

THE MONTHLY RECORD

June 2009

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FUNDAMENTALISTS THREATEN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND | RONALD MACKAY | THE NARNIA CODE

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Front Cover: *Statue of John Calvin*. Photograph by David Niblack. www.imagebase.davidniblack.com

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READ, ENJOY AND RESPOND!

FUNDAMENTALISTS THREATEN U HOMOSEXUAL 'MARRIAGE'

The Church of Scotland magazine, *Life and Work*, has spoken. In an editorial for its May Assembly issue, editor Muriel Armstrong issues a strong cry for the church 'to be true to its reforming character' and to lead a new anti-slavery type campaign in support of homosexual relationships. In so doing, the magazine takes several swipes at those who uphold the church's official position – especially of course, 'conservative evangelicals'. They are:

- 1) Inconsiderate - Not considering 'the integrity of a relationship'.
- 2) Cowardly – because they are concerned about upsetting other churches and therefore refuse to face up to the truth.
- 3) Ignorant – whilst it is 'clear to the lay person that not everything Biblical is Christ-like', these men and women seem to miss this most obvious of absolute truths.
- 4) Hypocritical – they 'swear by the anti-homosexual laws in the Book of Leviticus' yet would not advocate slavery or stoning women taken in adultery.
- 5) Imprisoned – they are 'bound by a few Biblical verses'.
- 6) Oppressive and divisive – they are a minority who are seeking to overturn the wishes of the majority.
- 7) Narrow-minded – they don't seem to realise that the Church of Scotland is a 'broad and inclusive church that can celebrate its diversity while remaining true to the Gospel'.

Why this outburst? It all centres on a cause celebre, that of Rev. Scott Rennie, the minister of Brechin Cathedral, who has been called to the congregation of Queen's Cross, Aberdeen. Mr Rennie made it clear that he would accept the call on the condition that he would be living in the manse with his homosexual partner. The congregation accepted this and the Presbytery of Aberdeen, by a vote of 60 to 20, agreed to 'sustain the call'. This has now been appealed to the General Assembly, which, by the time you read this, will probably have ruled on the matter.

IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD, IT IS ALL VERY BLACK AND WHITE. IN THE GOOD CORNER ARE THE KIND, TOLERANT, LOVING, REAL CHRISTIANS; IN THE BAD ARE THE IGNORANT, HYPOCRITICAL, UNLOVING, HOMOPHOBIC FUNDIES.

After the *Life and Work* editorial, evangelicals set up an online petition. The response to this was immediate and indicated the depth of feeling on the whole subject. At the time of writing, over 10,000 people have signed it, including over 375 Church of Scotland ministers, Christian leaders from all over the world, and hundreds of Free Church people.

This has resulted in a further spate of 'evangelical bashing' in the popular media and in some sections of the 'Christian' press. Take the following quotes from a Radio Scotland phone-in on the subject as indicative of the kind of thing of which our evangelical brothers and sisters are being accused. Most of these statements were made by ministers:

'People's sexuality cannot be changed, so shouldn't the church be a broad church and accept everyone?'

'The Church in the past had to wrestle with texts which stated that God does not like homosexuals, so the Church is institutionally homophobic and does not understand the wideness of God's love'

'The Church should be affirming the God-given sexuality that God has given to each person ... the Lord Jesus affirms our sexuality'

'As usual, a very vocal minority get the headlines – our forefathers fought for the right to call their own minister'

'The Bible contains the Word of God. We do not accept that the Bible is true. I tend to be ruled by what Jesus said and did. The OT is no longer relevant ... we are looking at a translation which got it wrong about homosexuality'

'The issue is really Conservative Evangelicals vs. the Silent Majority ... they are splitting the church, promoting intolerance'

'Let's rid ourselves of these hate-mongers' (referring to evangelicals)

Meanwhile, the Glasgow *Herald* published a very sympathetic article (taken directly from the 'One Kirk' website, in which Mr Rennie gave his point of view and came across very well). *The Scotsman* published a couple of articles, both of them criticising the evangelical position (one wonders when an editor will have the courage to allow us to speak for ourselves – rather than just have our enemies write about how wicked we are?). In the first article the Free Church was criticised by One Kirk (the pro-homosexual organisation in the Kirk) for 'interfering' in the Church of Scotland. The hypocrisy of this was breathtaking, given that One Kirk itself actively seeks support from 'friends' outwith the Church of Scotland. The second article by Rev. Scott McKenna was as bad a mishmash of biblical misunderstanding and misrepresentation as one could hope to gather. Indeed, it is such a classic piece of postmodern meaningless illogicality that one hopes it will be compulsory reading for all future Divinity students – with an HM Churches 'Warning - Liberalism Rots the Brain!' One example will suffice – both Mr McKenna and One Kirk have somehow tried to connect the Disruption of 1843 with their support for homosexuality. Apparently Chalmers et al fought

UNITY OF KIRK OVER

for the right to allow churches to call actively homosexual men as their ministers. The fact that they can seriously say this and think that they can get away with it only demonstrates how much postmodern ahistoricism, and the Alice in Wonderland, 'words mean what I want them to mean' mentality, have taken over much of modern theology.

So, in the eyes of the world, it is all very black and white. In the good corner are the kind, tolerant, loving, real Christians; in the bad are the ignorant, hypocritical, unloving, homophobic fundies. What can we say to all this?

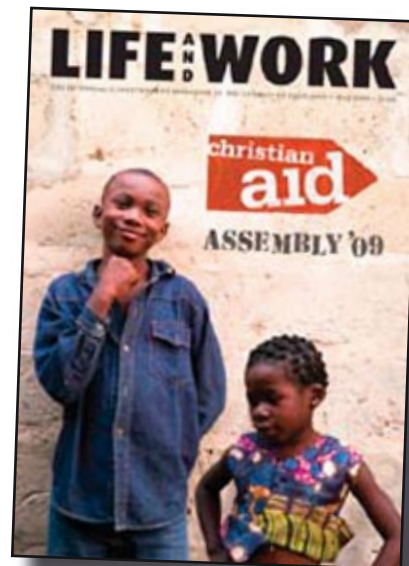
Firstly, we agree that there is enormous danger of fundamentalists splitting the Kirk – but it is not the conservative evangelicals who are the danger. The trouble is with the 'liberal' fundamentalists, who seem obsessed with this issue and consider it to be on a par with the campaign against slavery – failing to notice the many differences between the two issues, not least that Wilberforce and co were arguing against the prevailing opinion in society, whereas those who advocate homosexuality are just going along with the prevailing opinion.

In response, then, to all of the above, let us try to answer some basic questions:

IF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND WISHES TO BE TRUE TO ITS REFORMING TRADITION AND ITS BIBLICAL ROOTS, THEN IT SHOULD BE QUESTIONING, CHALLENGING AND TRANSFORMING SOCIETY – NOT APING IT.

1) WHY DOES THE CHURCH SEEM OBSESSED WITH THIS ISSUE? With rare exceptions, this is just simply not the case. Most of us just want to get on with teaching the Bible and living for Jesus. But the issue is continually being raised in our culture as the ultimate test of goodness. We live in an increasingly intolerant society where those of us who dare to believe that God knows us best, and that He has the right to determine how we express our sexuality, will be prosecuted and discriminated against. Terence Blacker put it very well in *The Independent*: 'There is a surprising amount of hate at anti-hate rallies'. There are so many examples of this kind of intolerance – take, for example, the couple who were refused access to their grandchildren by a social worker because they did not want them to be adopted by a homosexual couple. Or the case of Carrie Prejean (Miss California), who committed the unpardonable sin of saying that marriage 'should be between one man and one woman'. The host of the beauty contest, Perez Hilton, stated that she 'should have left her politics and her religion out' and called her a 'dumb b....'. This despite the fact that it was Mr Hilton who asked Ms Prejean as part of the contest if every State should follow Vermont in legalising same-sex marriage. Mr Hilton was joined in his criticism by those great thinkers, Britney Spears and the *Hannah Montana* star Miley Cyrus. Ms Spears

twittered: 'Love is Love! People should be able to do whatever makes them happy!' Miley declared, 'Jesus loves you AND your partner and wants you to know how much He cares!' Meanwhile, the Conservative Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, Alan Duncan, joked on TV about how he would murder her. All good clean fun!



It is 'liberals' who, lacking any guts or moral backbone in trying to help the poor and having given up on any form of economic radicalism, have now turned to 'radical' morality as their cause celebre. And they have been so effective in this that there is hardly a politician or journalist in the mainstream who would dare to question the mantras of the homosexual lobby. In postmodern society it is an absolute *par excellence*.

Tony Blair, having reformed the Labour party, now wants to reform the Catholic church, which he has recently joined. He told the Gay magazine *Attitude* that the Pope was wrong on his views on homosexuality and should change them. Meanwhile, *Coronation Street* announces that it is going to feature a plot line with a teenage 'born again' Christian who embarks on a lesbian affair, because it wants to be more 'reflective' of British society and needs more gay characters. And so the re-education/indoctrination of the great British public continues.

In that sense, the call from *Life and Work* to be 'reforming' is a joke and an almost comic postmodern use of the English language. The editor wants the church to *conform* to the standards of the world around – not to *reform* them. If the Church of Scotland wishes to be true to its reforming tradition and its biblical roots, then it should be questioning, challenging and transforming society – not aping it.

2) WHAT'S WRONG WITH A BROAD CHURCH? It is beyond irony that *Life and Work* and others in the Church of Scotland have argued that toleration of civil partnerships, etc., would lead to a more 'inclusive and tolerant' church. No, it would not. The pattern would be exactly the same as the women's ordination issue. When that was first proposed it was 'permissive' legislation, which granted Kirk Sessions permission to ordain women. Now that has been reinterpreted as declarative – all Kirk Sessions and ministers are *obliged* to ordain women, whatever they think the Scripture says. Does anyone doubt that those who think homosexuality is an issue on a par with slavery will as soon as possible seek to ban those who dare to think that homosexual practice is sinful? As the quote above puts it, 'Let's get rid of the hate-mongers'. And how broad do people

want the Church to be? Should we allow non-believers to preach? Why not 'include' paedophiles as well? Can they not argue that their sexual orientation is the way God made them? (And please, before the hate-speech thought police sharpen their swords – let me point out that I am not saying, nor do I believe, that homosexuality and paedophilia are synonymous. I am, however, just pointing out the folly of making sexual orientation an absolute, *whatever* that orientation is.) The Church has a responsibility to teach the Word of God, whatever the passing fads of our culture and society.

ONCE WE DECIDE THAT WE CAN BELIEVE IN WHAT WE LIKE OF THE BIBLE, AND LEAVE OUT WHAT WE DO NOT LIKE, IT IS NOT THE BIBLE WE BELIEVE, BUT OURSELVES

The irony is that it is liberals and traditionalists who both limit the church in an unbiblical way. Why? Because they are both moralists. They believe there are good people and bad people, and usually they determine which one is which by the standards of the prevailing (or in the case of traditionalists, the past) culture. Witness *The Daily Record's* headline on the 30th of April: *Kirk Bid to Recruit Sex Beasts*, an outrageous headline which sought to sensationalise a genuine attempt to rehabilitate prisoners who, having served their sentence, have become Christians and want to be rehabilitated into the community. Politicians lined up to question the Kirk's proposal – doubtless these would be the same politicians who would be preaching to the church about 'inclusiveness'. The trouble is that our moralists, whether religious or not, want to label some people as 'beasts' and beyond the pale, whereas the Gospel identifies *everyone* as sinners in need of repentance and forgiveness. The truly biblical church is inclusive, not because it accepts and excuses sin, but rather because it points to a Saviour who can save anyone who comes to Him – whatever their sexual orientation.

3) ISN'T THE BIBLE OUT OF DATE? Scott Rennie, in his article in *One Kirk*, argues that the Bible does not deal with the issue of committed same-sex partnerships because they did not exist at that time. It is a statement made without any supporting evidence. It is a classic case of what Mr Rennie warns about in another part of the article: 'It is all too easy to read our modern 21st-century concepts back into a 1st-century text'. Precisely. No-one with a grasp of ancient history is going to seriously argue that the ancient Greeks, Hebrews and Romans knew nothing of homosexuality. But what about the oft-cited argument (i.e. *Life and Work*) about slavery and stoning women taken in adultery? Firstly, *Life and Work* are being disingenuous when they suggest that those who are opposed to homosexuality on biblical grounds only do so because of Leviticus. There are other passages, most notably Paul's teaching in Romans 1, which are very clear. Furthermore, we are not 'cut and paste' text-citing Christians – the Trinity, for example, is not mentioned, and yet the Bible clearly teaches the Trinity. Likewise, there

is no doubt about the biblical/theological teaching on human sexuality in the Bible. Finally, we do not share the chronological arrogance of some of our modern theologians, who seem to think that the whole church, up until they came along, either did not really understand the Bible or were too cowardly to share their understanding. Their arrogance and chutzpah, all done in the name of 'the love of Jesus' (who is whoever we want Him to be) is quite breathtaking.

In this regard, *Life and Work's* assertion that not everything biblical is Christlike is meaningless. How do we know what is Christlike? How do we know Christ? We know him through His Word – the Word that testifies of Him, that is inspired by His Holy Spirit and has been preserved for us. Unless we accept this, the term Christlike becomes meaningless; or rather it means that we end up creating our own personal Jesus – one made in our image, or the image of our culture. I suspect that Muriel Armstrong does not accept the teaching of Jesus about Hell – even though there is more of that in the Gospels than His teaching about heaven. As Augustine pointed out, once we decide that we can believe in what we like of the Bible, and leave out what we do not like, it is not the Bible we believe, but ourselves.

Does the Bible advocate slavery? No. Does it regulate it? Yes. Why? Because we live in an imperfect world and if the choice is to blow it up or reform it, the latter is often the best option. The comparison with homosexuality does not work. It is not slavery. Nor is anyone advocating that the Mosaic civil law, given to the theocratic nation of Israel, should be applied by governments today. Those who argue in this simplistic way are making a category error which the Bible itself does not allow. But then again, saying that slavery and homosexuality are synonymous is a lazy, simplistic way to avoid thinking. Another refuge of the fundamentalist.

4) WHAT ABOUT LIFE AND WORK'S EX CATHEDRA PRONOUNCEMENT THAT 'NOWADAYS WE UNDERSTAND HOMOSEXUALITY AS A MATTER OF GENETICS RATHER THAN LIFESTYLE'?

