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CONSCIENCE VERSUS THE STATE

Protestants throughout Scotland have no doubt found themselves taking a keen interest in the escalation of the war of words between the Roman Catholic Church and the government over the new gay anti-discrimination laws.

By Mr Jack Bell

The act, due to come into effect in April outlaws discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, preventing Catholic Adoption Agencies from ruling out gay and lesbian couples as suitable foster parents. As a Bible believing Protestant I will obviously continue in the SPV to expose the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, but I would agree to its opposition to the new legislation. I believe the act is a direct challenge to the institution of marriage which I believe is the ideal institution for the rearing of children appointed by God. Being sent to a gay household in the cause of political correctness does not offer the normality and security that children crave for. At the same time I must make certain qualifications in regards to one's conscience. The Archbishop of Canterbury and York has said that "the rights of conscience cannot be made subject to legislation, however well meaning". That statement has been greeted as a breakthrough by Christian campaigners, but it must be treated with caution.

If our law was bound by everyone's conscience it could result in anarchy. What we must remember as Christians is that first and foremost it is God's rights that are at stake and that

God's laws take precedence over human consciences, beliefs and laws. The Bible says, "We ought to obey God rather than men", Acts 5:29. On the other hand we must submit ourselves to our laws where there is no real conflict with God's commands.

The whole debate has given further vent to the secularists who believe that religious groups should not have anything to say in those matters. The Word of God says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people", Proverbs 14:34. It is the duty of God's people to preach that very righteousness.

Our conscience is captive to the Word of God.

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Archbishop and Cardinal launch fight back for faith

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy O'Connor, have thrown their weight behind a new religious think tank in an effort to change the climate of opinion about the importance of faith in society.

The ecumenical think tank called Theos is modelled on mainstream secular think tanks, such as Demos and the Institute of Economic Affairs. It will undertake research and provide theological commentary on social and political arrangements.

In their joint foreword to the think tank's first report, "Doing God: a Future For Faith in the Public Square, Dr Williams and Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor argue that religion has rarely been so important in society or so badly misunderstood. And they claim that society is experiencing a period of collective confusion about the most important questions in life. "As a society, we must decide how we will respond to this moment of collective confusion - can we go on living as before? Or, like Tolstoy, will we reassess the importance of faith to individuals and society?"

Countering claims that the increasing prominence of religion in society is a cause for concern, Dr Williams and Cardinal Murphy O'Connor argue that:

"Many secularist commentators argue that the growing role of faith in society represents a dangerous development. However, they fail to recognise that public atheism is itself an intolerant faith position. If we pay attention to what is actually happening in the United Kingdom and beyond, we will see that religiously inspired public engagement need not be sectarian and can, in fact, be radically inclusive. This report argues that faith is not just important for human flourishing and the renewal of society but that society can only flourish if faith is given space to make its contribution and its challenge."

The Theos report attacks institutional atheism and argues against consigning faith to the private sphere. It claims that religion will play an increasingly significant role in the UK due to three trends, the return of civil society, the pursuit of happiness and the politics of identity.

Speaking before the launch of the report today (Tuesday) the Director of Theos, Paul Woolley; said:

In the 1980s and 1990s think tanks challenged the status quo and helped change the climate of opinion in society. And we want to do the same. We want to provide alternative perspectives to the orthodoxies of secular culture."

'It is clear that society is embarking on a process of rapid de-secularisation. It is no longer considered bold, brave and brilliant to argue that religion is an infantile delusion. Interest in faith is increasing across Western culture. Religion is firmly on the agenda of both government and the media, and Theos aims to speak into this new context.'

"Theos steers an independent course between political parties and is non denominational. We stand against the prejudice in secular society that religion in public life or debate is dangerous or irrelevant. Faith is personal but it can never be private. If William Wilberforce, Keir Hardie or Martin Luther King had kept their faith private, the world would be a more divided and unjust place than it is today."

The launch of the think tank coincides with the publication of new opinion poll showing that six out of ten people think that Christianity has an important role to play in public life. The poll carried out by Communicate Research reveals that 58% of people agree that Christianity has an important role to play in public life, compared with only 37% who disagree. Interestingly, 42% agree with the view of Richard Dawkins that faith is one of the world's great evils, comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate", compared with 44% who disagree. But 53% agree that religion is a force for good in society; compared with 39% who disagree.

Editor of English Churchman comment (O dear what confusion! The false religion of heretical bishops and cardinals is every bit as bad as no religion at all)

English Churchman January 2007

Orange Lodge backs Catholic stance on adoption

JAMES KIRKUP

THE Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland has backed the Catholic Church in its war of words with the government over Tony Blair's decision to push ahead with controversial gay equality laws.

The support from the staunchly Protestant order is a sign that the government's refusal to exempt religious groups from the Sexual Orientation Regulations is uniting Christians in opposition.

Despite public protests from Catholic leaders and members of his own Cabinet, the Prime Minister decided on Monday that Catholic adoption agencies will not be excluded from new rules which will forbid anyone who provides goods or services from refusing custom on grounds of sexuality.

Ian Wilson, the Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland, last night told The Scotsman that leaders of the Catholic Church had a right to be heard on such moral issues in politics.

He spoke after Cormac Murphy O'Connor said: "If people weren't able to act according to their conscience for the sake of the common good in our country, it would be a lack of freedom for religious conviction"

Mr Wilson said: "There has to be more tolerance of the views of people of faith, and that includes the Cardinal.

"Broadly speaking, the Lodge would take an orthodox, traditional Christian view of this - we see the family as a man and a woman."

Orange lodges have sometimes been associated with sectarian tension, but Mr Wilson insisted that his order sympathised with the Catholic hierarchy.

