

SCOTTISH PROTESTANT VIEW

FREE

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GAY MARRIAGE SCOTLAND'S SHAME

When one reads the comments of Keith Charters at the end of the article, 'Gay couples are flocking to wed in Scotland', we see as God's people the great battle we have on our hands to save Scotland from complete secularisation.

No doubt his group and others like them will push until same-sex couples have the right to full marriage. How shameful that local councillors in our capital and elsewhere are boasting of a

social, but very sinful re-defining of marriage. We need to pray that God in His wrath will remember mercy and send us a great revival. Romans 1 verses 26 and 27 'For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman turned in their lust one toward another.'

Mr Jack Bell

Gay couples are flocking north to wed in Scotland

MORE than 140 gay couples have applied to tie the knot in Scotland when new laws allowing same-sex civil partnerships come into force next month.

Gay men and women are flocking to register offices north of the Border, according to new figures.

A total of 143 bookings for ceremonies have already been made although the legislation does not take effect until December 5.

Scots designer duo Justin Ryan and Colin McAllister are among those who are planning to take advantage of the new legislation, which will allow gay couples the same rights as heterosexual couples have through marriage.

Couples will be able to transfer assets without taxation and will have succession rights if no will is available.

Edinburgh has been picked as the most popular destination, with a total of 59 couples seeking to say 'I do'.

A spokesman for City of Edinburgh Council said: 'We are thrilled that so many people have chosen our city to celebrate their special day.

'We are also pleased that the first civil partnership in Scotland will be performed

in Edinburgh.'

Glasgow was the next in the wedding list with a total of 30 couples, followed by Fife with 15 applications.

Perth and Kinross Council has received nine bookings for civil partnerships, which will take place on or after December 20. North Lanarkshire Council has received seven applications, while Aberdeen received five.

Scotland will be the first in the UK to carry out civil partnerships after officials misread the new legislation.

It means that same sex couples will be allowed to tie the knot on December 20, a day earlier than in England and Wales.

Councillors Neil Fletcher and John Stewart, who serve alongside each other on the same local authority, will take the plunge just a couple of hours after another couple in Edinburgh.

The couple, both Liberal Democrat councillors in Aberdeen, have been together since 1992 and have long been keen to take part in a ceremony.

Mr Fletcher, a 40 year old accountant who heads Aberdeen City Council's finance committee, said: 'We are very much in love and have always wanted some kind of

marriage.

'We have been forced to wait for a long time for this legislation to go through.

'We have always wanted a public and legal acknowledgement of our relationship and are over the moon that it is finally going to happen.

'All our family and friends are delighted. It's going to be a very special day for us.'

Couples have a 15-day countdown after giving registrars notice of their intent to be joined in a civil partnership. It begins the day after the notice is recorded, but registrars in Scotland misinterpreted the new rules and gave permission for the first ceremony to take place on December 20.

Sir Elton John and his long term partner David Furnish are planning to tie the knot in a low key ceremony in Windsor on December 21.

However, some believe the new laws do not go far enough and said couples should be allowed to have a proper marriage.

Keith Charters, convener of the National Secular Society for Scotland, said: 'You can argue that the one reason it doesn't go all the way to equality is the fact that it is called a civil partnership and people aren't allowed to call it a marriage.'

'If you are going into something which, for all intents and purposes is a marriage, then it should be your right to call it a marriage.'

By Kizzy Taylor

Daily Mail 28.11.05

Cardinal: Faith relations are key to world peace

CARDINAL Keith O'Brien has highlighted inter-faith dialogue as key to bringing peace to the world.

The Cardinal was speaking on the 40th anniversary of a Vatican II document on Judeo-Christian relations at a reception held on Tuesday, November 15, for members of the Jewish faith at the Cardinal's residence in Edinburgh where a tree was planted to symbolise the relationship between the faiths.

His Eminence spoke of the Church's continuing commitment to interfaith dialogue as he welcomed his Jewish guests.

He said: "I am delighted to be gathered here with friends of the Jewish faith and also those of other faiths. I have had the opportunity of working with many of you in the past and look forward to doing so ever more closely in the future.

"The strength of our common commitment to inter-faith dialogue is one that I believe is becoming increasingly recognised nationally.

"The Scottish Executive have recognised

By Gerard Gough

this in their support for the Scottish Interfaith Council and across the world I believe that it is the promotion of such dialogue that is the key to peace."

The document, *Nostra Aetate*, "The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", is one of huge importance and its impact has been profound and long lasting with even the US House of Representatives passing a bill earlier this month recognising its role in inter-faith dialogue.

The document, which denounces anti-semitism, reads: "The Church reproves every form of persecution against whomsoever it may be directed. Remembering, then, her common heritage with the Jews and moved not by any political consideration, but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity, she deploras all hatreds, persecutions, displays of anti-semitism levelled at any time or from any source against the Jews."

Of the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Jewish people the Cardinal added: "We commemorate in a special way the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people.

"We look to Judaism as our older brother in the faith. It was from Jewish people that Jesus himself came and the Old Testament will always unite us to the Jewish people."

His Eminence also reminded the reception that the late Pope John Paul II was keen to build upon the groundwork laid down by the *Nostra Aetate* document and his successor Pope Benedict XVI has been similarly involved in strengthening Judeo-Christian relations.

Earlier this year at the World Youth day in Cologne, the German Pontiff followed in his predecessor's footsteps by meeting with Jewish leaders at a city Synagogue.