Again, what is the evidence for this? We know homosexuals who find the idea of a homosexual 'gene' very offensive. They believe that they have chosen to be homosexual and are proud to have done so. Actually, we personally have no problem with the idea that genetics is a significant part of our sexual orientation, as it is of our temperament, or indeed a proclivity to alcoholism or violence. According to Bishop Holloway, my genetics predispose me to sow my seed with as many potential mates as possible. Would that justify my committing adultery? The journal *Behavioural Brain Research*, for example, recently published research from the University of Bonn that there is an 'anger' gene. Does this justify my bad temper because 'that is the way God made me'? There are some sociobiologists who even argue that all our actions are genetically determined; but Prof. Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics at University College London, disagrees and argues that 'human consciousness, and hence freedom and agency, involves complex social relationships and not just genetic ones.' (*Prospect* magazine, March 2009). Indeed. It is a characteristic of the unthinking fundamentalist to always seek simplistic black and white solutions. And the argument 'This is way God made me' fits that bill exactly. It is the equivalent of the five year old child justifying their tantrums by stating that 'I can't help it ... it is the way God made me'.

5) BUT AREN'T YOU BEING HOMOPHOBIC AND CUTTING OFF 10% OF THE POPULATION FROM THE CHURCH?

Actually, no. Firstly, no Christian should 'fear' homosexuals. Nor should we treat homosexuals as any different than heterosexual human beings. Homosexuals are as welcome in the church as anyone else. But just as we would expect a heterosexual to maintain biblical standards of behaviour, so we would expect homosexuals to do so. That means sexual abstinence outwith marriage and faithfulness within it (marriage being between one man and one woman). We do not accept the modern myth that unless one is sexually active, one is somehow less than human. Furthermore, we believe that we should love all people, whatever their sexual orientation – and that love means that we must always tell the truth.

As for the oft-cited figure that 10% of the population is homosexual, this is a modern myth that has long been thoroughly debunked. The old figure was based on the Kinsey report in 1948. This report has been completely destroyed. Numerous studies since 1990 have demonstrated that the figure is around 1-2% of males who are homosexually active and around 1% of women. Of course it is not a numbers game, but it does behove those who seek to make public pronouncements and public policy to at least get their facts and figures right. Furthermore, the view that homosexuality is equivalent to heterosexuality is one that is demonstrably false. Bell and Weinberg, in their book *Homosexualities*, point out that sexual promiscuity is far more prominent amongst homosexuals – more than 74% have more than one hundred partners during their lifetime, 41% more than 500 and 28% more than 1,000. Less than 10% of male homosexuals have been in a relationship that lasted more than 10 years. It is a mark of simplistic fundamentalism to ignore facts and just repeat mantras. A few heartfelt (and genuinely tragic) stories of experience of homophobia are more likely to win hearts than any examination of the facts (and of course these stories are rarely balanced by those on the other side – the many whose lives have been devastated by homosexuality).

6) SHOULD WE SUPPORT THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND EVANGELICALS WHO ARE MAKING THIS STANCE?

There are Christians who are concerned that this is the wrong issue for evangelicals to fight on. We have some sympathy with this point of view ... indeed, at the risk of appearing to claim prophetic powers, we refer to an article written on the Free Church website five years ago. 'Having sold the pass on this, the evangelicals do not have a leg to stand on (unless it is a homophobic one) when it comes, as it will do, to the question of homosexuality and the church. And this is rapidly turning into the crux issue. Not because the evangelicals want to make it such. In fact the running on this issue is being made by the "liberals" or pseudo evangelicals' (www.freechurch.org/issues/2004/jan04.htm). Given the current intolerance of biblical standards in our culture, we are afraid that our evangelical brothers and sisters are on a hiding to nothing on this particular issue. Again, notice the nerve of the *Life and Work* editorial in suggesting that it is the evangelicals who are breaking their ordination vows because they are not preserving the peace and unity of the church. One man and one congregation (supported by a presbytery) go against the teaching and position of the Church, and those who seek to uphold that teaching are castigated as vow breakers!

George Orwell would have been proud of such *Newspeak*. The point is that neither logic nor language have any part in this 'discussion'. It is all about 'feeling' and the tyranny of the politically correct.

Furthermore, there is a case to be made for saying it is too late. Surely a stance should have been taken on even more fundamental issues, such as the resurrection, etc.? Why are we surprised that liberal theology leads to a collapse of biblical morality? Indeed, doesn't Romans 1 teach us that homosexuality, rather than being the reason people are punished, is itself the punishment for rejecting God? 'God gave them over...'

All that is true, but two wrongs do not make a right. Furthermore, we in the Free Church are not really in any position to cast stones. There are many faithful Church of Scotland Christians working away in parishes, doing a work which we can only admire and thank God for. The fact that they have been pushed on this issue is not something for which to blame them. We should encourage, support, pray for and assist as much as we can. All of us are going to be picked on if we dare to believe or teach what the Bible actually says on this subject.

WE NEED TO ACCEPT THAT THE GAME IS UP, CHRISTENDOM IS DEAD AND THAT WE NOW LIVE IN A POSTMODERN, SECULAR, PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

The key question will be 'where do we go from here'. Whatever happens at the Assembly, the evangelicals will not win. Even if Mr Rennie does not go to Aberdeen, he will remain in Brechin, and anyway the issue is not ultimately about him – it is about the church's attitude to the Scriptures and its discipline. The liberal fundamentalists will not let this issue go and it will continually keep coming back until eventually homosexuality is accepted as legitimate within the Church of Scotland.

Where does that leave us? We hope that this petition is not going to just fizzle out in a kind of Grand Old Duke of York scenario, where evangelicals are marched up to the top of the hill and then marched back down again. Perhaps it is time for a radical Reformation of the Church in Scotland. We need to accept that the game is up, Christendom is dead and that we now live in a postmodern, secular, pluralistic society. The notion of a national State church is outdated and unworkable in the current climate. Does the Church really want to be the 'religious' arm of the secular State? And do evangelicals really want to stay in and support with their money those who would deny the Scriptures? In the postmodern marketplace, liberal theology will not survive without evangelical support. But a robust, contemporary, biblical church is just what is needed in that marketplace. Perhaps we should forget about the Church of Scotland and the Free Church and all the other offshoots of our past and instead look to having, as we called for last month, a united British Presbyterian church, confessional, faithful to the Lord Jesus and His Word, and ready and willing to bring the Gospel to our confused and messed-up cultures?

STRATEGY UPDATE



BY NEIL MACMILLAN, MISSION DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

For several years the Free Church of Scotland has been working to understand how it can do a better job of sharing the gospel with the people of Scotland. Many of you will have attended meetings that were held as part of this process. We want you to

know that the Free Church has learnt some important lessons as a result and that we are acting on what we have learnt. The most important overall decision was to focus our efforts on supporting local congregations to carry out the work of mission. God has given local churches a starring role in the work of spreading the gospel. The General Assembly has agreed with this and has made decisions aimed at helping congregations become better at mission and evangelism.

THE FREE CHURCH HAS LEARNT SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS AND WE ARE ACTING ON WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Some of what has been decided will have a clear impact on congregations in the shorter term. However, in the areas of church courts and committees, we are working toward a longer term goal of making these bodies much more supportive of local congregations and their mission.

The main outcomes of the Strategy Process so far are:

- Rev Neil MacMillan has been seconded to the Home Missions Board to act as a Mission Development Officer for a nine-month period. It is hoped this post will be made permanent and that a suitable minister will be found to further this work.
- The Home Missions Board is piloting a 'Hub' congregation programme in Thurso, Cumbernauld, and Resolis & Urquhart. The focus of this has been to provide training resources relating to leadership and every member ministry. It is hoped that this programme will help equip local congregations for mission and ministry.
- The Free Church School in Theology re-launches this summer under the title of Positively Presbyterian. The theme this year will be The Church. This should help ministers think through the challenges facing us in greater theological depth.
- Representatives of the Assembly Arrangements Committee and the Strategy Sub-Committee have begun very positive discussions on how the General Assembly can become more efficient and effective.

Other priorities were agreed by a Commission of Assembly and are under active consideration by relevant parties. These include:

- Modules on Church Planting, Leadership and Evangelism at the Free Church College.
- Development of Strategic Plans for the Presbytery of Glasgow & Argyll and the Northern Presbytery.
- Presbyteries identifying opportunities for mercy ministries within their bounds and Deacons' Courts also actively seeking to engage in such work.
- Presbyteries actively reviewing their work in order to become more pastoral and practical.
- A review of locally held resources that will allow such resources to be used across the denomination to promote ministry and mission in areas of greatest potential.
- The Home Missions Board exploring new opportunities and models for church planting with a view to at least one new church plant before the General Assembly of 2010.
- The Home Missions Board researching the possibilities for team ministry across a number of congregations.
- Kirk Sessions finding ways to work more closely with like-minded believers from other denominations for the sake of the gospel.
- Presbyteries and the Home Mission Board working together to determine the best future development for congregations in a seriously weakened state.

All of this work is being done with one question in mind: how can we help local congregations become more effective and fruitful in mission and discipleship?

PLEASE WORK WITH ENERGY, WHEREVER YOU ARE, WHATEVER YOUR ROLE, TO HELP YOUR CONGREGATION TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS WITH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.

Having asked God to guide us through this process and having agreed as a denomination the direction He wants us to pursue, it is vital that we do not lose sight of what has been agreed. We cannot ask God for guidance and then refuse to obey Him. So please work with energy, wherever you are, whatever your role, to help your congregation to reach out to others with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

REV. RONALD G. MACKAY FREE NORTH

Ronald Mackay died early on the 4th of April, but in the mysterious providence of God, his ministry at the Free North Church, Inverness, had been ended by illness nearly two years earlier. The intervening months were a sad and difficult time for all who loved him, and especially for his family, as they watched the process of decline. Yet his outward calmness and steady smile seemed to express an inner peace, even when the ability to communicate verbally was gone.



Ronald was born at Ullapool in 1947, where his mother was a schoolteacher and his father was plumber-electrician. The influence of his home was put to the test when he went to Dingwall for secondary education, staying in the students' hostel. But he continued living an outwardly Christian life despite the pressures of his fellow students. At the age of 16 he came to a personal faith in Christ, through the ministry of the Rev. Alec Fraser, at a Youth Conference. From the beginning, he was ready to witness to his faith, and to encourage others to share it. He once took two boys along to an evangelistic meeting at the Brethren Hall, and both were converted. During his studies at Aberdeen University he served as Prayer Secretary of the Christian Union – and never missed a prayer meeting, even during the pressures of his final year and its exams. It was at Aberdeen, too, that he met Helen Mackenzie, eventually to become his wife.

HE PREACHED FAITHFULLY, DIRECTLY, AND EARNESTLY WHEREVER HE WAS – BUT HE ESPECIALLY LOVED PREACHING TO HIS OWN FLOCK

After university, Ronald worked as a Town Planner in Stirling – a task to which he brought his artistic gifts, his eye for detail, and his concern for people. But a meeting with the Rev. Kenneth Taylor, then minister of Ayr Free Church, was to set the course of his life in another direction, as he was challenged to consider the call of full-time gospel ministry. He entered the Free Church College in 1972, just after his marriage, and was a great befriender and encourager among a large intake of 15 students, several of them from far outside the bounds of the Free Church.

He was ordained to Golspie Free Church in October 1975, and remained there for nine years before accepting a call to St Vincent Street Free Church in Glasgow. There he served

for eight years, until the Free North drew him in 1992. In all his ministries Ronald was, above all, a true pastor. He preached faithfully, directly, and earnestly wherever he was – but he especially loved preaching to his own flock. He was a diligent visitor among his people, especially attentive to those going through crisis. He was always eager to see his congregations moving forward in outreach, in caring ministry, and in true spirituality, but he brought change through gentle persuasion. He had a concern for missions, both at home and abroad, within the Free Church and beyond its borders. He delighted in ministry to the marginalised and the needy – spending much time with troubled people even beyond his own congregation, making egg sandwiches for the desperate ones who knocked on the door of the church when he was studying in the vestry, and encouraging practical ministry to the addicted and homeless through such works as that at Madras Street, Inverness. He was always an eager evangelist, gentle but not at all afraid to challenge, both in preaching and in conversation, and even at the end of his farewell meeting in the Free North, when it had been assumed that he would be unable to speak for himself. And he was the same as a father at home as he was as a minister in the pulpit. Above all, Ronald Mackay was a man of prayer, convicting at least one of his colleagues by his thoughtful, deep and Christ-centred requests to a God whose presence he evidently knew. It was altogether appropriate that, when called to be Moderator of the General Assembly in 2003, he should choose Prayer as the theme of his opening address.

I KNOW THAT HE WOULD INSIST THAT ALL OF THIS THAT HAS BEEN SAID OF HIM IS, IF TRUE, DUE TO THE GRACE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

Ronald was a family man, and Helen played a full part in all his ministries, and in making a succession of manses places of fun, warmth and welcome. To her, and to their three children – Norman, Graham and Eilidh – and their spouses, to the grandchildren, and to Ronald's sister, and to all his friends and congregations who feel the pain of his passing and the comfort of his salvation, we extend our sympathy and our thankfulness for sharing him with us.

All this may sound like a tribute from one who is too close to be objective, but I cannot help that. I do believe that Ronald Mackay was a very special Christian, and I thank God for his friendship and fellowship. But I know that he would insist that all of this that has been said of him is, if true, due to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The old jargon is wrong: when Christians die, even – especially – ministers, we do not 'go to receive our reward'. We go to receive mercy.

John Nicholls

OTHER OBITUARIES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BUT FOR REASONS OF SPACE THESE WILL APPEAR IN LATER RECORDS.

DE LA HAYES' FAREWELL

On 28 November 2008, the Caithness folk met together at Wick Free Church to bid farewell to the de la Haye family. John, Jane and Samuel de la Haye were all able to attend this very special evening, and a good number of folk attended from far and wide throughout the county.

The evening was chaired by Jim Morrison (Lybster), an assessor elder of the Wick and Keiss congregation. He warmly welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with praise. Jim then addressed John, Jane and Samuel - describing each of them by using acrostics based on their names! These were very apt and suited each of their characters very well indeed.

Mr James Ross (elder) spoke on behalf of the Wick congregation, thanking John for his nine years of ministry to the folks of Wick and Keiss, which had been greatly appreciated. He made mention of John, Jane and Samuel in turn, highlighting all the benefits and strengths each one of them had brought to the congregation during their nine years together.

Presentations to John, Jane and Samuel then followed. Mr James Ross handed over a cheque to John and to Samuel. Mrs J. Sutherland presented Jane with a beautiful Caithness Glass bowl which had been engraved with a picture of the church. Other gifts were also given and received before John replied, thanking everyone for the generosity shown. He spoke of his time in Wick and Keiss with heartfelt and obvious affection. Rev. Howard Stone and Dr John Morrison spoke on behalf of the Castletown and Thurso congregations, and again thanked John for his wider work throughout the county and presbytery.