Scotsman 31.01.07

THE ACT OF UNION - ITS RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

This year marks the 300th anniversary of the passing of the Act of Union. Tuesday, 16th January, 1707 was the day when the final vote was taken in the Scottish Parliament in favour of the union with England that created Great Britain, exactly one hundred and forty years after the Union of the Crowns. The Act was presented to Queen Anne on 6th March, that her royal consent may be given after which it took full effect on 1st May 1701. No doubt debates will take place as to its long term impact. Important to both discussions and debates will be the role that the National Church had in the Union three hundred years ago. The Kirk then saw itself as the true church within the nation having full responsibility for the spiritual guidance of the people, but also having a voice in the political domain as well.

From 1660, Charles II, who was King of both England and Scotland had sought to establish episcopacy in Scotland and bring its church closer to Church of England liturgy. Persecution followed and the devout Presbyterians who were now called Covenanters were hounded, imprisoned, sent overseas and sometimes executed for their faith. This was followed by the Revolution of 1688 which brought the Dutch Calvinist, William of Orange to the throne, which allowed Presbyterianism to be re-established in Scotland. By 1706, when union with England had been spoken of as a real possibility, the very idea was abhorrent to many in the Kirk. They saw it as a move to have bishops thrust

upon them. Opposition was strong in parts of Scotland that witnessed the worst of Covenanting struggle, but others favoured it as a great political tool to stop Roman Catholic France from gaining a foothold in Scotland. It was not any great secret that the Jacobites would favour a French invasion that would restore a Roman Catholic Stuart to the throne. Recognising the different feelings in Scotland, the Union negotiators agreed to a separate treaty. This treaty, known as the Act of Security guaranteed that the new British Parliament would respect the Presbyterian system within the Kirk. Despite these assurances the new Parliament interfered in Scotland's religious settlement. In 1711, Parliament passed a toleration act which granted toleration for Episcopal worship in Scotland, which for some was more than granting religious liberty, but opening the door again for bishops to be imposed upon the Kirk. The same year the Patronage Act, imposing the right of private patrons to select ministers within their parishes, caused all kinds of offence within the Kirk. Eventually thousands left the National Church to form various secessionist congregations, the great secession of 1843 forming the Free Church, being one of them. From a religious point of view, a victim of the Union was the notion that the Church of Scotland could go on indefinitely being the sole church of the Scottish people.

By Mr Jack Bell



United in God

Christian Unity Week was celebrated in Glasgow last week with many religious leaders descending on Renfield St Stephen's church.

Archbishop Mario Conti lead the Catholic contingent and was joined by Rev Alastair Cherry, Moderator of the Church of Scotland's Glasgow presbytery, Rev Douglas Scrimgeour of the United Free Church, and Rev Derek Bibb of the Methodist Church.

Rev Mary Buchanan of the United Reformed Church, and chair of Glasgow Churches Together, gave the sermon.

Renfield St Stephen's associate minister Rev Christopher Rowe welcomed over 150 people to the event. Music was provided by the St Mungo Singers of Glasgow archdiocese, plus volunteers performed a "touching" drama entitled 'Voices From South Africa'

Scottish Catholic Observer

Editorial: The group above were no doubt united, but united in error. To be united in God means to be united in truth. Unity at the expense of truth is nothing other than spiritual blindness

The Vital Task Of Open Air Preaching

Preaching in the open air is a vital task in these days when so few are entering into the churches to hear the Gospel. There is of course abundant scriptural precedent for the practice, not least from our Lord himself, and from the apostles. We know that the Lord would often preach in the synagogues, but we also have many accounts of great crowds following him, whom he would teach, whilst also healing the sick amongst them. We read for example, in Luke's Gospel, 'There went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them...' (Luke 14:25), and in Mark's Gospel, "Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). All such occasions as these could only have taken place in the open air. The Scriptures do not emphasise the outdoor location, quite simply because it was such a regular occurrence. The apostle Paul, like the Lord, took every opportunity to preach in the synagogue, but we are also told that, when he was in Athens, he "disputed in the market daily with them that met with him" (Acts 17:17). Much of John the Baptist's ministry was of course in the open air, taking place alongside the River Jordan.

What is particularly advantageous about open air preaching is that it maintains a 'proclamational' approach to Gospel testimony, steering away from the temptation, prevalent among many churches nowadays, to make the Gospel 'seeker friendly' and 'non-threatening', and to present it in such a relaxed and carefully styled fashion that no unregenerate person could

possibly take exception to it. The Christian message, however, can never be made attractive and user friendly to "the natural man, who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor.2:14). It has to be proclaimed in its own right and without apology, whether unbelievers find it acceptable or not. As the Lord told Ezekiel, "Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Ezek 2:7). Gospel preaching is an urgent and serious presentation to unbelievers of the fundamental realities of eternal death and eternal life, and of their own awful predicament without Christ. Yes, of course, we can and must, as individual Christians, engage in friendly personal conversation with others to witness to our faith (and this often happens after open air preaching), but even then, there still has to be the vital 'proclamational' element to what we say, for we speak nothing on our own authority. The Gospel must be made known, not because we personally like it, but because all men are under a God imposed obligation to believe it. The context in which the preacher carries out his task is not, 'Look at my attractive product', but rather "God ... now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). The preacher is acting as God's own mouthpiece, and he declares, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" (2Cor.5:20). Nowhere more so than in the open air does this ambassadorial, proclamational nature of Christian preaching come into its own.

