

# Is Revival Conditional?

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**I**N THE BIBLE, Biblical blessings and revivals are almost always conditional. From Abram onwards there have been conditions to be fulfilled before the blessing comes. God promised Abram a land flowing with milk and honey but if he didn't leave Ur of the Chaldeas and stayed in Ur, he would not get the blessing. The condition was leaving his father's house.

Throughout the Bible the same principle applies. We are promised that *"no good thing"* will God withhold from us, but it only applies if we *"walk uprightly"* [Psa 84:11]. In the New Testament also The promises of blessings are tied to obedience. We will be able to *"quench all the fiery darts of the devil"* only if we take *"the shield of faith"* [Eph 6: 16]. Our very salvation is conditional. We are only saved **if** we believe and rest and trust in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most practical book in the Bible is the book written by the half brother of our Lord, James. In his letter, in chapter 4, there are three wonderful promises The devil will flee from us; God will draw near to us; and God will lift us up. However to each of these promises is appended a duty.

The devil will not turn away from

us, unless we resist him [v7]. We never have to pick a fight with the devil - he goes about looking for one and we are easy prey for him [1 Pet 5:8]. So it is not long before we are struggling with him.

The word 'resist' here is the same word that Paul uses when he tells us to take the *"sword of the Spirit"* and stand fast.

There are times when we need to stand firm: without advancing or retreating. To advance or to retreat may be dangerous.

The devil does not have an unending source of energy and confidence. He gets tired like any other being that is not omnipotent. Satan is certainly not all powerful. To constantly resist him wearies him and turns him away.

Satan does not have what you and I as Christians have - an never-ending source of help and power. He cannot, like you and I call upon the Holy Spirit for help. In fact Satan has the distinct disadvantage of knowing he is already defeated! He is filled with discouragement! You and I are promised victory. *"We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us"* [Rom 8:37].

The second promise James makes is that God will *"draw near*

to us" and the condition is that we "draw near to God" [v8].

It is encouraging to note that the invitation to draw near is made to **sinner**s. It is not the pure and the holy that are invited but those with sin, "draw near to God...cleanse your hands, you **sinner**s". Even our sin should not keep us back from coming near to God. Sin is the reason for our coming. Our Catechism tells us that we are "to draw near to God...as children to a father, able and ready to help us".

We must never assume that because we go to a church, or because we pray regularly or because we read our Bibles daily, that we are therefore near to God. We can be 'miles away' from God even sitting at the Lord's Table! We can even have the praises of God on our lips and our hearts can be far away. There is a form of godliness which denies the power [2 Tim 3:5]. We can be cold and hard and yet appear to be true worshippers.

When we are near to God we have His mind and Spirit. We want to please Him. Getting near to God is becoming unselfish. It is denying self and serving others. It is putting ourselves last.

The third promise James makes in chapter 4 is that God "will lift us up" [v10]. The condition is that we "humble ourselves". The Lord Jesus Christ "humbled Himself". Jesus had a sinless human nature and it was a 'natural' thing for Him to humble Himself - it was His 'nature' to be humble - He did it from the inside as it were.

Sometimes, we are humbled by humbled by the discovery of sin, or something similar! We are 'forced' because of circumstances to be humble. Not so the Lord Jesus. He had grace above measure. He never sinned in any way and His humility came from His holy nature and spirit. However, God accepts our humility because it can only be performed through His grace in our hearts.

So, national revival will only come when we fulfil the conditions for God's blessing given in His Word. God does deal graciously with His people. One vital condition is repentance for our sins.

For national revival, we will need national repentance. "*If My people...humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land*" [2 Chro 7:14].

But there seems to be little sign of that in the nation at the moment. As a nation, we just do not realise how God defines sin. We are ignorant of what sin really is. Sin is the contradiction of God. We are totally unaware that God **is** deeply offended at our sinful way of life. We need to be made aware that God hates sin.

If there was national mourning over our sins on the scale that there was over Princess Diana's death, I have no doubt there would be revival round the corner. God is more willing to send revival than we are to repent.

# The Christian and the TV

By Revd Jerrold Lewis, Vancouver

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## Introduction

In the 1930's David Saronoff the president of RCA had the entrepreneurial foresight to invest money in a wild and crazy project called television. Over the next several years, RCA invested 50 million dollars into this endeavor under the watchful eye of Russian-born scientist Vladimir Kosma.

In 1939 RCA shocked the world by televising the opening of the New York World's Fair. Later that year RCA bought the license to patent the television and began selling television sets to the very wealthy. Before 1947 the number of US homes with television sets could be measured in the thousands. By the late 1990s, 98 percent of US homes had at least one television set (Gordman 2). No invention has had as much effect on contemporary culture as television. In Canada the average hours per week of TV viewing is staggering.

Given the permanency of TV in society at large, what then should the Christian's reaction be to television? Is it inherently evil? Is watching TV, even the news, a sin? How much time should a Christian spend watching TV? These are some of the questions that should arise in the mind of any godly and conscientious Christian. To help clarify these issues, it *is* my intention to give biblical grounds for

unplugging the "unblinking eye" and saying no to the cultural pressure to bow to its cultural demands. Taking dominion, which is a biblical principle, does not mean that we need to "Christianize" all of the world's forms of culture! Some things are better rejected no matter how popular they might be.