During his address, he said: "Our rich common heritage and our fraternal and more trusting relations call upon us to join in giving an ever more harmonious witness and to work together on the practical level for the defence and promotion of human rights and the sacredness of human life, for family values, for social justice and for peace in the world."

Scottish Catholic Observer, 18.11.05

EDITORIAL COMMENT

I would like to remind both the Cardinal and Rabbi that inter-faith dialogue is a futile exercise in regards to world peace. Christ, who came into the world as 'the Prince of Peace', addressed the possibility of His own disciples misunderstanding the true nature of peace on earth and good will towards men. In Matthew 10 verses 34-36, Christ said 'Think not that I am come to send peace, but a sword. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household'. Christ can make peace between God and sinners, Romans 5 verse 1, 'Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. I was interested to read that they planted a tree together. I was reminded of Calvary's tree through which Christ reconciled both Jew and Gentile, making peace through the blood of His cross. As for this world Christ said, 'There will be wars and rumours of wars' until the end of time.

ALL ARTICLES IN THIS MAGAZINE REPRODUCED AS EVIDENCE



Cardinal O'Brien plants a tree of friendship with Rabbi Moshe Rubin

We'll fight island threat to boycott gay weddings

GAY activists are threatening to use human rights law against Western Isles council staff who have refused to perform same-sex weddings.

Registrars banned civil partnership ceremonies on moral grounds despite every other local authority in the country agreeing to carry out the "weddings".

Sir Elton John and his partner David Furnish will have one of Britain's first gay weddings.

The veto has been backed by island ministers and council members and cannot be over-turned under the current law, which allows individual authorities to ban the ceremonies.

Western Isles Council voted last week to outlaw civil

partnerships after registrars said they were unwilling to carry them out. Councillor Angus Campbell, chairman of the policy committee, said: "It is a practical decision our officers don't want to do them so we didn't even go into the debate."

The Rev Tim McGlynn, of the Free Church of Scotland in Scalpay, said: "People in positions of power here are far more likely to personally have a faith which is guiding what they do.

"To try to force them to do something they think is immoral would be unjust."

Gay islanders claim the strict Presbyterian atmosphere has left them living in fear. One said: "You would be regarded as bringing shame on your island.

"I am very unhappy about what they have decided, but I'm not surprised we are years behind the rest of the country.

"I can imagine someone having a ceremony on a beach and defying anyone to stop us."

Campaigners insist they will go to the European Court of Human Rights to enforce the law, passed in Westminster last year, which gives gay couples pension and inheritance rights.

Calum Irving, director of the gay charity Stonewall Scotland, said: "I received an assurance from the Scottish Executive that any couple wishing to have a registration and ceremony in Scotland would get one, so it is concerning that the Western Isles has taken this stance.

"I'd hope that if a gay couple

did seek a ceremony the council would have the sense not to spoil that couple's big day."

John Hein, editor of Scotsgay magazine, revealed his publication has several subscribers in the Western Isles. He said: "How mean spirited. It is exactly what you would expect. What a dreadful place to live."

No gay couples in the Western Isles have yet registered their intention to get hitched.

The ban is thought to be the only one in Britain but a spokesman maintained the Executive was not aware of any council refusing to hold the ceremonies.

Daily Express 20.12.05

Same Sex Adoption - Scottish Churches' Response

The Church of Scotland has announced its support for the Scottish Executive's proposals to change the law in Scotland to allow homosexual couples to adopt children. The Kirk's Church and Nation Committee has released a statement declaring that the present system was not meeting children's needs. The Committee paid lip-service to the institution of marriage as providing the most "stable environment" for children, but added

that the Church does "not believe that the status of the relationship between adult potential adopters should be an absolute bar to them adopting jointly." Morag Mylne, the Convenor, welcomed "the emphasis on the best interests of the child" in the proposals. That these best interests might include the benefit of good moral example for these vulnerable children is, of course, never considered.

Yet again the Church of Scotland was put to shame by the Catholic Church, which has taken a resolute and uncompromising stance on the issue. Cardinal Keith O'Brien, writing in the Sunday Times, forcefully defined the issue: "Scotland's adopted children must not become guinea pigs in some distorted social experiment aimed at redefining marriage, subverting the family and threatening the good of society. "It is a painful reminder of just how low real Christianity has sunk in this country, and particularly within our Established Church, when it is left to a Roman prelate to argue for fundamental morality in public life. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

*British Church Newspaper
25 November 2005*

Threats for council in wedding ban

THE only council in Britain to ban same sex civil partnerships is threatening to call in the police after being bombarded by hate mail from around the world.

Western Isles Council has received threats about hanging councillors from "the nearest tree" and burning churches. A message from Iain Miller of Ohio, USA, says: "You people are a disgrace to Scotland. You are nothing more than a self righteous, holier than thou mob of religious bigots."

The religious Outer Hebrides is the only part of Britain to ban gay wedding ceremonies.

Councillors agreed last week to support the island's registrars on moral grounds. However the council has stressed it will carry out its obligation to register same sex weddings but uphold its right of discretion to ban ceremonies.

Council spokesman Nigel Scott said: "If the messages contain personal threats we will consider passing them to the police."

Daily Express 21.12.05

EQUALITY BILL: a great victory but not the end of the war

“We are thankful to God that the amendment passed in the Lords on 9th November, to remove the religious harassment provision from the Equality Bill, has been accepted by the government,” writes Mrs Andrea Minichiello Williams, publicity Officer for the Lawyers Christian Fellowship. “This was a wonderful victory for the Christians who had worked hard to raise concerns over the provision and an answer to prayer. The ‘strength of feeling’ in the Lords was cited as a key reason for the government’s acceptance of the amendment. Praise God for this victory, but please continue to pray that the government will not try to push through the harassment provision at a later stage.

