

# Wells Blocked Up!

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**A** TEMPTATION FOR MANY Christians today is to look for a 'new word' or a 'new revelation' from the Lord. They are looking for something that will revitalise their spiritual lives. We have no doubt but God does and will lead His people into new understandings of His Word.

In fact Jesus said *"every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old"* [Mat 13:52]. Things new as well as old will yet be discovered from the study of God's Word and God's servants need to look for those new things which God is revealing to His people in His Word.

There are however times when it is not something new but something old that needs to be recaptured. We read that *"Isaac dug again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham"* [Gen 26:18].

These verses tell us that Isaac reopened the wells which had been such a source of life and blessing to his forebears, but now had been deliberately blocked up with the dirt and rubbish of the Philistines.

There are many lessons in this

for ourselves today. In order to move forward, we sometimes need to go back to the old tested and tried principles and truths of God's Word which have been stopped up with what Selwyn Hughes calls 'the Philistine mentality'.

Over the years the truths of God's Word have been eroded by the deliberate teachings of humanism and atheism. Our society has forgotten the wonderful example and leadership our nation gave to the world as a result of our drawing water from the wells of life which are in the Holy Scriptures.

The Apostle Peter of course warns us about the false teachings of those who have gone astray from the right way whose teachings are nothing but *"wells without water"* [2 Peter 2:17]. The 'wisdom of the wise' of our generation are also shown to be nothing but great swelling words of emptiness although they promised freedom and liberty. Nationally we are now at the 'bottom of the league' with very little influence in the world. We are no longer the salt that seasoned or the light that shined. We have lost the leadership of the nations because we have blocked up the wells of life.

One of the wells that needs to be reopened today is the well of the Ten Commandments! These commands

are the basis of all laws. William Blackstone the architect of the English Legal System, wrote that all law must be based on the Ten Commandments. He of course lived in the eighteenth century when things were very much different from today.

Blackstone knew that law was religious in origin. He knew that law came from the God of the society that enacted the law. A change of law really means a change of belief - and thus a change of religion.

If law has its source in man's reason, then reason is the god of that society. Mao Tse-Tung has said 'Our god is none other than the masses of the Chinese people'. Modern humanism locates law in the human mind (displayed and exhibited by the humanistic state) and therefore the state becomes the god of the whole system.

We in the UK have begun to look to the government for the solutions to all our problems and completely ignore the whole concept of God - this signifies the change in our beliefs and why we look to the government rather than to God.

God is no longer 'The Governor' in our society - therefore the Ten Commandments are no longer held important as they belong to a God we no longer believe in. We live in times like Jeremiah did when he said that *"My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water"* [Jer 2:13].

God will not be mocked - what we sow we shall reap. If we continue to reject Him as the only living and true God and seek out other solutions to our problems rather than the solutions found in the wells of God's Word, we will continue to deteriorate and become a byword among the nations.

With the possibility of a General Election coming up it is important for us to realise that the spiritual and moral state of the land is more important than anything else. It is more important than economics and the environment. If we scorn God's law, He will come in judgment, but if we repent He will forgive and heal. God will come to the aid of His people when they honour Him and only then will we get our economics and other problems in perspective.

It is not so much another government our nation needs - it is another god - the god we had in the past, the only living and true God, the God of Israel.

He has graciously given us *"wells of salvation"* from all types of enemies. His Word is full of instructions regarding our life on earth in that Word, but if we spurn it and turn to false gods and false remedies we will suffer.

Our thirst can only be quenched with the *"water of life"* and there is a clear and genuine invitation to all and sundry to come and take this water of life - free and full - *"without money and without price"*. We need to unblock the many wells that have filled up with the false notions of what is truth and righteousness.

# 'Incitement to Religious Hatred'

We publish below a Press Release from Barnabus Fund regarding the proposed new laws on religious hatred. We feel the need for God's praying people to be aware of the real threat to the gospel of Jesus Christ being proclaimed as the only way of salvation if this proposal becomes law.

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## LORDS ATTACK GOVERNMENT PLANS TO INTRODUCE RELIGIOUS HATE LAWS

Press Release – 17 March 2005

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Government plans to introduce laws banning Incitement to Religious Hatred were attacked by peers from all sides on Monday as the House of Lords debated the measures for the first time.

Over 40 peers spoke in a debate which lasted almost 9 hours as the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill received its Second Reading in the House of Lords on 14 March.

For every peer who spoke in favour of proposed religious hate laws two spoke against.

Whilst almost all support came from Labour loyalists, attacks came from across the House with multiple speakers from the Conservatives, Liberal-Democrats, Labour and the Crossbenchers.

Leading the attack were several widely respected and influential members, the former Lord Chancellor Lord Mackay, former Home Secretary Lord Baker and noted QC Lord Lester.

Lord Mackay described the new

laws as an "issue of great importance" and "a threat to free speech". Lord Lester condemned the new offences as "sweepingly broad in their reach." Lord Baker deplored the measure as a "straightjacket on the freedom of expression".

Other notable contributions were made by the Crossbench peer Baroness D'Souza who decried the fact that "the lack of clarity will undoubtedly increase self-censorship".

From the Labour benches Lord Desai stressed the laws were unnecessary pointing out that already under law "protection is available against harassment, against violence and even against a lot of incitement."

Fresh from their confrontation with the government over the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, as 19 out of 29 peers who spoke on the subject of religious hatred condemned the proposed legislation, it became clear that the Lords is again prepared to defy the government in support of basic civil liberties.

The Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill has now moved on to its Committee Stage and will be debated again on 5 April.

## BARNABAS FUND WELCOMES LORDS OPPOSITION

Barnabas Fund welcomes the stand so many peers took on this issue at the debate. Paul Cook, Advocacy Manager for the Fund, said, "We are greatly encouraged by the determination of the Lords to critically examine this dangerous piece of legislation and not allow the government to rush it through as occurred in the Commons. We urge peers to remain firm in their opposition to this law for the sake of free speech."

### PLEASE PRAY

- As time runs out before an expected election in May pressure will be put on peers and the opposition parties to drop their opposition to these laws or do a deal so that the rest of the Bill, which is largely uncontroversial, can be passed. Pray that the Lords and the opposition parties will remain firm in their rejection of this new law and insist that it is dropped.
- Pray that when and if the law is put to a final vote, a large number of peers who oppose this legislation will turn out and vote against it, removing it from the Bill.
- Pray for wisdom, guidance and strength for peers leading the opposition to the new law, that they will be clear and united in insisting that the laws are dropped.
- Above all ask that the Lord will rule in this situation, that no law will be passed against His will.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldhansrd/pdvn/lds05/text/50314-05.htm>

### Notes for Editors

The government argues that the law is needed to prevent far-right groups and extremists of all religions whipping up hatred against the followers of other faiths.

However, a broad based coalition of journalists, senior lawyers, MPs, peers, human rights groups, civil liberties organizations, religious organisations, secularists and actors, amongst others, co-ordinated by Barnabas Fund fear that far from achieving this laudable aim the law will instead effectively end up banning all legitimate criticism of religion and religious practices.

Barnabas Fund is concerned that those who speak out on behalf of millions of people who suffer as a result of particular religious teachings, such as Muslims who convert to another faith (who should be executed according to Islamic law) or Dalits (treated as "untouchables" in the traditional Hindu caste system), could be silenced.

For further information or an interview please contact Paul Cook, Advocacy Manager, Barnabas Fund on + 44 (0) 1672 564938 or [info@barnabasfund.org](mailto:info@barnabasfund.org)

Further information on the proposed law banning Incitement to Religious Hatred is available on Barnabas Fund's website [http://www.barnabasfund.org/News/ITRHC/about\\_ITRHC.htm](http://www.barnabasfund.org/News/ITRHC/about_ITRHC.htm)

# The Necessity of Creeds

The paragraphs below are taken from the book '[The Shape of Sola Scriptura](#)' by Keith A Mathison. This book discusses the false position of those who claim 'No creed but Christ' in their opposition to Churches holding creeds. ISBN 1-885767-74-9 published in 2001 by Canon Press, Moscow, Idaho.

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**I**F *SOLA SCRIPTURA* is true, the Scripture is to be interpreted by the Church within the hermeneutical context of the *regula fidei* or rule of faith. This rule of faith has found written expression in the ecumenical creeds of the Church.

The Nicene Creed and the definition of Chalcedon are the creedal confessions of all orthodox Christians and serve as the documentary boundaries of orthodox Christianity. Several questions remain, however. What is the relationship between these creeds and the Scripture? What is the purpose of creeds in the Church?

There is a tendency within the Church to run to extremes, and this tendency manifests itself clearly when the creeds of the Church are discussed. It would not be an exaggeration to say that modern Evangelicalism is anti-creedal. This is largely due to the effects of *sola scriptura*, but for whatever reason this anti-creedalism exists, it is a dangerous error. The simple truth of the matter is that creeds are inevitable. The question is not whether one will have a creed. The only question is **which** creed will one have - the Christian creed or a creed of one's own devising?

Part of the Evangelical aversion to creeds comes from misunderstanding exactly what a creed is. The English creed comes from the Latin *credo* which simply means 'I believe'. This is why a creed is inevitable. If a Christian has any belief about what Scripture teaches, he has a creed whether he uses that word or not.

Even the statement 'No creed but Christ' is itself a creed. It is simply another way of saying, 'I believe there should be no creeds,' or 'My creed is that there should be no creeds.' The denial of creeds is simply self-contradictory.

The most common objection to creeds is that they undermine the authority of Scripture. The Truth of the matter is that a proper concept of creeds does not result in the subordination of Scripture regardless of whether the accusation comes from Evangelicals or cultists.

As foreign as it may sound to individualistic modern Evangelical ears, a church that adheres to *sola scriptura* is a creedal Church. The evangelical denial of real creedal authority is not only self-contradictory and foolish, it is an open invitation to every kind of heresy imaginable.

# The Imprecatory Psalms

The imprecatory Psalms have always been difficult to explain, especially to unbelievers. In this article John Piper gives a helpful analysis

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## Do I Not Hate Them With Complete Hatred?

[Psalm 139:19-22]

*"O that You would slay the wicked, O God; Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed. For they speak against You wickedly, And Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? 22 I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies".*

The Fighter Verse team made a judgment call that these "problem" verses of Psalm 139:19-22 did not directly serve the tactical aims of the memory program, and might require so much explanation as to be distracting from the goal of strengthening faith. But for many of us, the strength of faith calls for an explanation. So I will give some pointers for how to understand them. I hope you will pray and ponder so that these pointers become providers of God-taught riches.

(1) These verses are in the category of "imprecatory psalms," which include 5:10; 10:15; 28:4; 31:17-18; 35:4-6; 40:14-15; 58:6-11; 69:22-28; 109:6-15; 139:19-22; 140:9-10. They call down divine

curses and express hatred for the enemies of God.

