PLANS

- The churches are now looking towards Edinburgh in March or April 2010.
- In the meantime, steps are being taken to gather information on evangelistic/mission work that is already being done by the member churches and their associated bodies throughout Europe. This is intended to provide a clearer picture for future co-operation – will we be ready to aim to establish 100 new Reformed churches in European cities by 2020?
- A small committee was also appointed to look at ways to make theological consultation more viable, in order to equip the churches to meet the issues raised by 21st-century European society.

### OUTCOME

There were more than mere 'plans' as a result of these few days. There are positive signs, where action is begun, and not just more talk. But these arose from the good sense of fellowship – although differences in details do still exist. There was encouragement, and not just for the small isolated churches. The bigger denominations were encouraged to see small groups working hard, with their own resources, in quite surprising places; but this was also encouragement to greater involvement with them.

There was a unity in the desire to work for growth, out of our awareness of our valuable 'Reformed' heritage. All were very conscious of the vast numbers all around us who are chasing after material wellbeing at the expense of their souls. While very sensible of our own limited understanding of the needs (thus the emphasis on theological co-operation), the gathering helped to draw attention to the emptiness and confusion in the lives of the majority of people all around us. With both their need and our own blessings in the gospel before us, the conference met and parted with a strong sense of compulsion to make Christ Jesus truly known.

**David Miller (Cobham)**



## CLOSING STATEMENT: EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES, SOEST, 2008

We rejoice that we have had the opportunity to share our faith and mission with one another and with our sister churches and church and mission contacts in Europe. We thank the Lord that He has preserved a witness through the Reformed churches in Europe.

We recognise our collective calling to glorify God's name and to bring the good news to the people we live among. Our spiritual identity goes beyond historical, national and cultural borders; our identity is in Christ. As partakers of His gospel we are committed to sharing it with everyone we meet.

As churches of the Reformed and Presbyterian family we consider ourselves heirs of the 16th-century Reformation. This was a truly international and European movement. In today's Europe we see many people as sheep without a shepherd, wandering in an intensifying spiritual and moral darkness. As disciples of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, the King of the World, the Helper of the nations of Europe (Acts 16:6-10), we are challenged to look for ways to join forces. Utilising the best from our past, we search for ways to live and preach the Word, to touch the heart of contemporary European culture.

Therefore we seek for co-operation in the field of evangelistic outreach throughout Europe and in the field of theological study and education. To that end we desire to harness our resources in these fields.

We have agreed to meet regularly in a conference as churches and missionaries of Europe. To co-ordinate this, the ecumenical committees of the member churches will organise a 'European Conference of Reformed Churches' every two years. Each conference will instruct a convening committee to prepare the next conference.

We have agreed to combine forces for the proclamation of the gospel in Europe, with special emphasis on the major cities in areas where Reformed church life is absent or needs to be revitalised. We want to establish a Reformed consultation on European evangelism to promote such co-operation.

We have agreed that it is important to develop Reformed theology in a European context, because joint theological reflection is important for us, to strengthen our sense of unity and catholicity and to enable us to address our own societies with the gospel. We want to establish a Reformed consultation on theology and theological education in Europe to promote such co-operation between the theological institutes.

We look forward to meeting one another at our next conference in Edinburgh 2010. We wish to learn to know one another better and to encourage one another.

**WE HAVE AGREED TO COMBINE FORCES FOR THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL IN EUROPE, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE MAJOR CITIES IN AREAS WHERE REFORMED CHURCH LIFE IS ABSENT OR NEEDS TO BE REVITALISED.**

We pray that on our way to Edinburgh 2010 we may witness the moving of the Holy Spirit across Europe, and see fresh vigour in our churches and a readiness to participate in God's work of extending his Kingdom. We pray that grace may abound to those who hear the gospel, to those with whom we work, and to those who share in this task within the church of Jesus Christ. We pray that the Lord may turn His face towards us again and show Europe His favour. Amen.

**Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Ireland)  
Free Church of Scotland  
Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)  
Iglesias Reformadas de España  
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland**

# BYZANTIUM, PAST AND PRESENT

**NEIL DM AND DAYSPRING MACLEOD** VISITED THE BYZANTIUM EXHIBITION AT LONDON'S ROYAL ACADEMY, WHERE THEY WERE REMINDED OF OUR RELIGIOUS HERITAGE.

Imagine a city: deeply multicultural, built on commerce and trade, full of stadia, churches, and civic buildings, divided into two by a great river, and polarized by two sport teams who wear the colours blue and green.

Surely, a passable description of modern-day Glasgow. But it could equally be Constantinople: the great city, now known as Istanbul, which was the capital of the Byzantine (properly known as the Eastern Roman) Empire. Lasting over 1200 years, its worldwide influence in culture, trade, war, and religion were unsurpassed in the Middle Ages.

Walking through the new Byzantium 330-1453 exhibition at London's Royal Academy, the overall impression is one of great wealth and deep piety. In Byzantium, culture and Christianity were almost synonymous. On lavish display are the gold-trimmed icons that one associates with Byzantine worship: the tender Theotokos, or Bearer of God, and the stern, majestic images of Christos Pantokrator (Christ, Ruler of All) look out at the viewer with expressions of conviction and pity. How foreign – even heretical – these masterpieces look to our Presbyterian eyes; yet we owe much of our Christian tradition and development to Byzantium.

When Constantine I became the sole Roman Emperor in 324AD, he also made Christianity the official religion of his empire – and this less than 20 years after the great persecution of Christians by his predecessor Diocletian. The shift in attitudes toward the fledgling Church could not have been more extreme: from being despised and persecuted in the previous generation, Christianity was suddenly encouraged, even fashionable. Although Constantine's new capital, Constantinople, was politically a Roman city, its culture was Greek – and its inhabitants, like the famed Greek philosophers of old, talked of nothing but religious controversies and ideas. The love of debate and preoccupation with theology is one thing that, if not directly inherited from Byzantium, the Presbyterian Church certainly emulates. However, there is a warning in this: heated debate on important doctrinal issues often led to enormous divisions and schisms.

## IN BYZANTIUM, CULTURE AND CHRISTIANITY WERE ALMOST SYNONYMOUS.



*Angelos Akotantos (c. 1424-50) Icon with St Theodore*  
Photo ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Receipts Fund, Athens



*Mosaic panel of St Stephen, c. 1108-13*  
*St Sophia of Kiev, National Conservation Area*

Constantine wisely saw that what the Church needed, in the first flush of freedom of religion, was unity. It was he who convened the Council of Nicea, where 318 church fathers from across the Roman world composed the Nicene Creed, as relevant to evangelical churches now as it was then. That same first Ecumenical Council decided the method for finding the date of Easter: the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox. It may be a surprisingly pagan formula, but we continue to use it today – albeit on the Gregorian calendar rather than the Julian, which is still used by Orthodox churches.

Indeed, the early church was permeated by pagan ritual in many different ways, from artistic representations of Christ (early images were beardless, reflecting portraits of Dionysus, but the church finally agreed that Christ looked more like the bearded Zeus) to services permeated with candles, incense, and distinctive costumes for the clergy, and



*Perfume brazier in the form of a domed building. Constantinople or Italy, end of twelfth century. Photo per gentile concessione della Procuratoria di San Marco/Cameraphoto Arte, Venice*

Christian holidays overriding older pagan ones. Is this a bad thing? Not necessarily; for the Church has taken these old influences and adapted them to its own uses, just as many of our best-loved Psalm and hymn tunes were adapted from drinking songs and other secular melodies. Christians must take the culture in which they are placed, and consecrate it for the use of Christ's Kingdom.

The Creed and the Easter dating system are far from the only contributions Byzantium made to our current Christian, even Presbyterian, practices. Psalms were integral to Byzantine worship, with priests singing the Scriptures a cappella. John Chrysostom, a Patriarch of Constantinople, wrote: 'Our tongues are the strings of the lyre with a different tone indeed but much more in accordance with piety... For when the flesh no longer lusts against the Spirit, but has submitted to its orders and has been led at length into the best and most admirable path, then will you create a spiritual melody.' Other Byzantine scholars wrote similar sentiments about spiritual music which, if not exactly a page out of the Westminster Confession of Faith, are largely in line with the current Free Church practice of worship.

**CHRISTIANS MUST TAKE THE CULTURE IN WHICH THEY ARE PLACED, AND CONSECRATE IT FOR THE USE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.**

The culture of learning and ever-present religiosity in Byzantium was fertile ground also for writers and thinkers, including the Emperor Justinian I, who ordered the writing of the Corpus Iuris Civilis, on which much of the Scottish legal system is based; and Cyril, who wrote the Cyrillic alphabet. The Empire produced such theologians as John the Grammarian and St Augustine, still widely read. In Byzantium, everyone – from the meanest peasant to the Emperor himself – was a theologian.

There was no such concept as the separation of church and state, as the Emperors presided over the ecumenical councils; many of them even retired to monasteries toward the end of their lives. Emperors carried enormous influence in the Church, submitting only to the Patriarch of Constantinople, the head priest of Hagia Sophia. How grateful we would be for leaders who set our country such an example of Christian piety – though it should be noted that Roman Emperors did not always practice what they preached!

In terms of history too, it is impossible to say how different our world would be if Byzantium had not kept the Muslim armies out of Europe during the middle and medieval periods, or if its diaspora had not been the impetus for the European Renaissance, or if it had not converted huge swathes of eastern and northern Europe to Christianity. Byzantium's influence has been diverse, from the concept of diplomacy to an object as commonplace as the fork! It is a civilization little-known except among academics; but irrelevant, either to the Western world at large or to the Church? Not at all.

NICENE CREED

WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD,  
THE FATHER, THE ALMIGHTY...  
WE BELIEVE IN ONE LORD, JESUS  
CHRIST,  
THE ONLY SON OF GOD...  
WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE  
LORD, THE GIVER OF LIFE...  
WE BELIEVE IN ONE HOLY CATHOLIC  
AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH.  
...WE LOOK FOR THE RESURRECTION  
OF THE DEAD,  
AND THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO  
COME. AMEN.

Let's try this one more time: name a civilization deeply rooted in Christianity but prone also to religious divisions, supporting a complex and well-rooted legal system, with a reputation for excellent education, known for great writers, artists, and politicians, fanatical about sport, and daring in its architecture.

Modern-day Scotland, or Byzantium, 330-1453?

**BYZANTIUM 330 - 1453**

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS  
25 OCTOBER 2009 - 22 MARCH 2009

SUPPORTED BY THE J.F. COSTOPOULOS FOUNDATION  
AND THE STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION

# THE PREACHING OF JESUS



**MALCOLM MACLEAN** REFLECTS UPON THE PREACHING OF JESUS AND WHETHER IT ACTS AS A MODEL FOR PREACHERS TODAY.

I have been preaching through the Sermon on the Mount for a few months and have now completed the series. The closing verses of that Sermon say that those who listened to Jesus were astonished at His authority. I wondered to myself if it

was possible to identify any features in His Sermon that should be imitated by those who preach in His name. After all, He did promise His disciples that He would train them to become fishers of men, and the basic method of training came by copying His example. Here are some suggestions that seem to me to be obvious in this regard. These suggestions come from the Sermon on the Mount and, no doubt, other features of the Saviour's methods can be deduced from it as well as from other of His sermons that are recorded in the Gospels.