“There were worrying signs in the debate on Monday 21 November in the House of Commons that the government intend to reintroduce the harassment provision in the future. It will be considered as part of the discrimination law review before further proposals are made. Please continue to pray against the harassment provision, which, if passed, could stop public expressions of Christianity, for example: ‘a hospital could be sued for harassment over the placing of Bibles, a local council that holds a public meeting in a church could be sued over the presence of a cross on the wall, and, indeed, a Salvation Army hospice could be sued over a banner on a wall containing a biblical text’ (Baroness



O’Cathain in the House of Lords on 9th November).

“Many of the freedom of speech issues raised by the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill arise again with the concept of religious harassment. The discrimination law review will produce a Green Paper in late Spring 2006 with a view to consulting on a wide range of issues including religious harassment. The Christian community needs to be very involved in this consultation to ensure Christian truths and freedoms are not eroded. We must continue to fast, to pray and to act.”

British Church Newspaper

Order Lodge leader looks at Church’s relationship

By Harry Conroy

THE leader of the Orange Lodge of Scotland has said the Orange Order needs to re-examine its relationship with the Catholic Church.

Ian Wilson, who has been the Grand Master of the organisation for 10 years, has vowed to bring the Orange Order into the modern world, which could include changing elements that could be deemed ‘anti-Catholic’.

Mr Wilson, who describes himself as a “moderniser”, was speaking to a national Sunday newspaper on the place of women in the Orange Order when he expanded on the theme to include how the Order should examine its relationship with the Catholic Church.

Stressing that he was not proposing that the Order should

modify its stated aim to “uphold and defend the Protestant religion”, Mr Wilson said: “The Order is a bit out of step.

“As recently as 20 years ago, its attitude would not look quite so bizarre. But society has moved on and, to some extent, the Catholic church has moved on and we are now living in a pluralist society where it is not just them and us.”

The Orange Lodge of Scotland is estimated to have 50,000 members and dates back to 1798 during the Penal times when the Catholic religion was persecuted and had almost been extinguished in Scotland.

Members of the Order are instructed “to strenuously oppose the fatal errors and doctrines of the Church of Rome and scrupulously avoid

countenancing (by his presence or otherwise) any act or ceremony of Popish worship.”

Mr Wilson, who is a church organist, explained: “Expressing ourselves in quite such florid language about what we are is why fingers are pointed at us. We are being accused of being anti Catholic, we say we’re not, and people quite rightly say, ‘Hang on a minute this is what you say’. We leave ourselves wide open.”

However, despite his belief that most members would welcome change, the Grand Master realises that the Order’s traditions are steeped in history and that there would have to be international agreement for any changes, thus delaying any proposed changes.

He explained: “It’s a bit like the Church of Scotland, which has famously had grief over the Westminster Confession, which goes on about the Pope being the anti-Christ. It’s still there. They are uncomfortable with it but can’t make up their minds what to do because it is an important and historic document.”



Lodge Leader Ian Wilson

A New Year Message From Pastor Jack Glass

(Mark 4:35-41) Trials make us

*Glorify God
Make us like Jesus
Silence Satan
Make us thankful
Make us dependent
Make us valuable
Make us hopeful
Make us joyful
Make us patient
Make us sympathetic
Make us humble
Make us prayerful
Bring reward*

*John 11:4, Psalm 42:11
Rom 8:28, 29, Heb 2:10, 5:10, 13:13, Phil 3:10
Job 1:11, 2:5
Rom 8:28, Psalm 119:71, James 5:11
Isaiah 30:15, 16, Exodus 14:13, Zech 4:6
Job 23:10
Rom 8:24, 25
1 Peter 4:12, 13
Rom 5:3-5
2 Cor 1:3-6, Heb 2:10-18
2 Cor 12:7-10
Hosea 5:15
2 Tim 2:12*

FLASHBACK TO 2003

KIRK CHIEF BACKS PROPOSALS ON GAY MARRIAGE

Moderator attacks critics of civil partnerships as 'defensive'

DEBORAH SUMMERS and CATHERINE LYST
THE outspoken Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland prompted fresh controversy yesterday when he backed government proposals for civil partnerships and accused his critics within the Church of displaying a "competitive, defensive, and jealous spirit".

Iain Torrance, professor of patristics and Christian ethics at Aberdeen University, who has previously sparked controversy with his support for the ordination of homosexual ministers, said he viewed civil partnerships as a matter of justice rather than religion and called for the legislation to be extended to partners of opposite sex.

But at a lunch at the Scotland Office in London yesterday. Professor Torrance insisted there was a distinction between marriage and legislation based on justice.

Referring to the government's proposals for civil partnerships Professor Torrance said: "There is a tendency in some quarters to react defensively and criticise such proposals as being an attack on Christian marriage. That strikes me as being an absolutist, all-or-nothing kind of approach,

which hampers the Church's effectiveness. Christianity has a long tradition of defining itself by vilifying the other."

Professor Torrance argued that moralism was 'pure and simple'.

"Christianity is about transformation, new life and new possibilities," he said. "It is not about a catalogue of backward looking and condemnatory should-have dones, or worse still, shouldn't have dones."

He suggested that a decline in the number of Church of Scotland worshippers and a loss of "visible prestige" provoked a search for some alternative context.