(2) Consider that, in some of these psalms, love for the enemy has been pursued for a long time. *"They requite me evil for good. . . . When they were sick, I wore sackcloth"* [35:12-13]. *"In return for my love they accuse me, even as I make prayer for them. So they reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love"* [109:4-5]. Though unexpressed, this may be the case for all the psalms. The wickedness in view has resisted love.

(3) Hatred may be moral repugnance, not personal vengeance. This is not the same as saying, "Hate the sin and love the sinner" (which is good counsel, but not all there is to say). There is a kind of hate for the sinner (viewed as morally corrupt and hostile to God) that may coexist with pity and even a desire for their salvation. You may hate spinach without opposing its good use.

(4) But there may come a point when wickedness is so persistent and high-handed and God-despising that the time of redemption is past and there only remain irremediable wickedness and judgment. For example, Jesus speaks of unforgivable sin [Matthew 12:32]

and John says there is sin that is "unto death" and adds, "I do not say that one should pray for this" [1 John 5:16]. And Paul says, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed" [1 Corinthians 16:22]. This imprecation is like the Psalms, and assumes that there comes a point of such extended, hardened, high-handed lovelessness toward God that it may be appropriate to call down anathema on it.

(5) The imprecatory Psalms were not avoided by Jesus. At least one of the most severe of them [Psalm 69] seems to have been a favorite from which Jesus, in his human nature, drew guidance and encouragement and self-understanding. (John 15:25 = Psalm 69:4, "They hated me without cause." John 2:17 = Psalm 69:9, "Zeal for your house has eaten me up." Matthew 27:24 = Psalm 69:21, "They gave me gall for my food.") This is a Psalm which prays, "Pour out your indignation on them, and let your burning anger overtake them" (69:24).

(6) The apostle Paul quoted the very imprecatory words of Psalm 69:22-23 in Romans 11:9-10 as having Old Testament authority. This means Paul regarded the very words of imprecation as inspired and not sinful, personal words of vengeance.

(7) Paul read the imprecatory Psalms as the words of Christ, spoken prophetically by David, the type of Christ. We can see this from the fact that David's words in one imprecatory psalm (69:9) are quoted

by Paul as the words of Christ in Romans 15:3, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." The implication, then, is that David spoke in these Psalms as God's inspired anointed king, prefiguring the coming King and Messiah, who has the right to pronounce final judgment on his enemies and will do so, as the whole Bible teaches.

Conclusion: We will grant to the psalmist (usually David), who speaks, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the foreshadowed Messiah and Judge, the right to call down judgment on the enemies of God. This is not personal vindictiveness. It is a prophetic execution of what will happen at the last day when God casts all his enemies into the lake of fire [Revelation 20:15].

We would do well to leave such final assessments to God, and realize our own corrupt inability to hate as we ought. While there is unforgivable sin for which we are not to pray (see #4 above), we are told to love our enemies, and pray for those who persecute us, and return good for evil (as David did, see #2 above).

This is our vocation by faith. Let us tremble and trust God, lest we fail, and find ourselves on the other side of the curse. *Pastor John*

October 3, 2000

By John Piper. ©Desiring God.

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## OBITUARY

# Mrs Ann Tallach, Inverness

1900 to 2004

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**M**RS TALLACH, Mum, Aunt Annie, Gran, Great Granny; these are just a few of the titles that were given to this very special lady and tell of the great influence she had during her lifetime.

Each person who came into contact with her would come to know something of her Christian character. Tracts were a favourite way of communicating the gospel and she distributed them at every opportunity. On one occasion Ann handed tracts to Hell's Angels outside the courthouse and warned about the dangers of motorcycling! Always concerned and caring for those around her, her life is a testimony of the love she had for her Saviour.

Ann and her twin sister Helen were born in Pultney town, Wick on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1900. Her parents were Revd J S Sinclair and his wife Jessie. Family life began in Pollockshields, Glasgow, where they all attended school, a very happy and united family. Singing Psalms and well-loved hymns together in a four part harmony became a favourite activity every Lord's day evening. The family enjoyed a wealth of Christian love and care which also encompassed the many friends and relatives who were always made

welcome.

It was not until Ann was 19 that she would meet her future husband, John Tallach. At this time John was a Divinity student of the Free Presbyterian Church and had become firm friends with Ann's brothers. Romance did not blossom until two years later and in 1923 they were engaged.

The following year John sailed for Africa. Here God had called him to work as a missionary at a place called Ingwenya about 30 miles from Bulawayo, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Ann soon followed and left the shores of Scotland to be with her fiance. So John and she were married in Bulawayo, by a Methodist minister before two witnesses on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 1925, far away from that family circle that had meant so much to her.

Africa marked the start of a new life for Ann, unfamiliar surroundings and people that demanded a new way of life and a husband to love and to care for but it also marked a 'new life' spiritually for Ann. Under Mr Neil Cameron's preaching, Ann was awakened to her need of a Saviour, but it was during her time here that she was saved.

In the business of the day, Ann was passing from one room to another in their humble home in

Ingwenya, when she heard most clearly a voice that said, *"thy sins which are many are forgiven thee."* So audible was the voice that Ann looked around to see who had said it but no one was near save the Lord. She did not confide in John her experience immediately but rather asked in prayer that if this Word was for her then John would preach from it. Assurance came to her at the next Prayer Meeting when John unknowingly preached on the same text!