## Eye-Gate, Ear-Gate.

In John Bunyan's Holy War, it was understood by the devil and his minions that the town of Mansoul (which symbolizes the heart of man) was the most vulnerable to attack through the entrances called Eye-Gate, and Ear-Gate—the sense organs of eye and ear (Bunyan, 10). Man today is not different than in Bunyan's day. We are also most vulnerable through the senses of sight and sound. To underscore this, one does not need to look any farther than the local shopping mall, where everything is of a certain *visual quality* beckoning us to come and buy.

This presents the Christian with an interesting dilemma as he looks on, and lives in, the current culture. Jacques Ellul rightly points out that "television acts less by the creation of clear notions and precise opinions and more by enveloping us in a haze" [Ellul 336]. David F. Wells says regarding the dangers of television that "Television opens the

entire world to us, bequeathing to us a virtual omniscience" [Wells, 230]. We are beckoned to have a sort of *colonization of experience* where the sins and virtues of others are incorporated into our own experience. Thus by our eye and ear, we are enticed to partake in the sin of others [Ephesians 5:6] with a once removed sense of reality. What we would not do ourselves we readily watch with our eyes and hear with our ears.

A W Tozer once said regarding the Christian and the world's culture, For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was—a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability. For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god 'Entertainment' she may as well join forces with him and make what use she can of his powers [Tozer 84]. We sin then, vicariously through those things we watch. Because man is sinful by nature, we naturally want to see how close to sin *we can get* without actually taking part in it. Dr. Joel Beeke put it this way, 'By nature our question is, "How far can I go and still not sin?" instead of, "How far can I flee from sin and avoid the very appearance of evil?"' At the very heart and center of

our modern entertainment spirit stands TELEVISION. This is an obvious fact. Television sets are in the homes of 97% of Americans today and 91% of all television time is dedicated solely to the purpose of entertainment [Beeke].

While the world beckons us to "come close", the Scriptures tell us to "*Abstain from all appearance of evil*" [2 Thessalonians 5:22]. It is true that the technology of the television is of things indifferent, but the overarching usage is another story. Joel Beeke gives some stunning statistics in his essay [Is TV Really so Bad?](#) After displaying how the TV in general encouraged the viewer to watch people break each of the 10 commandments he says, One study reached the conclusion that by the time a child is fourteen at least 18,000 violent assaults and murders take place before his eyes. Another study confirmed that the average child between five and thirteen years of age soaks in 1,300 murders each year, so that violence, assaults, and murders no longer speak the message of sin or its consequences. Murders, hatred, violent actions and words assume the role of normal behavior. The average child's program contains thirty-eight acts of violence per hour (adult program: twenty) [Beeke]. He goes on to say, In American homes 35% of mealtimes are spent in front of the TV set. Nightly thousands of parents realize the programs that will come on are demoralizing and harmful for their children but yet are so hungry

themselves to drink in the sin which they contain that they often let their children watch it too, having no power to control it [Beeke].

### **A Good Use of TV?**

Many have objected to the content of television programmes (too much violence, sex, etc.) but television as a *medium* is largely ignored as an innocuous invention. But was Marshall McLuhan right when he coined the slogan "the medium is the message" [McLuhan 7-21]? The ease with which men, women, and children sit in front of the TV goes a long way to show us how lazy the human heart is. TV "leisure" time very quickly eats up "family worship" time, "godly reading" time, "playing with your children" time, and "personal quiet" time. "But I can control my TV and my time", you might say. Dr. Beeke rejoinders, "People who say they can control TV are usually speaking idealistically, not realistically" [Beeke].

So what is it about the medium of TV that shapes the message? Television stresses *moving image* over against written and spoken language. This image-defendant medium does not let the imagination of the individual paint the picture on the canvas of the mind but rather paints the images for you. We are being told, in a very subtle, tantalizing way, what to think. Creativity, independence of thinking, and ingenuity are all discarded to create a *central database of experience*. The only visionaries in a TV show are the

producers and directors who decide for the audience what they will and will not process. Lateral thinking is never used because about the time you wish to analyze what you are looking at in a rational way, the TV program has already moved on to its next sequence of visual events.

Kenneth Myers says regarding this, "A culture that is rooted more in images than in words will find it increasingly difficult to sustain any broad commitment to any truth, since truth is an abstraction requiring language" [Myers 164].

### **Is Christ against Culture?**

So then, is our Lord and Saviour against technology and culture? Absolutely not. But when the *medium* by which culture comes, makes us culpable in other men's sins, steals valuable time away from other important things, and disables our God-given ability to reason and discern between right and wrong, perhaps we should take a step back and examine the actual value of the *medium of TV* itself. Paul's words might come into play here, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" [1 Corinthians 10:23].

Perhaps the antithesis between the world and the Church is simply *too great* at this point. Even if the TV industry were "Christianized" and men and women watched programs where God was glorified, would not the medium of TV *all by itself* still compel the

believer to excess? It is the conviction of this author that even if the *content* were to change, the human heart would still find reason to abuse the medium. Twenty-two hours per week of the *finest programming* would suddenly become the norm, thus causing man to fall back into the same ditch he just dug himself out of. *Amusement* always seems to triumph over *duty* in the heart of man, and so, we give over to the lesser of two goods, falling short of true obedience to God.

When God gave us His special revelation, He did not give it to us as a symphony, or in a painting, or a sculpture. He gave it to us in letters: letters which form words, words which form sentences and sentences which *give thought* and *paint pictures* on the mind and heart.