Opportunity was given for others to say a few words, and Mr J. Rosie from the Wick congregation spoke, again thanking John and Jane for their work and witness during their years of ministry. Mrs Christine Stone was then invited by Jim to mark the occasion by having the official 'launch' of the Caithness Psalmsingers CD. It seemed a very fitting occasion to launch the CD as John, Jane and Samuel all took part in its production with enthusiasm and constant encouragement. Having said a little about the CD, Christine then gifted the first 2 CDs to the de la Hayes - one to John and Jane and one to Samuel. All the psalms sung on the evening were taken from the Caithness Psalmsingers CD, which tied the whole evening together very nicely.

The meeting was closed with praise and with a prayer of thanks for the wonderful supper that had been prepared by the ladies of the Wick and Keiss congregation. A lovely, informal time of fellowship and friendship then followed, and the newly released CDs were available for purchase. Folk lingered, speaking together, enjoying the company and using the opportunity to speak privately with John, Jane and Samuel, conveying their own gratitude and thanks for all the work done during their time of ministry.

John and Jane are now happily settled in Dingwall. It's not so far from the county of Caithness, so we don't feel we have lost our friends ... it just takes a little longer to get to them now.

Samuel shares a flat with Kenneth Stone in Aberdeen and is actively seeking work in the Aberdeen area. We wish the family every blessing in their new life and location. We miss them from our midst but remain thankful for their ministry to the folks of Caithness and in particular to those of the Wick and Keiss congregation.

CS

DAWKINS DEBATES WITH FREE CHURCH MINISTER

Charleston Academy in Inverness organised a debate between Professor Richard Dawkins (of *The God Delusion* fame) and Rev. Alex MacDonald, minister of Buccleuch Free Church, Edinburgh, on the subject 'Does God Exist?' The debate took place on Thursday 16th April, and the audience consisted of around 70 fifth and sixth year philosophy and science students and some staff.



Alex MacDonald and Richard Dawkins met at Charleston Academy, Inverness

The debate was organised because one of the parents had felt that a previous debate about Creation between two Christians was not representative and, as she is a friend of Professor Dawkins, she arranged for the school to invite him to debate the existence of God.

Each speaker had 15 minutes to present his case, with each having two minutes to reply; then the debate was opened to the students to comment or ask questions.

Professor Dawkins presented some of his arguments from *The God Delusion*, and Alex MacDonald countered by pointing out the weakness of two of Dawkins' arguments - 'Faith in God is anti-science' and 'Who designed the designer?' - and then presenting three pieces of evidence for the existence of God: rationality, morality and Jesus.

The staff were very pleased with the debate and seemed to think it was not at all one-sided! The students too asked some very relevant questions of both speakers.

FREE CHURCH SPRING CONFERENCE

The Conference was held, as last year, at the Four Seasons Hotel, Aviemore, and was attended by about 50. The facilities and food were excellent, and if the weather could have been better, we were at least spared the extreme conditions of last year!

The main spiritual diet of the weekend was provided by the speakers: Rev. Iver Martin, Stornoway, and Dr Michael Bird from the Highland Theological College. Iver took as his theme 'The Church – the Body and the Building', based on 1 Cor.12:1-12 and Matt. 16:13-20. In a sense, the model church on earth was found in the Garden of Eden, where the image of God was perfectly reproduced in its members. Although God saves people individually, His blessing is characteristically poured out on the church collectively, as the body of Christ. It is His family, and its chief witness to the world is how it functions as a fellowship, brought together by nourishment in the one Spirit. As a building, the church has a foundation, a purpose, a structure and a secure future. These are laid down in the New Testament, and it is not helpful to argue that we should scrap existing structures in favour of the 'emerging church'.

Michael Bird, under the title 'Apostle of the Impossible', selected five passages from 2 Cor. 4 and 5 to illustrate Paul's teaching about the paradoxes of God's dealings with mankind. God raises the dead: Judaism taught resurrection at the end of the age, but Christ was raised in the middle of history. God shows His power in human weakness, deliberately choosing the frailest of vessels to bear the treasure of the Gospel. God makes new, bringing about a new creation in individuals in advance of the renewal of all things. God brings sinners into fellowship with Himself – the offended party reaching out with reconciliation to the offender. God brings light into a world of darkness, illuminating the Christian and showing up the darkness for what it is.

Group Bible study and discussion are features of the Spring Conference, and this year we followed a helpful outline on the marks of the church, based on Eph. 2:11-22, with references to Book 4, chapter 1 of Calvin's *Institutes*.

ONE OF THE RECURRENT BLESSINGS OF THE SPRING CONFERENCE IS THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIKE-MINDED FOLK FROM AROUND THE FREE CHURCH AND BEYOND

Sandra MacDonald, with Cathy Steed, gave us insights into the culture of Thailand and into her contacts with Thai people in Scotland, of whom there are a surprising number. Towards the end of the conference we heard from Stephen Harding about the life of a small but active fellowship in Thirsk, Yorkshire; from Isobel Morison about the ending of a long vacancy and the encouragements of a new ministry in Bon Accord, Aberdeen; from Betty Rennie about her spiritual pilgrimage from the Girl Guides in Glasgow to the Free Church in Lochgilphead; from Deuan Jones, now a member in St Peter's, Dundee; and from Iver Martin about his ministries in Stornoway, Aberdeen and now once again in Stornoway. We are further in Iver's debt for two thought-provoking sermons at the morning and evening services in Kingussie, based on John 17.

One of the recurrent blessings of the Spring Conference is the fellowship of like-minded folk from around the Free Church and beyond, and the joy of lifting up our voices in praise and prayer together. We are grateful to God for the work undertaken by our Convener, Rev. Charles Douglas, and the bookings secretary, Janice Ballantyne, in making it all happen.

NEXT YEAR WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING FROM 9 TO 11 APRIL, WITH PROFESSOR JOHN L MACKAY AND REV. DAVID MACPHERSON AS SPEAKERS.



THE HISTORY PAGE

THIS MONTH **BARBARA CROSS** LOOKS AT THE LIFE OF THE GREAT BIBLE COMMENTATOR **MATTHEW HENRY**.

Few commentaries on the Bible have had the long-lasting impact of those by Matthew Henry.

Matthew was the son of Philip Henry, minister in the Church of England until 1662. He was among the two thousand evangelical ministers ejected from their pulpits for refusal to conform to all the rites and ceremonies of that church. Because of a modest inheritance, he was able to move to Flintshire and minister to the people there without pay. Philip Henry always read a portion of Scripture to his family before morning and evening prayers. After these readings Matthew was required to write an exposition of what he had heard along with applications of it.

Matthew was born prematurely in 1662. His birth was so sudden and he was so weak that he was not expected to live. Though very weak in body as a child, he was very capable in mind. At age three he was able to read a chapter of the Bible clearly and make intelligent remarks on what he read! When he was five his brother died – an event which affected him greatly. At age 10 a sermon on Psalm 51:17 stirred him spiritually. Later he recalled, *'I think it was that which melted me, afterward I began to enquire after Christ.'*

AT AGE THREE HE WAS ABLE TO READ A CHAPTER OF THE BIBLE CLEARLY AND MAKE INTELLIGENT REMARKS ON WHAT HE READ!

In order to train for the ministry he went to a Dissenter's Academy (a school for those who would not conform to the Church of England). The head of the school said of Matthew, *'I am sure it was the common opinion that he was as sweet tempered, courteous and obliging a gentleman as could come into a house; his going from us was universally lamented.'*

Because of the restrictions on preaching by non-conformists, Matthew Henry went to London to study law. However, Matthew was not happy. He said, *'The more I see of the world and the various affairs of the children of men in it, the more I see of the vanity of it.'* Upon returning to his home at Broad Oak he became a candidate for the ministry.

In 1687 the king began to grant more freedom to Dissenters, which allowed them to preach openly. Matthew was ordained by the leading Presbyterian ministers in London. Soon after his ordination he moved to Chester. His first sermon before his new congregation was on 1 Corinthians 2:2: *'I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.'*

It was in Chester that he met his wife, Katherine Hardware. The young couple lived with her parents, who came to love



Barbara Cross

Matthew. Sadly, Katherine contracted smallpox waiting for the birth of their first child. She died, but the baby lived. Though experiencing severe grief, Matthew continued to live with his in-laws and to labour faithfully in the gospel. His former mother-in-law suggested Mary Warburton as a second wife for her son-in-law. Nine children were born to Matthew and Mary. Just like his father, Matthew conducted family worship *'giving a short exposition in a plain and familiar manner, so as to render it both intelligible and pleasant and added practical reflections.'*

Whilst reading the Scripture in the morning worship service in August of 1704, he suddenly fainted. He tried to carry on with his preaching responsibility, but was soon taken back to his sickbed. It was soon after this illness that he began his monumental *Commentary On The Whole Bible*.

As his preaching became recognised by people far and wide, many congregations urged him to become their pastor. He turned away these invitations for many years but finally felt the Lord was calling him to become a pastor in Hackney, London.

His travels and tireless efforts in ministry began to have an effect on his health. On 20 June 1704, he spent his last Sunday on earth at Chester, where he preached twice on Hebrew 4:9: *'There remaineth a rest for the people of God.'* On his way back to London he fell ill, but he was determined to fulfill his commitment to preach in Nantwich on his way home. After preaching his last sermon (on Jeremiah 31:18), Matthew Henry became so ill that he allowed them to put him to bed and bleed him. Knowing he was dying, he said to a dear friend, *'A life spent in the service of God and in communion with Him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that one can live in the present world.'*

Matthew Henry wrote of his commentary, *'If any receive spiritual benefit by my poor endeavors, it will be a comfort to me, but let God have all the glory.'*

NUMBERS

DAVID MEREDITH CONTINUES HIS LOOK AT THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

The tendency to engage in worship wars is not new. In chapters 2 to 4 we have the instructions regarding the role of the Levites for the desert journey. A word of caution at the outset: when we read these chapters, the prevailing sense of adventure is more Indiana Jones than a dry instruction manual. If we think that Spirit-filled worship is a matter of merely ticking the right boxes, then we haven't begun to understand it.

THE PRINCIPLE IS SEEN THAT FAITHFUL SERVICE TO GOD IS OFTEN REWARDED BY GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES AND FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

The early chapters of Numbers are largely a list of names. As you go through the list you notice that the Levites are dealt with separately. Why? They were not eligible to serve in the army. We must not make the mistake of thinking that the Levites were not involved in the struggles, suggesting that working full-time in the work of worship is a lesser task. In 4:23 the Gershonites (a division of the Levites) are said to 'serve' in the Tent of Meeting. The word 'serve' can just as easily be translated 'do warfare'. There is a warfare involved in worship, and indeed those closest to the centre of the action sometimes attract the most hostile fire. The Levite today is not your minister, it's you! Do you also remember that in Exodus 32, after the incident of the golden calf, Moses asked, 'who is on the Lord's side?' At that point all the Levites rallied to him. The principle is seen that faithful service to God is often rewarded by greater responsibilities and further opportunities to serve. From the specific role of the Levites we can see that there is no more important element of our Christian lives than worship. It is not part of our Christian life - it is that life.

THERE IS NOTHING AS IMPORTANT IN LIFE AS OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES

There were 22,000 Levites. All these men were pulled out of fighting to tend to the spiritual services of the tabernacle (3:5-9). Was this not a waste of strong and fit men? The community invested their money in order that the worship of God might be carried out among them. Although all believers now are priests, we cannot ignore the application to full-time Christian ministry today. In Ephesians 4:8 the ascended Christ gave gifts to men: some apostles, some evangelists and some teachers. It was not a waste of talent for Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones to give up Harley Street to minister to the deprived dirty steel town of Port Talbot. Are we prepared to sacrifice our material needs to maintain worship in our communities?

IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES THERE IS NOTHING AS IMPORTANT AS WORSHIP

Look at what the Levites did. They were to encamp around the tent of meeting (2:1) to ensure that people did not

approach God in a flippant or irreverent manner. Any non-Levite who approached the tent was to be put to death by the Levitical guard. The worship of God is always a serious matter. It seems that today the most popular question in churches is 'how can we get them in?' The solemn matter of worship is never decided by opinion polls, but it is regulated by Scripture. God still asks today, 'Have I required this?'



ARE WE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE OUR MATERIAL NEEDS TO MAINTAIN WORSHIP IN OUR COMMUNITIES?

Notice also a couple of things. The tent was located in the centre of the community (2:17). God was near them. This was astounding at that time (see Deuteronomy 4:7). God is not far from each of us. There is, however, a paradox because although God is near, He is also far away: they were to camp at a distance from the tabernacle (2:2). We need to get this balance between the immanence of God and the transcendence of God. If we emphasise His immanence, we drift into casualness; but if we emphasise His transcendence, we end up with remoteness. The prevailing mood of contemporary evangelicalism seems to tend toward the 'God as big buddy' model. Os Guinness speaks of meeting a Japanese CEO in Australia. This was his observation on our Christianity: 'When I meet a Buddhist monk, I meet a holy man in touch with another world. When I meet a Western missionary, I meet a manager who is only in touch with the world I know.' Guinness reflects, 'You could say that many, many Christians are atheists unaware.'

IN WORSHIP THERE IS NOTHING AS IMPORTANT AS OBEDIENCE

Look at the repeated refrain 'as the Lord commanded Moses' (1:54, 2:33, 34). These chapters in Numbers make the point that in worship, obedience is much more important than pragmatism or pandering to our feelings. Whatever God told the people to do, they did without question. The role of obedience in the whole of our lives is critical; the evidence of knowing God is obeying God. It is not easy to obey God; although Jesus could not be disobedient, He had to learn obedience.

These chapters provide us with a great vision: families led by an army of godly men, a society with worship at its centre, and a people obeying the Lord just as He commanded.

TRULY CATHOLIC

Most Free Church people probably do not think of themselves as catholic. Now, there is a sense in which that is correct: if you are a member of the Free Church, then, by definition, you are not a member of the Roman Catholic Church. At least, if you are, and the minister or the priest finds out about it, you are going to be in some considerable trouble. Yet there is also a sense in which Free Church people are catholics. To be catholic, after all, really only means to be part of the one great communion of saints, of all those who call upon Christ for salvation and who are entrusted with the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

There are various ways in which this should manifest itself, but one of the most significant is in the way we think about the Bible. Do we just pick it up and read it for ourselves, effectively reinventing the faith every time we open the cover? Or do we self-consciously read it with the church, listening to the many great voices of the past as we engage with its text? Up until the last century, there would have been no question: the church's teaching in the past was of vital importance to understanding the Bible in the present. Now, however, it is not so much the case.