In 1927 Catherine was born, to be followed by James two years later. Ann busied herself with the children, household duties and in teaching some of the African women matters relating to laundry, sewing and hygiene.

These times enabled Ann great opportunities to witness and testify of her own faith. A well-earned furlough home after seven years without a break, came in 1932. One can only imagine the rejoicing in Ann's former home in Glasgow!

On their return to Ingwenya work would expand greatly and also three more little Tallachs were added to the family: Ian in 1936 and identical twins Margaret and Helen in 1937. World War 2 prevented any furlough for the family, which meant 12 years were to pass before they stepped on Scottish soil again. Ann by this time was aware that John's health was deteriorating for he had developed heart problems.

As a result of this, in 1948, he decided to resign from the Foreign Mission, and after a year and a half

in Raasay, accepted a call to become the FP minister of the Oban congregation. Here they knew much happiness but that was also overshadowed by John's death in October 1955. Ann must have been desolate, but her hope was in the Lord who had proved again and again, "He is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him."

Moving home is always very traumatic, but with very little in the way of income it was a trying and difficult time for her to find suitable accommodation, but eventually a small flat was found in Soroba Road, Oban. Many friends and relations continued to enjoy the love and kindness of Ann's hospitality but her overriding desire was to recommend the love of Jesus to all friends with whom she came in contact.

In 1969 (some twenty four years after Ann had left Africa, Ann enjoyed a return visit to Rhodesia where her married son James and her daughters Catherine and Margaret worked. What a joy to see the African friends whom she loved and also to see some of her own family working for the Lord there.

Three years later, Ann and her daughter Margaret (now home from Rhodesia), decided to move to Inverness to be nearer most of their close relatives. This last chapter lasted an amazing 32 years for Ann, and included times of rejoicing but also severe testing.

During a ten year period, Ann's two sons Ian and James and her son-in-law Donnie Macaskill, all died

suddenly. Ian in 1979, Donnie in 1984 and James in 1989. In the midst of these very sore trials the Lord sustained her and she was comforted by the faith these men had in God.

In 2000 the celebration of Ann's 100th birthday was a very memorable and happy occasion for 100 relatives and friends who joined together with her for lunch. At this time she was bright and alert and aware of God's goodness and mercy to her and all her loved ones over the years.

In her last years Ann was aware

that she had become much frailer, "*We all do fade as a leaf*", but perhaps her testimony shined brightest at this time, a witness to many. Here she knew above and amid all else, that one thing was sure and certain that her Redeemer lives.

In the end, her passing came quite suddenly, but peacefully on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2004. She is now "*Absent from the body and present with the Lord*", whom she had lived to serve for so long.

We extend to all members of the family our deepest sympathy. A truly lovely lady.

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## Commitment, Faithfulness

**A** NURSE SHARED this story of faithfulness: "It was a busy morning, approximately 8:30 am, when an elderly gentleman, in his 80's, arrived to have stitches removed from his thumb. He stated that he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 am. I took his vital signs and had him take a seat, knowing it would be over an hour before someone would be able to see him.

"I saw him looking at his watch and decided, since I was not busy with another patient, I would evaluate his wound. On examination, it was well healed, so I talked to one of the doctors, got the needed supplies to remove his sutures and redressed his wound.

"While taking care of his wound, we began to engage in conversation. I asked him if he had a doctor's appointment this morning, as he was in such a hurry. The gentleman told me no, that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast with his wife. I then inquired as to her health. He told me that she had been there for a while and that she was a victim of Alzheimer Disease.

"As we talked, and I finished dressing his wound, I asked if she would be worried if he was a bit late. He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now.

"I was surprised, and asked him. 'And you still go every morning, even though she doesn't know who you are?' He smiled as he patted my hand and said. 'She doesn't know me, but I still know who she is.' "

# Congregational News

## EDINBURGH

There is no easy way to say goodbye to a congregation you have loved and worked with for 26 years. I suppose a lovely and fitting end was the communion on our last Sabbath. The pain of Jesus' death, but the wonderful work he has done for us. We do not know why God has called us to another work, but I am thankful that the Lord reassured me many times and am grateful that he continues to reassure me. The children miss their friends, the familiar and loved congregation and funnily enough Tain Royal Academy, which was never one of their favourite places before, but they have settled very well.

Graeme, Nicola and Melissa would value prayer that they would feel more settled in their new school and surroundings. We are thankful that they have settled so well in such a short space of time.

God knows our every need. Recently I heard the illustration of someone holding a pea in their hand and saying this was like the world in God's hand. What a comfort that we are just like that pea, we are in Gods hand, loved, protected and kept. What more could we ask? We pray this for Tain and Fearn.

If it was only our choice we would never have left. God will do

abundantly more than we can ask or think for them and all of us. As I enjoy being challenged, and although I fall short, I would like to challenge each one who reads this, and ask, 'Are you willing to do what God asks of you and to be where God wants you to be?' *Morag Ross.*

There were and are many incidents which make us feel that God is going before us here. The first time we went to the local Parish church and told them that we were coming to the area to do outreach work, the immediate response from one of the key persons in the congregation was, 'That is an answer to prayer.' We also believe that there was mutual and instant fellowship. There is evidence that people are reading the leaflets, so join us in giving thanks, and pray that there would be much more evidence.