In our contemporary society formality is out of fashion, and many churches have sadly mimicked the world in

steering away from any kind of formality in their public ministrations. The very nature of preaching, however, and not least in the open air, is that it is a 'formal' event. (Please do not misunderstand me here, by 'formal', I do not mean without heart and emotion, but rather serious, structured and deliberate). The exercise of preaching is so much more than just a sharing of one's thoughts and a passing on of some good advice. It is rather, "Thus saith the Lord!" and "Take heed how ye hear!" We must avoid trying to market the Gospel as some kind of preferable lifestyle choice. Gospel preaching must not take the form of 'I have tried out the Christian faith, and it has worked; it has improved my enjoyment of life and my ability to cope with problems, and I therefore warmly recommend it'. Such an assertion will hopefully be true, but subjective, man-centred, earthly considerations like these are not the reason why the Gospel must be made known. It must be made known purely and simply because the glory of God requires the obedience of his creatures. It must be made known, because God has put men under an obligation to repent of their sin and to come to Christ. Open air preaching is a perfect vehicle for this authoritative, declaratory nature of the Christian message. It is the ideal medium for the 'thus saith the Lord' character of Christian testimony.

Where better to engage in the proclamation of God's eternal truth by a man who is the Lord's own ambassador than in public places where large numbers of people gather, most of whom will be quite oblivious of their great spiritual need? The Bible

tells us that “in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col.2:3). This wisdom must be made known to as many people as possible, as the following verses in Proverbs make abundantly clear: “Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse; in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you” (Prov. 1:20-23). Here, then, are clear Biblical grounds for our going out today into public outdoor places to make known to the masses the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In the current environment of contemporary Britain open air preaching is becoming more difficult. The law is beginning to be used against preachers who actually believe the Bible. The days of a residual respect in secular society for all things Christian, including the moral law, have long since vanished. The stranglehold with which political correctness now grips our society (not to mention many churches), along with an increasing hardness to the Gospel amongst many of our countrymen, means that the open air preacher can never expect sympathy or an easy ride. The current philosophical climate requires the preacher to be as “wise as a serpent” in what he says, avoiding all avoidable offence, but never avoiding the offence of the Gospel, nor compromising for one moment on Biblical truth.

On a very practical level, the location of open air preaching is obviously very important, especially in these days when traffic noise can so often be a problem. No longer do people willingly gather around a public preacher out of a polite curiosity at what is going on. The spiritual hardness in our land today means that most people just do not want to listen to preaching, and so their immediate reaction will be to give

the preacher a wide berth. There is often an embarrassment, and even a shame, at being seen to be interested in such an outlandish affair as a religious ‘fundamentalist’ giving vent to his extremist views. That, sad to say, is exactly how most people now view the open air Christian preacher, but that of course is no reason whatsoever for us to refrain from engaging in this most noble and God honouring of all human activities. If the great apostle Paul was willing to be regarded as “as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things” (1 Cor.4:13), then how much more should we be. So, the fact that most of the preacher’s potential audience will have no desire to hear him means that he will have to physically station himself in a place where there is already a major concourse of people, because the crowds, generally speaking, will never come to him....

....As to the mechanics of the open air meeting, everyone will do things somewhat differently, and adjustments will always have to be made for local conditions. It is important however, that the preachers are representing a local church or local churches, because interested hearers do have to be referred to a place where they can receive further sound teaching. So church based witness is preferable to general’ witness, if at all possible. It is also vital that the minister who is preaching has helpers from his church with him, to assist in forming a crowd, to speak to any enquirers, and to give out tracts with the church’s details on. However, any passers by listening to the preacher should not be immediately approached by a helper, but be left to carry on listening, only being approached when they appear to be leaving. Open air preaching occasions are often wonderful times of Christian fellowship, as one witnesses in public alongside one’s fellow believers.

We shall certainly not always see immediate fruit from our open air labours, but who knows what seeds

are being sown? In any case, we are offering to men the words of life, and they will be responsible to God on the great last day, if they choose to ignore them. So let us use our liberty to preach in the open air, whilst we still have it. As George Whitefield declared, after he had preached in the open for the first time, “I believe I was never more acceptable to my Master than when I stood to teach those hearers in the open fields”. John Wesley said of his first venture into the streets and fields, “I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining the city to about three thousand people”. After that, he maintained an immovable conviction of the need to keep on preaching Christ outside of church buildings, as well as within. He asserted this is the way to spread religion: to publish it in the face of the sun”. He wrote of one occasion, “I preached to a huge multitude in Moorfields on ‘Why will ye die, O House of Israel?’ It is field preaching which does the execution still. For usefulness there is none comparable to it”. So let us pray that God will be pleased to bless our open air endeavours today with a similar usefulness, so as to confront head on the satanic darkness which now so tragically prevails in this Christ rejecting land.

Peter Simpson

Minister of Penn Free Methodist Church in Buckinghamshire
The substance of this article first appeared earlier this year in the twice yearly magazine, ‘The Gospel Truth’, 155N 0263 5216.

Extract from the English Churchman
Fridays, 5th & 12th January 2007

**ALL ARTICLES IN
THIS MAGAZINE
REPRODUCED AS
EVIDENCE**

William Wilberforce and the Abolition of Slavery

A two part article by Peter Kinley ——— 2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in this country. This is the work for which William Wilberforce is probably best known. However, we should remember that abolition was only one aspect, albeit an extremely important aspect, of his life work. He carried on the fight against slavery against a background of many other interests.

Good Causes

It has been said of Wilberforce that good causes stuck to him like pins to a magnet. A conservative estimate puts his charitable interests at seventy, which included education reform, better working conditions in factories, legislation to help the poor, and public health initiatives. His second greatest work was the reformation of manners, or moral reform. There was great need for such reform in a country blighted with gambling, adultery, duelling, bribery in politics, cheap gin, immorality in the church and nominal religion. These conditions, combined with appalling housing and dreadful working conditions, made life utterly miserable for many of the nation's people.