Some church people very naturally turn to social ethics, the family, the current debates on sexuality and social misbehaviour," he said.

"This is all very well and understandable but I think at least part of it is in response to fear of a situation in which spiritualities are thought to compete, as if there could only be a single victor or a sole right answer. As a result, at times I fear the churches can display a competitive, defensive and jealous spirit, which blinds us to what really matters."

Professor Torrance said an illustration of that was some of the discussions provoked by the proposed legislation on the

registration of civil partnership.

He said: "If there is an extension of legal rights so persons in civil partnerships may claim benefits from which they have hitherto been excluded I fail to see why heterosexual couples who form partnerships should not also avail themselves to that arrangement."

The Rev Iain Greenshield of Snizort, Skye, expressed "disappointment" at the comments.

"I am very, very disappointed if that's his position. I think it is taking us a step further away from our Christian faith. People who have no Christian beliefs may have no problem with it but I think the Church is rooted in an historic faith. That is what we came into as ministers and what we bound ourselves to keep and preserve.

"To go down the road the moderator is suggesting would be to loosen our ties from our historic Christian position."

Keith Cowan, executive member of Outright Scotland, the gay rights group, said: "I think the proposals are sensible. I don't think most right minded people believe Jim and Ken at number 13, in a civil partnership, would undermine the marriage of June and Davy at number 34. The moderator sees the world as it is."

A Gospel to be Proud of

(Romans 1: 16)

The apostle Paul had many things of which he could have been truly ashamed; his misplaced zeal in persecuting Christian believers; his acquiescence in the martyrdom of Stephen; his quarrel with Barnabas; his past, the very thought of which caused him to describe himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1: 15).

In contrast, he could confidently declare that he was *not* ashamed of his Saviour (2 Timothy 1:12), nor of his eternal hope (Romans 5:5 and Philippians 1:20), nor of the gospel of Christ, the subject we look at now. The Greek verb used in this text is in an intensive form, implying that, far from being ashamed, Paul was, on the contrary, *proud* of this gospel, this good news, which he describes as being **peerless, powerful, and personal**.

1. It is **PEERLESS**, for it concerns none other than the matchless Christ Himself. Many translations of Scripture do, it must be regretfully noted, omit the words “of Christ” from this text but, whilst a discussion of this is beyond the scope of the present article, it should nevertheless be stressed that the phrase does emphasise that there is only one true gospel, which is Christ centred, and to be distinguished from all other so called gospels (Galatians 1:8).

The real evangel is *founded* in Christ for had He not “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18) and risen from the dead there would be no good tidings. We would be “of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). It was *proclaimed* by Christ in His teaching. “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47), and it is obvious, as we read through the Acts and Epistles, that the content of the *preaching* of the apostles and others was that salvation comes only by faith in the finished work of the crucified, risen and ascended Son of God.

By way of illustration we need look no further than Peter and John, subsequent to the healing of the man at the temple gate. Having used this miracle as a lead into preaching the gospel, they were called to account by the Jewish leaders, before whom they confidently testified that it was only in the Name of Jesus that the wonder had been performed and were then quick to declare, “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Today we live, or so it is claimed, in a multi-faith society where the Christian religion is regarded as one amongst others of equal validity, in an ecumenical environment which would eradicate the very uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and in a world which has its own gods and from which the Lord of Glory is conveniently excluded.

May we, who are the “sons of God ... in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation ... shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life” (Philippians 2:15,16) and proudly testify:

‘I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
Nor to defend His cause’.

Let us determine to be, like Paul, “separated unto the gospel of God” (Rom. 1: 1), for there is no other.

2. This gospel is **POWERFUL** - “the power of God unto salvation”. He Whom we worship is a powerful God. Indeed He is the sole all powerful God, whose *dunamis* was demonstrated in creation (Jeremiah 10:12), in healing (Luke 5:17), in authority over evil (Luke 9:43) and in the resurrection of His Son (Ephesians 1:19-20). This same dynamic is inherent in the gospel, as it is proclaimed in the power of and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14).

Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 must be (if it is recorded in its entirety) one of the shortest ever preached! Peter was the human instrument, but it was the recently poured out Holy Spirit who caused the hearers to be “pricked in their heart” and to cry out, “what shall we do?” It was the apostles’ witness to the gospel with *power* which was instrumental in the beginning and growth of the Christian Church.

This powerful gospel is “unto (*eis* = *into*) salvation”. As it is proclaimed by the servant of the Lord, received by the penitent sinner, and applied in regeneration by the Holy Spirit, so is the repentant one brought “out (*ek* = *from* the very midst) of darkness into (*eis*) ... light” (1 Peter 2:9). He has “passed from (*ek*) death into (*eis*) life” (John 5:24).

As Christ is the only way, so the gospel is the only message that proclaims this and brings us to faith. Writing to the Galatians (1:6-9), Paul warns of the danger of an *ersatz* gospel, which he describes as “another ... perverted ... accursed”. Let us be warned. The situation has not altered from the time of Paul. Still there are many false gospels. There are many who, like Elymas, would “pervert the right ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10). It is still true that “many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

In perilous days, may we “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13) and be proud of the Christ centred, all powerful gospel of Christ.

3. Finally, the gospel is **PERSONAL**. It is for “everyone that believeth”, regardless of religious, national, or cultural background. In New Testament times it was offered to, and received by, Jews, Samaritans, Greeks and Romans. It led to the salvation of a Roman centurion, an Ethiopian high official, a gaoler at Philippi, some religious leaders, and many “common people” such as the slave Onesimus.