We now worship in a side room of the Parish church (which incidentally was at their very kind suggestion) but hope eventually to have a place of our own right in the area we work in. A few people from the parish church came to our services, which we greatly appreciate.

The Community Centre gave us permission to meet in one of the rooms, on a week morning, for a bible study. Morag hopes to do a

ladies bible study. Pray that people will come. Sunday is much more of a problem, the area head janitor says there is, "no chance" of getting a janitor to come out on a Sunday.

We are thinking about a Charity Shop as we feel this might lead to positive and practical contact with the community, and might solve the problem of a place to worship, however it would take a lot of our time and energy and we are not altogether sure if this would be the wisest use of these two resources, so please pray that we are guided in this matter.

One lady is very thoughtfully holding on to bric-a-brac for the proposed shop. Various people have very kindly shown us hospitality. Our heart warms within us when we see, what seems to be, the endless opportunity to reach out with the printed message.

Please pray that I learn, sooner rather than later, how to share the gospel most effectively on a one to one basis. I feel this is critical for the work and a real part of the burden on my heart. One of the assessor elders suggested we call our meetings, "Burdiehouse Southhouse Community Church" in the hope that locals will identify with it. We followed this suggestion.

At the bottom of the signs giving direction to the meeting it says "Jesus Changes Lives," sadly a number of children have commented negatively about this, but at least it shows the notices are being read. A number of adults seem to take the time to read the new notice. The

homes in the area now have our details and more importantly various gospel messages and offers of help. We believe this is fundamental to a long term work. We believe God has brought things about quicker than we dared to imagine. Pray that this continues.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this article. Please continue to help us by your prayers. *"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, His love endures forever."* [Psalm 136:1]. To God, be the glory. JR

### STORNOWAY

The congregation thoroughly enjoyed excellent preaching from Geoff Thomas, Aberystwyth and Andrew Coghill, Leurbost at its Communion in February and was encouraged by one new profession of faith.

The Christianity Explored course is still going on as is a small men's Bible Study. Some new missionary organisations were going to visit the congregation in March. The Fellowship meetings after the Sunday evening service are continuing to be enjoyed.

Please remember the Harris congregation at its Communion at the end of April especially as some of the congregation suffered extensive damage to their homes during the recent storms which hit the island.

### DUNDEE

We are still encouraged with an increase in attendance although we

were very sorry to lose Regi and her family from the congregation. Regi is a Christian from Keralla in the south of India and has been a great help to us in assisting at the Sunday Club. Her husband, Unni, who is staying behind to concentrate on finding permanent work here, has completed a MBA in pharmaceuticals and is hoping to find work in or around the Dundee area.

However, so far this has not been possible, but Regi and family are hoping to return after the summer if Unnie does find work. See photo on back page - please pray that Unni will find work and that the family will be able to worship with us once again.

We are in the middle of preparing and distributing appropriate leaflets in the area for easter and have a Special Service for the community on the 27th March as well as other events for the children.

The minister gave a short address to the Dundee City 24hr Prayer Day on Saturday 26th February. He spoke on Acts 19 about Ephesus only having 12 men and yet true revival was experienced which brought social, political and economic changes to the city. This 24hr prayer time supported by almost every evangelical church in the city. Our city needs much prayer.

We ask readers to continue to remember us in prayer that we would be a real witness in our city.

The congregation hope to make two elders, Iain Murray and Kevin Stirling and the members have been sent the appropriate

forms for election. We ask again for prayer, especially for the local community that the work done in the area will bear fruit to God's glory.

## **INVERNESS**

### **Co-workers Together with Him**

How wonderful it is that God is pleased to use mere mortals to advance his kingdom. He places the treasure in vessels of clay, so the glory will be given to him. Greater honour has no man than this, that the Lord call him to preach the gospel.

***Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2005.***

Kingsview Christian Centre, Inverness, was the scene of a celebration. The occasion was the ordination and induction of Revd Ross MacFarlane as Assistant Minister in the Inverness/Dingwall congregation. God's providences cover every detail of life. While that should afford us great comfort as we face life's issues, the enemy of our souls can try to turn the comfort into worrying concern.

The March date was not the original one for this event. Away back in January the highlands were hit with stormy and snowy weather. That January morning threw up a number of issues. Schools were closed and radio messages warned people not to travel unless absolutely necessary. What about the Induction service scheduled for that evening? Even if a quorum

were able to meet, and that seemed unlikely, there would, at best, be a very poor turnout of people.

A decision had to be made to postpone the ordination and induction service. What would the devil say about that? Thankfully, we know that there is someone higher than the devil. Our Father in Heaven makes no mistakes, and we were not disappointed on Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March. Good weather for travelling, good number of people present, good worship service, and a good official beginning to what we pray will be a ministry greatly blessed by the Lord.

The Moderator, Revd John Ross, preached from Romans, chapter 1, and put the Questions to Revd Ross Macfarlane, who then signed the Formula. After the 'Laying on of Hands', Rev Archie McPhail

addressed the newly ordained minister, and Rev D C Macaskill addressed the congregation on their responsibilities. Ross, Amy, and the children have been in the congregation for over a year, while Ross was completing his studies at HTC, and their work and fellowship is much appreciated.

The congregation provided a 'Reception' following the worship service, during which people were able to talk together, and Presentations were made to Ross and Amy, from the Congregation, as tokens of the affection in which they are held. I am sure that they, as do we all, value the prayers of all those who call on the Father in Heaven. May the Lord richly bless them in their ministry and in their family life.