## **COMPREHENSIVE**

The first quality of the preaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is its comprehensiveness. When we begin to list the topics He mentions, we soon discover that there are a great number. He speaks about divine attributes, His own activities, the work of the Spirit, prayer, good works, attitudes of the heart, witness by His disciples to the world, and many others. What is striking is that He does not go into minute detail about one topic; instead He interlinks a great number of topics. Perhaps this is the reason why His listeners did not find His sermons boring.

## **CONCISE**

A second quality of His preaching, and it is connected to the above point, is His conciseness. Often Jesus merely states His teaching, and leaves it there. We can take almost any of His comments and see that this is the case. For example, each of the Beatitudes contains several truths, and I am not suggesting it is inappropriate to preach a sermon on each one. Yet we must note that originally each one of them was a concise statement, and each is similar to many other concise statements that made up the sermon. The opposite of concise is long-winded, and often long-windedness obscures truth, whereas conciseness declares it. (At other times, the Saviour expanded on a theme, such as in John 10, when He preached about Himself as the Good Shepherd.)

## **CREATIVE**

A third feature of His preaching is creativity, and in this heading I would place two sub-features. One is originality and the other is illustrations. Obviously, there is a sense in which Jesus was original in His teaching because of His unique understanding of the meaning of the Old Testament. But that is not the meaning of originality that I have in mind. Rather, what I mean is that He presented truth in a way that

was exclusive to Him. In other words, He did not imitate another person, but was Himself. The truth He preached was revealed through His own personal identity. As Oswald Sanders describes it, 'What He said was original in its manner of formulation, in its spirit and atmosphere. It was free from the clichés and casuistry of the Jewish teachings. Old truths were stated in new ways that challenged fresh thought and action. His teaching carries its own stamp of greatness. It was original because his ideals and standards of greatness on many things were the very antithesis of generally accepted standards.'

## **HE DID NOT IMITATE ANOTHER PERSON, BUT WAS HIMSELF. THE TRUTH HE PREACHED WAS REVEALED THROUGH HIS OWN PERSONAL IDENTITY.**

His creativity was also shown in His frequent use of word pictures or illustrations. He refers to His disciples acting like salt or influencing like light; He pictures a person building a house on a rock and another person building a house on sand. He asks His hearers to imagine the Day of Judgement, when individuals will say that they have preached in His name. And He compares prayer to the Father to the interaction between a parent and child over the everyday matter of asking for food. It is obvious that Jesus stressed the value of illustrations as an important means of communicating truth, and the illustrations that He used were taken from everyday life, which all His listeners could understand. It is possible to take an illustration from the world of science that would appeal to those with such understanding but which would only confuse other people. The Saviour only used illustrations that His listeners could understand.

## **CORRECTIVE AND COURAGEOUS**

The preaching of Jesus was corrective in dealing with the errors of other teachers. We can see this aspect in the section in Matthew 5, in which He exposes the wrong teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, when He deals with the sayings from old time. In His correction, He did not delve deeply into how they came to their erroneous views, such as when they originated or how they developed. Instead He stated each wrong view as it was commonly understood at that time and proceeded to explain in what ways it was wrong. This corrective quality in His preaching was accompanied by another essential feature, that of courage. The Saviour was a very courageous preacher, bold in affirming the truth of God. For Jesus, error was a lie, not merely an opinion, and therefore He strenuously

refuted it. Because it was a lie, it would inevitably lead to deception and take people along a wrong road. Therefore He courageously corrected false views and did not deal with them in a mealy-mouthed manner.

### **CONVICTION**

Jesus preached with conviction. He knew that each aspect of the message He taught was essential truth. Therefore He taught in a serious way, whether He was speaking about the necessity of true sanctification (as depicted in His teaching about slaying indwelling sin) or about the inevitability of the Day of Judgement. For Jesus, there were no doctrines that He could preach without conviction. He instructed earnestly the whole range of His teaching.

### **CONSOLINGLY**

Jesus preaching consolingly. He knew that His followers would face huge problems as they lived for Him in a hostile world. Ahead of them were troubles that would have terrified them if they had seen them beforehand. In addition, they would all experience personal failings; they would succumb to temptation; they would wonder if restoration was full, once they repented. Therefore, the Saviour emphasises again and again the wonderful reality and variegated manner of divine consolation. There is comfort from God for every circumstance, and Jesus gives a wide range of them in the Sermon on the Mount.

### **CONSCIOUS OF GOD**

Jesus preached conscious of God. We see this in the Sermon on the Mount when He teaches that the sun is God's sun, that the rain is sent by God, that God clothes the flowers of the field, and that God is present with His people when they give to the poor, when they pray, and when they abstain from unlawful actions. This was the world-view of Jesus – He lived in the presence of an omnipresent God who knew all things and possessed all power.

### **CHRIST-CENTRED**

Jesus' preaching centred on Himself. While it would be wrong for any other preacher to preach about himself, it was entirely appropriate for Him to do so because He was the message. The gospel is about what God has done in Christ; therefore, if a message is not Christ-centred, it is not the gospel. It is possible to preach a biblical message that is not the gospel; it is possible to preach a series about great doctrines of the faith and fail to preach the gospel. This happens if the message is not related to Christ. Jesus always preached Himself: in the Sermon on the Mount He says that He is the One who will fulfil the law and the prophets (5:17), who speaks with divine authority ('But I say unto you...'), who reveals the Father in a variety of ways (to see this we need to look at each reference to the Father), and who will be the Judge of all humans at the end of history (7:21-23). Elsewhere in His addresses in the Gospels, He speaks about other matters about Himself.

As I reflected on these qualities, I realised how far short my preaching is of the perfect standard. Obviously, those features found in Christ's preaching were in Him in a far higher way than they will be found in any who serve Him in this role. Yet I had to ask myself whether or not I was learning from Him. After all, each preacher is a permanent scholar in His school, continually needing His instruction.



On 18 November a number of Free Church ministers attended a highly significant conference in Westminster, London. It was the first meeting of the Urban Plant Life consultations. The consultations are being hosted by London City Mission in partnership with the South East Gospel partnership and the Redeemer Church Planting Centre of New York City.

The keynote speaker was Dr Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC. Keller gave three papers on the subjects of Gospel Renewal, Church and Culture, and the Missional and Contextual Church. The teaching was biblical and challenging, but also inspirational. In one of his papers Keller gave a plea for gospel renewal, which arises out of a recovery of the essence of the gospel in that we must resist the default position of the human heart, which is to pursue a works-righteousness model for salvation. He also highlighted the need for bold, united and extraordinary prevailing prayer. Keller also noted that we must recognise creativity because no revival is like the past.

## **WHY IS THE CHURCH OF THOMAS CHALMERS AND THOMAS GUTHRIE NOT THE CHURCH-PLANTING MACHINE THAT IT ONCE WAS?**

There was a Q&A session with some leading church planters. It was a source of joy to listen to a New Frontiers pastor speak about their vision of planting 1000 new churches in the next ten years, as well as hearing from Richard Coekin, of the Wimbledon Co-mission team, speak of church planting in London.

It is true that many of the issues raised suited the American and London context. The paper on culture wars was helpful, but less so than the others. The Free Church ministers who attended were certainly challenged, but at the same time felt as if we were on the outside looking in. There was a party going on and we were not part of it. The question in our mind was why the church of Thomas Chalmers and Thomas Guthrie is not the church-planting and evangelistic machine that it once was. Why is the largest evangelical presbyterian church in Europe unable even to keep a church in Govan going?

THERE WILL BE FIVE FURTHER CONSULTATIONS HELD IN THE FIRST HALF OF NEXT YEAR. FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO [www.lcm.org.uk](http://www.lcm.org.uk)

# INTRODUCING: ST VINCENT STREET

## A CITY CENTRE CHURCH

St Vincent Street-Milton Free Church is located in the midst of the business community in Glasgow's city centre. In addition to the daily influx of office workers, the area in which the church is located houses a wide spectrum of individuals including business executives and asylum seekers. Reaching out to the local resident and business community is one of the biggest challenges facing the congregation, which is largely made up of individuals and families who live outwith the city centre.

The congregation has a communicant membership of 94, of which 23% are under 30 years old, 48% fall in the 30 to 59 group and 28% are over 60. There is an adherent base of over 50. The congregation is blessed with a good number of young married couples with the result that there is a lively crèche, and a Sunday School and Bible Class catering for about 30 children. With a sizeable student population, Sunday attendances vary depending on the time of year, but usually are about 120 in the morning and 70 in the evening.

The congregation is enriched with several African and Chinese families among its membership.

The congregation benefits from the preaching of Rev. Dr Colin Dow, who was inducted to the congregation in 2003. The Associate Minister, Rev. Finlay Mackenzie, is involved with his wife Christine in a strategic work with overseas students (SOS). St V's members help at the Strathclyde Chaplaincy SOS service on a Sunday evening and there is a Bible study for

Overseas Students in St V's on a Sunday morning. There are 9 other elders and 6 deacons. Miss Marion Stewart, the Sunday School superintendent, leads a team of 4 teachers, while one of the elders, Walter Matheson, helps run the Bible Class with a rota of 4 helpers. There are 4 full time St. V's missionaries working overseas. Neil White is serving in Uganda; Caitriana (see page 24) is serving in the far east; and David and Olwen Ford are serving in Columbia.

## AN ENDANGERED BUILDING

The church building, located at 265 St Vincent Street, was designed by one of Glasgow's famous architects, Alexander "Greek" Thomson, and is on the World Monument Fund list of endangered buildings! It is easily accessed by road or rail. At present, whilst the St V's roof is being fixed, the congregation worships in Anderston Primary School, 3 Port Street.

## REACHING OUT TO THE LOCAL RESIDENT AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING THE CONGREGATION

## AN ACTIVE CHURCH

The central activities of St V's are the same as for any other Free Church - Sunday morning and evening worship, a Wednesday evening prayer and Bible study, Sunday school, Bible class, a great youth fellowship. Once a month there are district Bible studies in different areas of Glasgow. There are often after-church congregational fellowships on a Sunday evening. There are also separate Bible study groups for males and females. The ladies have Bible studies and Ladies' Fellowships. The congregation hope to run more Christianity Explored courses in the near future and a 'Two Ways to Live' course. For more mature folk there is the 'Evergreens' - always on their feet and putting the younger folk to shame!