Various factors have brought us to this sorry pass. Science has led us to believe that the past is merely useful as a prelude to the future, which is bound to be better than the present. There is much truth in this: after all, who wants to go back to a world with no antibiotics? But while the forward-looking, future-prioritising scientific mindset works well with medication, it is not so good when it comes to cultural expectations with regard to an historic faith which demands by its very essence continuity with the past, and gives no guarantee that the future will necessarily represent a great leap forward.

IN AN ERA WHEN PEOPLE KNOW LESS AND LESS ABOUT THE BIBLE, IT IS NOT ENOUGH JUST TO TELL THEM TO LEARN THE STORIES; THEY NEED TO PUT THE WHOLE THING TOGETHER AS WELL

There are other factors, too: consumerism, with its built-in imperative which makes all possessions obsolete almost as soon as they are purchased; the cult of youth, with its insistence that the least experienced and most unqualified people in this world are the ones to whom society, including the church, needs to listen to more than anyone else; technology, whose constant change and development favours younger, more nimble minds and gives technique the edge over character and experience; and, of course, the theological brains which have bought into the modern specialist research mentality – our equivalent of the scientific paradigm. We even find such characters in evangelical quarters; you know, the kind of theologian who spends his entire career redefining things that don't need redefining, fixing doctrines that aren't bust in the first place, replacing

the credal equivalent of a Chippendale chair with something in a flatpack from IKEA, and generally wandering around the theological landscape like a latter day Frank Spencer (remember him?), crashing cars into lamp posts and blowing up the gas boiler he was brought in to fix.



Carl Trueman

There are too many problems to address here, but for the Free Church to take its place in the catholic church, a number of things must be self-consciously pursued by its members. First, we should acknowledge our debt to the past and to the way in which that past connects to our reading of the Bible in the present. The obvious factor here is the church's confession, the Westminster Standards. It is surely time that we stopped paying mere lip-service to these documents and brought them back into the day-to-day life of the church. Indeed, they should be embraced and become an integral part of the church's life at a congregational level. This is not to place them on a par with scripture, but the Free Church is committed to regarding the Standards as a summary of the system of doctrine taught in scripture; and, as such, they offer a great overview and synthesis of biblical teaching. In an era when people know less and less about the Bible, it is not enough just to tell them to learn the stories; they need to put the whole thing together as well, and the Standards help to do that.

Secondly, by placing the Standards at the heart of the church's life, the Free Church reconnects with the great traditions to which the Standards themselves belong: Trinitarianism, the doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the nature of the church as a body committed to the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Further, the very act of reasserting the importance of the Standards is itself a counter-cultural move, pointing to the fact that no, we do not reinvent the faith every Sunday; rather, in gratitude and humility, we receive the faith that has been handed down to us by previous generations, and we keep it safe for our children and their children after them. Creeds, like the Standards, give continuity and stability to our faith and to our testimony.

Some may well regard this move as idolatrous: does it not exalt the doctrines of men as if they were the Word of God? Well, no, I do not think so. Rather, it acknowledges our indebtedness to those who have gone before us. Anyone who uses a Bible translation is indebted to the past, to traditions of linguistic, textual, and translation work. Thus, in acknowledging our debt to the past, we are, perhaps, simply being honest. Oh, and also catholic as well, in our acceptance that our day, generation, and congregation are not the final word on everything.

HUMAN DIGNITY – WHAT IS IT?

The concept of human dignity has been much in the news of late.

As the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill was going through Westminster last year, those of us who opposed the use of human embryos for scientific experimentation expressed the opinion that it undermined the sanctity of human life and was an affront to human dignity.

Supporters of MSP Margo MacDonald's recent efforts to introduce assisted suicide into Scottish law claim that assisted suicide is necessary to allow people to die with dignity.

So, one group claims the destruction of human life is undignified; another group believes it bestows dignity. Who's right? And anyway what is dignity?

The first sentence of the first article of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, 'All



people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. 'There's no definition of dignity, possibly an assumption that we know what it means. Dignity is, in fact, a belief and not a scientific concept and so, as the examples above suggest, there is no universally shared understanding of what human dignity means; as a result the debate continues inconclusively.

'Dying with dignity' is a phrase now hijacked by those who advocate some form of assisted suicide. The assumption is that any death which is natural is in some way undignified, and that only by enabling a person to decide the time and place of their own death can that death be made dignified.

This viewpoint of course is at odds with the ethos of the hospice movement. Hospices exist to enable the terminally ill to die naturally in an atmosphere of calm and loving care. Hospices would claim that the inherent dignity of the individual is affirmed by the personalised care and attention that their patients receive.

The notion of assisted suicide brings with it a sense of selfishness. 'Persons who consider their lives are no longer worth living or believe they have lost their dignity are discriminating against themselves and, indirectly, indicating that the lives of persons in the same or in worse medical situations than themselves are also not worth living and

should be ended. Assisted suicide is a reflection of the unacceptable belief by a person that another person has lost his or her dignity and that his or her life is not worth living and should be ended' (Scottish Council on Human Bioethics).

The last weeks and days of a person's life are often the time when close friendships become closer, when disagreements are buried and when relatives can show their love in practical ways. Many people who responded to Margo MacDonald's recent consultation on assisted suicide highlighted how special these last days were for them.

One wrote: 'My mother died slowly from a disease that robbed her of movement, speech, the ability to eat solids, and she choked easily. Just because I wanted her not to suffer anymore did not mean that she wanted to die. I discovered that we decide what would be best for other people, even those we know well, at our peril.'

A lady who looked after her mother for several months wrote: 'We

then had another six months of sharing memories, listening to her thoughts, reading to her and just holding her hand. The final months of her life were peaceful, fulfilling and dignified. It was a time that I got extremely tired as I was often up in the night, but I can honestly say that it was a time I wouldn't have wanted to have missed. It was rewarding and enriching and I felt it was the way it should be. Our three adult children were also the richer for that period and our daughter subsequently changed her career for nursing.'

It is through loving service such as this that we bestow human dignity. The false claim that a dignified death comes only as a result of administering a deadly potion denies much of what it means to be human.

As this is being written, the news is breaking that Margo MacDonald has confirmed that she has the support of 18 MSPs to enable her planned Bill to go forward. CARE for Scotland's canvassing of MSPs suggests that many are undecided on this issue. If the Bill is taken through the Scottish Parliament, churches will need to unite in demonstrating how disastrous these proposals would be for our nation and society.

Bill Baird,
Manager, Care for Scotland

THE CARE NOT KILLING ALLIANCE IS A CONSORTIUM OF DISABILITY GROUPS, HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS AND FAITH DENOMINATIONS SET UP TO OPPOSE ASSISTED SUICIDE. YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE AT www.carenotkilling.org.uk IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, PHONE 0141 332 7212 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

INTRODUCING ... CARLOWAY



THE AREA

The village of Carloway is located on the west side of the island of Lewis. It is 25 miles from Stornoway on the main circular road and approximately 18 miles across the single-track Pentland Road.

Carloway is in fact a district made up of the villages of Doune, Kirvick, Knock, Borrowston, Garenin, Upper Carloway, Park Carloway and Dalmore. The village of Tolsta Chaolais to the south is closely associated with the district and is included in the Community Council area. To the north of Carloway lie the villages of Shawbost, Bragar and Arnol, and to the south the villages of Breasclete and Callanish.

We have our own primary school, two churches (Free Church of Scotland and Church of Scotland), police station, pier, hotel (Doune Braes), football pitch, community centre and play area, etc. Carloway is a small but thriving community.

An area of outstanding scenic beauty, the district boasts two of the main tourist attractions in the island – the Doune Carloway Broch and the Garrannan Blackhouse village. Six miles away in Callanish, the world-renowned Callanish Stones are to be found.

THE CHURCH

The congregation averages 90 people. We get up to 80 folk at the noon service and up to 100 in the evening. We have 56 members, a mixture of young, middle-aged and some older. A lot of our young folk left last year for further education on the mainland.



LEADERSHIP

The minister is the Rev. Kenny Macleod, who has been with us now for four and a half years. He came to us straight from the Free Church College. We have three elders and seven deacons. At the moment there are only two Sunday School teachers, as the Sunday School has gone down to ten children. Up until March of this year, we had a community youth worker (D.J. Macleod) who did a lot of work with our children.

WORKING TOGETHER

As the Free Church and the Church of Scotland are located next door to each other, we share many of our church activities and pulpits. Up until 2007, the Rev. Murdo Campbell was the Church of Scotland minister. He was more than willing to have joint services and joint fellowship meetings with the Free Church. For example, on the Friday evening of our communion season, we meet for a joint fellowship in the CoS and have a panel of speakers address the large crowd that gathers. Since Murdo left, the Rev. Stephen Macdonald has come to Carloway, and he is just as enthusiastic about working together for the cause of Christ.

The Youth Fellowship is shared between the two churches on alternate weeks. We also hold a joint service with the Church of Scotland in Tolsta Chaolais once a month on a Sunday afternoon.

IF THERE ARE ANY YOUNG FAMILIES OUT THERE THINKING OF MOVING TO LEWIS, HOW ABOUT COMING TO CARLOWAY?

The women of our community have set up WFM, which meets monthly. This is well run and the ladies have raised a substantial sum of money for Missions worldwide.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Since December 2005, we hold a Road 2 Recovery meeting for people with drink and drug addictions in a neutral venue in our village. This was held fortnightly, but recently we have moved to a weekly meeting. Stan Gowdy, who has worked with the STAUROS organisation for over 20 years, helped us set up R2R. Stan visits us once a month and meets with folk with addictions on a one-to-one basis. We have recognised six volunteers within our two congregations to help with this work.

CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED

In the last four and a half years we have run the Christianity Explored course five times. This has gone exceptionally well and we would highly recommend the course to

congregations who have not done it yet. You will find details of it on the Free Church website and materials for it in the Free Church Bookshop.

YOUTH WORK

Having our own youth worker in the area, we have been blessed with many of our children coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. D.J. worked tirelessly to nurture and educate our children in the faith. The children's activities included a skiing trip to Switzerland with the Smithton-Culloden Youth Fellowship. We had exchange weekends with Smithton (up to 40 of their children and leaders came to Carloway for a weekend - packed with loads to do) and also visited them one weekend in Inverness.

Since losing our youth worker, we need to re-group. We are in the process of setting up a Parent & Toddler group. We hope to begin a summer club during the summer holidays, jointly run by the Church of Scotland and the Free Church.

MISSIONARY INTEREST

We support Mission, both home and abroad, at our prayer meetings on Thursday evenings. We usually have a guest speaker from the various organisations we support once a month if possible. We support our own International Missions Board, TearFund, Slavic Gospel Association, WEC, etc. We also support Free Church Youth Camps, Scripture Union (which is held locally), and R2R. All of our collection on Thursday evenings goes to Mission. We raise, on average, £3500 per year.

PRAYER

Recently we have organised our members and adherents to meet for prayer in small groups so that our community and beyond is prayed for all the time. Groups as small as three people meet in their homes on a regular basis for prayer.

Our congregation is warm and vibrant, and we meet in a relaxed setting, albeit in a traditional building. We are encouraged that God is working among us and He is continually blessing us with new people coming to faith in the Lord. The declining number of children in the community is a concern. If there are any young families out there thinking of moving to Lewis, how about coming to Carloway? You will be made most welcome. We are financially stable and have been able to give our commitment to the church on a regular basis. On the whole we are greatly encouraged by how God has blessed our community over the years and we pray that this will continue for many years to come.

ANGUS, KATHY & ANGELA MACASKILL

(Missing from our family picture is Amanda, who is currently studying in Glasgow University.)

I was born in Canada, and met Angus while visiting relations in Carloway. We married in 1980. After eight years in Canada, we moved and set up home in Carloway. Angus



was brought up in the Carloway Free Church and I in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. After returning to Carloway, we were blessed with two beautiful daughters, Amanda and Angela. They attended Sunday School and Campaigners and are involved with the Youth Fellowship.

Following several difficult years in our lives, we were overwhelmed by the support and prayers of our congregation. This was God's love being directed towards us, and we now know it was God's strength that took us through these difficult times.

Our daughter Amanda professed her faith in the Lord in March 2005, which had a spiritual effect on Angus, who professed his faith along with me in 2006. A year later Angela also gave her life to Christ. Since then our faith has grown and developed through the ministry of Kenny MacLeod. The genuine love and fellowship we experience within our church makes us feel privileged to be part of the Christian family.

We believe in the power of prayer and have been encouraged recently to start having prayer groups gathering throughout the village where we pray for individuals or issues within our community. Over the last number of years, church programmes such as Christianity Explored have proved a great success in the village. WFM is a great way for the local woman to have fellowship together. R2R has also positively impacted on many lives and families in the area.

Carloway Free Church is an open and welcoming place, which can be clearly seen by the new faces and visitors which we meet most Sundays throughout the year.

SCOTT MACAULAY

I am 21 years old and have stayed in Carloway all my life. I work as a joiner. When I was in primary school, I went to Sunday School and Campaigners, which was organised by the church. In secondary school, there was a Youth Fellowship, which was excellent because you used to hear how the older members of the congregation were converted.



Scott and Seumas

It's only recently that I've been converted, and the church has been so supportive. It's amazing how you make new friends so quickly when you have the same interests. Apart from the services on a Sunday, there are also fellowships held often, which are well attended and thoroughly enjoyable. There is an excellent welcoming atmosphere among the church folk.

SEUMAS MACLEOD

I am 17 years old and I am serving my time as a joiner. I moved from Inverness to Carloway over four years ago. I have been a member in Carloway Free Church for almost two years. The people here are brilliant – there is always loads to do (believe it or not!). We have recently started small prayer groups: I meet with other young lads like myself at least once a week to pray. These prayer groups have been a real blessing and have been the highlight of my time here.

PUBLIC EYE

TALIBAN RULES

'A recent list of prohibitions amongst the Taliban include "any equipment that produces the joy of music, pool tables, chess, masks, alcohol, computers, VCRs, anything that propagates sex and is full of music, wine, lobster, nail polish, firecrackers, statues, sewing catalogues and pictures."

The Week, 14th March 2009

THE GREAT CUSTARD SCANDAL

'In 1644 the Puritan congregation of Uggleshal, Suffolk, had their rector ejected for, inter alia, "eating custard in a scandalous manner" – he poured sherry into it.'

