

GOOD NEWS

From the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland | May 2019



A Global Mission Field

Pages 3-4

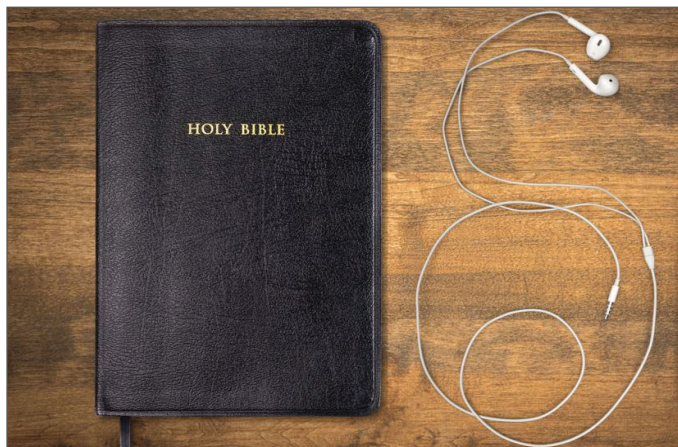
William Symington: Part One

Pages 10-11

An Interview with RPCS Seminary Students

Pages 12-14

CONTENTS



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

A Global Mission Field | Rev. Dr. Tim Donachie.....3-4

PRACTICAL

Improving Our Worship: Part Three | Rev. Stephen McCollum.....5-6

DOCTRINAL

The Law of God; Part One | Rev. Stephen Steele.....7-8

Visual Theology.....9

CHURCH HISTORY

William Symington: Part One | Rev. Stephen Steele.....10-11

INTERVIEW

An Interview with | RPCS Seminary Students.....12-14

NEWS

Congregational & Presbytery News.....15-17

Global News.....18-19

TEENS Q&A

What Do I do about Church When I'm away from home? | Rev. Peter Loughridge.....20

Children's Story | Margaret Murray.....21

Children's Quiz | Brenda McCollum.....22

Recommended Reading.....23

Poster.....24



To subscribe email
rpchurchscotland@gmail.com

Editor — Rev. Stephen McCollum, Stornoway RPCS | Assistant Editor — Scott Maciver | Website — www.rpccotland.org