## AN AFRICAN CHURCH

One more recent development has been the addition of the African Fellowship (if anyone has a better name for it, please write to Colin). The Fellowship is mainly made up of Kenyans. It meets on a Sunday afternoon once a month for fellowship, worship and teaching. Whilst it started with only a couple of families, there are now regularly 40 on a Sunday afternoon.

Finlay and Colin share the privilege of conducting their services. Colin has begun a catechism class among the young Africans - up to 15 meet on a Saturday morning.

This year, for the first time, St Vincent St. have a Cornhill apprentice, Bryan Kee, who is studying for a year with Cornhill Glasgow.

St V's also has a strong link with the Chanan Trust (formerly known as the Open Door Trust). Hugh MacKenna

and his band of helpers have been working from the St V's building for the last 15 years. The congregation are

### **A GROWING CHURCH FACING A GREAT OPPORTUNITY**

God has richly blessed St V's with growing Sunday attendances. The congregation is in good heart and there are always plenty of new faces. Sunday morning at St V's is a truly international experience! There are no polar bears or penguins, but every other continent in the world is represented. There are encouragements in every area of congregational life. It is a great place to worship, to minister and to use your gifts. One of the main encouragements has been the enthusiasm for bringing friends, family and workmates to church. It has led to new Christians and new enthusiasm!

### **SUNDAY MORNING AT ST V'S IS A TRULY INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE!**

One of the challenges the congregation face is to evangelise the local area. The west end of the centre of Glasgow is a busy hive of business offices and residential tower blocks full of both down-and-outs and up-and-outs. Up to 25,000 people commute into offices less than 300 metres away from the building every day.

Colin Dow comments, 'The challenge is so great that we often feel like rabbits caught in headlights; we know that God is sovereign and He has a plan for our congregation, and so we would value your prayers for our future. Rev. Neil MacMillan is coming to help us crystallise our thoughts for the future outreach of the congregation. Please pray for him and for us. The fields are white unto harvest in Glasgow!'

### **THE RIDLANDS**

We are Morag and David Ridland, with our young daughter Marianne. We are members of St Vincent Street-Milton Free Church and have shared in the worship there for the last four years. We met whilst working in the financial services industry. Originally from Edinburgh, David has lived and worked in Glasgow for the last eleven years. Morag is from Helensburgh, and after working in London for four years, came back up to Glasgow in 1999.



We visited several churches in Glasgow before joining St V's. There were two main aspects that most attracted us there. Firstly, and most importantly, was the strong Bible-centred preaching. It seems that one of the challenges for the church in today's changing society is adapting how it presents itself whilst not altering the fundamental message and truth of the Bible. When we came to St V's, it struck us how the word of the Bible was delivered without trying to alter and dilute it in order to accommodate the changing values of society.

The other main factor that attracted us was the warm

welcome we received. The congregation at St V's spans many generations. It is a vibrant collection of people who have been so kind in inviting us into their homes to share a meal and conversation. At the moment, St V's is being renovated, and we are worshipping in Anderton Primary School. The fact that the congregation continues to grow shows that it is the people that are the church and not the building. And it's a great church of which to be a part!



*Some members of the African Fellowship*

### **JEREMIAH REYNOLDS**

My name is Jeremiah Reynolds but most people just call me Jeremy. I was born and raised in the Midwest of America, mostly in St. Louis, Missouri. When I was growing up, my Dad was a minister of Music and the arts in the Evangelical Church. My whole family life revolved around the church and ministering to the people within it. That was my way of life until I went to a small university in the-middle-of-nowhere Missouri, where I couldn't be bothered to attend church, or seek out Christians, or really live a Christian life.

Without my knowing or supposing, God was still working in my life and put it on my heart that I really wanted to become a trained actor in Scotland at the RSAMD. It made absolutely no sense, but I was incredibly enthusiastic about it. After being accepted into the Academy, a friend of mine back home told me to visit St V's. I didn't know why, but after weeks of putting it off, I thought I'd give it a try. God has a great sense of timing.

Unbeknown to me, Colin Dow, the minister, and his family had all just been in St. Louis, my hometown, to marry Kathmar Dow's brother, Neil, to one of my friends! I was able to chat with Colin about people he had met that I had known most of my life. I was invited over for lunch to the manse, and I instantly felt as though I had a home away from home. Since then St V's has been a great healing ground for me to discover God in brand new ways and to enjoy the benefits of His love from the members of His church. I wasn't sure why I was coming to Scotland, but after two years here, God's plan has proved to be, yet again, exactly what I needed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ST VINCENT STREET FREE CHURCH, PLEASE VISIT THEIR WEBSITE:  
[www.greekthomsonchurch.com](http://www.greekthomsonchurch.com)

# THE INERRANCY DEBATE

ANDY MCGOWAN'S BOOK *THE DIVINE SPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE* HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE DEBATE WITHIN THE CHURCH. THIS HAS BEEN REFLECTED IN *THE MONTHLY RECORD* OVER THE PAST YEAR. THIS MONTH WE CLOSE THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH A RESPONSE FROM DR MCGOWAN AND A COUPLE OF HIS CRITICS.

## RESPONSE TO CAMPBELL AND TRUEMAN

Sir,

I have followed with sadness and disappointment the discussion of my book, *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*, in the pages of *The Monthly Record*. The original review by Iain D. Campbell was littered with inaccuracies, as well as betraying signs of 'playing to the gallery'. Unfortunately, when these inaccuracies were pointed out by Hector Morrison, Campbell's response was simply to say that he had showed the review to a few people who thought it was all right. If you have said things that are inaccurate, untrue and damaging to the reputation of a brother in Christ, that response is simply inadequate. I am not asking that he abandon his views or accept what I have written. Clearly we disagree and there is nothing wrong with that. What is definitely unacceptable is that he should persist in misrepresenting what I have written, even when he had the opportunity to set the record straight.



**LET ME MAKE MY POSITION CLEAR. I BELIEVE THAT THE WHOLE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD AND THAT IT IS PRECISELY AS GOD INTENDED IT TO BE. IT IS ALSO WITHOUT ERROR IN ALL THAT IT AFFIRMS.**

Let me repeat, then, the most glaring inaccuracies:

1. At no point in the book do I argue that there are 'errors' in Scripture. Instead I am arguing that the 'inerrantist' position carries with it a great deal of theological and scientific 'baggage' that I do not find helpful.
2. At no point in the book do I argue that we should 'abandon' the words 'illumination' and 'perspicuity'. Rather, I say that these words should be 'supplemented' with other words in order to clarify their original meaning.

Let me make my position clear. I believe that the whole Bible is the Word of God and that it is precisely as God intended it to be. It is also without error in all that it affirms.

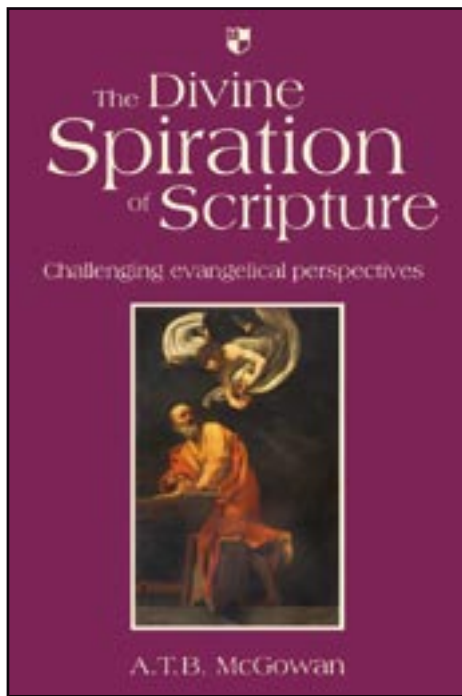
In the October issue of *The Monthly Record* Carl Trueman rides into battle alongside Campbell, brandishing his metaphorical 'broadsword'.

Trueman's basic point is the same as that of Campbell; namely, that by choosing to use the word 'infallibility' to refer to Scripture instead of the word 'inerrancy', I am unorthodox. Indeed, he goes so far as to say this: 'Is it overstating the case to say that so much of the current rebellion against inerrancy is as much a rebellion of children against parents, such a classic cliché of current society in general, as anything?'

So there we have it. Those of us who do not accept Trueman's choice of orthodoxy are really just like children throwing a tantrum. What we must do is simply accept the views that have been handed down to us without question. But which views that have been handed down?

Trueman argues his case on the basis that to question or disagree with 'Old Princeton', especially its leading proponent, B.B. Warfield, is an unacceptable departure from orthodoxy. My question is this: when did 'Old Princeton' become the only standard of orthodoxy for Reformed theology? Now do not misunderstand me, I have the highest regard for Warfield as one of the finest Reformed theologians yet produced by the church, but there were areas where I believe him to have been wrong. Why should that be a crime? In my view, Warfield followed too closely the somewhat mechanistic theological method of his earlier 'Old Princeton' mentor Charles Hodge, and he had too high a view of the prevailing scientific orthodoxy of his day. This led him to the view that the only kind of truth was scientific accuracy (hence the word 'inerrancy'). It also led him to substantially accept the theory of evolution. So let me ask again: when did the views of this 20th-century American evolutionist become the final authority for subsequent generations of Reformed theologians?

As a Scottish Presbyterian theologian, I affirm *The Westminster Confession of Faith* as my doctrinal standard. Chapter 1 of that Confession spells out the doctrine of Scripture. It speaks of the 'infallible truth' of Scripture. That doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture is also the position taken by most of the other Reformation catechisms and confessions. It is also the word used by Calvin and most succeeding generations of Reformed theologians. Trueman accuses me of abandoning the position of 'Old Princeton'; I might just as well accuse him of abandoning the position of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Why should I, as a Scottish Presbyterian theologian, give up the language of the Confession (infallibility) for the language of 20th-century North America (inerrancy)?



European Reformed theologians have, for over 400 years, spoken about the infallibility of Scripture. In my view, nothing is gained by abandoning this language and adopting American inerrantist language.

There is, however, an underlying problem that must be addressed, because this dispute over the use of the word 'inerrancy' is symptomatic of something much deeper. The problem is that certain scholars today believe they have a monopoly on what is 'Reformed' and feel free to condemn others who do not share their doctrinal conclusions. This is quite contrary to the nature and history of Reformed theology.

## **MY QUESTION IS THIS: WHEN DID 'OLD PRINCETON' BECOME THE ONLY STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY FOR REFORMED THEOLOGY?**

Reformed theology has always been a 'school' of thought with many 'strands'. In the earliest days of the Reformation, scholars throughout Europe were developing Reformed ideas. For example: Martin Bucer in Strasburg, Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich, John Calvin and Theodore Beza in Geneva, Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus in Heidelberg. This is to say nothing of John Martyr Vermigli, who was everywhere! Add to this the theologians in Holland, England and Scotland, and you have a fascinating 'school' of thought. These various 'strands' of the 'school' of Reformed theology did not always agree and often came to contradictory conclusions. They also produced confessional statements, which were often quite different from one another in structure and content (for example, compare the *Second Helvetic Confession* with the *Heidelberg Catechism* and then with the later *Westminster Confession of Faith*), yet all were recognised as 'Reformed'. There was a healthy debate between the 'strands' and no one strand was regarded as having all the truth.