Now it is not this author's contention that all forms of culture should be written (surely art, music, literature etc, can be godly), but that we should understand God's way of revelation to man and feed the mind in ways that would enhance our walk of faith. "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness*" [2 Peter 1:3]. Certainly this should be the starting point of every aspect of culture?

## Conclusion

Philippians 4:8 says, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,*

*whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*"

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones comments on this verse and adds, The problem which is posed for us by this particular text is the whole problem of the relationship between Christianity and culture. Now I am sure that many, if not most, Christian people are interested in that question, because it is of real significance and importance... In view of all this, I would suggest to you that what Paul was saying to the Philippians was this: Your whole thinking and all your actions must be controlled by the gospel...Every thought must be brought into subjection to him. Let our whole life be a tribute and a testimony to our Redeemer's praise [Lloyd- Jones 181-189].

This should be our motivation in every area of culture. The Lord is telling us that we are the gatekeepers of our own minds. If we *absolutely must* watch TV (which would speak deeply to the subject of idolatry), we should observe nothing that would displease our Lord. If we use the criteria set above in Philippians 4 as our example in what we place before our eyes and ears, I am sure that 99.9% of all televisions would power down in our country. And, if we were truly concerned about the things of the Lord, I am sure we would find better ways of

passing the time than watching TV. But the flesh is weak. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" [1 John 5:21].

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## **Debating Scripture**

I TRULY WONDER IF THE MODERN evangelical church is better off for the tacit decision to 'agree to disagree' over such important issues as the nature of God's work in salvation...In our churches such debate should be polite and civilised. But even there we prefer to call them 'discussions,' to avoid any hint of contention. Our worship services have evolved to the point where even asking questions of, let alone entering into debate with, the preacher is considered a serious breach of decorum. In a way that is too bad. Instead, today, when people disagree with the preacher, it is much more likely they will 'roast him' (behind his back) over Sunday supper, or simply leave and look for another church (or another preacher) that they do agree with. This is commonly accepted as the loving, caring way to handle disagreements in churches. Few, it seems, are willing to take the time and trouble, and risk the vulnerability, required to persuade, or be persuaded, by discussing and debating issues - where everybody concerned seriously wrestles with the Scriptures - until proper conclusions are reached and agreed upon...it is too bad that even Berean-style inquiry [Acts 17:11] cannot find a place for exercise in many of our assemblies.

*Roger Wagner, ['Tongues Aflame', p190]*

# Hypocrisy!

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**T**HE CHURCH IS 'full of hypocrites' is one of the most commonest reasons given why people do not go to church. The word hypocrisy comes from two Greek words meaning 'answer' and 'mask' and is taken from the theatre world and means 'to answer from behind a mask'. It is to play act. It is to **pretend to be someone we are not**.

In a play at a theatre people pretend to be someone else. Christians too often pretend to be better than they are. They can hide their feelings put on a face that gives a wrong image of the truth. This is a great sin in God's sight. Jesus said "*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy*" [Luke 12::1]. He followed that up by telling them (and us) 'Everything is going to be revealed', "*there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be made Known*". The mask is going to come off!

There is a story told of a young student who was to sit an oral exam in science. When he went into the examination room one of the three stern looking examiners asked him to give the answer to a scientific question. 'Oh, I know that answer' he said. 'It was on the tip of my tongue just seconds ago. I had it in

the room through the back as we waited. Oh what is it again. I'm sorry, it has slipped my mind' he said.

'Well, well' said the examiner, 'what a pity you can't remember the answer. The scientific world have been looking for that answer since decades and have not been able to answer it yet! You could have made yourself famous if you remembered it!' The young student was ashamed and embarrassed - he had lied and pretended he knew.

Christians can be hypocritical like that young student. We can pretend that we enjoyed a service when we didn't. We can pretend we are stronger Christians than we actually are.

We can pretend that everything is going well and that we have no problems; that we enjoy praying, worshipping and serving God when it is not true. But we must be honest before God and before men. People notice our mock humility and our dishonesty - and it is a very bad testimony.

We need also to distinguish between being hypocritical and doing something against our feelings. Some people think that it is being hypocritical to do something against their feelings, but that is not so. For example, to get up out of bed

every morning is something some people do every day, against their feelings. But that is not being hypocritical. It would only be hypocritical if they said they enjoyed doing it when they actually didn't!

We need to remember this fact when people say to us that it is hypocritical for them to go to church when they do not believe in God, or when they feel they are sinners. Everyone is called to worship God. It is a duty for everyone to worship

their creator whether they acknowledge it or not.

In fact it is the wicked that God calls to come and worship Him. *"Come now let us reason together, though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool"* [Isa 1:18]

We add to our sin by refusing to come and worship God. An imperfect worship is infinitely better than no worship at all.

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## Sin - a Broken Relationship

SIN STRIKES AT THE VERY NATURE of a person and her or his relationship with God. Instead of relativism, it is a matter of relationship. Sin involves much more than mere transgression or breaking of a rule. It is possible to sin, Paul said, without transgressing the Law [Rom 4:15]. You may not even know the Law. You cannot transgress the Law unless you know the Law. Even if you do not know the Law, however, it is still possible to sin. Sin is ultimately a matter of one's relationship with God. And the fact that we turn every one to our own way. [Isa 53:6]. A person can even sin by observing the Law, according to Jesus [Mat 6:1-18]. Watch out how you pray. Watch out how you give to the poor. Watch out how you fast. You can do a good thing with the wrong motive and it is sin.....