The Spectator, 21 Feb 2009

THE LAW AND CHRISTIAN VALUES

79% of Muslims say British laws should be guided by Christian values. 74% of Hindus agree. Only 70% of Christians.

The Daily Telegraph

TESCO BANS SHEEPDOGS

Tesco has ordered a farm which supplies it with lamb to stop using sheepdogs unless they can be trained to be 'more considerate' towards sheep. Tesco wants the shepherds at Silver Fern Farms in New Zealand to herd sheep by flailing their arms, beating sticks or waving flags, which it says is less stressful than being corralled by a dog.

The Week

LAST ROMAN CATHOLIC SEMINARY IN SCOTLAND CLOSES

The last Roman Catholic Seminary in Scotland is to close – leaving Scotland without a training centre for priests for the first time in 300 years. The number of trainee priests has fallen from 193 in 1978, to 136 in 1984, to 55 in 1993 and finally nine today.

The Scotsman

GOVERNMENT PIMPS

Ann Summers, the sex-toy retailer, took the Department of Work and Pensions to court, claiming that as a legal business it should be allowed to advertise in jobcentres. She won, and as a result jobcentres are now required to advertise for 'escorts, masseurs, nude models, erotic dancers and sex chatline workers'. In Doncaster in March 2009 women were offered the chance to strip naked in front of webcams and talk dirty to punters for £10 an hour.

The Guardian

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE, SAUCE FOR THE GANDER?

The minister for unemployment and welfare reform, Tony McNulty, has stated that 'the time a jobseeker is expected to travel from his home to his place of employment has increased from one hour to one and a half hours each way'. Anyone who refuses to do this will lose their £60.50 Jobseekers Allowance. Meanwhile, the journey from Westminster to Mr McNulty's constituency home in Harrow takes 45 minutes. This is sufficient to allow him to claim £60,000 in 'additional costs allowance' for the house, let his parents live there and reside nine miles away in Hammersmith instead.

Private Eye

THE POLYPILL SCANDAL

Cardiovascular disease is the biggest killer in the Western world. In the UK in 2005 it was responsible for four in ten deaths. A five-in-one capsule, which contains five different drugs to treat cardiovascular disease, was created in 2003. It was proposed that it should be given to every man over 50 and every woman over 60 on the NHS. *The British Medical Journal* hailed the proposal as a step of genius and 'possibly the most important paper the journal has published in 50 years'. But this polypill has not gone into production. Why? Because the pharmaceutical companies won't make any money out of it. The drugs it contains, 'aspirin for blood clots, a statin for cholesterol and three blood pressure-lowering agents', have been around for ages and are cheap. So the companies won't make much money out of them. Meanwhile thousands upon thousands die.

The Independent



HOW TO TELL TRUTH FROM FICTION

INSTITUTES BOOK 1, CHAPTERS 6-14

KNOWING GOD AND OURSELVES

Calvin's *Institutes* begin with the bold assertion that human life is inherently disjointed until we properly know God and ourselves. Naturally, we want to know both. However, Calvin paints a bleak picture of humankind's natural expressions of spirituality. We make a confused mishmash bookended by fervent religiosity and anti-religiosity (think bin Laden and Dawkins, respectively). In between these extremes, Calvin portrays our current post-Christian norm: essentially autonomous people who dabble in religion when it suits our agendas.

Nothing in our time, globally or locally, would surprise Calvin. Humanity is still demonstrating its own basic inability to know itself and its Maker.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE TRUTH?

All is not well in the world. However, Calvin is no relentless pessimist. He examines the problem, that human-led initiatives to know God always fail, and offers a solution: a divinely-led initiative. In the Bible, Calvin says, God makes Himself known. Spiritually, we have terrible eyesight. Scripture is like a pair of glasses that adds clarity and definition to our view of God, *'so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God.'* Reading the Bible is essential if, concerning God, we are to tell truth from fiction (hence the premium Calvinism has always placed on education for the people. Scotland is indebted to Calvin in this respect; indirectly, he taught us to read).

WHY SHOULD I ACCEPT THAT THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES ARE TRUE?

In his context, Calvin faced people who claimed that as the Bible's authority was granted by the (Roman Catholic) Church, it only held sway for those who submit to the Church. This argument finds its modern form in the clichés of Dan Brown novels and Channel 4 religious documentaries, where a small group of sinister misogynists cut and paste their way to a Bible designed to fit their agenda. Scripture thus becomes the redundant product of a discredited human organisation. Calvin denies outright that the church ever 'decided' which books were divinely inspired. The church's role is merely to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit has inspired certain works. Scripture's authority is rooted in its authorship and inspiration, not in institutional validation. Its writings are credible because its human authors were inspired by the foremost expert on both God and humanity: God Himself. From a purely human perspective, Calvin argues, the Bible is outstanding: it is unlike any other book - its excellence is self-evident.

Accepting God must reveal Himself to be known, why should I believe He does so specifically in the Bible? **WHY RANK THE BIBLE ABOVE ANY OTHER HOLY BOOK OR ONE'S OWN SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS?**

Calvin believed that the Holy Spirit speaks through the Bible. We can therefore only become authentically 'spiritual' insofar

as we listen where the Spirit speaks. The contemporary 'spiritual but not religious' mantra means, in effect, 'I think myself receptive to spiritual truth, but I look for it on my own terms.' Generally, those terms preclude submission to any book, organisation or religion. Calvin points us to the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture as the source of real, lasting spirituality.

Is such a dependence on the Bible merely superstition in priestly garb? Neo-Atheism builds itself on the premise that faith is inherently superstitious; it is irrational, the antithesis of fact. Calvin begs to differ. The Bible connects humanity with fact, liberating us from both fiction and superstition. It grounds us in reality.

HOW DO WE TELL FACT FROM FICTION CONCERNING GOD HIMSELF?

Calvin writes against the backdrop of medieval Roman Catholicism, with its churchgoing faithful largely illiterate. Furthermore, their Church-based contact with Scripture was in Latin, which few understood. As a result, their religious learning was dependent on pictures. Calvin saw two problems with this. First, God's essence is spiritual rather than physical. A faithful visible depiction of the invisible is impossible. The Church promulgates fiction, not fact, when it shows bearded, Caucasian octogenarians and tells the masses, 'This is your God.' Secondly, God has revealed Himself with words in Scripture. Calvin concludes that people must be taught to read Scripture for themselves. It is the only way to a non-fictitious Christianity.

FROM A PURELY HUMAN PERSPECTIVE, CALVIN ARGUES, THE BIBLE IS OUTSTANDING: IT IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER BOOK - ITS EXCELLENCE IS SELF-EVIDENT

His emphasis on education for all changed the course of European and world history.

Scripture claims that the true God is three-in-one: the Trinity. There is only one God who exists in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These persons are eternally co-existent. All are fully God. Our response to the Trinity sets our trajectory in belief and practice. If we get it wrong, Calvin says, heresy and malpractice are assured. Get it right, and we can live and think in reality.

Why do we make such a mess of knowing God and ourselves? Calvin's answer comes next month, in *Our Dysfunctional Family*.



James Eglinton

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN CALVIN

EARLY YEARS

John Calvin was born on July 10th, 1509. His parents, Gérard Calvin and Jeanne le Franc, lived in Noyon, a small town in the modern-day Oise department of northern France. Calvin's childhood was marked by tragedy and piety. Gérard was widowed when his children were young. After this, his energies were focused on directing his sons towards the Roman Catholic priesthood. As an early teen, John worked as the local bishop's clerk. He even wore the tonsure, a clerical haircut denoting serious devotion to Catholicism. The young Calvin was dedicated to the Church.

Financially supported by an influential local family, Calvin was enrolled at the Collège de la Marche in Paris. After this, he studied philosophy at the Collège de Montaigu. His fellow alumni from Montaigu include the Jesuit founder Ignatius of Loyola, Luther's sparring partner Erasmus, and Scotland's own John Knox.

Calvin was profoundly impacted by his early experiences in Paris. He studied at the Collège de la Marche for a few months. Four years were also spent at the Collège de Montaigu. At the Collège de la Marche, Calvin met Marthurin Cordier and was captivated by his Christ-centeredness and new teaching methods.

THE YOUNG CALVIN WAS DEDICATED TO THE CHURCH

At this point, his life turned away from the priesthood. Gérard had fallen out with the local cathedral. John's life would be better spent as a lawyer, it was decided, and thus he relocated to the University of Orléans. Following a period of study there, he moved to the University of Bourges. There he became involved in Renaissance Humanism, an intellectual movement which emphasised Greek and Latin study. He was thus equipped to read Scripture not only in its Latin Vulgate translation, but in its original languages.

BECOMING REFORMED

Calvin's student years took place during a period of dramatic social upheaval. Luther had, for some years, been spearheading a Europe-wide Reform movement. The year Calvin arrived to study in Paris, Jean Vallière, an Augustinian monk, was publicly burned to death for his Lutheran sympathies. Calvin studied in the midst of an inquisition.

After John's graduation, Gérard Calvin died, having been previously excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church. This was a source of grief to John, particularly regarding the difficulty of arranging a church burial for his father.

Following this, in 1531, Calvin returned to Paris. There he



published his first book, a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*. During this period Calvin, as a young man at the heart of Parisian intellectual life, began mixing in circles sympathetic to Luther and the Reformist movement. His writings from this time demonstrate an increasing awareness of Scripture.

His involvement with the Reformers was uncovered when his friend Nicolas Cop, the newly appointed rector of the Collège Royal, gave a speech containing Luther's theology of law and gospel, and the notion of justification by faith alone. Cop called the Catholic Church to reform. His address caused the powder keg of pre-Reformation France to ignite. Cop was deemed a heretic and fled to Basel.

The inquisition turned its focus to Cop's associates. Within a month of Cop's speech, the King ordered that the 'damned Lutheran sects' be wiped out. Calvin became a suspect and was forced into hiding. Louis du Tillet, the canon of Antoulême and rector of Claix, showed him mercy, hiding Calvin for five months. Holed up in du Tillet's considerable theological library, Calvin immersed himself in Scripture and the Early Church Fathers. He emerged from hiding intent on re-establishing himself in Paris. These plans were shelved when a new wave of anti-Lutheran persecution began. In October 1534, Antoine Marcourt, a preacher from Neuchâtel, began a protest using anti-Mass placards. Marcourt's protest was aggressive, as was the State's response. A round of imprisonments and executions forced Calvin to leave France. In January 1535, he was reunited with both Cop and du Tillet in Basel.

Within a year of arriving in Switzerland, at the age of 26, Calvin had completed the first edition of the *Christianae Religionis Institutio (Institutes of the Christian Religion)*. The *Institutes* quickly became popular. They were available to the academic world in Latin, and to the wider community in a breathtakingly clear French translation.

The resounding success of the Institutes led Guillaume Farel, the Geneva-based Reformer, to ask Calvin (somewhat forcefully) to join him and work there. Reluctantly, Calvin agreed. However, his first stay in Geneva was short and somewhat unsuccessful. Several factors contributed to this, including the fact that the Genevan public was not, at this point, fully on board with Calvin's take on Reformed worship and church life.

WHETHER ONE LOVES OR LOATHES CALVIN, NONE CAN DENY HIS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE FIVE CENTURIES SINCE HIS REMARKABLE LIFE

The real disaster in this first Geneva stay, however, was caused by the Swiss church itself. Historically, the Reformed churches in Bern and Geneva had been mutually supportive in the Reformation. However, after Calvin's arrival in Geneva, Bern insisted that Geneva comply with its theology of worship: strict uniformity was demanded (albeit on Bern's terms). The Geneva Council, against the wishes of Calvin and Farel, complied. Worship in Francophone Geneva had to become uniform with that of Germanic Bern. The City Council had already agreed to Bern's demands, which placed Calvin and Farel in an impossible position. The work of Reformation in Geneva ground to a halt as Farel left to be the pastor at Neuchâtel and Calvin moved to work in Strasbourg. Geneva, having had two Reformers, was left with none. Without its Reformers, Geneva came under the attention of Cardinal Sadolet, who urged the Genevans to return to Catholicism. They came close to this.

STRASBOURG

Calvin's story continues in the Alsatian capital, Strasbourg. While here, he worked alongside the Reformer Martin Bucer, preaching, teaching and expanding the *Institutes*. Living in Alsace, Calvin was also able to make closer contact with the German Reformers.

In Strasbourg, Calvin was aware of Cardinal Sadolet's efforts to bring the Genevans back to Catholicism and wrote a thorough response to Sadolet, exhorting the Genevan public to reform. So convincing was Calvin's piece that the Genevans called him back to be their pastor.

Before returning to Geneva, Calvin married Idelette de Bure. At this point, Calvin was 30. Idelette, a widow with several children, was from Liege.

GENEVA

In 1541, the Calvins moved to Geneva. Shortly after, Idelette gave birth to a son, Jacques, who died in infancy. John and Idelette had another two children who also died as infants. Five years into their marriage, Idelette became ill. The same illness plagued her for four years until her death in 1549, after nine years of marriage. The bereft Calvin's remark was, 'The best companion of my life is taken from me.'

Calvin's second stay in Geneva was marked by wholehearted commitment to the Reformation. He preached over two thousand sermons, wrote extensively, founded a school which transformed education in Europe, taught theology,

sheltered refugees and was at the centre of a worldwide Christian movement. His church in Geneva trained, financially supported and sent over one hundred ministers to France.

SERVETUS

No discussion of Calvin's life would be complete without the obligatory mention of Michael Servetus. Born in Spain, Servetus was a prodigious polymath who travelled Europe with a publicly anti-Trinitarian and anti-paedobaptist theology. Protestants and Catholics alike, Calvin included, denounced his theology as heretical. Servetus was first arrested in 1553 by Roman Catholic authorities in France. There, he was sentenced to death.

He managed to escape from prison. While en route to Italy, Servetus stopped in Geneva and attended Calvin's church, where he was recognised as a wanted man and held by the Genevan authorities. The normal view of the time, regardless of ecclesiastical background, was that proactive heresy of this kind was a capital offense. Calvin agreed, and in doing so reflects his historical context in post-Medieval, pre-Enlightenment Christendom.

Contrary to the common stereotype, however, Calvin was not the dictator who ruled the City Council (and thus was singularly responsible for Servetus' death). In fact, as an immigrant, Calvin was not even a citizen of Geneva at the time. The Genevan Council, under pressure to avoid the label of safe house for all 'heresies', first offered to return Servetus to the French. Servetus refused to go. He had now made himself Switzerland's problem. Geneva then came under pressure from France to carry out their sentence on Servetus. In escaping to Switzerland, Servetus had turned his case into a knotty, international episode, complicating an already difficult diplomatic relationship between Catholic France and its Protestant neighbour.