*Calum MacInnes*

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## God's Purposes for Your Church

*"To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" [Ephesians 3:21]. "When David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he [died]" [Acts 13:36 NIV]*

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**O**NE OF MY hobbies is gardening. I think one reason I enjoy it so much is because it fits the way God wired up my personality: I love to watch things grow. I have always been fascinated by the different ways plants develop.

No two plants grow in the same way, at the same rate, or to the same size. Each plant's growth pattern is unique. The same is true of churches. No two churches will

ever grow in identical ways. God intends for your church to be unique.

Of all the growth patterns I've observed as a gardener, the growth of the Chinese bamboo tree is the most amazing to me. Plant a bamboo sprout in the ground, and for four or five years (sometimes much longer) nothing happens! You water and fertilize, water and fertilize, water and fertilize - but you see no visible evidence that anything is happening.

Nothing! But about the fifth year things change rather dramatically. In a six-week period the Chinese bamboo tree grows to be a staggering ninety feet tall! World Book Encyclopedia records that one bamboo plant can grow three feet in a single twenty-four-hour period. It seems incredible that a plant that lies dormant for years can suddenly explode with growth, but it happens without fail with bamboo trees.

As I conclude this book I want to offer you this final advice: Don't worry about the growth of your church. Focus on fulfilling the purposes of your church. Keep watering and fertilizing and cultivating and weeding and pruning. God will grow his church to the size he wants it, at the rate that's best for your situation.

God may allow you to labor for years with little visible results. Don't be discouraged! Underneath the surface things are happening that you can't 'see. Roots are growing down and out, preparing for what is ahead. Even when you may not see the wisdom of what God is doing, you must trust God. Learn to live with the assurance that he knows what he's doing.

Remember Proverbs 19:21:-  
*"Many are the plans in a man heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails."* If you are building a

ministry on God's eternal purpose, you cannot fail. It will prevail. Keep on doing what you know is right, even when you feel discouraged. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" [Gal. 6:9]. Just as with a bamboo tree, when the time is right God can change things overnight. What is most important is that you remain faithful to his purposes.

Purpose-driven churches are led by purpose-driven leaders. Acts 13:36, one of my life verses, tells us that David was purpose driven: "When David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he [died]." I cannot think of a greater epitaph. Imagine having that statement inscribed on *your* tombstone: *"He served God's purpose in his own generation."* My prayer is that God will be able to say that about me when I die. And my motivation for writing this book is that God will be able to say that about *you* when you die. The secret of effective ministry is to fulfil both parts of this statement.

[Morag Ross, the wife of our minister in Edinburgh, was so encouraged with this piece from Rick Warren's book 'The Purpose Driven Church' that she sent it in for the encouragement of others working to build a church.]

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"In the year 1861 the French Academy of Science published a list of fifty-one so-called scientific facts, each of which, it was alleged, disproved some statement in the Bible. Today the Bible remains as it was then, but not one of those fifty-one so-called facts is held by men of science".

*Loraine Boettner, 'Studies in Theology', p35, Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co.*

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# BRITISH CONVERTS FROM ISLAM: CHRISTIAN LEADERS MUST SPEAK OUT

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UNITED KINGDOM

10 March 2005

**S**OME 3,000 Christians in the UK are in danger because they have chosen to convert from Islam. Some are being actively harassed and persecuted, but many church leaders seem more interested in defending their attackers than in standing up for the rights of the converts.

Nissar Hussain, a Christian from Bradford, has suffered three years of harassment, amounting effectively to persecution, from the local Muslims in his neighbourhood. His car has been torched and rammed, bricks have been thrown through his window on many occasions, there have been threats to burn the house down, and much else besides. Mr Hussain and his wife were originally Muslims, and this is the reason for the treatment they are getting.

Though this may seem shocking, it should not be a surprise. From its inception, Islam has rigorously sought to prevent its adherents from choosing any other faith. Such apostates are regarded as traitors and – according to shari'a (Islamic law) – should be executed. There are many thousands of former Muslims, in scores of countries around the world, who are suffering for their decision to follow Christ.

In countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Sudan the law of the land specifies the death sentence for apostates from Islam, though this is only rarely practised. What is more common is for those who have left Islam to be persecuted in a multitude of other ways, including imprisonment and torture. In countries where there is no law against conversion, other laws may be used as a pretext, or "accidents" may be arranged.

In addition, zealous individual Muslims may take it on themselves to kill a convert. Those converts who do not lose their lives may lose their spouse (through divorce), children, inheritance, home and job. As the case of Mr and Mrs Hussain shows, living in Britain does not ensure full protection from persecution. Where a convert is the only non-Muslim in their family, difficulties can be even more severe. Converts from Islam in this country, especially young women, have been rejected by their family and sometimes brutally assaulted; some have been threatened with death [1].

## NUMBERS AT RISK IN THE UK

The number of individuals at risk in the UK is substantial. It is conservatively estimated that there are 1,500 to 2,000 Iranians, approaching 1,000 Arabs, and some 150 Pakistanis and others living in

this country who have left Islam to become Christians. In round figures there are 3,000 KNOWN converts, but there may also be many more who are isolated from the various networks, and thus omitted from the figures.

These converts face not only the possibility of hostility and aggression from individuals within the Muslim community in Britain, but also some are asylum-seekers who have fled much graver dangers in their countries of origin. If such individuals are refused asylum and sent home, they could face imprisonment, torture or death. A number of senior British Muslims have recently acknowledged the injustice of the Islamic apostasy law and the serious breach of human rights and religious liberty which it entails, both in theory and in practice in the modern world.