What is happening today, however, is that a certain group of scholars (including Campbell and Trueman) believe that they can tell us what is 'truly Reformed'. In other words, they believe that their particular 'strand' of Reformed theology is the only one and that the rest of us must accept it or suffer the consequences. This is obvious in some of the language they use. For example, on many matters (including the doctrine of Scripture) they will tell us that their view is 'the Reformed position'. Notice that definite article!

In my book I argue that the 'English Puritan' and 'Old Princeton' strands (important in themselves) have become too determinative of what is Reformed and that we have neglected other strands, most notably the Dutch Neo-Calvinist strand, comprising especially Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. The response from Trueman and others is usually to say that Kuyper and Bavinck were really saying the same thing as 'Old Princeton', just in a different way. Thus Bavinck's severe critique of Hodge's theological method and his rejection of inerrantist language is not taken with sufficient seriousness.

It is my hope that those who hold to the Reformed faith will resist these attempts to insist that only one 'strand' of Reformed theology is acceptable. Like the early Reformers, we must learn to show respect for Reformed brothers and sisters who choose to express their theology in different language and with different emphases.

**The Rev. Professor A.T.B. McGowan**  
**Highland Theological College**

## **CARL RESPONDS**

Dear David,

Thank you for bringing Dr McGowan's letter to my attention. A number of points come immediately to mind, given his desire to posit a significant difference between Bavinck and Warfield. First, it is basic that the statements of Bavinck on this issue be addressed, first and foremost, within the context of Bavinck's life, times, and theology as a whole. This Dr McGowan signally failed to do in his book, depending entirely on the recent English translation of Bavinck's *Dogmatics*. Thus, the wider Bavinckian, and indeed Dutch background, was totally ignored. The excellent paper of my friend James Eglinton, delivered at the Bavinck Conference in Grand Rapids, exposes this shortcoming in admirable fashion and will, I hope, soon be published. Thus, to talk glibly about Bavinck's critique of Hodge without engaging any of the 19th-century Dutch background is unfortunate.

Second, it is remarkable that Dr McGowan only footnotes my colleague Dick Gaffin's work on Princeton and Old Amsterdam at one point, and then he does not engage with Dick's argument that there is no substantial difference between Old Princeton and Old Amsterdam on inerrancy. Nor, interestingly enough, does he even indicate to the reader that that is Dick's position and thus that he, Dr McGowan, is implicitly rejecting his arguments. A strange move in an academic book: to fail to alert readers to the most substantial piece of counter-scholarship or to critique the arguments of

said scholarship. Now Dick, unlike Dr McGowan, based his work on primary Dutch sources, and his arguments, whether one agrees or disagrees, are substantial and need to be addressed. Basic to scholarly argumentation is to find the principle proponents of the position you are rejecting and engage their arguments at the appropriate depth with the appropriate scholarly apparatus. This Dr McGowan has signally failed to do. It is the equivalent of me now publishing a book which refutes Dr McGowan but refuses to engage his arguments; indeed, which refuses to acknowledge that he is even proposing a thesis that contradicts my own, and which footnotes him as if he were a supporter. I would expect to be taken to the woodshed by the reviewers for such a move, and rightly so.

## **THE BEST ONE CAN SAY ABOUT DR MCGOWAN'S ARGUMENT AT THIS POINT IS THAT IT IS POORLY COMMUNICATED AND DANGEROUSLY AMBIGUOUS.**

Third, I have no desire to tell other people what to think or to enforce a narrow definition of what is and is not acceptable as Reformed Orthodoxy. I think that, in stating that, Dr McGowan not only crosses over the line into personal invective by speculating about motives, but also massively overestimates my importance and influence, and indeed, that of himself and his book. Confessional definition and confessional explication are ultimately tasks for the courts of the church; in my case, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Having said that, neither do I have the desire to assert revisionist positions without properly engaging with the relevant primary and secondary literature on the subject. Indeed, while in my original article I specifically indicate that the arguments of the revisionists are substantial and not to be dismissed, the reader might now infer that the more I have reflected on Dr McGowan's failure to engage Bavinck scholarship (and, indeed, to engage in substantial exegesis, with the exception of the discussion of *theopneustos*), the less substantial I believe the argument he provides to support his thesis on Old Princeton-Old Amsterdam to be. Further, to disagree with Dr McGowan, and to point out the implications and the inadequacies of his book, is not to act like a member of the Reformed thought police, as if the creedal and theological boundaries of Reformed theology depended on Dr McGowan being given a pass for his views. Surely it is what academics are paid to do; and when the book is on theology, it is more important that theological academics, churchmen and educators do so because the stakes can be very high. It is perhaps comforting and reassuring to impute base motives and ideas of control freakery to those who have the temerity to offer criticism; but, whatever the motives of myself and Iain might be, the fact remains that, if Dr McGowan doesn't want criticism, he shouldn't publish revisionist books on controversial subjects without footnoting the relevant research and engaging in the appropriate argumentation, nor then cry 'Foul!' when anyone dares to disagree with his assertions.

Fourth, I remain perplexed that Dr McGowan can maintain that inerrant (meaning 'without error') is an inappropriate term to apply to the Bible, when he claims that at no point does he argue that 'there are "errors" in Scripture'. Is he playing with words? Or is it simply, as he claims, that he dislikes the baggage associated with the term? If the problem is the baggage, why not simply clarify the meaning of the term and avoid all

the heartache and confusion this has obviously injected into Dr McGowan's life? That's what the Cappadocian Fathers did in the 360s with the term 'hypostasis', up until that point an anathematized heretical term when applied to the threeness of God; they revised its meaning in a way that was crucially significant for the development of Trinitarianism. Compared to that, the rehabilitation and clarification of inerrancy should be relatively straightforward – especially, I repeat, if Dr McGowan is not arguing that that 'there are "errors" in Scripture'. The best one can say about Dr McGowan's argument at this point is that it is poorly communicated and dangerously ambiguous.

Fifth, far from abandoning the Westminster Standards, I believe that my position, and that of Warfield, represents a consistent explication of what these documents say. To imply that I believe Warfield because he is an old Princeton professor is simply silly. I believe Warfield's position is a good one: not because he was a pre-1929 Princeton professor, but because his arguments seem to me to be exegetically well-grounded (Warfield, consistent with WCF I.9, regarded exegesis as centrally important for a doctrine of scripture) and his conclusions are consistent with the Westminster Standards. It's a shame that Dr McGowan dismisses Warfield without demonstrating where his exegesis of biblical passages on scripture is flawed. Further, given the debate over even the inspiration of the Masoretic vowel points in the seventeenth century, Dr McGowan's posits re the Westminster Assembly's view of scripture seems problematic. But, then again, as with his omission of significant exegesis or criticism of the exegesis of others such as Warfield, the arguments of Dick Gaffin, or the importance of the 19th-century Dutch background, Dr McGowan does not engage in any real discussion of the complexity of the debates about scripture prior to, during, or after the Westminster Assembly: another serious lacuna in his argument. That the word 'inerrant' does not appear in the documents is neither here nor there: the concept seems to me to be clearly present, both in scripture and in the Standards. Dr McGowan fails to persuade that that is not the case because he simply has not engaged the arguments for either.

Perhaps Dr McGowan will consider it unfair to require that he engage in detail the history of 17th-century Reformed Orthodoxy, the exegesis of scripture, the Dutch background to Bavinck, and the exegetical work of Warfield and company, given the constraints of time and space under which he was no doubt working for his publisher; but it seems to me that a book on such a crucial topic, and which has such potential significance for evangelicalism's understanding of scripture, should embody the highest scholarly standards. This book is not such. Indeed, Dr McGowan has here written a cheque that his scholarly apparatus and argumentation cannot cash.

The book has some good points and I found it helpful in places, but its manifold weaknesses on key issues, from the almost total absence of exegesis (see Westminster Confession I.9) to the failure to take seriously counterarguments in the scholarship, to the isolation of Bavinck from his context, should also be noted. For me, these are fatal flaws, such that even his supporters should concede that he has far from proved his case.

Yours sincerely,

**Carl R Trueman**  
**Academic Dean, Westminster Theological Seminary**

## THE FINAL WORD

David –

Without wishing to protract the debate, may I be permitted to comment on Andrew McGowan's response to my review of his book, *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*?

As I said in my original review, this book is evidence of 'prodigious learning' and of serious reflection. My respect for Dr McGowan has not diminished, and I wish him well in his new sphere of ministry. I am only sorry that his response has diverted attention from the core issue in his book by personalising the argument and attributing unworthy motives to those who disagree with him. That is hardly the way to conduct scholarly debate, which is what I thought he was inviting.

### **MY RESPECT FOR DR MCGOWAN HAS NOT DIMINISHED, AND I WISH HIM WELL IN HIS NEW SPHERE OF MINISTRY.**

Notwithstanding the noble defence of both the author and his colleagues, I still maintain that traditional formulations of the doctrine of Scripture, including its primary locus in systematics, together with the terminology of inspiration, perspicuity and inerrancy, are preferable to the alternatives which *The Divine Spiration of Scripture* have suggested to us.

I argue this not because these formulations are traditional, nor because I believe that those who developed them are not capable of being improved upon, but because I believe they are scriptural. No argument will convince me that the idea of inerrant autographs is not biblical, nor even that we have no access to them. That, I always thought, was what the proper use of textual criticism was about.

Dr McGowan has given a welcome assurance that he believes the Bible to be 'without error in all that it affirms'. This does not sit easily, however, with the core argument in his book – that God has communicated these errorless (inerrant?) affirmations through manuscripts which have from the outset, according to the author, been characterised by 'difficulties ... discrepancies and apparent contradictions' (p118).

One can hardly expect to challenge evangelical perspectives on Scripture without having these perspectives defended in turn. And if there is a debate to be had on this point, let us conduct it 'in a manner worthy of the Gospel'. On the other hand, I think the last thing the church needs from the academy is a signal that after two thousand years of reflection on the canon of Scripture, we are still not sure what we are talking about.

**Iain D. Campbell**



## CALVIN 500

Special arrangements are now in place with our friends in America for anyone wishing to attend all or part of the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth. Our travel arrangements would be separate but we are able to avail of special rates in various hotels and link in with the main group for the tour programme. Dates are 30th June – 10th July 2009.

A number of people have expressed an interest in joining the tour in Geneva, travel dates being Monday 6th July, returning Monday 13th July. Any interested readers can contact Harold Gibson on :  
[hgibson@barronstown.forc9.net](mailto:hgibson@barronstown.forc9.net)



## Keswick Convention 2009

Grants are available from the Campbell Trust to enable ministers and full-time Christian workers from Scotland to attend the Keswick Convention in 2009.