So it has been down the ages since then, and shall be until that time when a great multitude “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” shall cry, “Salvation to our God ... and unto the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9,10). Every member of that large gathering will have experienced the power of the gospel personally and individually,

and so must all who would be saved now for, “none ... can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Psalm 49:7). This truth is confirmed in some of the Bible’s closing words, the final gospel call, “And *whosoever* will, let *him* take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

The writer remembers well an occasion during his Bible College years when the elderly lecturer laid aside his prepared lesson and, at the students’ request, gave his own testimony.

He related how that, when he was a young teenager, he and his friend went to a gospel meeting and were both asked to stay behind so that the message of salvation might be more fully explained to

them. His friend refused and went out of the door, whilst he himself did indeed remain, and that evening experienced the saving power of the gospel. Both made a personal response, one positive and the other negative, and so their ways parted for eternity.

This lecturer was one who had become, like the apostle, *proud* of the gospel, and should not every one who names the Name of Christ bear the same testimony? The Christ-centred, powerful, personal gospel is the only hope for a world which is “without Christ... having no hope... without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

David L Johnson

Protestant Truth November-December 2005

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD?

A Biblical Assessment by Timothy Cross

You are probably aware from the news that, in our irreligious, even post-Christian society, at a time of mourning for example, the death of a member of the Royal Family or the death of a British hostage at the hands of terrorists - a common practice in some circles is to light a candle and have a special church service to ‘pray for the dead.’

Whilst we have to be especially sensitive to those living through the pain of bereavement, and also to obey the biblical injunction to ‘weep with them that weep’ (Romans 12:15), to be true to the Bible, we have to state that the practice of ‘praying for the dead’ has no biblical mandate at all. The Bible, by implication, could not actually be more opposed to the practice of praying for those who have now departed from this life to the next.

Giving thanks to God for a life lived, and praying for those who mourn is most certainly biblical. Praying for those who have died though is not. The souls of the dead are now in eternity. If they belonged to the Lord Jesus when they died they are now with Him in Paradise, and no prayers of ours can add to their bliss. Those who died without Christ are sadly lost forever. The saving benefit of Christ’s redeeming death at Calvary was not taken advantage of by them. Sadly, they are unforgiven and unfit for fellowship with God. They are now in hell, and no prayers of ours can ever pray them out of hell into heaven ...

The reality of all this is, of course, stark. It does not fit our ‘politically correct’ age. But the Bible is stark. It divides humanity into the saved and the lost. The believer and the non believer, those who belong to Jesus and those who do not, and those who spend eternity in heaven and those who spend eternity in a Christ-less hell. ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him’ (John 3:36). ‘He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life’ (1 John 5:12).

The Believer’s Eternal Blessedness

Consider that those who die ‘in Christ’ have no need for our prayers, because they are now with Him in heaven, and our prayers cannot add one iota to their current blessedness. ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord’ (Revelation 14:13). The Lord Jesus assuredly promised the dying thief who turned to Him in repentance and faith: ‘Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise’ (Luke 23:43). Those who die ‘in Christ’ are ‘with Christ which is far better’ (Philippians 1:23). They are ‘absent from the body and present with the Lord’ (2 Corinthians 5:8). In the Father’s

house, they are saved, safe and supremely happy. Why are they there though? Not because of any personal merit, for the Bible is clear that, by nature, none of us merit heaven because we are sinners. No. The inhabitants of heaven are there because of the grace of God in Christ. The residents of heaven are there because of the death of Christ at Calvary - a death which has procured their pardon and made them fit for fellowship with God. The death of Christ was an eternal sacrifice. Hence it saves eternally those who put their faith in the crucified Saviour. But Christ, ‘after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God’ (Hebrews 10: 12).

Christ’s atoning death was a finished, final and all sufficient work. Nothing can be added to it, for perfection cannot be perfected. And nothing can be taken away from it. Those who belong to Christ are eternally saved. Those who die in Christ are eternally blessed. Whilst we can thank God for them, and praise Him for the triumph of His saving grace in their lives, to pray for them casts aspersions on the all sufficiency of Christ’s redeeming work, when no works of ours are needed, to make Christ’s merits more...’

The Unbeliever’s Eternal Loss

Consider secondly, and soberingly, that it is pointless to pray for those who, as far as we humanly knew, have died without Christ as sadly, the Christ-less are now in hell, separated eternally from God’s love, light and life and under His condemnation for ever. Their state is fixed, and cannot ever be changed by either their or our prayers.

The Lord Jesus told of a certain, ungodly rich man in hell in Luke 16. In a parable in which He mentions both heaven and hell, he said that between the two places ‘there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; Neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence’ (v.26). Hell is a sobering reality, which is both logical and theological. Consider that (i). the death of Christ procures the believer’s forgiveness (1 John 1: 12) so the unbeliever is, by implication unforgiven; (ii). the death of Christ procures the believer’s reconciliation to God (Romans 5:11 and 1 Peter 3:18) so the unbeliever is, by implication alienated from Him; (iii). the death of Christ procures the believer’s total cleansing from sin (1 John :7) so the unbeliever is, by implication, still defiled and so unfit for the presence of a thrice holy God. Heaven cannot be gained if Calvary is by passed. When Christ died, He actually tasted the pangs of hell (Matthew 27:46) when He bore our sins in His sinless body, and God’s righteous judgement upon them. By doing so, He procured the believer’s right to heaven. But by implication those outside of Christ have no hope of heaven. A condemned hell is their lot, for without the Saviour they do not possess the only hope of salvation that there is.