Not only this, but much was happening internationally as well. Wilberforce's fight for abolition as a whole lasted 46 years, from 1787 to 1833. The American War of Independence had ended in 1783, but France declared war on Britain in February 1793, and this conflict was to last 22 years until Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. There was much to occupy parliamentary time with issues at home and abroad, and Wilberforce played his part in these concerns.

Although a frail man with poor eyesight, Wilberforce had great oratorical powers. Dr. Johnson's biographer, James Boswell, was present at a political meeting and records, "I saw what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon a table; but as I listened he grew and grew till the shrimp became a whale". These

powers Wilberforce used to good effect in the House of Commons in a day when public speaking was not demeaned as it is today. Incidentally, Wilberforce once told Harmah More that the House of Commons was like Noah's ark with many beasts and a few humans.

Early Life

William was born to Robert and Elizabeth Wilberforce in Hull on August 24th 1759. The Wilberforces belonged to a very old, honourable and wealthy Yorkshire family and as the only son William was set to inherit a fortune. At the age of eight he commenced two years at Hull Grammar School, where he showed much promise. Within a year, death claimed his older sister Elizabeth (aged 14) and his father, to whom he had been close. Mrs Wilberforce was pregnant at the time of her husband's death, and she subsequently became very ill.

William was sent to live with his Uncle William and Aunt Harmah in London. They had no children of their own, and heaped love upon their nephew. The couple was much influenced by George Whitefield, and John Newton was a regular visitor to their home, where he also preached for them. Young William began to be affected by this evangelical environment, and the change was reflected in letters home to Yorkshire. This was not good news to his mother or his grandfather who said, "If Billy turns Methodist, he shan't have a sixpence of mine". Mrs Wilberforce came to take Billy home, a parting that occasioned much sorrow.

Back in Hull, the family purged William's mind of all thoughts of what they called "enthusiasm" by subjecting him to a succession of visits to the theatre, balls, dinners and card parties. He went to school at Pocklington near York, where he read much, but lived mainly in idleness and pleasure. William entered St Johns College, Cambridge in October 1776 with an unhealthy mix of religious scepticism, few

moral principles and a fortune which he had inherited from his Uncle William. He gambled, drank and danced. He was told that he didn't need to work hard because he was so wealthy, but he did continue to read much. He was also ambitious and, having struck up a friendship with William Pitt at Cambridge, began to see himself as a Member of Parliament.

"The Great Change"

On September 11th 1780, at the age of 21, he was elected as MP for Hull. On April 7th 1784, he was elected to represent Yorkshire, which he was to do for 28 years, until 1812. In the autumn of 1784 Wilberforce commenced a continental tour for a year. His first choice of travelling companion was unable to go, but an unexpected meeting with Isaac Milner, who had been his teacher at Hull Grammar School, led Wilberforce to invite him, and he accepted. Even before they departed it became apparent that Milner had very decidedly evangelical views. On this account, Wilberforce regretted the invitation he had given, but was too proud to withdraw it.

At this time, William had been attending a Unitarian Chapel in London, and had rejected the faith of his Uncle William and Aunt Harmah. The two men agreed to enter into serious discussion that revealed that Milner had a good understanding of Christian doctrine and was able to back up his statements from the Bible. Wilberforce was hard pressed to answer Milner's arguments. They agreed to read together Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, which deeply affected Wilberforce. He put all his doubts, objections, and difficulties to Milner, and slowly his mind was changed, but not his heart.

By the time they returned home in October 1785, Wilberforce was under conviction of sin. He longed for peace with God and knew it could only come through Christ. He thought of giving up politics and being

ordained. He made a secret visit to John Newton who told him he had not ceased to pray for him, and helped him to see that he could serve Christ in politics. By Easter 1786 he had experienced the completion of his “great change” which he regarded as the sign of true conversion.

Beginning the Struggle

Wilberforce’s great life work began on Sunday, October 28th 1787. He wrote, “God Almighty has placed before me two great objects; the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners”. As to the first of these, he gave himself to researching his subject, sometimes for fourteen hours a day. The following year he was unwell and was prescribed opium, a common medicine in those days. The drug helped, but its side effects, added to his stressful workload, gave rise to much distress, and his recovery was slow. Whilst Wilberforce was absent from the House, Pitt raised the subject of the slave trade, and the Commons seemed to be generally sympathetic.

Wilberforce returned to Parliament in 1789, and on May 12th he delivered his first great speech against the slave trade. One account of this speech, which lasted three and a half hours, includes this section about the transit of the slaves in the West Indies.

“This I confess, in my own opinion, is the most wretched part of the whole subject. So much misery condensed in so little room, is more than the human imagination had ever before conceived. I will not accuse the Liverpool merchants: I will allow them, nay, I will believe them to be men of humanity; and I will therefore believe, if it were not for the enormous magnitude and extent of the evil which distracts their attention from individual cases, and makes them think generally, and therefore less feelingly on the subject, they would never have persisted in the trade. I verily believe therefore, if the wretchedness of any one of the many hundred Negroes stowed in each ship could be brought before their view, and remain within the sight of the African Merchant, that there is no one among them whose heart would bear it.

Painful Description

“Let any one imagine to himself 6 or 700 of these wretches chained two and two, surrounded with every object that is nauseous and disgusting, diseased, and struggling under every kind of wretchedness! How can we bear to think of

such a scene as this? One would think it had been determined to heap upon them all the varieties of bodily pain, for the purpose of blunting the feelings of the mind; and yet, in this very point ... the situation of the slaves has been described by Mr. Norris, one of the Liverpool delegates, in a manner which, I am sure will convince the House how interest can draw a film across the eyes, so thick, that total blindness could do no more; and how it is our duty therefore to trust not to the reasonings of interested men, or to their way of colouring a transaction.