The Convention offers life-changing Bible teaching, uplifting worship and great fellowship, combined with the chance to relax and enjoy a holiday in the wonderful setting of the Lake District. It has been held since 1875. The Convention lasts three weeks, with the second two weeks being especially for families, with full alternative programmes for children and young people. The theme for next year is *Faith That Works*. The dates for the weeks are 11-17 July, 18-24 July, and 25-31 July. Each week is self-contained.

The grant assists towards travel and accommodation for any week. The only stipulation is that those applying should not have been registered members of the Convention on a previous occasion. There is no charge for actually attending the Convention.

Further information is at [www.keswickministries.org](http://www.keswickministries.org)

Details of grants are available from:

**Rev. John M F Butler**  
**2 Southview, Dalmuir, Clydebank, G81 3LA**  
E-mail: [jmfb@talktalk.net](mailto:jmfb@talktalk.net)

Early application is advised as only a small number of grants are available each year.



## TAINGEALACHD

Bha Là Taingealachd againn o chionn ghoirid ann an Siabost agus bheachdaich sinn gu sònraichte air an t-salm a tha ag ràdh, " Mur tog lehòbhah Fèin an taigh, luchd-togail tha iad faoin."

Is e smuain mhòr a th'ann gu dearbh. Mur bi Esan a' beannachadh agus a' stiùireadh chùisean cha bhi rian ann. Faodaidh sinn iomadh oidhirp a dhèanamh ach is e an Cruithear Fhèin aig a bheil cumhachd. Nam biodh seo nar n-inntinnean nach sinn a bhiodh a' toirt an àite Dha. Is e seo an t-àite a tha Esan ag iarraidh-prìomh àite nar beatha. Cha dèan àit' eile a' chùis. Mur glèidh Esan am baile gu cinnteach bidh na h-oidhirpean againne gun bhrìgh. Nach iongantach 's sinn an crochadh Air airson gach nì gu bheil sinn cho dèidheil air na h-oidhirpean againn fhìn.

Chunnaic sinn mar a bha 'taigh' gu tric a' ciallachadh dachaigh agus smaoinich sinn air a' bheannachd a bh'ann an àite nuair a bha an Cruithear a' beannachadh. Bidh toradh air fhaicinn agus air fhaireachdainn.

Aig amannan tha e doirbh a bhith a' creidsinn gu bheil na h-uile nithean a' co-obrachadh chum maith nuair a tha iad nar n-aghaidh, ach nach fheum sinn aig uair mar sin a bhith ag ràdh nach eil againne ach tuigse air am bheil iomadh uireasbhaidh ach gu bheil eòlas iomlan Aige-san agus rùn a tha fhathast air fholach oirne.

Chì sinn càirdean gu math òg air an toirt air falbh ann an treun an neirt agus iad a' fàgail an teaghlach le cridheachan briste 's bidh sinn ann an imcheist. Is e fìor nàmhaid a th'anns a' bhàs agus chan eil e na charaid aig àm sam bith. Ged a gheibh clann Dhè thairis gu sàbhailte chan eil a bhith a' fàgail tìr an eòlais agus luchd an gràidh tric furast' don h-uile neach. Tha feadhainn ann gun teagamh agus tha an Cruithear a' dèanamh nithean nas fhasa dhaibh. Chì iad tìr 'as ro-fheàrr' agus tha sin a' dèanamh chùisean mòran nas fhasa dhaibh.

Aig toiseach bliadhn' eile nach biodh e iomchaidh a bhith a' cuir a' Chruitheir romhainn anns gach cùis agus sinn a' creidsinn gur e 'Fireantachd a-mhàin a dh' àrdaicheas cinneach.' Mar rìoghachd tha sinn ann an iomadh dòigh air ar cùl a chur Ris, ach nach e a bhiodh math gum biodh ùrnaigh againn gum pillleadh E ar bruid 'mar shruth san àirde deas.'

'Cha robh sinn a-riamh cho feumach.' Nach tric a chuala sinn an ùrnaigh-sa ann an Eaglais a' Bhac! Bha aon èildear nach maireann an-còmhnaidh ag ràdh seo agus nach b'ann aige a bha an fhirinn. Is e ùrnaigh àlainn a tha seo agus slugh Dhè a' creidsinn gur ann Aige-san a-mhàin a tha cobhair dhuinn.

Le bhith a' cur ar dòchas ann gheibh sinn sìth agus fosglaidh dorsan dhuinn air nach do smaoinich sinn. Tha iad sin prìseil ach is e a tha prìseil E Fhèin- a làthaireachd, fhagaisgeachd agus a bheannachd. Cò nach laigheadh sìos air cluainibh glas' le neart buachaille mar seo mun cuairt air?

Tha mi an dòchas gum bi bliadhna mhath air toiseach oirbh uile agus gum bi beannachd chùbhraidh innte dhuibh.

## SEANFHACAIL

### GHEIBHEAR FÀTH AIR A' MHUIR MHÒR.

### FAR AM BI A' CHUID BIDH NA DAOINE.

Tha sinn aig an àm -sa a' cuimhneachadh orra-san a tha a'saothrachadh thall thairis ann an àitean far am bheil buaireadh agus troimh-chèile. Aig toiseach bliadhna eile bhiodh e iomchaidh gum biodh iad nar n-ùrnaighean. Is aithne Dha Fhèin cò iad agus tha e na chomas an cumail sàbhailte aig amannan a tha gu math trioblaideach.

# THE CREDIT CRUNCH: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE


Recently we decided to sell our house in the UK. It was proving too costly and complicated to keep it. At the start of the process we were told that, although England was going through a property slump, it was still a good time to sell in Scotland. We went through the necessary processes, just to find that the housing market in Scotland too had collapsed. For several months our house stood empty. We couldn't find either a tenant or a buyer that could secure a large enough mortgage.

During the first few months, we felt calm and at peace – after all, we knew that God would provide. We had seen Him at work in our lives many times before and did not doubt His ability to move houses even in a property slump.

As time went by, however, we began to feel the pinch. Each month, money was draining out of our bank account on this empty house, and there was not enough going in to cover these extra costs. Panic began to set in.

We became TV news junkies as we watched news item after news item, which told us of the worsening crisis. There did not seem to be any end in sight for our plight. Repossession was beginning to seem like a likely ending to our house saga. Some of our friends comforted us with comments such as, 'You know God will never let you down. The house will sell!' or 'God honours those who honour Him. You are working hard for Him; He will repay you.' We never doubted for one minute that God would not let us down, but try as we might, we could not see what He was doing. Did following God really mean that we would be immune to the consumer seasons of the world's economy?

As we went about our business in South Africa, we were aware of the extra pressure this was putting on family members as they sought to liaise with the estate agents and solicitors in Scotland. We felt powerless, frustrated and depressed. Questions buzzed continuously around our minds. Why was God allowing this to happen? What lesson was God trying to teach us? We were trying to sell to reduce costs we could not bear - was that so wrong?



One Sunday, while trying to fight back the tears, my thoughts were directed to Job. He certainly experienced the credit crunch. He was someone that I needed to take notice of. When his friends left him, he didn't crumple and say, 'Why me, Lord?' When he lost all his money, he did not say, 'You have let me down. Why are you doing this?' He knew that our service

to God is not conditional on what He will do for us. He was willing to endure hardships, not knowing if his heart's desire would ever be granted. He didn't question God or puzzle about why he wasn't receiving back tenfold what he was giving to God.

For a fleeting moment, we even considered leaving South Africa, as we battled with understanding how we would make ends meet. At that point, I could no longer control the tears. Could God really have put us here just to let us go due to finances? Could I live with the pain of being torn away from the work I have grown to love so dearly? But then it hit hard. Our service to God should be unconditional. We don't serve because He provides us with finance or emotional support or success or recognition. We serve because He has told us to. Our service should be unconditional.

## **WE NEVER DOUBTED FOR ONE MINUTE THAT GOD WOULD NOT LET US DOWN, BUT TRY AS WE MIGHT, WE COULD NOT SEE WHAT HE WAS DOING.**

There were many issues that often sought to unsettle me in my work. Finances – yes. But also the emotional credit crunch had hit. With lessening contact from the UK, it was easy to feel isolated. But it wasn't to receive such support that we are here. We are here to work in God's kingdom. We don't know exactly how our finances will work out – but that is not, ultimately, important. What is important is that there is a job to be done, and we have been called to do it. I know that God will provide all our needs according to His riches in heaven, but my service does not require that. My service does not force God's hand to act in a certain way. I am to serve simply because that is what God has asked me to do. Our house has sold. It didn't sell for what we had hoped to get – but that's OK. We look back now on nine very trying months and are glad that they are over, but we see even more clearly now that, even when things are tough, we have a job to do. We praise God for His love and His patience with us and we thank Him that He has provided for all our needs. My appreciation of God's good gifts is heightened now. It is true that without the dark times, we cannot fully appreciate the brightness and hope of the sunrise.

We still watch the news avidly. At the moment we are listening daily to the interest rates and exchange rates, so we know how many Rands the pound will be changed into. We still don't know whether it will be enough to buy something here, but we know that God is in control. We can rest knowing that we will not get second best. God's plan is perfect. It is just that our minds are not perfect in their insight, wisdom and understanding – as He is. And if the credit crunch teaches us nothing else, it teaches us to rely completely and totally on God – for both we, and all the great politicians and economists, are definitely not in control.

**Jenny Wilson**

# LET THERE BE LIGHT

**REV IAIN MACASKILL**, VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS BOARD, INFORMS US ABOUT HIS RECENT VISIT TO INDIA.

The headline in *The Times of India* on the day we left Delhi was 'let there be light'. Diwali, the Indian festival of lights, was just beginning as the IMB delegation was preparing to leave India after three weeks in which many miles were covered and many encouragements were encountered.

Our remit was to visit the established work in Jabalpur, Lakhnadon and Chhapara, visiting churches, schools and the hospital where the Free Church has had a presence for many years.

## **THERE COULD BE OPPORTUNITY FOR RETIRED MEN FROM HERE TO DO SHORT-TERM SUPPLY UNTIL A SETTLED MINISTRY IS ESTABLISHED.**

The persecution in India has not affected the Madhya Pradesh area as much as in other regions, but there have been isolated incidents nonetheless. Shadrach Khristi, who is in charge of the Chhapara section of the Spandana Community health project, spoke of an evening when a number of youths approached his house with sticks. Shadrach predicts dark days ahead, but also days of opportunity for new doors to be opened for the gospel. Rev. Shyam Babu told us that the police had requested that he employ a night watchman at the church as there was a fear that extremists were planning on burning churches in the region. He also feels believers are being watched as they witness in the villages surrounding Lakhnadon.