Ulster Bulwark July-September 2005

Questions about Christian Unity ...

Last time we looked at the problem of false teachers and the warnings in the New Testament about them. We saw that the warnings were necessary because false teachers exist, the devil is subtle, there are serious consequences from listening to such teachers, and we need to act. We move on to consider a basic question concerning knowledge of the truth.

What Is Our Authority?

Imagine a group of leaders from different churches meeting together. They are agreed that false teachers exist and that they constitute a threat that must be countered. "How do we judge whether or not certain people are false teachers?" one asks. "From what the Bible says," is one reply. "That's true," says another, "but we must also take into account the unwritten inspired tradition handed down from the apostles and preserved in the Church." "Ah!" says a third, "That ignores the growth of modern knowledge. We mustn't be bound by the past. We have to use our reason." That conversation highlights the vital issue at stake here. What is our authority? What is the standard by which we evaluate conflicting teachings?

Where Could We Go?

Three of the main alternatives have already been given. The plainest and simplest answer is the Bible, the Word of God. Christian leaders recognised the need for clarity about this early on, hence the emergence of the canon of Scripture, the recognition that the Old Testament 39 books plus the 27 making up the New Testament were inspired by the Spirit and carried God's authority. Other books, however profitable, did not have the same status. Admittedly it took a while for this process of recognition to be completed, but generally it was complete by the mid 2nd century. For a full treatment of the history of the canon one of the standard textbooks needs to be consulted.

This acceptance of the Scriptures alone for what Christians were to believe was the position of the early Church Fathers, of the Reformers, and of Evangelicals ever since.

However, there was a parallel development taking place at the same time in an endeavour to preserve the truth and resist false teachers. This concerned the Christian ministry. From the existence of elders in

every congregation there emerged one leader who was regarded as the focus of unity, the upholder of the truth, the successor of the apostles, and the preserver of apostolic tradition. This has been spoken of as the monarchical bishop and it is something that has developed into the type of episcopate we see in the Roman, Anglican, and Orthodox Churches. As with our description of the canon of Scripture this is a very simple outline, but one, we believe, true to the more detailed history readers may like to pursue.

It is this that has given rise to the difference between the Roman and Protestant attitudes to Scripture. 'The Protestant holds to the Bible alone as the authority. Rome maintains that alongside the written Word there is also the oral tradition, preserved by the apostolic ministry of the episcopate, which is equally authoritative. Rome would also maintain that the Lord ensured preservation of the truth through the infallible teaching office of a ministry inspired by the Holy Spirit. This reaches its peak in the infallibility of the Pope, but it belongs to the episcopate as a whole. So the Roman position could be summed up as not the Bible alone, but the Bible and tradition understood as the Church teaches.

Then we come to the position that has come to dominate Protestantism in its broadest sense in the last hundred years. This varies in degree, but not in kind. It dismisses ideas of infallibility, whether of Scripture or the Church. It emphasises the use of human reason in a search for truth wherever it might be found. There is an absence of certainty, and much more openness to all kinds of belief as insights to help us in our search.

Now it has to be said that no responsible Christian leadership would ever dismiss the use of reason. The Bible makes it plain that we are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. We are to bring our intellects to bear

on Scripture, but those intellects must have been made spiritually alive and be instructed by the Holy Spirit. Christians are never called to close their minds and need never be afraid of the truth. Sadly, we have sometimes brought ridicule on our position by a refusal to think.

You can see, though, from the outlines above that there can be no agreement between the three groups so long as they differ on the authority to which they appeal.

So Where Should We Go?

As individuals we must go where we believe the truth is to be found. Roman Catholics believe they have the truth. That's why they are Roman Catholics. Liberals believe they are right in turning away from the two older positions. We, who are Protestant Evangelicals, believe that it is in Scripture alone that we find the truth we need to believe and practise for our eternal good. There can be no real unity between those holding these three conflicting positions because the differences arising from them concern not just the incidentals of our faith, but issues at the very heart of our salvation. We shall see this in the three articles to follow in later issues of *Protestant Truth*.

Why Should We Go To Scripture Alone?

Every Protestant Evangelical should know the answer to that question. It is because we believe that God has spoken in Scripture and has guaranteed the reliability of what men have recorded in the biblical books through the work of the Holy Spirit. In 2 Timothy 3:15-17 Paul speaks of the holy Scriptures that are able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus", and he goes on to speak of their inspiration by God. They are breathed out by Him, and through these Scriptures the man of God can be perfect, complete.

Paul was referring to the Old Testament writings here, but 2 Peter 3:16 compares

Paul's writings with "the other scriptures", and there are other passages in the New Testament which indicate an implicit claim to be the Word of God, a claim which, in time, the whole early Church had no problem in accepting. The argument for this position has been well set out across the centuries right to the present day, and the Roman Church would agree with us on the inspiration of Scripture. It is what it adds that divides us so completely.

One has only to read some of the apocryphal Gospels and Acts to see the difference in spiritual authority and quality. It is interesting but sad that at the present time TV documentaries like "Who Wrote The Bible?" and the best selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, are promoting these Gnostic books at the expense of the truth.