The Genevan Council sentenced Servetus to death by burning. Calvin's plea was for the punishment to be reduced to the less painful beheading.

Servetus' case is complex. Its facts concern international law, economic and social pressures and a very particular historical context. Properly interpreting these facts is somewhat more challenging than relying on the oft churned-out stereotypes of Calvin as a murderous tyrant in an otherwise peace-loving Europe.

OLDER AGE

Calvin lived as a widower for fifteen years. In 1558, he was ill and, thinking death was near, became motivated to massively expand the Institutes. Although Calvin largely recovered from this illness, his health declined from that time onwards. He preached for the final time in February 1564. He passed into glory on the 27th of May, 1564, shortly before his 55th birthday.

His grave became the focal point of the Genevan Reformed community. Fearing the creation of a Calvin cult, his body was moved to an unmarked location. Whether one loves or loathes Calvin, none can deny his significance in the five centuries since his remarkable life.

James Eglinton

DEAGH BHUACHAILLE

Chuala sinn facal glè mhisneachail anns an eaglais ann an Siabost an t-seachdain a chaidh. “Na biodh eagal ort a thred bhig.” Bhruidhinn an searmonaiche air iomadh nì a dh’ fhaodadh a bhith na chùis-eagail do shluagh a’ Chruitheir. Bha feadhainn le ceist an e fìor thòiseachadh a rinn iad air an t-slighe a bha seo. Bha feadhainn eile le eagal ro na bhiodh romhpa agus cuid eile le ceist am buanaicheadh iad gun smal a chur air adhbhar a’ Chruitheir. Bha eagal air mòran ro na bha nan cridheachan no ‘s dòcha gu robh eagal air cuid ron bhàs.

Bha gealladh aca bhon Athair, “Na biodh eagal ort oir tha mise maille riut; na biodh geilt ort, oir is mise do Dhia.” Bha neartachadh mòr ann am facal bhon Chruitheir.

B’e sluagh beartach a bha seo. Bha ionmhas aca air nèamh agus chaidh an uchd mhacachd do theaghlach Dhè. Is iad clann Dhè. Thàinig iad gu Crìosd anns an t-saoghal agus tha na nithean as fheàrr air thoiseach orra. Tha iad air an còmhach le fuil na rèite.

‘Na rinn ‘s na dh’ fhuiling Slànaighear an-siud an àit’ a shluagh is e siud as bunait-teàrnaidh dhomh ‘s chan e gach gràs a fhuair.’

Tha geallaidhean Dhè cinnteach, agus chì sinn seo anns an t-saoghal mun cuairt oirnn’ le bhith a’ faicinn mar a thig an là agus an uair sin an oidhche. Chì sinn ràithean na bliadhna, le fuachd no teas agus cuimhnichidh sinn air gealladh Dhè. Is e E Fhèin a tha gan òrdachadh.

Ann an treud talmhaidh caillidh buachaille caora. Dh’ fhaodadh cuid-eigin falbh le beathach, ach chan fhaigh duine air aon de na caoraich-sa a ghoid. Tha iad tèarainte agus air an toradh aithnichear iad. Chan fhaic iad fhèin seo idir, ach bidh e soilleir do chàch. Chan eil iad riarachta len staid. Tha iad a’ dìreadh agus a’ dìreadh. Is e obair glè shàraichte a tha seo ach aon là ruigidh iad agus bidh iad’ sàmhach beò.’

Ruigidh iad an t-àite a th’ air ullachadh do shliochd Adhaimh a rinn ar a- mach an aghaidh Dhè. Is e seo mìorbhail gràis agus is math as fhiach do shluagh a’ Chruitheir a bhith ga chumail f’ a chomhair an inntinn. A-measg gach sàrachadh a thig thugainn anns an t-saoghal-sa bheir sith nam Flaitheas neart dhuinn agus bidh gach eagal a bh’ oirnn’ an seo aon là air ar cùl gu bràth.

SEANFHACAIL

BHEIR SEILLEAN MATH MIL À SIN.

IS TRIC LEIS AN EARRACH A BHITH FUAR, O NACH DUAL DHA A BHITH BLÀTH.

Càirdean air chuairt nar measg.

Aig an taigh ann an Leòdhas an-dràsta, tha sinn air a bhith a’ cluinntinn mu obair a’ Chruitheir ann an dùthchannan eile thall thairis far a bheil cuid a’ saothrachadh tric ann an aonranachd, ach le gràdh dha na daoine a chuir an Cruitheir air an cridhe. Chuala sinn mu obair a- measg nan dilleachdainn anns an Roinn-Eòrp’ agus chuir e uabhas oirnn’ a bhith a’ smaoinichadh air na fulangasan a tha aig cuid.

Bha dithis òg’ ann à Alba a bha a’ dol a shaothrachadh ann an àite anns nach eil mòran de sholas spioradail. Bha iad cho òg agus an dithis aca air a bhith anns an oilthigh, ach b’e gairm a’ Chruitheir a bha a’ tighinn an toiseach.

Saoilidh mi gu bheil iad a’ toirt beannachd leotha, agus a’ fàgail beannachd nan dèidh nuair a dh’ fhalbhas iad às ar measg. Gu cinnteach aon là gheibh iadsan an duais.



AN ADVERT ON TWO LEGS

South Africa sometimes seems to be a walking advert. In the street, almost every second person that you pass will be wearing an advert on their t-shirt: adverts for each of the political parties, advertisements for different brands of cell phones, slogans educating passersby of road traffic rules or HIV/AIDS information.

Cars proudly display bumper stickers declaring 'God is Love' or 'Don't talk to me – talk to my lawyer' and sometimes both. In a country of poverty, it is a very efficient way of advertising your service or viewpoint. No one will turn down a free t-shirt, even if it means declaring allegiance to a political party which you personally won't vote for.

Often our lives are just as fickle. We change the message that we portray depending on whom we are talking to at the time. Our attitudes, the words we say, our facial expressions, the way we dress, how we spend our money, the books we read, the films we watch, and the music we listen to all send out an advert for what is important in our lives.

The Bible often teaches us about our clothing – metaphorically and literally. Colossians 3:12 says: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

IF CALVIN HAD HAD A T-SHIRT PRINTED, HIS CHOSEN SLOGAN MAY HAVE BEEN 'BEARER OF THE GOSPEL'

These are not clothes we can take off and swap depending on whom we are with. These are clothes we are required to wear – clothes which not only say something about us but are also an advert for the One who gave us life as well as the life we have chosen to live.

As we remember Calvin's life 500 years on, we must ask ourselves, how did his teaching help to shape our lives as Christians according to the teaching found in the Bible? How did Calvin influence us as Christians today? Are we a walking advert to Calvinism, or through Calvin, a greater advert for Christ?

After the Reformation, the authority of the Christian message was perhaps vague and uncertain. Protestant groups that had been accustomed to the strong central authority in Rome were now only loosely organized and, though they claimed scripture for their authority, they disagreed on what the scriptures meant with regards to certain doctrines. By the time Calvin gained prominence in 1536, Protestant churches were in great need of organization and structure in their doctrine and practice. They were in effect struggling for their identity. If they did identify with Protestantism, it brought immediate punishment and even death.

In such a difficult time, it might be understandable if the church went underground, the metaphorical t-shirts turned inside out so that the wearer's life might be saved. But

this did not seem to happen. The persecution did not stop the evangelistic efforts of Calvin and his followers. He writes several times about the gospel being preached to the masses, resulting in the salvation of the elect and the hardening of the non-elect.



Jenny Wilson

If Calvin had had a t-shirt printed, his chosen slogan may have been 'bearer of the gospel'. He took seriously the need to preach the gospel to all men. We do not know who God has elected to be His children, so we must treat everyone as deserving to hear God's good news. The Genevan pastors led by Calvin sent missionaries into France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Scotland and England. At times, even their own churches were deprived of pastors in order to meet the needs of struggling groups abroad. Under Calvin's direction, the Reformation in Europe began to spread out its message of salvation to all areas.

One man who went on a trip to Belgium wrote that 'upon receiving the request, the church of Geneva at once gave thanks to God for the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ in a country so distant and likewise so foreign and among a nation entirely without knowledge of the true God.'

If you were to ask the man on the street what he knows of Calvin, I would suspect that you are most likely to get the response that he made good undergarments (Calvin Klein). Yet to those of us in the reformed churches, we should see not undergarments but highly visible outer garments of a man who spent his life proclaiming Christ's good news. A man who was one of God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience: a man who has gone down in history, not as a slogan in his own right, but as an advert for Christ.

It is easy to look at these great men and compare our own lives with theirs. When we do that, we often realise how little we have done for Christ. And yet I am sure that if Calvin had compared himself with other great men of the faith, he would also not have rated himself highly. Are we, like Calvin, just signposts and adverts for the One who can truly make a difference in our lives, or are we in fact advertising ourselves? Let's be grateful for the teachings of Calvin and other great men in the faith, but see them only as adverts for the One who freely gave His only Son as the greatest sacrifice for the salvation of our sins.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON JOHN CALVIN AND MISSIONS, GO TO:

wwwFOUNDERS.org/journal/fj33/article2

GLOWING WITH PRIDE

JOHN ROSS TELLS ABOUT STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM DUMISANI

We are told that pride is sin. But there is, I believe, a non-sinful pride which consists of that deep sense of gratitude and satisfaction that someone else, not you, has succeeded, but in whose success you have been privileged to play a small part. I felt that kind of pride last Saturday (14 March) during the Dumisani annual awards and graduation ceremony. It was thrilling to see the satisfaction, joy and enthusiasm shining on the faces of our awardees and graduates.

Thirteen students successfully completed Basic Ministries Studies, a kind of access course, opening up theological education for those who want to go on towards, say, a degree, or who take it as a stand-alone course confirming them in their faith. Four students succeeded in passing the Advanced Ministries studies, a course for students who do not fulfil the requirements for university registration but nevertheless are able to meet the demands of the BTh curriculum. We also had six students graduate with a fully accredited North-West University Bachelor of Theology degree. In all, 23 students succeeded in their chosen courses of study. They were flushed with success and I felt incredibly proud of them.

Dumisani students, these days, are very representative of the Rainbow Nation. The racial mix includes a majority of black Xhosa students, but with some Coloured and White students. Economically the blend is equally wide – some come from an impoverished background and struggle to pay fees and meet their other obligations; on the other hand I see some students drive away from class in new Mercedes saloons and Mitsubishi 4x4s. There are male and female, married and unmarried, young and old. I guess the age range spans about forty years. Some sail through their courses, consistently getting high marks; others struggle, facing setbacks and discouragements. Some are diligent; others you worry about! Some have excellent health; others struggle with ill health, including cancer, and yet succeed. Some have the support of Christian parents or spouses; others plough a lonely furrow with few who care.

The singing and applause are never to be forgotten: African singing, spontaneous and harmonic, and applause



Mutual congratulations

uninhibited with full voiced ululation. But what I think may remain longest in my memory is the competence of these students, some indeed showing streaks of brilliance. One hundred years ago the Lovedale Institute, founded by Scots and in 1843 taken under the umbrella of the Free Church of Scotland, produced a group of remarkable Xhosa intellectuals. Their influence was marginalised and their mouths stopped by white prejudice, which later led to the shutting down of Lovedale when it was seen as a bastion of anti-Apartheid thought and action.

The group included such Christian intellectuals as Tiyo Soga, the first Xhosa Presbyterian minister; the poet John Knox Bokwe; writer and minister Isaac Williams Wauchope; Tengo Jabavu, the founder of South Africa's first black newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*; and his son Professor Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, Noni Jabavu's father, founder of the All-African National Convention (AANC) and Professor of Latin and Bantu languages at Fort Hare. Gwayi Tyamzashe, William Wellington Gqoba, Elijah Makiwane, Walter B. Rubusana, and Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba were also prominent in this Xhosa renaissance.

Bokwe's son-in-law, the educationalist, church leader and African nationalist Z. K. Matthews, once described them all as 'leaders [who] drank deep at the spring of western civilisation and yet ... remained true Africans, loyal to the best traditions of their people and good examples of what has been

described as the African personality.'

It is my hope and prayer that in the years to come Dumisani may take up where Lovedale finished and provide solid Christians, strong in the faith but the intellectual equals of any, to lead their people forward into a new era of Gospel success in South Africa.



Staff and students

REFLECTIONS FROM COLOMBIA

PATTY REAÑO OUTLINES HER ROLE IN MEDELLIN

When I come into an office and for some reason I am asked what it is I do for a living, it is always a question I don't know how to answer, because I do so many things. But I wish to share three things I do with you.

Focus 1: I do love to study my Bible to see what is in God's Word about women. So, for the last two or three years I have been working with this in different places: in our church here, we meet every fortnight for breakfast with women who work outside the home. This is a group of about 17 middle-class, professional women, who are under every kind of pressure experienced by the average 21st-century woman. Quite often some of us stay after the prayer breakfast to talk, learn more and pray.

Once a year we go for a weekend with the other women from church for a retreat. I was the main speaker two years ago. In this last year God has given me the privilege to support, in counselling and prayer, Ana Cristina, the leader of the housewives' group.



Women's retreat

Usually once or twice a year, I am also invited to take the Bible teaching to women's retreats in other churches. For example, last August I went to Pereira (a small city about 4 hours by bus from Medellin), where about 70 women had four beautiful days with God, His Word and His presence. Ana Cristina and Elizabeth came with me and it was good to work in a team; it was a very good experience. Elizabeth is a young woman who is taking her first steps in Christian discipleship with me.

Focus 2: I am working a couple of days every week practicing family counselling in a Christian Family Center called *Vínculo*, which is Spanish for 'Link'. Here comes the exciting part: we have managed to articulate a project to undertake Family Therapy in a shanty town called El Pacífico, with the families of the under-6-year-olds that come to El Arca in El Pacífico. This is for this first semester, but we hope to start with the other families for the next semester. I know that many of the things they experience are awful, almost unspeakable, but God is approaching them in the middle of their darkness to touch them and bring His light to their lives.



Ladies' Conference

Of course, as it is in a therapy context, it is not ethical to reveal any 'secrets', but I can tell you that Ana is a mother of three and Teresa of four, that they both are victims of different kinds of abuse, and neither of their husbands want to come to church or to therapy; but these women have started their first steps towards healing. Their children are coming to the Children's Club and they cannot wait for Ludoteca to be ready. This week Ana told us she was able to play football sometimes with other women from the community and is now less afraid of her husband. She is attending church. We are planning to have three or four workshops with six to eight families during this semester, to work on issues like abuse versus respect, violence versus love. Please pray for them and for us. We are at the moment three therapists that go up to El Pacífico. We are really encouraged but we know it is not in our strength that changes are made and lives are touched. Pray for physical and spiritual protection.