So...what does it mean to be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit? It involves the idea that the Holy Spirit will convince in such a strong, powerful, and unshakeable way that sin is a problem in one's life. Conviction means that a person is absolutely convinced that something is a problem. Ironically, a person may experience the conviction of sin without understanding what has happened. I would argue that people around us every day are under conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit without realising what is going on, because they are ignorant.

As long as people think of sin as only breaking the rules and conviction only as feeling guilty about breaking the rules, the great state of ignorance will continue. When people begin to understand that sin involves a spiritual state of being, the ignorance will begin to diminish. Then they can begin to understand that any spiritual state of being that does not line up with Christ is the condition we call sin. People experience the debilitating effects of sin in many varied ways other than guilt. *Harry Lee Poe* ['See No Evil', p51]

# What Happens After Death?

By Revd Calum MacInnes, Inverness

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**W**HEN YOU DIE, is that the end? Who knows? Who can tell what is on the other side? Jesus tells the story of a man who died and went to a *"place of torment"*. He was not happy there and concluded that his brothers, left behind on earth, would not be happy there either.

In a moment of apparent compassion he made a special request that a messenger be sent to warn them so they would avoid coming to the unhappy situation in which he now found himself. The story goes on to say that he was told that his brothers had the written Word of God, and if they would not believe that, they would not believe supposing someone went to them from the other side of death. What an answer he got! For us it is a good pointer as to where we can learn something about the 'other side'. God has spoken!

You are a person with a body and a spirit. You are more a spirit with a body than a body with a spirit. Death comes and whatever happens to your body, your spirit goes marching on – but the question is: where? That is the idea behind the expression 'the remains', sometimes used to refer to a person's body after death. The body remains behind, and will be disposed of one way or another, but your spirit will be in

the 'next world', either in a place called heaven or in a place called hell.

One of the inspired writers in the Bible was called Paul. He was taught by God so he understood a lot about these issues. One of the things he wrote about himself was that when death came he would *"be with Christ, which is far better"*. He was referring to heaven. To have that experience ahead of you should fill you with hope and help you through life's hard times. In fact, with that in mind, you should see all the 'ups-and-downs' in this life as part-preparation for going to be with Jesus in heaven. This will help ease a lot of the pain. However, the only way to have that expectation is that you are trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. That means a new relationship with him, and it will show its reality in your life. *"He who has the Son of God has life"*.

What about the other place, called hell? God's Word shows us things about the place. One part of the Bible where we get an insight to such an 'unseen place' is Isaiah, chapter 14, from verse 9 onward. This is almost like an obituary of a king, written while the king is still alive! In it God shows us how things will be there, using the illustration of a powerful king. The king is seen as very wealthy, living in luxury, and

surrounded by pomp in this life. But, things change. We are given a look into 'Sheol', the place of the dead. What happens in this scene?

Four things are noted about some of the activities in the unseen world into which the king was to enter. The first of these shows us that 'there is existence beyond death', because he is depicted as coming into the company of others who exist there.

Those who rise to meet him are but 'shadows' of their past – like the expression used of a person who has lost some of the previous splendour. Death is just a change of location and circumstance, not termination of existence.

The second thing to learn about hell is that there is still personal identity and reality of recognition. Those there know who is coming in to join them! That of course will not ease the pain of the place. If it would, the man in torment would not have wanted his brothers to avoid coming.

Then, we learn that there is the loss of the power that the person had on this side of death. They say, with apparent sense of amazement, "You too have become as weak as we".

Then, lastly, all the previous trappings of pomp and ceremony are gone. What is depicted is rather an ignominious bed of maggots so unlike the bed of splendour to which the king had been accustomed. These words from the metrical psalm describe well the changed circumstances:

For he shall carry nothing hence  
When death his days do end,  
Nor shall his glory after him  
Into the grave descend.

Thankfully, at the end of the chapter, God speaks words of comfort and hope to those who trust in him. Depicting a city, well-built on a solid foundation, He has provided a refuge for those who are afflicted, who need help and shelter. That is what the good news of Jesus is. He is the refuge, He gives the comfort by His word and the Holy Spirit. He is the hope that will stand whatever happens on this side of the great divide between this existence and that beyond what we commonly call death. One of the old writers said, 'Those who have welcomed Christ, can welcome death'.

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## **INVENTING EVIL**

"The gravity of Satan's rebellion rests in the fact that he sinned without a tempter. It gives him the shameful distinction of being called *"the father of lies"* [John 8:44], in the same tradition that men who have founded an art or profession are called the 'father' of it. And while men are not in danger of Satan's supreme act of treason, they come close to it when they become *"inventors of evil things"* [Rom 1:30]. You may provoke God to new punishments. Sodom devised a new way to sin, so God devised a new way to discipline them: He sent hell from above upon them. *William Gurnall*

# Prayer of a Minor Prophet

The covenant and prayer of the well known great preacher A W Tozer written in 1950

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**T**HIS IS THE prayer of a man called to be a witness to the nations. This is what he said to his Lord on the day of his ordination. After the elders and ministers had prayed and laid their hands on him he withdrew to meet his Savior in the secret place and in the silence, farther in than his well-meaning brethren could take him.