What is wrong, though, with adding tradition as the Church of Rome does? In the first place, where tradition is saying the same as Scripture it is true but redundant. Where it adds to Scripture it is, at the very least, suspect, and certainly not necessary. Where it is contrary to Scripture it is wrong. Yet it is very easy for tradition to overrule Scripture where it exists. It happened with the Jews. It can happen with us if we are not careful. It has certainly happened with Rome. We can see it in matters like the papal claims, the doctrines of transubstantiation and baptismal regeneration, purgatory, confession, indulgences, the position given to Mary, and the significance of the mass in relation to the atoning work of our Lord Jesus. These are not small things, and while

it may be claimed that they develop from a biblical seed it has to be said that what has grown bears no resemblance to biblical teaching, and in effect has superseded it.

In theological liberalism and modernism the presuppositions of human reason have replaced Scripture and tradition with its own view of what is possible. Dismissing the supernatural work of an Almighty God there is so much that the reason dismisses as true, because it literally cannot see it. It is spiritually blind.

It may be that someone will say to us "You have your teachers whose words you accept. Don't you act as though they are infallible?" It's wrong if we do. We have to maintain that no human being is infallible, and even though we respect great teachers to whom we owe, under God, a great deal, we must always assess what they say by the Scriptures. Only God's Word is infallible.

How Then Should We Act?

If we make this bold claim that the Bible alone is our authority and that it is through the Word that the Spirit works, bringing people to a knowledge of God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility to demonstrate this conviction in the life of faith that we live. Trust must be shown in obedience to the will of God as He has revealed it in His Word.

Our minds, our thoughts must be brought into submission to God's revelation. Others may help us in this. There are those more

mature in the faith and more instructed in the Word who can help us to a closer understanding of the mind and will of God. Always, though, the test must be, "is this what the Bible says?" We are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, as James instructs us (1:22).

It is in grasping the truths of Scripture that we should be drawn closer together as members of the Body of Christ. Historically that has not always proved the case. Our proneness to sin includes fallibility and has produced division rather than unity for which our Lord prayed. The divisions among Bible believing people are an ongoing witness to that. Yet Paul's words to the Ephesian Christians (4:11-16) remain as a challenge and an encouragement to us. Do we love the Lord and our fellow believers enough, and believe the Scriptures enough, to take such teaching seriously and resolve to do what we can to help to implement them? Are we prepared for ongoing reformation in our churches?

It is through the Word as well that sinners will be brought to repentance and faith as the Gospel is preached and the Spirit works. There is our authority to tell all men they are sinners, and that those who believe on the Lord Jesus will be saved, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Protestant Truth May/June 2005

Iranian Pastor Stabbed to Death

An Iranian convert to Christianity was kidnapped in November from his home in north-eastern Iran and stabbed to death, his bleeding body thrown in front of his home a few hours later.

Ghorban Tori, 50, was pastoring an independent house church of convert Christians in Gonbad e Kavus. He is survived by his wife and four children, ages 3 to 23.

According to one informed Iranian source, representatives of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) have arrested and severely tortured 10 other Christians in several cities. MOIS officials have warned unofficial Protestant house fellowships that "the government knows what you are doing, and we will come for you soon."

He is the fifth Protestant pastor assassinated in Iran by unidentified killers in the past 11 years. Three of the five were former Muslims, under Iranian law subject to the death penalty for

having committed apostasy.

Tori's murder came just days after Iran's new hard line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called an open meeting with the nation's 30 provincial governors. During the session, Ahmadinejad reportedly vowed, "I will stop Christianity in this country".

"This was apparently a green light from the president of Iran to go out and start killing Christians," the source said.

According to the government run Entekhaab website, in a public speech Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, told youthful Basijis (members of a volunteer militia formed to enforce strict Islamic codes) preparing to join suicide missions that "non Muslims are sinful animals who roam the earth and engage in corruption." (Compass Direct)

British Church Newspaper 9.12.05

That's your funeral

A woman journalist, writing recently in *The Times* about a funeral service she had attended of a family friend, confessed frankly that as far as she was concerned all the religious bit meant nothing to her or, indeed for that matter, to most of her contemporaries. She had been irritated when her aunt had died and the minister went on about God. Why didn't he talk more about her aunt? It was after all her day, and the minister was exploiting the occasion and making it into some kind of Christian rally. The funeral of the family friend was more to her liking - a medley of pop music beginning with 'Hey, Jude' by the Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Stone Roses, and Mama Cass's 'Dream a Little Dream'.

What happens at funerals is significant. It is a barometer of the spiritual weather. It has been falling steadily for the past thirty years. The great themes of the Christian burial service are now treated with ill concealed impatience and even contempt. The present generation wishes instead to "rage and shout against the dying of the light". At one time many may have not have believed very much, but were prepared to suffer in respectful silence. But not any more. They want a slice of the action. There is a spirit of

iconoclasm abroad, and they want to 'strut their stuff'. They have nothing to celebrate in death, but they want to pretend somehow it isn't there.

What they fail to see is that their view of death colours also their view of life. Not only is death emptied of any meaning, but it reflects back upon life, and reveals a life emptied of meaning, too. And the process has only just begun. Very soon the full impact of this will be felt. Already we are seeing how the aimlessness of life is being celebrated in increasing drunkenness and violence of our city centres. It illustrates the truth that, "man shall not live by bread only". He cannot live in the fullest and truest sense by material things alone. He is a living soul. He needs spiritual sustenance. It is that which he now denies by his warped view of life.