“‘Their apartments’, says Mr. Norris, ‘are fitted up as much for their advantage as circumstances will admit. The right ankle of one, indeed is connected with the left ankle of another by a small iron fetter, and if they are turbulent, by another on their wrists. They have several meals a day; some of their own country provisions, with the best sauces of African cookery; and by way of variety, another meal of pulse, etc. according to European taste.

“‘After breakfast they have water to wash themselves, while their apartments are perfumed with frankincense and lime-juice. Before dinner, they are amused after the manner of their country. The song and dance are promoted,’ and, as if the whole was really a scene of pleasure and dissipation it is added, that games of chance are furnished. ‘The men play and sing, while the women and girls make fanciful ornaments with beads, which they are plentifully supplied with.’

Excuses Dismissed

“Such is the sort of strain in which the Liverpool delegates, and particularly Mr. Norris, gave evidence before the Privy Council. What will the House think when, by the concurring testimony of other witnesses, the true history is laid open? The slaves who are sometimes described as rejoicing at their captivity, are so wrung with misery at leaving their country, that it is the constant practice to set sail at night, lest they should be sensible of their departure.

“The pulse which Mr. Norris talks of are horse beans; and the scantiness, both of water and provision, was, suggested by the very legislature of Jamaica in the report of their committee, to be a subject that called for the interference of parliament. Mr. Norris talks of frankincense and lime juice; when surgeons tell you the slaves are stowed so

close, that there is not room to tread among them: and when you have it in evidence from Sir George Younge, that even in a ship which wanted 200 of her complement, the stench was intolerable.

‘The song and the dance’, says Mr. Norris, ‘are promoted.’ It had been more fair, perhaps, if he had explained that word ‘promoted’. The truth is, that for the sake of exercise, these miserable wretches, loaded with chains, oppressed with disease and wretchedness, are forced to dance by the terror of the lash, and sometimes by the actual use of it. ‘I,’ says one of the other evidences, ‘was employed to dance the men, while another person danced the women.’ Such, then is the meaning of the word ‘promoted’; and it may be observed too, with respect to food, that an instrument is carried out, in order to force them to eat which is the same sort of proof how much they enjoy themselves in that instance also.

“As to their singing, what shall we say when we are told that their songs are songs of lamentation upon their departure which, while they sing, are always in tears, insomuch that one captain ... threatened one of the women with a flogging, because the mournfulness of her song was too painful for his feelings. In order, however, not to trust too much to any sort of description, I will call the attention of the House to one species of evidence which is absolutely infallible.

Conclusive Proof

“Death, at least, is a sure ground of evidence, and the proportion of deaths will not only confirm, but if possible will even aggravate our suspicion of their misery in the transit. It will be found, upon an average of all the ships of which evidence has been given at the Privy Council, that exclusive of those who perish before they sail, not less than twelve and a half per cent perish in the passage. Besides these, the Jamaica report tells you, that not less than four and a half per cent die on shore before the day of sale, which is only a week or two from the time of landing. One third more die in the seasoning, and this in a country exactly like their own, where they are healthy and happy as some of the evidences would pretend.

“The diseases, however, which they contract on shipboard, the astringent washes which are to hide their wounds, and

the mischievous tricks used to make them up for sale, are, as the Jamaica report says, ‘... one principal cause of this mortality. Upon the whole, however, here is a mortality of about 50 per cent and this among Negroes who are not bought unless ... they are sound in mind and limb. How then can the House refuse its belief to the multiplied testimonies before the Privy Council, of the savage treatment of the Negroes in the middle passage? Nay, indeed, what need is there of any evidence? The number of deaths speaks for itself, and makes all such enquiry superfluous.

“As soon as ever I had arrived thus far in my investigation of the slave trade, I confess to you sir, so enormous so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for the abolition. A trade founded in iniquity; and carried on as this was, must be abolished, let the policy be what it might, let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest till I had effected its abolition.”

Other instances of cruelty almost beggar belief. For example, “the captain of a British slaver threw 132 slaves overboard during a mid ocean storm in order to lighten the vessel. Upon returning to England he made an insurance claim on the lost cargo! Sensitive people were outraged. The Attorney General, however, insisted that the captain was without ‘any show or suggestion of cruelty; it was his privilege to do with the cargo as he pleased.”

Wilberforce was not without supporters, but the House wanted more evidence. This was a delaying tactic, which would often be used.

In April 1791 Wilberforce made another long speech that culminated with a vote at 3.30 am on April 20th. A little less than half the members were present to vote, and the result was a defeat of abolition by 163 votes to 88.

(To be continued)

January February 2007

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Are Germans Witnessing the Downfall of Rome in their Country?

By a English Churchman correspondent

Though most citizens of the UK still believe that Germany is a Roman Catholic country, the *English Churchman* has reported from time to time how the Protestant German churches are not sharing the enormous problems of the Roman Church. The Protestants have lost a few churches in the Rhineland district and a few parishes have been merged but this has been nothing like the enormous losses of their RC counterparts in the region. The Ruhr Diocese has been compelled to reduce its parishes from 259 to 43 and of the 330 church buildings they own, they have had to give up almost a hundred during the past year. This year, they plan to save 17,7 million by cutting down on non clerical staff. Their administration department has already been cut down by over a third, leaving 130 unemployed. However, further social, medical, educational and advisory projects will be terminated shortly in order to sink diocesan expenditures from 220 million a year to 150 million by 2009. This means that over a thousand people will become jobless.