“O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and was afraid. Thou has called me to an awesome task in a grave and perilous hour. Thou art about to shake all nations and the earth and also heaven, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. O Lord, my Lord, Thou has stooped to honor me to be Thy servant. No man taketh this honor upon himself save he that is called of God as was Aaron. Thou has ordained me Thy messenger to them that are stubborn of heart and hard of hearing. They have rejected Thee, the Master, and it is not to be expected that they will receive me, the servant.

My God, I shall not waste time deploring my weakness nor my unfitness for the work. The responsibility is not mine, but Thine. Thou has said, "I knew thee - I ordained thee - I sanctified thee," and Thou hast also said, "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou

shalt speak." Who am I to argue with Thee or to call into question Thy sovereign choice? The decision is not mine but Thine. So be it, Lord. Thy will, not mine, be done.

Well do I know, Thou God of the prophets and the apostles, that as long as I honor Thee Thou wilt honor me. Help me therefore to take this solemn vow to honor Thee in all my future life and labors, whether by gain or by loss, by life or by death, and then to keep that vow unbroken while I live.

It is time, O God, for Thee to work, for the enemy has entered into Thy pastures and the sheep are torn and scattered. And false shepherds abound who deny the danger and laugh at the perils which surround Thy flock. The sheep are deceived by these hirelings and follow them with touching loyalty while the wolf closes in to kill and destroy. I beseech Thee, give me sharp eyes to detect the presence of the enemy; give me understanding to see and courage to report what I see faithfully. Make my voice so like Thine own that even the sick sheep will recognize it and follow Thee.

Lord Jesus, I come to Thee for spiritual preparation. Lay Thy hand upon me. Anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should be come a religious scribe and thus lose my prophetic

calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the modern clergy, the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet - not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity. Save me from bondage to things. Let me not waste my days puttering around the house. Lay Thy terror upon me, O God, and drive me to the place of prayer where I may wrestle with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Deliver me from overeating and late sleeping. Teach me self-discipline that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I accept hard work and small rewards in this life. I ask for no easy place. I shall try to be blind to the little ways that could make life easier. If others seek the smoother path I shall try to take the hard way without judging them too harshly. I shall expect opposition and try to take it quietly when it comes. Or if, as some-times it falleth out to Thy servants, I should have grateful gifts pressed upon me by Thy kindly people, stand by me then and save me from the blight that often follows. Teach me to use whatever I receive in such manner that will not injure my soul nor diminish my spiritual power. And if in Thy permissive providence honor should

come to me from Thy church, let me not forget in that hour that I am unworthy of the least of Thy mercies, and that if men knew me as intimately as I know myself they would withhold their honors or bestow them upon others more worthy to receive them.

And now, O Lord of heaven and earth, I consecrate my remaining days to Thee; let them be many or few, as Thou wilt. Let me stand before the great or minister to the poor and lowly; that choice is not mine, and I would not influence it if I could. I am Thy servant to do Thy will, and that will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame and I choose it above all things on earth or in heaven.

Though I am chosen of Thee and honored by a high and holy calling, let me never forget that I am but a man of dust and ashes, a man with all the natural faults and passions that plague the race of men. I pray Thee, therefore, my Lord and Redeemer, save me from myself and from all the injuries I may do myself while trying to be a blessing to others. Fill me with Thy power by the Holy Spirit, and I will go in Thy strength and tell of Thy righteousness, even Thine only. I will spread abroad the message of redeeming love while my normal powers endure.

Then, dear Lord, when I am old and weary and too tired to go on, have a place ready for me above, and make me to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting. Amen".

## From the Moderator's Desk

# 'A Word in Season'

Mr William Byers, Fearn

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*"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I Trust" [Psalm 91:2]*

We are living, especially today, in an age of uncertainty, *"we know not what a day may bring forth"*. How many went off to work in London on the morning of the first suicide bombing, just another day like all the rest, but they were injured, maimed or murdered. They were just killed in a moment of time, unexpectedly, and never returned home, leaving a trail of vexation, perplexity and sorrow for their families, loved ones, friends and acquaintances.

In this new era of international terrorism it is more urgent than ever that we have God as our refuge. Without being alarmist, we do not know how where or when indiscriminate violence may break out again in our society.

We need in a new and urgent way to have God as our refuge and our strength. The gospel call has always been urgent, instant, now, today, for us to close in with Jesus Christ in the gospel as Saviour and Lord, but surely the reckless violence of terrorists, of suicide bombers, gives it a new urgency, emphasizes the

need for us to be right with God.

In the first instance of terrorist suicide bombing in London much damage, injury and death was suddenly visited on our capital city as a bolt out of the blue.

We do give thanks and credit for the manifest skill, success and determination of our police force and security experts in tracking down and exposing the evil men who were behind the indiscriminate slaughter of innocent bystanders in the public transport and streets of our city.

Our loving sympathy goes out to those who suffered bereavement or injury as a consequence of these tragic events.

I consider it very regrettable that on the second occasion when the suicide bombers were unsuccessful, that the mercy of God was not publicly acknowledged in that this proved to be a damp squib. No damage was done and no life lost. This could have been a catastrophe as great as the first one or even greater, but God in his mercy intervened.

As Christians we must cry to God, as he alone can frustrate violent and evil men in their attempts to create disturbance, carnage, havock and

mayhem in our streets. The Psalmist knew of like forces of evil all these milleniums ago and he knew where to turn for help. *"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God in him will I trust."*

The churches and nation ought to cry to God for mercy, for grace to help in this time of need. He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart and can expose the plans and intentions of men with hatred and murder in their hearts before they put their plans into motion.