It is all very well for the lady journalist of *The Times* to mock the Christian funeral service and pretend that the present generation has outgrown that, and left it behind. The boot is, in fact, on the other foot. The naivety and shallowness of the present generation shows that it has no real grasp of the realities of human existence. The vacuity and

meaninglessness of a modern funeral service, devoid of hope, filled only with sentimentality, self pity, and regret, reflect the modern view of life. It lacks the depths and heights, the wealth and power of the Christian view not merely of death, but of life also. What has modern, secular man to live for apart from self indulgence? A writer in the same newspaper, commenting on the prevalence of obesity today put the matter this way: "A loss of self control might be said to be the defining social (or anti-social) characteristic of our age: public drunkenness, excessive gambling, promiscuity, and common or garden rudeness are all examples of our collective loss of self control."

We may contrast the present view of life and death, carefully instilled into the present generation by the prophets of secularism, atheism, and hedonism, with the purposeful and elevating view of both life and death depicted by the Christian Gospel, and which are well summed up in a verse of Charles Wesley's:

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify
A never dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

Unless we can return to that vision, and understand life again in those terms, the outlook for our society is bleak indeed.

English Churchman 9.12.05

Displaying Bible texts 'was a crime'

Three police officers recently stopped a 74-year old black Christian displaying a Bible text message in the London Bridge area.

The text was displayed on a 'double A4 size' notice suspended on a piece of string around his neck. The notice said, "Jesus Christ is Lord, Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out". The man was surrounded by the Police officers and ordered to remove the Text from his person or be booked for a criminal charge under Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 (Displaying any sign, which is threatening, abusive or insulting).

The Police said that they had received a

complaint, and read from a small book informing him of the criminal offence he was alleged to be committing.

The man removed the notice from his neck. The Police then said that it was all right for him to carry it in his hands.

He said, "The Police did not approve of someone telling the world this Bible message. This country has changed. These are days of difficulty for 'Bible Believing Christians' but this should not stop us. I must obey my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The man concerned known as 'Grandpa' by his family, was in the past the Treasurer of the United Church of Zambia.

British Church Newspaper 9.12.05





THE MARION MARTYRS

By Mr Jack Bell

At the heart of the teaching of the Reformation lay two great affirmations, *sola fide* (faith alone) and *sola scriptura* (scripture alone). The Reformers believed that forgiveness of sins and eternal life comes through faith alone in Christ alone, not by human merit or church ceremony. Furthermore they maintained that the final authority in matters of faith and conduct is not the Pope or church councils or Christian tradition, but the Bible alone. The Protestants arrested by Queen Mary's officials often had to defend their adherence to these doctrines. In almost every case, however, the particular issue about which they were interrogated was the doctrine of transubstantiation, commonly referred to as the Mass. The Reformers believed the mass had four serious consequences:

- 1) It undermines Christ's finished work on the cross.
- 2) It undermines Christ's priestly office.
- 3) It undermines Christ's true humanity.
- 4) It encourages idolatry.

John Lomas, Agnes Snoth, Anne Wright, Joan Sole and Joan Calmer were five such Protestants who suffered martyrdom together on January 31, 1556. Seldom in any country have four women been led to execution whose lives were irreproachable. The above five persons were burnt at two stakes in one fire singing praises to God until their life was extinguished.

Monument at Martyrs Field, Canterbury. Inscription reads

*In memory of forty-one Kentish Martyrs who were burnt
at the stake on this spot in the reign of Queen Mary
A.D. 1555-1558.*

*For themselves they earned the martyr's crown by their heroic fidelity they helped secure for
their succeeding generations the priceless blessing of religious freedom.
"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"*

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Hello Boys and Girls,

It's always good to read the bible for it is God's Word and God can speak to us through His Word. There is a lot of information in the bible and some bibles have the meaning of names either at the back of the bible or in a column in middle of the page and the meaning of the name usually described the person who had that name. Do you have a bible name? If so, you can look up the bible to see what it means. Below I have given a names puzzle

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Joseph's brother (son of the right hand) | Genesis 45:14 |
| 2. The first man (red man) | Genesis 2:20 |
| 3. Jacob's wife (a ewe) | Genesis 29:9 |
| 4. Ruth's Mother-in-law (pleasant) | Ruth 1:8 |
| 5. High Priest (enlightened) | Leviticus 8:2 |
| 6. Ruth's Husband (cheerfulness) | Ruth 2:4 |
| 7. An old Lady (grace) | Luke 2:36 |
| 8. Abraham's wife (princess) | Genesis 17:15 |



The first letter of each answer makes another name found in ACTS 4:36.

Love from Mrs Glass

WOMEN'S VIEW

Hello Everyone,

A happy and blessed new year to you all.

I was recently looking over some of my dear husband's bibles (you will excuse me for not saying "late husband" I just cannot think of him in that way), and I read many of the poems and phrases he had written in his bible. The following are two of them.



*I am leading my child to the heavenly land
I am guiding him day by day
And I ask him now as I take his hand
To come home by a narrow way.
It is not such a way he himself would choose
For its beauty he cannot see
But he knows not what his soul would lose
If he trod not the path with me.*

Psalm 107:7



*My times are in Thy hands, My God I wish them there
My life, my friends, my soul I leave entirely to Thy care.
My times are in Thy hands, whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright, as best may seem to Thee.
My times are in Thy hands, why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand will never cause His child a needless tear.
My times are in Thy hands, Jesus the Crucified,
Those hands, my cruel sins had pierced, are now my guard and guide.
My times are in Thy hands, I'll always trust in Thee,
And after death, at Thy right hand, I shall forever be.*

Psalm 31:15



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