EDITORIAL

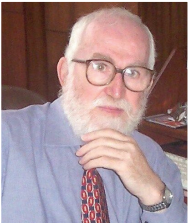
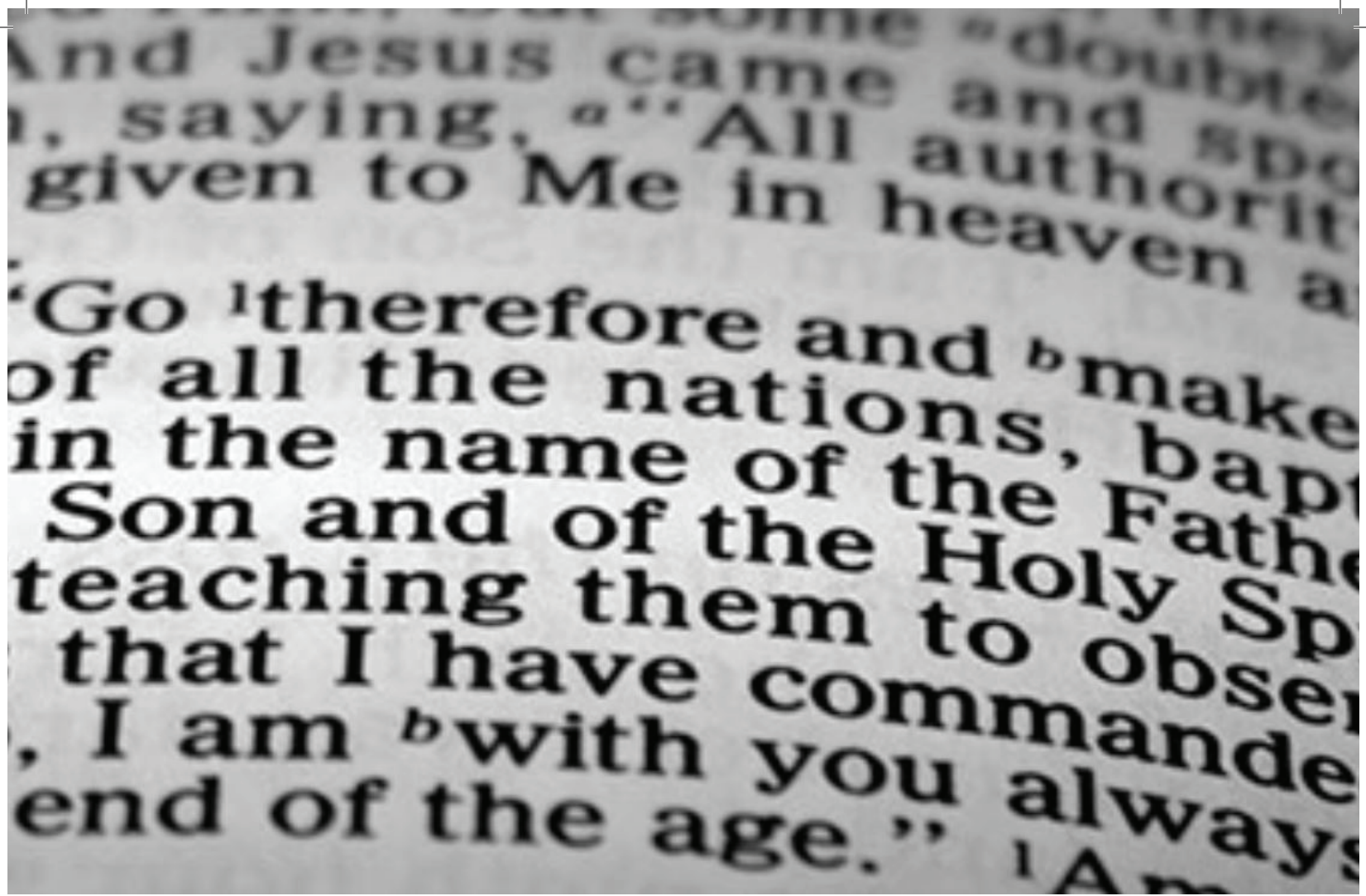
Dear readers,

Welcome to this edition of Good News. We commence a new series on the Law of God, written by Stephen Steele. The Law is an important topic and as Stephen points out, it is often misunderstood. I'm thankful that Stephen also agreed to write about William Symington. Symington was one of the best-known Reformed Presbyterian ministers. He was a minister both in Stranraer and in Glasgow and so that may be of particular interest to some of you. His legacy continues today in his books. I read *Messiah the Prince* while I was a student in Glasgow, but it wasn't until this year that I read *The Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ*. The former book deals with Christ's kingship and the latter with His priesthood, and I would heartily commend both.

Dr. Tim Donachie continues to helpfully address contemporary issues, here dealing with the nations on our doorstep. Having begun a regular interview slot in the last edition, we turn to find out how our seminary students are getting on. I trust that the interview leads you to pray for them as we ought. We can also pray that the Lord of the harvest would raise up further labourers.

Once again, let me encourage you to pass on the magazine, whether physically or electronically, if there is an article that would be helpful to them. If any outside the denomination wish to subscribe, the necessary information is to the side.

Every blessing,
Stephen



Contemporary Issues

Rev. Dr. Tim Donachie

A Global Mission Field

There is currently much discussion regarding the topic of immigration. People are worried about the number of migrants that come into the UK and how that could affect the racial and ethnic makeup of the country. It is certainly true that in some towns and cities there are areas in which a multiplicity of languages is heard, differing cultures are manifested, and a wide variety of dress is on view. For some, this is considered to be a very good thing and is a proper manifestation of a multiracial and multicultural society which should be embraced and encouraged; for others, it is a sign that their country is being taken over by alien cultures and customs and

that their distinctive 'British' culture is being lost. There is, however, one very important consideration that is missing from any discussion regarding immigration and one that should be of great interest to Christian people.