Vinay Das, one of the orphans formerly cared for by the Free Church mission, is now working as an evangelist with Grace Gospel ministries in the villages surrounding Chhapara. Five

other missionaries are working alongside him, and they hope to eventually reach 60 villages with regular gospel meetings. We visited one of the villages under the cover of darkness and I had opportunity to preach to the 70 or so adults and children who were awaiting our arrival. We presented Bibles and New Testaments to new believers on two occasions, and the joy of these people as they received the Word will remain with us for a long time.

We were also encouraged by the church attendances, as three of the four churches that we support had in excess of 100 people worshipping at their morning service. It was also good to hear of a church in another city wanting to join the Presbytery. This is in the city of Raipur, where there are over 160 people already worshipping. A request has been made for an English-speaking minister, so there could be opportunity for retired men from here to do short-term supply until a settled ministry is established. The Presbytery welcomed this development but was concerned at the lack of ministers due to the expected retiral of Rev. David John and Rev. S K Lall in March 2009. However, to counterbalance this, an application to the ministry by one of the young village missionaries was accepted by the Presbytery we attended.

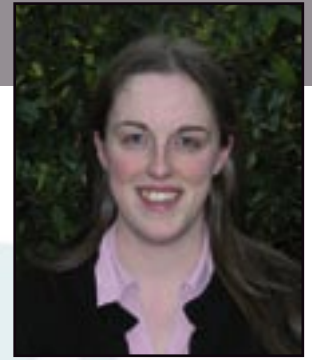
The schools in Chhapara and Lakhnadon continue to thrive despite a severe lack of resources and an imbalance between the salaries paid to Christian teachers and those in state schools. There are also incentives like free uniforms and bicycles for pupils introduced by the government so that more parents will be inclined to send their children to local authority schools as opposed to the established Christians schools. These are matters of concern, but we give thanks that 1,200 pupils in the two schools, mostly Hindus, are learning about 'The True Light' that came into the world. It is our desire as a Board to see money raised from the recent



*Youngsters in the village listening to God's Word being preached*

# CAITRIANA'S NEWS

AN UPDATE FROM  
CAITRIANA IN EAST ASIA.



I sit on the edge of the hard bed on a chilly November afternoon listening to the girls discuss the healing of the boy with the evil spirit, desperately trying to follow the discussion with my very limited language. The heating won't be turned on in the city for another week, and as the afternoon goes on the room feels ever colder, but it's good to be there with Kaitlyn and her friends. I feel a curious mix of satisfaction at being able to follow some of what's being said, and frustrated at the thought of all I haven't been able to follow. That's life as a language student!

It's now several months since I moved to this large university city, and life has settled into a steady routine, though there are still plenty of new sights, sounds and smells to surprise me! In the mornings I rush off to attend language classes, perhaps grabbing some soybean milk and dough fritters for breakfast on the way. The afternoons and evenings are usually taken up with studying at home or spending time with local friends, practising and seeking to build deeper relationships. The more I learn about the language and culture, the more I realise how long it will take to get below the surface level. It's sometimes discouraging; but thankfully, although our 'flesh and heart may faint and fail', our Father never fails and this is His work, not ours!

I expect to spend the next two years here, at least, in full-time language study. Afterwards, I'd love to teach in a university here, working with students and academics. Meanwhile, there are friends like Kaitlyn to learn from and to be a mutual encouragement! It's great that she's got this weekly study group, led by a very capable older girl, but I'd love her to become part of a regular Sunday meeting that could help her mature and continue in her journey. There are so many others like her in this country, who need good teaching to grow and develop.

There are other friends like Rosemary, who have little or no thought of eternal things; there's Helen, who recently made a commitment and is so full of questions; there are my language teachers, who are curious; and there are all the random people whose lives intersect with ours. Daily wisdom is needed in making priorities, in deciding who to spend time with, and in deciding how much time to spend at the desk and how much out in the community.

The ongoing upward plod of the language student is not very glamorous, perhaps, but it's so necessary – not only to learn how to communicate truth across cultures, but also to learn more about ourselves and about Him, so I'm thankful for this time. And I'm learning that these lessons are perhaps not so very different from life at home; the important thing is to be living them out wherever He wants us to!



*Vinay and 5 village missionaries receiving Bibles*

sale of buildings to be used to increase salaries, which can be as low as £20.00 per month for teachers and ministers. This will enable the schools to hold onto their best teachers and thus maintain a higher standard of education.

## WE ALL NEED TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGE OF REACHING INDIA FOR JESUS.

In many ways this is the dawn of a new day for our church work in India, and to that end a new agreement was signed by the Presbytery and the IMB that details a working plan that we hope will eventually enable the church there to stand on its own. There will always be opportunity for us to support special projects, and as new work is initiated we are confident that we over here will rise to the challenge. The IMB, under the new financial arrangements proposed, will need to raise a large percentage of its own budget to enable these projects to become reality.

We as a church are supporting a wonderful work in India, which will only increase as the persecution increases. We all need to rise to the challenge of reaching India for Jesus. Let there be Light!

### PRAY FOR:

- The believers as they face the prospect of further persecution.
- The work of Vinay Das and his colleagues in the villages surrounding Chhapara.
- Rev D John and Rev S.K. Lall as they prepare for retirement.
- The Presbytery as they implement the recommendations of the IMB.
- The hospital and school in Lakhnadon in their new building projects.
- The dedicated staff in the hospital, health project, schools and churches.
- The children who attend the schools - that they would trust in Jesus.

# WHO WOULDN'T BE A MISSIONARY?

**JOHN ROSS (DUMISANI THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE)**

Tension and pressure permeates the air we breathe, the conversations we have, and the concerns we bring to the Monday morning staff prayer meetings. But please don't rush to conclude that Dumisani Theological Institute is facing some terrible crisis. It is not. The stresses of which I speak are the normal lot for both our students and teachers.

Traditionally, at the end of term, examinations feature high in a student's list of misgivings. For a few, they are their only worry, but that is not true of most. This term an unusual amount of sickness has affected class attendance; in some cases seasonal coughs or colds have kept students away, but sometimes it has been much more serious. A lady student suffering from pneumonia missed weeks of lectures and then, even after antibiotic treatment, succumbed to tuberculosis. One student felt a severe pain in his side, which eased after a while, but the next day he was admitted to hospital with a serious lung infection. Another student was screened for cancer and had to face the trauma of discovering the results were positive.

## **PRESSURES, STRESSES AND STRAINS THERE MAY BE, BUT DESPITE IT ALL, DUMISANI IS A REMARKABLY HAPPY COMMUNITY IN WHICH TO STUDY AND WORK**

Often, however, the sickness that interrupts studies is that of a family member or a friend. Africans don't need John Donne to remind them that 'no man is an island entire of himself'; their sense of solidarity is renowned. The Xhosa word for it, 'ubuntu', has passed into the common language of South Africa, as has the popular definition, 'a person is a person through other persons'. This means that a student's work may suffer because of the stroke a cousin suffered or the operation an aunt went through, or the distress that premature death brings to an extended family, especially when the cause will not be mentioned. More than once we have given students lifts to bring to the homes of the bereaved the comfort of Christian fellowship and the Word of God.

Then there are financial worries. South Africa's black community suffers from a high degree of unemployment, and the international economic downturn has hit hard. As the Rand has weakened, inflation has increased. Few students enjoy the degree of affluence that brings nice homes and good cars within reach and makes them immune from money concerns. For the majority, hikes in the cost of rents, food prices and transport mean a struggle to meet the cost of fees. Some who hoped to follow up their BTh with further study now fear that they may have to get full-time paid employment before taking the Honours course at some future date. Reminding students of outstanding bills is stressful and embarrassing both for them and administrative staff. Some students qualify for bursaries, but others must



*Exams at Dumisani*

tighten their belts and feel the pinch. Financial worries are hardly conducive to concentration.

Nor are students the only ones to have cares. Dumisani's South African employees feel the struggles typical of the wider community, and some expatriate members of the team have faced pressures too personal and private to be shared here. When, for example, family members face a crisis, the six thousand miles of separation can seem like an unbridgeable chasm, even with phone contact, Skype and e-mail. Then, another source of minor strain is the facilities we share at Dumisani. Over the 30 years of its existence, the Institute has become a victim of its own success. As student numbers have grown and staffing increased, we all have to make do with an infrastructure that is seriously inadequate. Four members of academic staff and three administrative staff share so small a space that each has only a cubicle, rather than an office or a study, with no privacy to talk with students, and at times, precious little peace. Unsurprisingly, the need for better buildings features prominently in the Monday morning staff team prayer meetings.

Please don't get me wrong. It is a huge privilege to be at Dumisani, enjoying the friendship and partnership of belonging to the staff team. Pressures, stresses and strains there may be, and we all feel them - but despite it all, under Alistair Wilson's leadership, Dumisani is a remarkably happy community in which to study and work. Laughter, African exuberance and solid Christian fellowship all contribute to the Dumisani ethos. No wonder we have been able to settle in so easily and have found in the African Christian community here, black and white, across the denominations, a wonderfully supportive new family. As Elizabeth's great-uncle Herbert W Dickson, for fifty years a pioneer missionary in Africa, used to say, 'Who wouldn't be a missionary?'



YOU CAN NOW KEEP UP TO DATE WITH JOHN AND ELIZABETH ROSS VIA THEIR NEW BLOG:

[www.johnstuartross.wordpress.com](http://www.johnstuartross.wordpress.com)

# 'LITERATURE FOR LIFE' UPDATE

OUR THANKS TO BOTH **COLIN MACPHERSON** OF EMMAUS ROAD TRUST, FOR TELLING US HOW THEY HAVE USED SOME OF THE MONEY RAISED FOR OUR LAST PROJECT, AND **DUNCAN PETERS**, WHO GIVES AN UPDATE ON WHAT HAS HAPPENED WITH HIS BOOK *IN THE BEGINNING*.

Our thanks go to WFM for a much-needed gift at a time of unprecedented opportunities. The Emmaus Road Trust supports evangelical publishers around the world to produce literature that explains or 'opens up' the Bible. The WFM support will be invested in a number of projects, one of which is:



## **BASIC CHRISTIANITY BY JOHN STOTT, IN KARAKALPAK**

Had you heard of Karakalpak? Neither had we until we started working with a Christian publisher in Russia, someone with a passion to reach the peoples of Central Asia. The Karakalpak language is spoken by about half a million people who don't have a country of their own and are very overlooked. They live mainly in Uzbekistan but also in

Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkey, and there are even some in Iran and Afghanistan.

The production of *Basic Christianity* was called for by believers in the region and will be used in two ways. Firstly, it will strengthen young believers in their faith, most of whom have never had any biblical teaching. Secondly, it will be used evangelistically to help explain the Gospel to others, both in Central Asia and amongst the growing number of migrant workers in Moscow.

The Karakalpak people are one of the poorest ethnic groups in the region and they suffer from high unemployment, generally poor living conditions and bad health. Most have no idea of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Others, however, have heard and have responded and are now asking for Christian books.