The Diocesan hope to save money is proving illusionary. The more they shrink, the more difficulty they have in financing their system. Their loss in prestige is equivalent to the large number of paying members who are giving up the Roman Catholic faith. Yet, the number of new members of the Protestant churches is growing. Plans are being made to close down Roman Catholic Kindergartens and Elementary Schools which will most certainly increase the number of young parents who are turning their backs on the Roman Catholic Church with well over half a million other former members. The diocese will also lose the enormous subsidies which they receive from the State. Thus the Ruhr Diocese is now taking out loans at the rate of 23,6 million Euros per year. Their boast that they will be solvent by 2009 and have paid off all debts by then is not taken very seriously.

Now the Diocese, like the country’s other bishoprics, are facing a further problem. They cannot recruit the clergy they need despite so many parishes being merged. On the Protestant side, the churches have far more ministerial candidates than they can cope with, yet few nowadays wish to dedicate their lives to the Roman cause. In order to make the Roman Catholic ministry more attractive, the bishops are now openly suggesting that common law marriages of clergy should be legalised and young couples should be jointly invited to serve the churches in a pastoral capacity.

This loss in Roman Catholic presence and power in Germany is changing the political scene. There are fewer Romanists than ever in German politics. Arch-Romanist Edmund Stoiber, who is seen as often with red capped, cloaked and gowned bishops and cardinals as his fellow civilian-dressed friends has now resigned from his post as Minister President of Germany’s most Roman Catholic state, Bavaria. The Minister President designate, Günter Beckstein, the former minister for Internal Affairs, is an active Protestant and member of the EKD Synod and is also looked upon by the growing number of Jews in Germany as ‘a symbolic figure for democracy in Germany’ (so Charlotte Knobloch, President of the Central Consistory of Jews). Beckstein calls the Bavarian Jews “the fifth tribe of Bavaria” when he emphasises their importance in the federal state. Now, with rumours stronger than ever that leading British politicians and members of the Royal family are going over to Rome, Germany has now an evangelical President, an evangelical Chancellor and a thoroughly Protestant leader over Germany’s once most militant Roman state. So, too, through the leadership of these staunch Protestants, Germany’s relationship to Israel is at last viewed as almost ‘normal’ from both sides whereas Israel was always suspicious of Germany’s pro Roman politicians.

Sources: WAZ, ARD, ZDF, G. M. Ella

English Churchman

Fridays, 2nd & 9th February 2007

JOHN NEWTON

A Trophy of God's Grace !

Someone once summed up the theme from Paul's epistle to the Romans as "From guilt, through grace, to glory."

This was true in the file of John Newton, for where once sin abounded, grace super-abounded. "I was once a wild thing on the coast of Africa," he had declared, "but the Lord caught me and tamed me: and now people come to me like the lions in the Tower of London - doubt if the Lord can convert the heathen? Look at me."

Humanism, modernism, and even ecclesiasticism cannot understand it. Have they ever? The religious professors of Newton's day were unable to fathom or interpret the work of grace accomplished in his heart. The then Archbishop of York refused to ordain him. It is however, fair to state that the Bishop of Lincoln did state his willingness to "ordain" Newton to the ministry of the Church of England.

"Once an infidel and a libertine", and "a servant of slaves in Africa", as he once described himself, a looking in repentance and faith at the man on the middle Cross at Calvary, liberated Newton from the downward pull of sin, and changed his life from the darkness of night into the glory and sunshine of midday. This is how he described it:

"In evil long I took delight
Unawed by sin and fear;
Till a new object met my sight
And stopped my wild career.

I saw one hanging on a tree
In agony and blood.
Who turned his languid eye on me
As near the cross I stood."

And here is the story of his conversion, from guilt, through grace, to glory.

Son of a merchant sea captain and a puritan mother - she died in his seventh year - and leaving the protection of home at the tender age of eleven years he went to sea with his father, until at last he became an avowed atheist, delighting in blaspheming against the One his mother had taught him to revere and honor.

A friend of the father's obtained for John Newton a passage in a ship sailing from Liverpool, yet he deliberately missed the passage because of a friendship he had made with a certain Mary Catlett. Newton was but 17, and she had not reached her fourteenth birthday. Furious with his son at this act of defiance, the father secured for him another ship, this time sailing to Venice (Italy). On his return, he again overstayed his leave purposely but was caught by the press

gang, the eighteenth century method of recruiting for the Royal Navy, and taken on board "H.M.S. Harwich." Again his father's kindly interest was manifest, and John Newton was made a midshipman. On arrival in the East Indies station he again deserted, but on capture this time was degraded to the rank of a common seaman.

This disgrace drew him nigh to madness, and aroused the tiger nature within him. He even contemplated suicide as a sort of honorable way of escape, but something Someone! held him in check.

On arrival in Africa, John Newton secured work with a European trader. This proved to be one of the worst periods of his career. This planter had a negress for his wife, and in the trader's absence, took great delight in tormenting John Newton. On one such occasion, while he was suffering from a raging fever, she left him for days on the dirty floor of the native hut, unattended, and without a drop of water to quench the raging thirst within.

Another five years passed by. Newton by then had secured work within another trader, one who treated him in a much more humanitarian manner. He was also able to secure a passage back to England. But John Newton was far different from the turbulent lad he had been five years earlier.