With all the skill in the world we cannot anticipate the thoughts and intents of men bent on slaughter and death, who have no Christian principals to cause them to consider the sanctity of human life, of their own or that of others.

Truly we need to be found in Christ, in the secret place of the Most High under the shadow of The Almighty, the safe place where the psalmist was when he penned these words. Paul could say, *"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain"*.

For God's people even though death should come as a thief in the night, it is for them absent from the body present with the Lord.

Though it be as a consequence of the assassins actions or the terrorists evil work, that still holds good, yes even though it be in the twin towers, the London underground, the city bus, or the open street.

We cry to God to expose *violent* men, terrorists, from whatsoever religious background they may come whatever motivates or activates their evil deeds; to expose them and bring them to justice; to change them in their hearts and bring them to the love of Christ; to believe and act upon the principal; *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour."*

Dear friend do not be discouraged. Look to Jesus, Oh I want you to know Him for there is none like Him. God's blessing on you rest. *"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God: in him will I trust"* [Psalm 91:2].

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## Edinburgh APC Appeal for Prayer

When Revd John Ross went to work in Edinburgh none of us knew what to expect. He began with no congregation; it was a mission to people who had no church contact. To see a small number from the community now meeting regularly to worship and hear God's word is a great encouragement. Please pray that this work in Edinburgh will be fruitful. John and Morag are glad to meet people. Some of them have difficulties which are hard to imagine. However, like all men and women their greatest need is to be reconciled to God. There is no significant income. Present funding is temporary. Additional funding is needed for the work to continue long term. We trust and pray that the Lord will provide. We value your prayers and also the financial and material contributions that some of you have already made. Please continue to remember and support this work. *Jason Ross, Treasurer*

# Congregational News

## TORONTO

The congregation in Toronto has been kept busy over the summer months between visitors and vacations. The annual church barbecue was held towards the end of June in sizzling sunshine and we were encouraged to have some new friends enjoying the afternoon with us. Recently there have been some very positive signs relating to the work here.

Our plans of beginning an outreach work among the neighbourhood 'teen moms (and dads)' took a step forward following a visit to the church by Toronto 'Youth for Christ's Teen Mo'm co-ordinator. Her input was both informative and invaluable. Please make this outreach work a matter of prayer as there are some practical difficulties to overcome.

We are also extremely encouraged to share with you another development - a number of weeks ago we saw the number of children attending our Sunday school double! We are delighted to have three new children from two local families attending the church on a regular basis with their parents. Please continue to remember us. We thank you all for your prayerful support and interest in the work in this city up till now.

## HARRIS

The Harris congregation is looking forward to its communion on the last Lord's Day of September when Revd Ross MacFarlane is expected to preach over the weekend. There is still a fair amount of illness in the congregation, so please pray for them.

## STORNOWAY

The congregation had its annual Barbecue on Friday 29 July in the home of Sandy Gillies, one of its deacons. Revd Malcolm MacLean, Scalpay Free Church (at one time an elder in the Inverness congregation of the APC) officiated at the August Communion along with the minister's brother Rev D C Macaskill, Dundee.

Several visits have been enjoyed from different Missionary organisations and the congregation is encouraged that one of its young members, Thomas Parkes, is going on a trip to the Gambia during November, in connection with a 'Partnership' involving 26 young people from the Island of Lewis.

The congregation asks for prayer as plans are being discussed to commence another Christianity Explored Course in the church during the coming winter.

## **EDINBURGH**

We are delighted to say that the Blythswood Care shop is now open. Blythswood have fitted out the shop to a very impressive standard. The shop testifies that we care for people's material and spiritual needs. It is very much at the heart of the community we are working in and is an excellent point of contact with the local people. People are making use of it and some of them waiting around for a "cuppa" and we hope and pray that friendship, fellowship and faith will follow in due course, *"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"* Many from the community are donating goods for selling in the shop and this is very gratifying for them and for us.

We feel that for such a suitable shop to have become available in so short a space of time is a real answer to the prayers of God's people. One experienced Christian worker who has done evangelism work in Edinburgh was saying that what is needed for outreach in an area is, "presence and permanence." We feel we have a presence brought about so wonderfully by the shop and we trust that in God's goodness and grace we will be granted permanence.

We need more volunteers to help with the staffing of the shop and we trust this will come about in due course. Our oldest volunteer is 86 years old! It takes real commitment to help on a regular basis so we are very grateful to those who help with gracious enthusiasm.

Blythswood have been very, very supportive of our efforts to

reach out with the gospel here in Edinburgh, we are deeply grateful to them. We have a service in the shop each Sunday at 5pm. Some adults, teenagers and children from the area have come. We pray that the seed will fall into 'good ground'. The service on Sunday has been very encouraging and we hope and pray that the attendance will not only be maintained but continue to increase even if it is very gradual. There is a good spirit in the service, although we are aware of how "the adversary" would want to destroy it completely. A small minority of children and teenagers are too inclined to be disruptive, and this is an area that needs much prayer and wisdom that all of us would know just how to react to these situations.