Focus 3: At the moment, I am doing my postgraduate course in Family Therapy, in order to have better skills to approach families that suffer. I also have worked in the last few months with some missionaries in crisis or who are having difficulties in adapting to the country. This has been an interesting experience, for it is helping others to help in Colombia.



Patty with Ana and Jackson (her three-year-old son) after a family therapy session. Until the Ludoteca is built, they meet in a small house in the neighbourhood.

PLEASE REMEMBER PATTY IN YOUR PRAYERS IN EACH OF HER THREE INVOLVEMENTS.

HAGEFEN PUBLISHING

DAVID ZADOK, CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL'S FIELD DIRECTOR IN ISRAEL, UPDATES US ON THEIR WORK

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

The last few months have been filled with challenges and blessings. In October 2008 we published the first modern Hebrew version of the Heidelberg Catechism, which we entitled *One and Only Comfort* after the first question. Since nothing similar has ever been used in Israel, we held a one-day seminar to introduce it, in cooperation with the Netherlands Reformed congregations. It was a historic event for such a document to be made available in Hebrew.

SHEPHERDING A CHILD'S HEART

In November, Tedd Tripp's *Shepherding a Child's Heart* and accompanying *Parent's Handbook* were published in Hebrew and in Russian, in line with our goal of providing guidance to families. Dr Tripp and his wife were with us for two weeks and conducted five parenting seminars that were attended by over 300 people from around the country — Jews, Arabs and even Sudanese refugees. The Hebrew translation of the talks has been placed on our website in audio files for free download. Please feel free to visit our site (in Hebrew and English) at www.ha-gefen.org.il

2009 PROJECTS

We continue to forge ahead with new projects in 2009. *Let's Study the Gospel of Mark* by Sinclair Ferguson is to be published in March. A few months ago we published our first in this series, *Let's Study the Epistle to the Philippians*. Other commentaries to be published this year are *Let's Study II Peter and Jude*, and a locally written book on Joel and Amos. In addition we are translating Matthew Henry's unabridged *Gospel of John*. As you can imagine, this is a very challenging project, and involves a more long-term investment of time and resources. To meet the need in the Israeli church for solid biblical teaching, we have set ourselves the goal of publishing at least one commentary for each of the 66 books of the Bible in the next ten years.

Two main projects are being worked on for families and children. The first is the second edition of a Bible storybook that was first published 15 years ago. This is a 550-page book with stories from the Old and New Testaments and full colour illustrations. The second is a catechism for very young children, often known as the *Mother's Catechism*, to be published in April. This is charmingly illustrated and provides scripture references for those who wish to explore the answers further. I will write an introduction to explain how to use it to teach children.

Two evangelistic books in Russian and Hebrew are also in the works and will be used in the 2009 evangelistic campaigns. In November 2008 we received an order for 50,000 copies of *Betrayed* in Hebrew. These were distributed gratis to congregations throughout the land. HaGefen also translated *Betrayed* into Russian and printed 7000 copies. Of these only a handful are left. This is an indication of the work that the Lord is doing in the land. Many are open to hearing the good news of the promised Messiah of Israel. Please pray that the



David Zadok and his family

Lord will grant us wisdom in this work and that the books will reach those whose hearts the Lord has prepared to receive His truth.

JEWISH CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

Our Jewish Christian biography project is moving forward. We have on our website some 15 in Hebrew and another 40 in English. This was a project commenced last year with a twofold purpose. First, we wish to show our people that our faith is nothing newfangled and strange. Throughout the last 20 centuries there has always been a Jewish remnant, including rabbis and Jewish scholars, who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Messiah. Second, we hope that eventually the project will constitute a database for further research.

PRAYER FOR THE JEWISH CHURCH AND PEOPLE

During the months of December and January, Israel was at war with Hamas in Gaza. After seven years, in which many rockets and missiles were launched against the southern cities of Israel, the government acted to restore security to our borders. During the war, rockets fell in the proximity of many of our staff and congregation members. One such missile landed three houses down from our home in Gedera. Thankfully, there was no damage to our house, although others on the street were damaged and a three-month-old baby was slightly injured.

These last few months have been interesting and full. We are grateful to the Lord for enabling us to labour to bring His Gospel to the Jewish people, and to help strengthen the church in Israel. Your prayers are much needed. Please continue to pray for us..

IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE REGULAR INFORMATION AND LEARN HOW YOU CAN STAND WITH US IN THIS WORK, PLEASE CONTACT US AT office@ha-gefen.org.il

THIS MONTH WE SAY THANK YOU TO OUR RETIRING PRESIDENT, **CHRISTINE MACKENZIE**, AND GIVE A WELCOME TO OUR NEW PRESIDENT, **KIRSTY BOYD**.

THANK YOU, CHRISTINE...

...for being our President over the past seven years. Your enthusiasm, hard work, commitment, thoughtfulness and helpful ideas have been greatly appreciated. You have motivated us as a team of committee members and we have valued your wisdom and warm hospitality. In your chairmanship of our Days Away and Annual Meetings, we have been impressed with your calm, gracious and professional manner and are grateful for the many ways in which you have encouraged us to continue in our service.



Your lifelong interest in mission and the knowledge and experiences gained on your overseas trips have proved very valuable in informing our discussions and decision-making.

You have, among other things, initiated the idea of the annual theme and prepared the Bible Studies to accompany these themes, and we know from feedback from various groups that these have been well received.

You have also been involved in the distribution of our second recipe book – need we say more!

Thank you!



WELCOME, KIRSTY!

We have asked our new President to tell us a little about herself.

I was born in Inverness and spent my early years in the village of Ardaneaskan, in Wester Ross, where I had the privilege of a Christian upbringing. My earliest memory of mission work was of the daily prayers for a young Indian orphan named Vinai

- prayers that were answered years later when we discovered he had become a Christian. I attended Plockton High School, after which I moved to Glasgow, where I completed my nursing and midwifery training. During this time, I met Jim, and we married in 1981. Prior to our marriage, I made a profession of faith at the Luis Palau crusade in the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow. Jim and I both became members in St Vincent Street Free Church, which proved to be a real blessing to us. I continued to practise midwifery while Jim studied medicine.

We have two grown-up children, Jennifer and David. Initially I stayed at home to raise the children, but following a move to Larbert, I took up part-time work as a practice nurse.

During my 13 years there, I gained more knowledge and competence, often dealing with people from all walks of life who sometimes found themselves in difficult circumstances. At first we worshipped at Larbert Baptist Church, before becoming involved in the beginnings of Falkirk Free Church, where we have continued to worship to the present day. It has been an amazing experience to see the Lord add to His church over these years. My main involvement in the work has included both Sunday School and children's clubs over a number of years.

I began serving with the WFM in 2005 and have thoroughly enjoyed my time working with such a committed group of ladies. When asked if I would take over the role of WFM president, despite feeling ill-equipped for the task, I was strengthened by the words of Peter that 'If anyone serves, he (she) should do it with the strength that God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ'. With God's help, and your prayers, I hope that we will continue the good work carried out by the WFM in the past.

VICE-PRESIDENT

At our last committee meeting it was decided to appoint a Vice-President, and we are delighted that Nan Ferguson has agreed to take on this role.

BIBLE STUDIES ON THE ANNUAL THEME

These have proved helpful; the following are some comments from groups who used the study, *Making the Most of Every Opportunity*.

'There was lots of discussion and giving out the questions beforehand gave us time to think. It gave an introduction to Bible study for those not already in a study group. It was relevant and worthwhile and easily done in the hour.'

'The study was really practical and topical and there was something for everyone. When we discussed our response to the passing of time, all the older ladies in the group "lit up" and responded by saying what their faith meant to them.'

'I found it challenging and thought-provoking and I also enjoyed meeting with women from a wide age range because they brought a lot of experience and wisdom – different to the peer-group Bible study I usually go to.'

Why not use our new theme's Bible study *Where is Your Treasure?* in your group? It is accessible online at www.freechurch.org (click on Missions), or from our secretary: **Meg Miller, 11 Ferndown Gardens, Cobham, Surrey, KT11 2BH.**

GIVING HOPE AND A FUTURE - BETHANY CHRISTIAN TRUST: THE FIRST 25 YEARS CFP, ANNE E. BERRY



Mrs Anne Berry, wife of the Founder of the Bethany Christian Trust, Edinburgh, has given a detailed account of the Trust's first 25 years of ministry. The staff, volunteers and many of those helped are all featured here. It is a good story well told.

The story of the Trust began with her husband, Rev. Alan Berry's, compassion for the homeless and his vision for bringing help to them. At the time he was the minister of the South Leith Baptist Church, and in 1982 his vision led to the formation of the Trust. Some months after that the first of the Trust's buildings, just a few doors from the Elder Memorial Free Church in Casselbank Street, Leith, was opened.

IT IS A GOOD STORY WELL TOLD.

Over the years since then the Trust has developed a seven-fold programme of services, ranging from the nightly Carevan on the streets of Edinburgh to Supported Housing and Community Integration projects and to several attractive charity shops. Much work is done in conjunction with other Caring Services, the Edinburgh City Mission, and churches, including the Free Churches, in the city. The work has also spread to Fife, East Lothian and the Borders, and for a time there was work in West Lothian as well, centred on a farm. The funding of such a diverse operation has depended on grants from various local authorities, charitable agencies and fundraising activities. Always, however, there has been a dependence on the Lord to supply what was needed, and on occasions Bethany has itself given funds for relief work overseas.

Anne Berry is open about the disappointments often encountered in such work. But, in the Lord's goodness, there have been many successes. God has honoured the vision to give 'Hope and a Future' to many.

Billy Graham

Illness should only be diagnosed if there is a physical cause. All other human troubles are caused by sinful patterns of thought and behaviour. The Bible holds all the answers to such human problems. Secular psychology and psychiatry are no-go areas for Christians because they are hopelessly humanistic and therefore encourage self-centred and sinful thoughts, emotions and behaviour. People with problems need to have their sinful beliefs, thoughts and behaviour replaced with biblical ones.

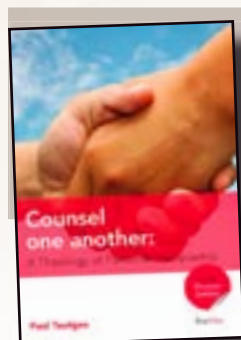
THE PROBLEM WITH IT IS THAT IT FAILS TO TREAT HUMAN BEINGS AS THE PSYCHOSOMATIC UNITY THAT WE ARE, AND IT HAS A RESTRICTED VIEW OF GOD'S COMMON GRACE

That may seem to be an extreme position, but I think it fairly represents Tautges' views. The problem with it is that it fails to treat human beings as the psychosomatic unity that we are, and it has a restricted view of God's common grace at work in the world. The materialist treats mind as a function of matter (the brain) and denies any spiritual aspect of human nature. Tautges denies any separate category of 'mind', and thus human problems have either a physical or a spiritual cause. However, this fails to do justice to the complexity of the relationship between the spiritual and physical aspects of human nature.

The counselling practised by Tautges appears to be of a cognitive-behavioural type carried out from a biblical perspective. It could therefore be useful for counselling someone whose main problem is indeed a disobedient lifestyle. However, in conditions such as, for example, schizophrenia, depressive illness, bipolar disorder, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorders, it would be foolish, and indeed often harmful, to ignore the insights of psychology, psychiatry and various proven medical treatments.

The American context of these books should be borne in mind. Perhaps the most helpful of the three books is the one on bereavement, although it appears to be overly programmatic in its approach.

Donald M MacDonald



COUNSEL ONE ANOTHER, COUNSEL YOUR FLOCK, AND COMFORT THOSE WHO GRIEVE, DAY ONE, PAUL TAUTGES

These three paperbacks are by Paul Tautges, a pastor/teacher in Wisconsin, USA. He is convinced that one of the things lacking in the church today is true biblical counselling. He belongs to the school of nouthetic counselling pioneered by Jay Adams. This teaches that there is no such category as mental illness.

LEADING YOUR FAMILY IN WORSHIP, DAY ONE, FRANCOIS CARR



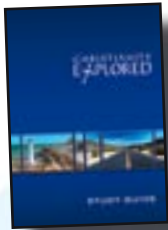
Leading Your Family in Worship is a manual explaining the necessity and benefits of family worship. It is not a long book (80 pages) and would be useful for new converts as well as for couples about to get married. Four different formats of family worship are also provided for any who may not have seen it practised before. This book costs £5.

Malcolm Maclean

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'By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.' Hebrews 13:15

- Mon 1** Remember the work of Livewires (Scripture Union Groups) that meet weekly in the local primary schools of the Dunfermline Eastern Expansion. Pray for P3-4 children who attend, many who have no church connection, and the leaders as that they introduce the Christian message.
- Tue 2** The Free Church is not immune from the kinds of moral controversy that the Church of Scotland face in our lead article. Pray that our church would be protected from the deception of those who would attack the authority of scripture.
- Wed 3** Bring before God the families of those in the Free Church who have recently passed away, including Ronald Mackay whose obituary is published this month.
- Thu 4** Give thanks and pray for several new families who have recently started attending Falkirk Free Church.
- Fri 5** St Andrews Free Church lost a large number of students about a year ago and is still building up its numbers. Pray for a core group of supporters to attend there and for the ministry team to be encouraged.
- Sat 6** The Free Church College students who are candidates for the ministry are about to go on placement. Pray that they would grow through the experience and would bless the congregations to which they are going.
- Sun 7** Remember the Carloway congregation, which is introduced in this month's *Record*, and give thanks for their mutually supportive relationship with the local Church of Scotland.
- Mon 8** An evangelist from the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association will speak at a mini festival in Gairloch today. Please pray that many local people will hear and believe the Good News.
- Tue 9** Road to Recovery, a support programme for those recovering from addictions, has been very helpful in several communities. Ask for special grace for those who are working with recovering addicts, that they may show Christ's love.
- Wed 10** Badenoch Free Church has started a children's club, with some 25 children now attending. Pray for them to receive more workers to help with the club and Sunday School.
- Thu 11** Free Church Camps will be starting next month. Pray for team leaders as they prepare, and also for team members going to camp for the first time.
- Fri 12** Today bring the Prime Minister before God, that he would have wisdom and humility as he serves the nation.
- Sat 13** Give thanks for this rest from the working week, and take rest also from your own worries.
- Sun 14** Remember the Dunfermline congregation as it seeks to reach out and make contacts in the local community.
- Mon 15** Pray for Christians serving in the Navy. Life on the sea can be isolating – ask that they would still have close communion with Christ and other believers.
- Sun 16** Pray for churches of other denominations in your area – ask that they would hold fast to the truth of the Gospel, and that we would be at unity with our brothers and sisters.