His sufferings had made him bitter and disgusted with the world around. It was then that the convicting Spirit of God brought back to his mind the early upbringing of his mother's. A storm in the mid Atlantic, when every wave threatened to make an end of the ship, and he was face to face with death, for one fellow seaman had already been washed over-board and lost, and all hands were in grave danger, was the means the Spirit used to lead John Newton through the wicket gate to the Cross beyond. John Newton was not the first one with whom the Spirit of God had dealt in a mid Atlantic storm. Only a few years earlier, the Wesley brothers, when en route to Georgia, in a storm had been impressed by the confidence and trust in God manifest by the Moravian passengers. This proved an important link up in the story of their evangelical conversion.

Not only did John Newton remember his mother's early training and example, he turned also to his mother's infallible guide - the sacred Scriptures. Opening a copy of the New Testament, he found help in the two verses:

"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him": and "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine".

To us these may not appear as great "Gospel texts", but it is not for us to question the working of the Holy Spirit. These are the verses God used. John Newton prayed for further enlightenment on them. That also was given. From that hour he started on the Christian pathway, and himself put on record: "*The tenth of March is a day much to be remembered by me, and I have never suffered it to pass wholly since the year 1748.*"

This then is the story of Newton's conversion.

In later years he developed an intimate friendship with William Cowper, also an acquaintance with George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley. Inducted later as vicar of Olney, a village in Buckinghamshire, he wrote many beautiful hymns including "How Sweet The Name of Jesus Sounds" and "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken, Zion City of Our God." Here is a verse of his own that describes his experience of saving grace:

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound!
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my tears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed."

He had to leave Olney, but then accepted an invitation to the incumbency of St. Mary Woolnoth, in the city of London. Newton remained there until his death, becoming a successful preacher and drawing many to listen to his expositions from the Word. Dying in his 82nd year, "packed, scaled, and waiting for the post", to use his own words, he had the following epitaph erected inside his church of St. Mary:

JOHN NEWTON Clerk.
Once an infidel and a libertine
A servant of slaves in Africa, was
By the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ,
Preserved, Restored, Pardoned,
And appointed to preach the faith
He had long laboured to destroy ...

The Protestant Challenge
(Voice of the Canadian Protestant league)

Education and the Christian Parent

The education of young people is a subject that is always guaranteed to raise controversy. General elections often hinge on education policies, parents will move house to ensure their children are within the catchment area of a desirable school, they will pay exorbitant fees for private education, and many parents are even opting out of the mainstream system by home schooling youngsters. The debate rages on daily: schools are too lenient, schools are not inclusive enough, teachers do too much, teachers don't give enough homework... Where, though does Christianity fit into the debate? What is the biblical perspective on education? Education is important to God, there is even a whole book of the Bible devoted to wisdom and knowledge, Proverbs, and the spiritual importance of a child's education is clearly stated: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he shall not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

There are two main modes of education to which the Bible makes constant reference: family-based education, and spiritual education. State education is surprisingly absent from the Bible. First of all, we will look at spiritual education. It was common practice for Jewish leaders to take young boys into the temple to train them in the ways of God. The apostle Paul "sat at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3) and the young Saul grew up with fierce religious fervour. The prophet Samuel was taken to the temple when he was weaned and was given to Eli to be trained and schooled as a priest. When Jesus was twelve, he debated with the priests and elders in the temple over the scriptures. The priests were amazed by Jesus' knowledge of the scriptures, but it is clear in Luke 2 that it was not unusual for a young boy to be in the temple in the first place. Ultimately, the whole point of many Jewish traditions and practices was for the education of future generations. The phylacteries and monuments raised in the Old Testament were to testify to future generations about God's covenants and mighty deeds.

However, the bulk of the scriptures that refer

to the passing on of knowledge are directed at parents. At the beginning of Proverbs, Solomon commends sons to "hear the instruction of your father, forsake not the teaching of your mother" (Proverbs 1:8). Throughout the book of proverbs, this feeling is endorsed: the most precious education comes from our parents. At the end of the book, we hear the words of Lemuel, King of Massa, as he commends the words his mother taught him (Proverbs 31:1). Paul congratulates Timothy for his faith, but he also acknowledges the examples he was presented in his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (II Timothy 1:5). Above all, it is a command from God that we honour our fathers and mothers (Exodus 20:12), therefore it is paramount that parents take their responsibilities as educators seriously.

The Bible is very clear on where children are placed in God's order. Ephesians 5 and 6 set out this order clearly. God is our Holy Father. He assumes complete responsibility for everything in the entire universe. He holds our lives in the palm of his hand, and knows the habits and thoughts of every creature on earth. Next come fathers and husbands who bear ultimate responsibility for their wives and children. They look to God alone for wisdom and support. Then wives and mothers find their place. They own the responsibility for their children, and serve their husbands. They look to their husbands for guidance, and with their husbands, look to God. Children are to be cherished and nourished by parents, but as far as responsibility is concerned, they have none apart from obeying their parents, and consequently, God. Jesus was very strong in his teaching that children are to be treated as a blessing and not harmed. Children are quite clearly, a blessing, a heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3).

So how does this lead us to find a biblical view of education that is relevant to today's children and families? Well, basically, as far as God is concerned, parents are still completely responsible for their children's lives. They are responsible for housing and clothing their children, responsible for their

diet, spiritual growth, emotional well-being, and yes, their education. We live in a country with one of Europe's worst records of childhood obesity. When this becomes clear, where do we look to fix the situation? Schools. And when a London primary school decided to rectify the situation by converting to an all-healthy menu, what was some mothers' response? Passing contraband chips and burgers through the school gates!