#### CHRISTIAN LEADERS MUST SPEAK OUT

It is essential that Christian leaders in the UK should affirm the rights of those who have converted to Christianity from Islam. Sadly such converts can often be marginalised by those to whom they turn for help. Having been rejected by their own community, they find that the Christian community fails to take their situation seriously.

Three years ago, when Mr Hussain was first attacked, most church leaders who heard of his situation did nothing. As further attacks occurred, they still seemed barely interested. Now that the

plight of the Hussain family has hit the national press, church leaders seem to be chiefly concerned to absolve from blame the perpetrators of these crimes. Even some in Bradford itself have sought to deny the link with Islam and have attributed this sustained and vicious campaign to the pranks of youngsters.

For Christian leadership to downplay the sufferings of converts is a betrayal of those who have risked everything for Christ. But if British Christian leaders were to stand up for converts, it could even bring about change within Islam itself.

#### PRAYER ITEMS

\* Please pray for the protection of all Christians in the UK who have come from a Muslim background. Pray that they may also have peace in their hearts and not give way to fear. Pray that their faithfulness to Christ, despite great loss, pain and harassment, may speak powerfully to others.

\* Pray that British Church leaders may act with integrity and courage to care for converts from Islam and to defend their rights and freedoms.

\* Pray that Muslim leaders will act to change the traditional apostasy law within Islam and to allow Muslims freedom to choose their own faith without fear of punishment.

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# Compassion

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- C Christlike
- O Oneness (identifying with)
- M Merciful
- P Pity
- A Awareness of others
- S Sympathy
- S Softness (not hard hearted)
- I Interested in
- O Openness towards the needy
- N Nothingness (humility)

*“Jesus went through all their towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” [Mat. 9:35-38].*

What do we see in the crowds? Let me suggest what we should see. We should see souls on their way to eternity who need to know about Christ. We should see people who have concerns of many kinds that cause them to be harassed. We should see people who often have no spiritual leader, or worse, spiritual leaders who are not interested in

leading them to Christ. We should see people who have often heard the message “*peace, peace,*” but there is no real peace. We should see people who are right in their own eyes but are not right in God's eyes. We should see people who seek happiness in this life only and don't care much about the life to come. We should see people who need help but might not accept the help on offer. Probably in the crowd there will be some however few who do love the Lord.

Sheep without a shepherd are lost, are in danger, have no one to lead them to food or water, have no protection, they are a prey for the thief and for the destroyer. There is no one to attend to the sick or carry the young lambs. Such sheep have a very bleak future.

So it is for multitudes in our day, they are spiritually lost and in the greatest danger of a lost eternity. They have no spiritual food or water that is wholesome and life giving. They are a prey to every false teacher who would keep them away from Christ and lead them further and further into a false hope for eternity. The spiritual thief, the spiritual murderer, the false teacher can come at any time and do his treacherous work. Such a scenario should constantly fill us with compassion,

prayer and action.

To the lost Jesus says, *"The Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost."* [Luke. 19:10]. To, the hungry and thirsty Jesus declares, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

To, the unwary He says, *"If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."* [Mat. 15:14]. To those looking for leadership, care and compassion He says *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* [John 10:11].

To, those harassed and burdened He says *"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."* [Mat. 11:28]. To the young Jesus says, *"Let the little*

*children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."* [Mat 19:12].

Compassion should lead to prayer. *"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* [Mat. 9:38]. There is a great need for an army of workers up and down the land and around the world. Only the Lord of the harvest can give this.

In the gospels we see how the compassion of Christ led to action Mark 1:41 *"Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man."* Our compassion must lead to action otherwise our faith is dead.

'Compassion is what makes a person feel pain when somebody else hurts.' Anon. 'People will not care what you know until they know that you care.' Anon.

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## Court Overturns Preacher's Conviction

THE CONVICTION OF A Swedish Pentecostal preacher — based on a sermon he preached on homosexuality — has been overturned by an appeals court. According to the news item: "The Swedish pastor sentenced to prison for a sermon that was said to spread hatred against gay people has had his conviction quashed on appeal, in a verdict that a Swedish gay rights group has called 'disturbing.'

"Åke Green, a pentacostalist pastor from Borgholm on the Baltic island of Öland, was convicted last year by a court in Kalmar under Swedish laws banning 'agitation against minority groups.' In the original verdict, the court ruled that certain phrases in his sermon amounted to an attempt to stir up hatred of homosexuals. He was sentenced to one month in prison.

"Overturning the earlier ruling, the appeal court in Jönköping said that there was "no evidence that the pastor was using his preaching as a cover to attack homosexuals," arguing instead that Green was clarifying his beliefs and his interpretation of biblical passages".

**Below is a copy of a warning made to the people of Glasgow some years ago!**

## A Call to Glasgow Citizens

**W**E, the LORD PROVOST and MAGISTRATES of the CITY and ROYAL BURGH of GLASGOW, and MINISTERS of RELIGION serving within its bounds, along with all right-minded citizens, are deeply perturbed that our City is in danger of losing its reputation as a great community of kindly, warm-hearted and well-behaved citizens.

The prevalence of crime and lawlessness throughout the country is seen in dishonest dealing, house-breaking, corruption of youth, stealing and pilfering of goods privately and nationally owned, malicious damage and violence with danger to life and limb.