They share the same great tradition of friendliness and hospitality found throughout Central Asia. As a visitor, you can arrive unannounced at a home anywhere and be welcomed, be brought tea and snacks, and, if you choose, spend the whole day with the family. People will gladly offer to kill a chicken or a sheep so you can stay longer and share a meal. Would we give a similar welcome in Scotland?

The overwhelming majority of Karakalpaks are Sunni Muslims, but only a tiny minority regularly attend a mosque. However, the countries in which most of them live are strongly Islamic and Christian books are not easily available. Producing them locally is almost impossible and certainly dangerous, so they rely heavily on the help of believers outside.

Please pray that the translation and publishing of this book would help open up the Bible to many Karakalpak speakers.

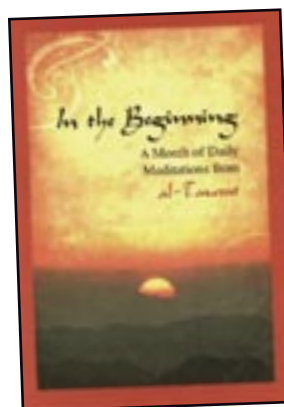
Details of this and other ERT projects are available from:  
**ERT, The Paddocks, Duncanston, By Dinwagall, IV7 8JD**



Karakalpak boy

## **IN THE BEGINNING**

*In the Beginning: A Month of Meditations from al-Taurat* was published in August 2007, thanks to a grant of about £3,300 from WFM as part of their 'Literature for Life' project. A thousand copies were printed.

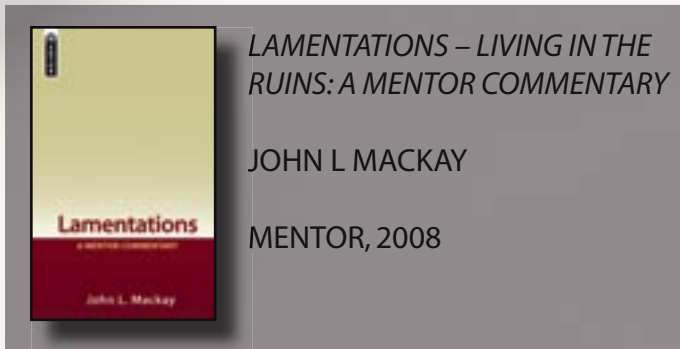


So far almost 400 copies have gone out, some as gifts, most having been sold. Some copies have travelled a long way, including to South and Central Asia. Many, if not most, of these have found their way to Muslims, for whom the book was written. One family we know sold about fifty books among their relatives. A couple of Christian organisations working in an inter-faith context have ordered copies to use for team devotions/Bible studies. People from all over Britain have bought copies to give as an attractive gift to Muslim friends.

Proceeds from sales are currently going into a fund that will hopefully be used to publish a second book based on the Gospels.

May the Lord use *In the Beginning* to spread the knowledge of His Word.

# COLLEGE PROF'S SUPERB COMMENTARY



*LAMENTATIONS – LIVING IN THE  
RUINS: A MENTOR COMMENTARY*

JOHN L MACKAY

MENTOR, 2008

This is a welcome addition to the commentaries already written by Professor John L. Mackay. He has published commentaries on Exodus and Jeremiah in the Mentor series, and this commentary has been long anticipated.

There are few good evangelical commentaries on Lamentations, a sign, perhaps, of the difficulty in handling this small Old Testament book. Professor Mackay's introduction is a good overview of the historical background, authorship, structure and message of the book. We are introduced to the devastating effects of Babylonian captivity, which led to the ruin of Jerusalem, and which in turn gave rise to the lament over it.

The discussion of authorship is balanced; Lamentations has traditionally been ascribed to Jeremiah, though there is nothing in the text on which to base that claim definitively. Professor Mackay opts to use the loose term 'the poet' for the author.

One of the features of Lamentations is the care with which the poet has written it, and the complexities of the literary structure are well discussed. So too is the discussion of the book's message (focussing on the themes of sympathy, divine wrath and justice, Zion theology, personal and communal suffering and future prospects).

The commentary is well-written, and nicely presented, easy to read and at every point lucid and clear. The exegesis of each section is followed by reflective comments which arise out of the laments.

At last, however, the great question which any user of the commentary will want to ask is – how does one preach from Lamentations, in a way which will testify to Christ? The introduction contains a section on application, which attempts to make connections with the New Testament. Professor Mackay treads cautiously; he is not willing to go to places where the text itself will not lead him. But perhaps the Christian message of Lamentations is more apparent than he is prepared to admit.

For one thing, Christ's own lament over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41ff (a passage not cited in the index), offers its own commentary on that of the weeping prophet. For another, the uniqueness of Jerusalem's suffering (Lam 1:12), imposed by the fierce anger of the Lord, is surely echoed in the experience of the cross, while the covenantal language of the

writer (such as at Lam 3:32) can only be eschatologised in the person and work of the covenant Mediator.

None of this is to detract from what is a superb exegetical commentary on a much neglected, yet highly relevant part of God's word. If Martin Luther could speak of the Babylonian captivity of the church, much more can we. Over many of our churches we could raise the same opening lament of Lamentations 1:1: 'How lonely sits the city that was full of people!' But the optimism of the church is to be found where the prophets found it too: in the mercies of the Lord which never come to an end (Lam 3:22). Old prophets are surprisingly up to date, and we are glad that the Free Church College is continuing to expand its ministry by producing commentaries of such a high, and helpful, standard.

Iain D Campbell

## Day One Publications



**Opening Up Matthew's Gospel -  
Rev Dr Iain D Campbell £8**

The Gospel of Matthew is divided into three sections, and each is sub-divided into several chapters, with the meaning of each chapter clearly explained. This book is suitable for individuals wishing to understand the purpose and themes of Matthew. Indeed, pastors, planning a series on Matthew or parts of the Gospel, could urge their congregations to read this book (the ministers too will find a ready source of topics about which they can preach).

**Travel Through Israel/Oxford/  
Cambridge £10**

Perhaps some are wondering what to do for their next holiday. Day One provides an excellent set of travel books. Recently they have added three titles to others previously available.

*Travel Through Israel* includes descriptions of various places, photographs, charts, maps, timelines and information for travelers to that country. For those planning to holiday within Britain there is *Travel Through Oxford* and *Travel Through Cambridge*. Most are aware that these are university locations, and both cities have many significant historical sites. In addition, both cities have been important in the religious history of England, with famous churches, well-known martyrs, and renowned preachers in each. Using these guides when visiting either city will contribute towards understanding the importance of them in our national life, past and present.

**All books are available from the Free Church Bookshop  
with free postage & packaging**

[www.dayone.co.uk](http://www.dayone.co.uk)

# JANUARY

'YOU WILL KEEP IN PERFECT PEACE HIM WHO IS STEADFAST, BECAUSE HE TRUSTS IN YOU.' ISAIAH 26:3

- 01** Today pray through the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, making each verse personal to you. Especially ask the Lord to keep you from temptation in the year to come, that you may live in a way that gives glory to Him.
- 02** Give thanks today for God's most precious gift – His Son, Jesus Christ. What a joy it is to thank Him for His salvation.
- 03** Today pray for the students and professors at the Free Church College, who are now on holiday. Pray that they would enjoy God's blessing in this time of rest.
- 04** This is the first Lord's Day of the year, and many who have been away for the holidays will be returning to their home congregation. Let's pray that Christ would be glorified in the service, and especially in the worship.
- 05** Like many other offices, the Free Church Offices are returning to work today. Please pray that the staff would work with joy and dedication, and have a feeling of refreshment.
- 06** Remember Rosskeen, who have been vacant for several years and are longing for the stability of a regular minister. Ask that the Lord would provide for all their needs.
- 07** Pray for the Scottish Government, that the politicians and legislators would have wisdom and would seek to please God in all their decisions.
- 08** This month's *Record* discusses the Credit Crunch. Remember those who have been badly hit by the economic climate. Pray especially for any in your church who are struggling.
- 09** Let's pray that God's work will continue apace in spite of the current financial woes, and that there would still be plenty of bookings this year for children to attend camps.
- 10** Think of those in your family and friends who are not Christians. Pray that God would draw them to Himself.
- 11** The congregation in Partick celebrate their Communion today. Pray that they would be encouraged and uplifted.
- 12** Most students have been back in school for a week. Pray that they would be open to learn, and that teachers would have patience and wisdom in dealing with any disciplinary issues.
- 13** Please pray for the Christianity Explored course starting today in Gravir. Pray for invitations to be accepted, for the Holy Spirit's help and presence throughout, and for the Lord to lead many to faith in Jesus.
- 14** Tonight many Free Church congregations will be holding a Prayer Meeting. Ask God for a renewed commitment to prayer throughout our church.
- 15** Be brave – ask God for an opportunity to share His love and Good News with others. And be prepared for Him to answer!
- 16** Christ has commanded us to care for the poor. Pray for those who are homeless or are refugees, that they would be touched by God's love. Ask God how we can help them.
- 17** Today, Sunday School teachers throughout Scotland will be preparing lessons for tomorrow. Pray that their work would bear much fruit in children coming to know and love Jesus.
- 18** In London City the Communion today will be taken by Dr Robert Letham of the Wales Evangelical School of Theology. Pray for the Lord's presence and power.
- 19** Remember those who are taking College courses via distance learning, that they would not be discouraged by studying alone, but would receive blessing from the lectures.
- 20** Today, the United States is scheduled to inaugurate Barack Obama as President. Pray for his safety and that he would seek to emulate Christ in his decisions.
- 21** Scientists predict that this week is 'the most depressing' in the year, as holiday bills become due. Pray for those who are distressed, that they would look to the Lord for help.
- 22** This time of year often brings flu and other sickness. Ask for healing for any who are sick, and ask for your own health.
- 23** St Columba's, Edinburgh, is having a weekend away in Comrie. Pray for safety and for good fellowship as they're away.
- 24** Today is a team leaders' meeting for Free Church Camps. Pray for wisdom and blessing on the meeting, and especially for Camps Administrator Mhairi MacKintosh.
- 25** The Vacancy Committee of London City meet today after the morning service to assess the situation and seek to know the Lord's will for the days ahead. Pray for them and the congregation.
- 26** Marriage and family are so important in the church. Pray for the domestic lives of those in your church, that love and patience would abound in our homes.
- 27** The economic crisis has hit certain professions particularly hard. Pray for those who are out of work, that God would provide for them and would help them to rely on Him.
- 28** Today remember those who were injured or lost loved ones in the terrorist attacks on Mumbai. This was already two months ago, but the victims and their families are still hurting.
- 29** Today give thanks to God for all that you have: shelter, food, warmth, friends, and other everyday blessings.
- 30** Pray that our church office-bearers would work with wisdom and loyalty to Christ's Church. Especially remember our treasurers, with the stresses that go with their position.
- 31** Falkirk Free Church are having a tenth-anniversary celebration for their Mums & Tots group. Pray that God would bless this further contact with local families.