The Christianity Explored Course has been very encouraging in that some attended every meeting. One meeting had only one of the candidates attending but that also proved to be a profitable meeting. Pray that each one eventually comes to faith in Christ as their personal saviour. In all ten people attended at least one session of the course, some of these were already Christians, others not. So there were repeated opportunities to point people to Christ. One Muslim lady attended one meeting and we would request special prayer for her. We believe people have been challenged and helped by this course. One person who was unable to get to all the meetings, wants to attend the next time we run the course.

One of the verses that spoke to

me when praying about coming here was *"allow the children to come to me and do not forbid them."* I wondered about different ways we might be involved with children but I certainly never thought of how children would be in and out of the shop getting toys at bargain prices - it is a delight. Then to see even just a few children and teenagers in the service should fill us with gratitude to God and genuine humility. Only God can make this continue let alone cause it to grow. May it be granted. The age range of our customers is what the age range in churches up and down the land should be - from infancy to old age.

The door to door work is going to need helpers if we are to effectively cover the area, and it is proving difficult to spend the time at this that we would like to. We expect the Faith Mission Students to come and help us in the services and on the doors. Pray that this does indeed happen. The Christian life is often both more difficult and more satisfying than we ever imagined when we first set out on our pilgrimage. Notwithstanding the difficulties, believers 'the world over' are at a loss to adequately express their thankfulness that their names are written in the *"book of life"*. We can say the same about our work here and our hope for the world to come. May you dear reader be able to say the same about your hope for, *"the world to come."*

Please pray for all aspects of the work, and that the Lord would establish the work of our hands. Pray

also for the minister and congregation in the local parish church. They have been such an encouragement and help to us. Many thanks for your prayers. It has often occurred to us that we have been helped by the prayers of others.

The address is: Blythswood Care, 47 Southhouse Broadway, EH 17 8AS.

Tel. 0131 466 9353; after hours: 0131 466 6247

Open: Tue. – Fri.: 10.30 – 15.45 hrs. Sat.: 12.00 – 15.45 If you are making a journey across town to visit the shop it is advisable to telephone in order to check times as we are still adjusting our routine.

*John Ross*

## **INVERNESS/DINGWALL**

Activities in the congregation are mostly back-on-track after the summer break. Dates have been agreed for the Ladies Meetings and the Men's Breakfast Meetings. Bible Study Groups are started as are also the 'After School' clubs, Mum's & Tots, and King's Kids on a Friday evening. So also is the Sunday School in Drakies Community Hall, which has been running now for several years, and the commitment of the teachers involved is to be commended. There are some new things in the life of the congregation.

These are the 'Prayer Time' before the evening service on the Lord's Day. At it we pray for a powerful work of the Holy Spirit in

mercy and grace. A 'Lunch Club' is started, likely to run weekly on a Wednesday, and at which there will be a short 'talk' given around the message of the Gospel. The other new activity is aimed at a wider field and the young generation. It goes under the name of 'Roots', is inter-denominational, and will run monthly on a Friday on agreed dates through to the end of May, next year. The hope is that young people from across the region will gather together for a time of Bible-teaching and fellowship.

At the more local level, the King's View magazine is prepared and distributed in the vicinity around the building. We ask that you include all of these in your prayers and praise to the Lord God, that he will grant such a visitation in his grace that it will be said, 'It is the Lord'.

## **DUNDEE**

During the summer we had our Holiday Club week for children in the community. A new family living opposite the church came along every night. This week ends up with a camp staying overnight with the children and their parents for two nights. The whole week finishes with a 'Special Service' on Sunday morning. This year we were particularly pleased with how many parents came to this service.

The children were very good during the whole time and really enjoyed everything and all were given prizes mainly of literature with Scripture messages.

The congregation still enjoy welcoming one or two new faces from the community. The colleges and the universities are about to begin their new year so we hope that several young students will join us this year.

We are enjoying having a Kirk Sessions in Dundee (instead of Inverness where our assessors were located). We have met several times and always end with a prayer time going over the various points discussed at the meeting and the various people in the congregation who need remembering in a special way.

As last year, we hope to have a 'Hallelujah Party' for the children in the community on Hallowe'en night. Andy, our outreach worker will no doubt once again correct the dangers of the occult world and point the children to the true spiritual world of Jesus Christ.

On Guy Fawkes night we hope to have another 'Bonfire Buffet'. After the local council's bonfire in the neighbourhood, we provide a buffet meal and get to know the people. There will be a 'spiritual input' somewhere along the line! Plans have also been made for the end of the year special services for the community.

At the time of going to press we look forward to Archie McPhail from Oban coming to take our autumn communion services. We pray that the Holy Spirit will also come and bless us mightily. Thank you for your prayers Do continue to remember us in prayer.

# Manna in the Cupboard

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**I**T WAS A REASONABLE thing to do. After all, the people of Israel had not eaten for some time.

When God sent bread from heaven, they not only ate it, they also saved enough to last them for a while.

But what is reasonable is not always right, and hoarding manna was explicitly against the command of God. *"I will rain down bread from heaven for you,"* the Lord had said to Moses. *"The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions"* [Exodus 16:4].

Moses clearly related this command to the people: *"No one is to keep any of it until morning"* [Exodus 16:19]. But some people don't like to take a chance. The manna had never been seen before; how did they know whether it would fall again the next day? These doubters hid some away and waited until morning. I wouldn't have liked to be in those tents when they opened their stash to eat the manna for breakfast. Overnight it became infested with worms and acquired a horrible stench.