They interfere with the freedom, security and happiness of the ordinary citizen and with the true welfare of youth and age alike in Glasgow as elsewhere.

Our civilization is based upon the Sovereignty of God, whence all authority springs, and upon respect for the rights and well-being of others—**doing to them as we would have them do to us.**

**IF GLASGOW IS NOT TO BE GOVERNED BY THIS GOLDEN RULE—WHAT THEN ?**

Must not each citizen curb all selfishness and self-seeking, and guide his thoughts, words and deeds by **RESPECT FOR GOD, RESPECT FOR OTHERS AND RESPECT FOR SELF ?**

At the beginning of our new Queen's reign, we call upon all citizens, young and old, without class or distinction, to join in a Campaign to renew

**RESPECT FOR OURSELVES**—Clean Bodies, Clean Minds, Clean Speech ; Honour, Faithfulness, Honesty at Home, at Work and at Play.

**RESPECT FOR OTHERS**—

**AS INDIVIDUALS**—Their Persons, their Rights and their Possessions.

**IN FAMILY LIFE**—Mutual Respect between husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister.

**IN EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE**—Respect for law, authority and promises. Mutual Respect between employer and employee, man and woman, citizen and fellow-citizen. Respect for all womanhood, for childhood and for strangers coming amongst us.

**RESPECT FOR GOD**—For His Name, for His Law and for His Service.

Let Glasgow Flourish

BY THE PREACHING OF THE WORD AND THE PRAISING OF HIS NAME !

*Nickie A. Mann*

Lord Provost.

*Glady's In Dewar.*

Senior Magistrate.

*John S. Lawrie*

Moderator, Presbytery of Glasgow, Church of Scotland.

*+ D.A. Campbell*

Archbishop of Glasgow, Roman Catholic Church.

*+ Professor A. Bellamy*

Bishop, Scottish Episcopal Church.

*J. G. Drummond*

President, Glasgow Christian Council.

*John D. B. Robertson.*

Glasgow Baptist Association.

*a Ego Bookieit.*

Church of Christ.

*James H. Smith.*

Congregational District Council.

*A. Macdonald*

Free Church of Scotland.

*I. K. Coogrove*

Garnethill Synagogue, Jewish Community.

*Cecil P. Bades*

Chairman, Methodist Synod, Scotland.

*Robert E. Williams.*

The Salvation Army.

*Robert S. Belantse,*

United Free Church of Scotland.

*Robert A. Finlayson*

United Original Secession.

How the times have changed! But what has happened before, can happen again.  
Let us pray that God would "restore the years that the locusts have eaten" [Joel 2:25]

# This Present Moment

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**W**E ARE profoundly unaware of the present. That is, the here and now, the place that we always are, is the place that we are least likely to see for what it fully is. Blaise Pascal, though living four centuries ago, keenly diagnosed this peculiar human condition. In his work, *Pensees*, he masterfully articulates our seeming lack of interest in the present. Writes Pascal,

"Let each one examine his thoughts, and he will find them all occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely ever think of the present; and if we think of it, it is only to take light from it to arrange the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means; the future alone is our end. So we never live, but we hope to live; and, as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so."

That is a powerful proclamation, isn't it? The present is never our end. If this is true, Pascal's grim thought is worth examining. Though we hope and toil for life, we never really live. And indeed, looking back most of us can readily recall a particularly squandered time in our lives, a time we now wish we were more fully attentive, more fully present. Truly, the now of life is far more significant than we often realize.

In the play *Our Town*, Thornton

Wilder brilliantly depicts the magnitude of the present, the fullness of each moment amidst the fleeting nature of time in our lives. Emily, a young mother who died in childbirth, is given the opportunity to go back and observe a single day in her life. She is advised to choose an "ordinary" day, for even the least important day will be important enough, the dead remind her. True enough, Emily chooses a day and quickly finds herself overwhelmed by it. Her ensuing lines are fascinating.

"I can't go on. It goes so fast... I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back—up the hill—to my grave. But first: Wait! One more look."

"Goodbye, Goodbye, world... Mama and Papa. Goodbye clocks ticking... and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths... and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you."

Upon returning Emily wonders if anyone ever realizes life while they live it—life as it is, "every, every minute." The response she receives is pointed. "No... The saints and poets, maybe they do some."<sup>1</sup> The image is powerful and the lesson clear. And where this is a fitting reminder to seize each day, we do well to ask why the present brims with significance, lest it lead us

merely to the Epicurean's philosophy, observed by King Solomon, cautioned against by Jesus, noted by Dave Matthews, and largely embraced today: "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die."<sup>2</sup>

It is written on our hearts that the present holds much more still.

C.S. Lewis once asked, "Where, except in the present, can the Eternal be met?" This is why the present is so profoundly important. You see, God is always nearest to us "now." Where Jesus says, "Follow me," where he pleads, "Come to me," there is both urgency and immediacy in his voice.

Now is where he asks us to draw near; now is when we must decide to follow or not to follow; now is where we rejoice in this day he hath made.

So indeed, seize the day, for the promises of the one who came in the fullness of time are boldly written upon this very moment.

<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Barry Morrow in *Heaven Observed* (Colorado Springs:NavPress, 2001), 321.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 8:15, Luke 12:13-21.

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"A worldwide poll taken in 1991 put the global figure for atheists at just 4.4%, and although a category labelled 'other non-religious' produced a further 16.4%, this still left nearly 80% professing some kind of belief in some kind of God".  
*John Blanchard*

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