If you have any requests for prayer or praise for the March Prayer Diary, please send them now to Dayspring MacLeod. Email [dayspring.macleod@btinternet.com](mailto:dayspring.macleod@btinternet.com) or phone **0131 226 5286**

## Free Church Spring Conference

Friday 3 April - Sunday 5 April 2009  
at the Aviemore Inn

### Speakers and Topics

Rev Iver Martin  
Stornoway Free Church  
*The Church - The Body and The Building*

Dr Michael Bird  
Highland Theological College, Dingwall  
*"Paul, the Apostle of the Impossible"*

### Missionary Speaker

Sandra MacDonald, OMF

Conference assembles for dinner on Friday evening and disperses early Sunday evening. Anyone who wishes to stay until Monday can book through the Booking Secretary and pay the extra cost directly to Aviemore Inn (B&B: £35 Twin, £55 Single).

### The Conference Fees are as follows:

Adults: £125 per person for 2 nights sharing a twin/double room (Single Occupancy £160)  
Children (5-15yrs) sharing a room with 2 adults: £35  
Children (0-4yrs): free of charge  
Single Adult sharing with child, 0-4 years: £160  
Single Adult sharing with child, 5-15 years: £190  
Children in their own room: £60  
Day Visitors: £25 (no dinner) or £40 (including dinner)

**\*\* Please note the fees include the full use of the Swimming Pool and Leisure Facilities \*\***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Special dietary requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

If possible I wish to share a room with: \_\_\_\_\_

Cot required? Yes / No \*

I would appreciate a lift to / from \* the conference if possible.

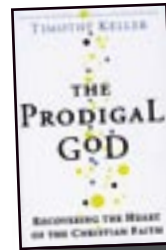
I would be able to offer a lift to / from \* the conference.

*\*Delete as appropriate*

Full payment will be required by Friday 6 March 2009 to secure a place at the Conference (This also applies to Day Visitors). Please make cheques payable to *The Free Church Spring Conference* and forward with Booking Form to:

**Miss Janice Ballantyne, 3 Erracht Road, Inverness,  
IV2 4RE. Tel: 01463 237875  
or e-mail [joejan.ballantyne@btinternet.com](mailto:joejan.ballantyne@btinternet.com)**

## New Arrivals at the Free Church Bookshop



***The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith***  
Hodder, £10.99

In this challenging and inspiring book, Timothy Keller invites both faithful believers and curious outsiders to come to a new and totally life-changing reading of the story of the prodigal son – Jesus' best-known parable, and the central message of the Christian faith.

***Walking Taylor Home: A Fatal Disease, a Father's Love, and a Son's Courageous Journey***  
Monarch, £7.99

Taylor was an energetic 9-year-old when doctors traced a nagging pain in his leg to a huge tumour hidden in his pelvis. Thus began a journey of anguish, hope, anger, joy, grief and ultimately life. You will find this book uplifting.



***They echoed the voice of God: Reflections on the Minor Prophets/When Heaven Calls Your Name: People in the Bible Who Heard God Speak***  
Day One, £5.00 each

These two new books by Roger Ellsworth will help you appreciate the Minor Prophets and also give you insight into how God spoke in the past, which will help clarify what God wants to say to you.

***Israel's New Disciples: Why Are So Many Jews Turning to Jesus?***  
Monarch, £7.99

Ten years ago there were only a few Jewish Christians in Israel, but since then their number has been growing. As a result, a number of Jewish believers are emerging as evangelists. In this book Juila Fisher brings together a series of testimonies from Jewish believers whose lives have been transformed.



### Free Church Bookshop

15 North Bank Street, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH1 2LS  
0131 718 4141 [bookshop@freechurchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:bookshop@freechurchofscotland.org.uk)

[www.freechurch.org/bookshop](http://www.freechurch.org/bookshop)

# CONFERENCE ON PRESENTING & CONGREGATIONAL SINGING



*A Psalmody Conference in Glasgow in 2006*

INVERNESS, 1ST - 2ND MAY 2009

We praise God in our services because we are commanded to do so! 'Sing to the LORD a new song' (Psalm 98:1); 'Come before him with joyful songs' (Psalm 100:1). To emphasize the importance of praise, the Psalmist repeats the injunction no fewer than four times in one verse in Psalm 47:6 – 'Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises!'

Psalm-singing is an integral part of our public worship, and the Scriptures give us guidance on the quality of our praise. It should be sincere (Psalm 24:4), joyful (Psalm 67:4) and offered from the heart (Psalm 111:1) with thanksgiving (Psalm 147:7).

We sing praise to God because it is good, fitting and pleasant (Psalm 147:1). But how pleasant is our praise? For the psalmist, the use of musical instruments in praise had to be employed skillfully (Psalm 33:2). This is surely just as important when only our voices are used to praise the Lord! There is a belief in some quarters that in our public worship, everything that precedes the sermon is looked on as 'the preliminaries' and not as important as the preaching of the Word. But surely the singing and reading of the Word are equally important and should be approached with much reverence and thought.

Over the years, the Psalmody Committee has arranged workshops in an attempt to promote excellence in this aspect of our worship and, this May, it is planning a nationwide conference in Inverness for all those interested in improving our congregational praise. This means that it is for all precentors and prospective precentors (male and female), their wives or husbands, all ministers, and as many from our congregations who are able to attend. The emphasis of the sessions will be more practical than theoretical. In addition to experienced precentors who will lead the conference sessions, the keynote address will be given by Rev Dr Iain D Campbell.

The date of the conference - Friday 1st to Saturday 2nd May 2009 - has been chosen to coincide with a public holiday, to allow as many as possible to attend. For those travelling from a distance, there is a wide selection of Bed and Breakfast establishments in Inverness and district. The City of Inverness – the capital of the Highlands – is a lovely place for a weekend holiday!

The venue of the conference is Smithton-Culloden Free Church, which is located just two miles from the Inverness city centre, and it is hoped to provide transport from the city centre to the church for those who require it.

The conference will convene with dinner at 6.00 pm on Friday evening and finish late Saturday afternoon with a public service of praise to be led by the Moderator of last year's General Assembly, Rev Kenneth Ferguson.

A conference charge of £5 will be made to cover expenses, and all those hoping to attend should book using the accompanying booking form, or the one found in the publicity leaflets being circulated to all congregations.

For further information, please contact the Clerk to the Psalmody Committee, **Mr Colin Rogerson, Glencorse House, Fettes College, East Fettes Avenue, Edinburgh EH4 1QT.** Tel **0131 332 8308** / Mob. **07946-959624** E-mail: **colin.rogerson@talk21.com**

## BOOKING FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I require transport to and from Inverness city centre on:  
Friday ..... [please tick] Saturday ..... [please tick]

Booking forms should be sent along with  
£5 non-returnable booking fee to:

**Rev John MacPherson**  
**7 Guardwell Crescent, Edinburgh, EH17 7JA**

*Cheques should be made payable to  
Free Church of Scotland*

# BIRD ON A WIRE

The queue stretched from Princes Street Gardens, up past St Columba's and on into Edinburgh Castle. A 'congregation' of some 10,000 people eventually got in and crammed into tiny seats. We were mostly middle aged to elderly, with a fair smattering of young people - not unlike some churches. And again, not unlike many churches, we had gathered to hear an elderly gentleman, dressed in a black suit with a fedora. The only difference was that the 'congregation' was 100 times bigger than most churches, and most people had paid £50-£100 to be there! We were at Leonard Cohen's concert at Edinburgh Castle last summer.

## BIBLICAL LYRICS?

What was striking about the music was how every word was heard and every note was precise and clear. The music and poetry were spine-chillingly beautiful, full of depth and meaning. Cohen's lyrics are dominated by two major themes: sexuality and spirituality. Whilst many of the audience clearly got the former, I wonder how many could get the latter? Anyone who is biblically illiterate would miss so much in Cohen. Sometimes his lyrics seem almost prophetic, and they certainly provide the Christian with much to think about.

*Like a bird on a wire,  
Like a drunk in a midnight choir,  
I have tried in my way to be free*

Is there a better way of expressing Luther's *The Bondage of the Will*? Human beings long for freedom, but we are trapped in our pleasures and our disharmony. In *The Future*, Cohen asks, 'When they said REPENT REPENT, I wonder what they meant?' The questioning, the descriptions of the paradoxes of modern life, and the lack of answers were, at one and the same time, brutally honest, profoundly moving and deeply depressing. He introduced *The Tower of Song* by stating, 'The inner mystery has been revealed to me - I'm not the kind of chap to keep this to myself. I have the answer...' - before bursting into the nonsense lyric 'da do dum dum'!

Or what about this comment on the sense of injustice and unfairness 'under the sun'?

*Everybody knows that the dice are loaded  
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed  
Everybody knows that the war is over  
Everybody knows the good guys lost  
Everybody knows the fight was fixed  
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich  
That's how it goes  
Everybody knows*

*Everybody knows that the boat is leaking  
Everybody knows that the captain lied  
Everybody got this broken feeling  
Like their father or their dog just died*

And would this be a good theme tune for our current discussions on worship?!

*I've heard there was a secret chord  
that David played, and it pleased the Lord  
But you don't really care for music, do you?*

## IDOL WORSHIP

Sometimes Christian commentators take the ritualistic elements of such a concert and suggest that it is a kind of idol worship. Is that what is happening nowadays at such concerts? When people cry out 'we love you Leonard', is that really what they are mean? No. What is happening is that people are not worshipping Leonard Cohen (or any other entertainer); they are worshipping themselves. The singer is there to provide the audience with what they want, what they have paid for. And most people have paid for something that reflects and affirms their own lifestyle, 'coolness' and past memories. There is little challenge and nothing radical about any of it. When Cohen spoke of the world being in 'darkness and chaos' and of what a 'great privilege to be here in this moment of extreme luxury', someone nearby shouted out about the cold and the discomfort of the Edinburgh Tattoo seats. They just did not get that he was speaking of the injustices and incongruities in the wider world. After all, we had collectively paid close to £750,000 to be at that one concert - why should we be challenged?

## LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH?

There are so many lessons and parallels for the Church. Is there not a danger that too often we are providing people with what they have 'paid for' - Whether that be 'entertainment' worship, or 'traditional' worship, or 'spiritual' worship? We live in a consumerist culture where the customer is king - and too often the church reflects that. How many times do we find ourselves in a position where we cannot do this, or say that, because 'so and so' will get upset, threaten to leave, etc? It's no longer about Christ...it's become about us.

Cohen reminds us of the power of words, in poetry and song. And there are plenty of those in the Bible. The poetic books (Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Job, Lamentations, and of course the Psalms) are so useful in teaching people through this medium.

Cohen is a Jew with a taste for Buddhism and a fascination with Jesus Christ. We pray that not only will he come to know Christ as he nears the end of his life, but that one day 10,000 people will be queuing to enter Edinburgh Castle to sing their own Hallelujahs to the King of Kings.