God chose to make the people of Israel live in daily dependence upon him. It would have been less trouble for everyone if he had sent a week's supply of manna at a time, or even a year's. Instead, the desert sojourners went to bed six out of

seven nights of the week without any food for the next day.

I don't like to go to sleep without having food in the house for breakfast. In fact, I don't really like to go to sleep without knowing how God is going to solve the problems of the next day. But just as God taught the people of Israel to live in daily dependence upon Him, He wants to teach us how to trust Him to provide what we need, when we need it... and not a moment before.

I have tried at times to live on God's past grace, subsisting on memories of his goodness and presence. Although reflecting on God's faithfulness in the past is a vital part of faith, we can't stockpile spiritual blessings so that we won't have to continue to seek them. I have alternately tried to taste what the future might bring, but this is not something God has yet given to me. We are not meant to live off the past or in the future. We are meant to trust God to meet the needs of today.

Each morning, the Israelites awoke with the knowledge that God had sent manna the day before. He had promised to send it the next day as well. But the manna that they were to gather was only enough for today.

If we spend our energies worrying about tomorrow, we won't be nourished by what God has provided for us today. I hate to see

believers fall prey to thinking that if they can just "get it together" they won't have to live in daily dependence upon God for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Even when the Israelites grew to expect manna, God didn't change his distribution schedule. *"The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan"* [Exodus 16:35].

Until we arrive in the settled land of our rest, God will provide us with daily bread. Let us savor it in faith, lying down at night in confidence that what we need will be provided and going out in the morning to gather the grace He has given for today.

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## The Important Questions

**C**S LEWIS ONCE SAID "Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important". The same can be said about the Bible. If the Bible is true then there is nothing more important, than the great issues it addresses. They are eternal, they are of never ending proportions. The subjects the Bible speaks about carry great consequences.

The famous Thomas Chalmers was also convinced of the same thing. Before his conversion, he was a minister in the Church of Scotland in Kilmany, in Fife, just a few miles over the Tay bridge. Although he was a minister, he was a scholar preoccupied with science and metaphysics rather than theology. He spent most of his time studying these subjects. He said about himself during these days in Kilmany, "when I studied magnitudes, there were two great magnitudes that I did not consider - the smallness of time and the greatness of eternity".

If the Bible is true, then the most important subject in the world is, 'How can we be right with God?' The purpose of life, where we came from and where we are going are of vital importance. What we believe concerning these questions affects the way we live on earth and will determine our eternal destiny. Jesus said *"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses"* [Luke 12:15]. He also said *"I am come that they might have life - and have it more abundantly"* [John 10:10].

# Amazing Grace

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THE SCENE IS A courtroom trial in South Africa. A frail black woman stands slowly to her feet. She is over seventy years old. Facing her from across the room are several white security police officers. One of them, Mr van der Broek, has just been tried and found guilty in the murders of first the woman's son and then her husband. He had come to the woman's home, taken her son, shot him at point-blank and then burned the young man's body while he and his officers partied nearby.

Several years later Mr van der Broek and his cohorts returned to take away her husband as well. For months she heard nothing of his whereabouts. Then, almost two years after her husband's disappearance, Mr van der Broek came back to fetch her. How vividly she remembered that night. She was taken to a river bank where she was shown her husband, bound and beaten but still strong in spirit, lying on a pile of wood. The last words she heard from his lips as Mr van der Broek and his fellow officers poured gasoline over his body and set him aflame were, "Father, forgive them."

Now the woman stands in the courtroom and listens to the confessions of Mr van der Broek. A member of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission turns to her and asks, "So what do you want? How should justice be done to this man who has so brutally destroyed

your family?" "I want three things," begins the old woman calmly, but confidently. "I want first to be taken to the place where my husband's body was burned so that I can gather up the dust and give his remains a decent burial."

She pauses, then continues. "My husband and son were my only family. I want, secondly, therefore, for Mr van der Broek to become my son. I would like for him to come twice a month to the ghetto and spend a day with me so that I can pour out on him whatever love I still have remaining in me." "And finally," she says, "I would like Mr van der Broek to know that I offer him my forgiveness because Jesus Christ died to forgive. This was also the wish of my husband. And so, I would kindly ask someone to come to my side and lead me across the courtroom so that I can take Mr van der Broek in my arms, embrace him and let him know that he is truly forgiven."

As the court assistants come to lead the elderly woman across the room, Mr van der Broek faints, overwhelmed by what he has just heard. And as he struggles for consciousness, those in the courtroom, family, friends, neighbors, all victims of decades of oppression and injustice, begin to sing, softly but assuredly, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

(Craig A. Smith, OMF Publishing 2004)

# FEAR of BEING DIFFERENT

In a speech to the Religious Communication Association, Quentin Schultze quoted Soren Kierkegaard, who once suggested that, "the majority of people are not so afraid of holding a wrong opinion, as they are of holding an opinion alone." Schultze observes, "In other words, we human beings are social creatures who tend to go along with what other people believe rather than venture courageously in an unpopular direction. We are more fearful of being thought crazy than wrong, as long as we have the comfort of being mistaken with others. Ignorance loves company. We are creatures of fashionable, even if sometimes foolish, ideas."

(The Journal of Communication and Religion, March 2005)

## MINISTRY TRAINING FUND

This bi-yearly collection is taken by congregations in **October**. Please send direct to the treasurer. There have been demands on this Fund over the past few years but the income has not covered the need. Please give generously, remembering it is for the Lord's Cause.

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