We live in a day where God's order has broken down. Parents look to schools to discipline their children. They blame television for unhealthy eating, and blame local authorities when children offend in the community. Teachers in busy mainstream secondary school have regularly seen children's lives broken irreparably by the years of neglect and abuse received from parents, heard mothers question the *school* when they are told that their child's behaviour has excluded him/her from mainstream education, been inconvenienced by parents not turning up to important meetings to discuss their child's future, and even heard parents *refusing* to carry out sanctions at home in order to support the school. Regardless of what might seem apparent in the press, schools in general are doing a pretty good job.

However, getting back to the biblical view of education, the bottom line is that Christian parents are responsible for their children's education. There are no directives in the Bible that state parents must educate their children at home, but many Christians are opting to do this, or pay the fees for a Christian school. Even in the best of state schools, we are handing our children to the ungodly to be educated. We are exposing them to secular wisdom and philosophies when they are at a very tender stage in their physical and spiritual development. Parents alone will answer to God for the level of care they have taken over nourishing their youngsters, preparing them in the way they should go.

Andrene Bamford
Member of Zion Baptist Church

Fifty one homosexual clergy in civil partnerships threaten further rift in C of E

The Church of England Synod faces a further clash on the issue of its attitudes to homosexuals after the revelations by *The Times* that 'at least 51' homosexual and lesbian C of E clergy have already entered into civil partnerships.

An assortment of C of E traditionalists and evangelicals opposed to homosexual clergy could force open debate on civil partnerships at February's meeting of the General Synod. The C of E has laid down that active homosexual relationships may be tolerated in the laity but not among the clergy; Bishops are advised to tolerate same-sex clergy couples living together but not if they are in an active sexual relationship. This rule has been ridiculed by the homosexual clergy.

The claim of 51 C of E priests in homosexual partnerships comes from Changing Attitude, a pro-homosexual organisation whose membership is mostly C of E priests. Its Director, Colin Coward, said "Civil partnerships have helped to increase the stability of same sex relationships and

reduced the social exclusion to which lesbian and gay people are often subjected".

George Curry, Chairman of the Church Society, predicted a 'crunch moment' at the General Synod: "Many of these people have defied the guidance. These are men and women who are in active sexual relationships. These figures expose the Bishops' failure of leadership".

Those known to have entered into civil partnerships include Canon Jeremy Davies, Precentor of Salisbury Cathedral, with Simon McEnery, an opera singer; and Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans, with Grant Holmes, Chaplain of Kingston Hospital, Surrey.

When Paul Collier, a Chaplain at Goldsmiths College, London, and a member of the Crown Nominations Commission, entered into a civil partnership with his companion of several years, he said he had no problem from Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Woolwich; "Just a little questioning, that's all. He wanted me to acknowledge the

Bishops' policy".

Mr Roy Clements, formerly Pastor of Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge, and ex Council Member of Evangelical Alliance, who came out as homosexual in 1999, is a prominent member of Changing Attitude and has recently argued that his Reformed evangelical stance is compatible with being a practising homosexual. He said: "I am an evangelical Christian and former pastor who was forced to leave public ministry after being 'outed' as gay in 1999. Many gay Christians are, like me, thoroughly evangelical in their theological position holding the highest possible view of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible. We would welcome the opportunity for a constructive, even handed discussion of the relevant pastoral theology and textual exegesis. But what we experience within evangelicalism far too often is an irrational response characterised by prejudice and emotion".

Many Anglican clergy are members of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement.

British Church Newspaper January 2007

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Hello Boys and Girls, I thought this month I would write about some young people mentioned in the bible.

The first one we can read about in John Chapter 6. He had gone with a lot of other people to hear Jesus and probably his mother had given him a picnic lunch in case he was away a long time and became hungry. But this young boy had not just listened and enjoyed what Jesus had to say, he possibly had become in his heart a follower of the Lord and he knew that it was more blessed to give than to receive, and so when his loaves and fishes were asked for, he willingly gave, even if it meant that he would go hungry. But you all know the end of the story. Jesus blessed the boy's food and a miracle took place. The five loaves and two fishes became enough to feed a huge crowd of five thousand, with enough left over to fill twelve baskets full.

The second young person is a young girl and we read about

her in 2 Kings Chapter 5. She was maid to the wife of Naaman. Naaman was a very important man who was Captain of the King's army, but we read that he was a leper. This little maid, although she was away from her own land and people, and in a strange land which worshipped idols, she still remembered and knew the real God. She remembered how God had given great power to His prophet Elisha, and she tells Naaman's wife this. The outcome is that Naaman goes to see Elisha and on his command washes himself seven times in the River Jordan and he is healed.

The reason I have written about these young people is that I want you to realise that no matter how young you are, if you love and follow the Lord Jesus with all of your heart you too can be used by God.



Love from Mrs. Glass

WOMEN'S VIEW

Hello Everyone,

I have just returned from a visit to the Isle of Man. As usual I worshipped in a small church in Peel and whenever I do I am reminded of how a church with small numbers can be used by God if they are committed to His work. It is from this church that the Grace Third World Charity had its beginnings and it is this charity that runs the Children's Home I visited in India last year. Not only this, but a church has also been built in the grounds of the Home and the membership of this church is much larger than the church in the Isle of Man.

The Lord Himself only had 12 disciples and they turned the world of their day upside down.

I think also of how the Lord used the little boy with the loaves and fishes and a multitude was fed, and also the little maid who was used in the healing of Naaman. (READ ABOUT THEM IN THE CHILDREN'S CORNER)

I remember too of how when our church started our numbers were very small, and stayed that way for many years, yet, and I say this to the honour and glory of God, the Lord greatly used and blessed us because we were all committed to the work

Numbers are not important to God. Numbers were never important to my husband. It was more important that he had a band of dedicated people.

I trust that if anyone reading this article is from a church with just a few members that they will be encouraged by my words.



May the Lord bless you all.



M. Glass

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