Wed 17 Whilst we often pray for our Scottish churches, don't forget those down in London! Ask that Cobham would be encouraged with growing numbers, and give thanks for London City's work amongst South Africans even as they are a vacant charge.

If you have any requests for prayer or praise for the August Prayer Diary, please send them now to Dayspring MacLeod: 0131 226 5286 or dayspring.macleod@btinternet.com

Thu 18 Many young people in the church will be participating in an EEFC (Eastern Europe for Christ) camp this summer. Pray for them to travel safely and come closer to Christ through their experience of a foreign land.

Fri 19 Kilmallie Youth Fellowship is going on their first weekend away to the Great Glen Hostel, returning on 21 June. Pray for safety, fun and the power of God's Word changing lives.

Sat 20 Tomorrow is Father's Day. Give thanks for your own father on earth, and for the continual presence of your loving Heavenly Father.

Sun 21 Poolewe and Aultbea hold their communion services this weekend. Please pray for the Holy Spirit to help Chris Smart as he preaches and to be working in all who hear the messages.

Mon 22 It's Monday! Instead of complaining about heading back to work, give thanks for your job, or for those of people close to you.

Tue 23 Pray for those in our churches who mentor younger Christians, that they would guide these disciples in patience and humility, never judging them.

Wed 24 Pray for the clerks and conveners of Free Church committees, who work very hard behind the scenes to prosper the gospel throughout Scotland and beyond.

Thu 25 Elgin & Forres Free Church has been holding services in Dufftown. Pray that God would bless the outreach there for His kingdom.

Fri 26 Remember children who are going to a Free Church Camp for the first time this year, that it would be good for them both as a memory and a spiritual experience; pray also for their safety.

Sat 27 Pray for those who will lead the worship at your church tomorrow. Precentors bear a great responsibility for the praise, and we are thankful for them!

Sun 28 Give thanks that, through His resurrection which we remember today, Christ has freed us from the fear of death.

Mon 29 Pray for the First Minister of Scotland, that he would be a peacemaker amongst the various political factions and would be committed to the spiritual renewal of our country.

Tue 30 Give thanks for the opportunity Douglas Campbell has had as chaplain in the local primary school this past year. Pray that the contacts made with staff, children and parents would continue to develop and that the seeds sown in the various talks would be remembered.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCELLENT LETTER FROM **JOHN WALLACE** IN RESPONSE TO CARL TRUEMAN'S COLUMN. IT IS THOUGHTFUL, PRACTICAL AND CHRIST-CENTERED. READ IT, THINK AND ACT!

Dear David,

Carl Trueman's articles in the *Monthly Record* are always stimulating and informative, and this May's feature proves no exception. In it he helpfully reiterates the primacy and perennial power of The Word, and his concluding assertion that fewer people would need counselling if more people actually listened prayerfully to what was being said from the pulpit is surely a great challenge to all of us who attend the public preaching of the Word week by week.

However, called as Christ's disciples to live radically different lives that glorify God and show love to His people, we cannot underestimate the importance of our 'one to one' and 'small group' encounters. Of course, many of these contacts will take place within the context of our ordinary work, family and church lives. However, I would maintain that there ought to be an important role for mentoring, if not actual 'counselling', within the life of the Church.

SCRIPTURE IS OF COURSE TO BE THE ONLY RULE BY WHICH WE ARE TO LIVE OUR LIVES, AND WE ARE UTTERLY DEPENDENT UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT APPLYING THAT TO OUR HEARTS. HOWEVER, SURELY THERE IS A GOD-GIVEN ROLE FOR 'GODLY COUNSEL' IN THIS.

Firstly, in terms of evangelism (which I appreciate is not the primary focus of the article): it is sadly the case that, as we move towards an increasingly secular society, fewer unbelievers are to be found gathering under the public preaching of the Word. The first contact that most unbelievers have with the gospel is often through the witness of Christians in the workplace, at home or within social circles. In some ways it was always like this (e.g. the woman of Samaria telling the whole town she had found the Messiah, etc.). Of course, this makes Christ's call to be salt and light all the more vital for our age. By their very nature most of these contacts are going to be of a 'one to one' or 'small group' format.

Secondly, in relation to guidance; scripture is of course to be the only rule by which we are to live our lives, and we are utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit applying that to our hearts. However, surely there is a God-given role for 'godly counsel' in this. Whilst the gospels record Jesus' great public teaching, they also record His private dialogue with, for example, Nicodemus or the woman at the well. Furthermore, one gets the feeling that Paul's exhortation to 'let the word



The Trueman File - May 2009

forth from the pulpit at that time.

To take an example, working as a GP in the Highlands and Islands, the scourge and devastation caused by alcohol misuse is all too evident, even within the visible church. I am also becoming increasingly aware of the extreme limitations of secular medical services to provide a route out. On the other hand, there are numerous examples where the sheer grace of God has completely transformed lives. Surely the Church of Christ must do all it can, by God's grace, to reach out to those in this predicament. Yet within the church culture of the Western Highlands, it is very difficult to do that within the confines of a traditional Sunday service, and this is where the excellent work of organisations such as Road to Recovery must be developed further.

Finally, there is the great omission from Christ's great commission – to make DISCIPLES of all nations. We have again largely ignored that within the protestant church, perhaps partly as the AV renders the verse 'teach all nations' and says nothing of making disciples. Discipleship training is, by its very nature, vital to making disciples, and involves making full use of all the spiritual disciplines given to us by God as means of grace; but I would argue that mentorship is an important part in reaching this end.

Carl shows some concern that many of the counselling strategies available are laced with secular psychology. Whilst there is much in modern psychological thought which would appear to be at odds with the Word of God, which must be the supreme test of all things, we should be careful not to dismiss as of no value techniques that have been primarily developed within the arena of secular psychological or medical practice. However, caution and prayerful discernment must be applied, and these techniques will be absolutely powerless if they do not give place to the Word of God.

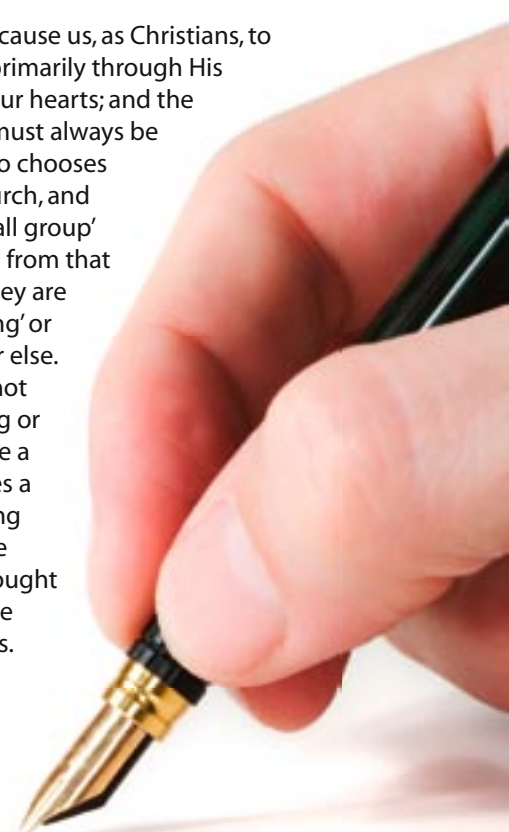
Of course, only God can cause us, as Christians, to grow, and He does this primarily through His Word being applied to our hearts; and the preaching of this Word must always be paramount. But God also chooses to work through His Church, and the 'one-to-one' and 'small group' relationships that spring from that are also vital, whether they are formally called 'mentoring' or 'counselling' or whatever else. I appreciate that Carl is not claiming that counselling or small groups do not have a place, and his article does a great service in reminding us of the centrality of the preached Word; but I thought it may be helpful to make these points nonetheless.

Yours in Christ.

**John Wallace
Leverburgh,
Isle of Harris**

of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom' applies primarily to individual believers one to another. This is of particular importance to young Christians, who are often all but abandoned by the church to their own devices after they have publicly professed faith. Of course, Carl makes the point that the perennial relevance of the Word relates to its 'generality'; but it does not necessarily follow that one-to-one mentoring was not a significant part of the New Testament church. An example of this may perhaps be seen in Paul's 'training up' of Timothy. The scriptures are the scriptures precisely because they speak to all people in all ages, whereas more specific individual communications would not; many people may be blessed by downloading one of your internet sermons from St Peter's, but it would not be appropriate to air a private discussion in your study in such a way.

My third point is in relation to Christians who are going through difficult times, particularly those struggling with sin. There are certain areas that the church has a real problem with and we almost dare not even speak of. Whilst 'sinners' flocked to, and were openly received by, Jesus, we seem to have a real problem even mentioning certain sins (e.g. alcohol, sex, etc.; of course Jesus could deal with sin in a way that we cannot). Furthermore, we in the protestant church seem to have completely ignored James' injunction to 'confess your sins to each other so that you may be healed'. We are told elsewhere to bear one another's burdens, yet all too often we are completely oblivious to the existence of these burdens. Of course, a large part of bearing these burdens is in prayer, but I do not believe it is exclusive to this. Speaking personally, when I have been through difficult times, I have found the 'mentoring' and accountability this brings, of two Christian friends (one a minister, the other not) invaluable. Nevertheless I freely admit that, as Carl points out, I was probably not prayerfully listening enough to what came



THE NARNIA CODE

I first read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* around the age of seven. I was immediately delighted with C.S. Lewis' fairy-tale world, but I had one minor reservation: I couldn't understand why Father Christmas appeared in a retelling of the Christian faith.

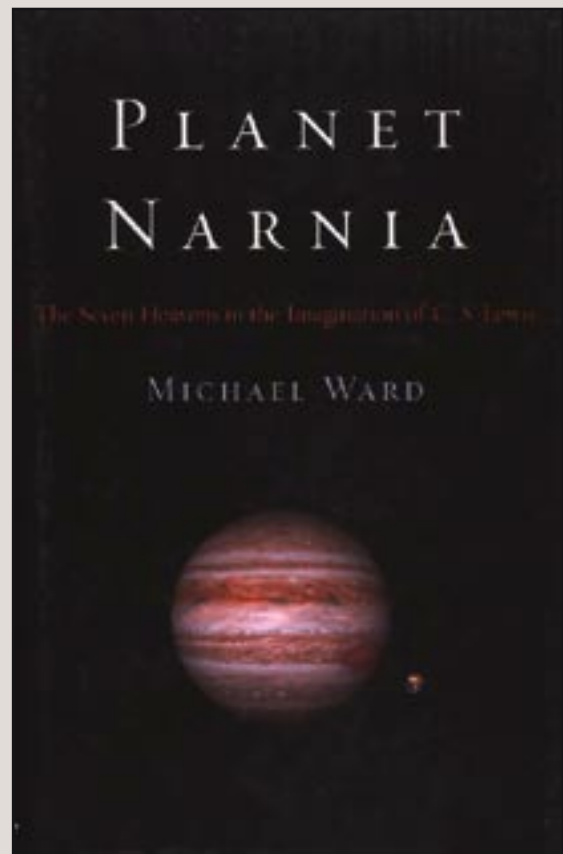
Although my impression was on the most basic level, the question of such anomalies in Lewis' best-known books has troubled academics ever since Lewis' friend J.R.R. Tolkien lectured him on the unsuitability of his work. How could a writer as careful, critical, and knowledgeable as Lewis create such a dreadful hash of mythology, theology and fantasy?

Now it appears that there was method in his madness. Whilst academics from time to time have theorized that the Narnia books might be related to a set of unrelated ideas – the Seven Deadly Sins, for instance – none was very convincing until Michael Ward published *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, an explanation of how each of the Narnia books represents one of the seven medieval planets. The book has been so successful that the first printing has already run out, and Oxford University Press is rushing to satisfy an unexpected demand. Interest has been greatly heightened by *The Narnia Code*, a BBC1 programme that aired in mid-April and explored the planets' role in Lewis' work.

In the programme, Ward describes his 'eureka moment' to viewers. He had been reading a long poem Lewis wrote about the planets and noticed a few words in relation to Jupiter: 'Winter past and guilt forgiven'. Ward commented: 'That's as good a five-word summary of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as you might hope to meet.' He raced through his collection of Lewis' writings, matching up the other books with other planets: *Prince Caspian*, for instance, as the book in which war is most central, reflects Mars, whilst *The Silver Chair*, with its lunatic prince, represents the moon. Start mulling over his ideas, and it quickly becomes addictive to look for comparisons between Narnia and the solar system.

Nor is the 'planet' theory one that merely slots into the books as an explanation of some incongruous elements; rather, it is fundamental to a proper understanding of the stories. Ward explains that Narnia is composed of three layers. The first is the straightforward fairy tale or fantasy; second is the biblical parallels, still fairly obvious to an informed reader; but the third, secret layer is the most important of all. 'Lewis turned the planets into plots,' Ward explains. 'It's that layer that undergirds and irradiates the novels at a level that escapes your conscious notice.'

But does this clarify matters for the Christian reader, who has made so much of those second-level biblical parallels? Why would the great apologist write a series of books based on astronomy? Lewis' book on medieval cosmology and symbolism, *The Discarded Image*, shows his love of the ancient view of the universe - not for its accuracy, but for its beauty. Lewis wanted, Ward says, 'to communicate the idea of a meaning-drenched universe'. His desire was to show God's sovereignty and majesty on the greatest scale, not to pit myth and Christianity against each other.



It is deeply encouraging to see a programme of such positivity about the Christian faith broadcast on BBC1. Ward's work is not treated as mere literary criticism, but explored as a new aspect of C.S. Lewis' faith. Scientists, both Christian and secular, lend their support to the happy notion that faith and science don't have to be at odds, and when Ward is questioned as to whether he agrees with Lewis' Christian worldview, his quiet affirmation is treated with absolute dignity – there is never any hint that he could be just a fanatical evangelical trying to make headlines with a new theory. He is, in fact, a consummate professional and academic, humble but eager to share his new-found knowledge.

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Ward's discovery, if it is genuine, is one of the greatest events in recent literary criticism; he gives Lewis a voice to speak from beyond the grave. His fellow academics largely take the view that his evidence holds water, though the literary world is steeped in relativism and the questioning of 'meaning' as a concept. As for me, I'm inclined to agree with Ward. At last I have my explanation for Father Christmas' appearance in Narnia: Lewis connected Jupiter's appearance in the sky closely with Christmas and the end of winter. How did we ever doubt him?