For many years, churches and missionary organisations have believed that the great commission in Matthew 28:19 obliged them to prepare and send missionaries to preach the gospel to those in other lands, especially to those lands where there was little or no access to the gospel of Christ. This has involved great expense for the sending organisations; great commitment from those who went – Bible

and theological training, language learning, cultural adaptation, long separation from home and family and the pressure of living in what was often an alien environment, with the knowledge that people at home were expecting to hear of exciting results, when the reality was all too often different. That this was and is a God honouring thing to do, cannot be denied, but perhaps, in the providence of God, for those living in the United Kingdom, God has now brought the mission field to their very doors!

Between 2004 and 2017 the foreign-born population in the UK nearly doubled from 5.3 million to around

9.4 million. In the same period the foreign-born population of Scotland rose from 203,000 to 447, 000, an increase of 135%. (figures from the Migration Observatory). For some, these figures are alarming, but for the Christian, they present a tremendous opportunity! Foreign missionary work can now be carried out without having to travel overseas!

The command of the Lord Jesus Christ to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature' comes into very sharp focus for every believer with the great influx of foreign nationals into the country. In the past, it was possible to be involved in missionary work through prayer and giving, which are, of course vital, but now there is a much greater opportunity and responsibility for the believer to be practically and personally involved in the work of foreign mission. That is not to say that foreign mission work at home is any easier than foreign mission work abroad! The mission worker abroad has the task of learning a new language and adapting to and understanding different customs and cultures, whilst the foreign mission worker at home has to try to understand and become accepted by people who have radically different ideas, cultures and religions. Just like working overseas, foreign mission work at home can be slow and frustrating as misunderstandings occur and cultural mistakes are made. The people who go overseas as foreign missionaries are wise to learn as much as possible about the country and culture of the place to which they are going before they set out. No less is true for those seeking to reach out to foreign nationals at home. It is very easy to cause offence by inadvertently breaking a cultural taboo simply because it had not been properly understood beforehand.

There are no sure-fire methods or plans that can be utilised in order to reach out to those who have made their home in our country, but there are certain attitudes and actions that may help in the evangelisation of 'the stranger within our gates'.

The first and most important thing is that people from other lands must be seen as people not targets! They are no less needy than the people

that have lived all their lives in the same street or town, and conversely, no more so! Whether from Scotland or Pakistan, England or Poland, if they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, they are lost and without hope. The colour of skin, or language, or culture is utterly irrelevant in the great task of reaching out to men and women with the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, in the specific task of cross-cultural evangelisation there may well be different approaches that must be adopted. It is certainly

“The first and foremost thing is that people from other lands must be seen as people not targets! They are no less needy than the people that have lived all their lives in the same street or town, and conversely, not more so!”

more difficult when dealing with people who are living in an area of a town or city that has become identified with a particular nationality or culture, for there is the natural inclination to be wary of outsiders and to find everything needed within the community itself. It is only as outsiders are able to make friends within these communities that there can be opportunities to speak about Christ. As well as that, there

are the occasional opportunities for Christians to debate with people of other faiths, but these opportunities must be handled extremely carefully and wisely.

One method of outreach that has met with some success is the provision of English language classes for immigrants. This can be extremely useful if there is a church building in the vicinity of an area in which large numbers of immigrants have settled. It means that people do not have to travel out of their area and there is great ease of access. Such classes are providing something that the people want and is a comparatively simple way to make contact with people whom we would not normally meet. It also means that people meet in an informal and non-threatening environment where conversations naturally occur. The presentation of the gospel message is no more difficult in such situations than it is in the context of conversations with native born people who have no meaningful contact with church or God.

Of course, when people come from other lands and settle into the country, get jobs and send their children to local schools, there is always the possibility of making friendships through the normal social interaction in society, work and school. It is not that the Christian should 'target' immigrants, just be aware of the possibility of friendship with people from other lands and cultures and make an effort to get to know them.

No missionary work, either at home or overseas, is easy. It requires dedication and commitment and much prayer and there are no guarantees of success. It is, however one of the greatest tasks in the world! To bring to men and women, Romanian, Scottish, Indian or Iraqi the glorious message of sins forgiven is an enormous privilege and a tremendous responsibility. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ to his first disciples are equally applicable to his people in the twenty-first century. 'Follow me, and I will make fishers of men'.

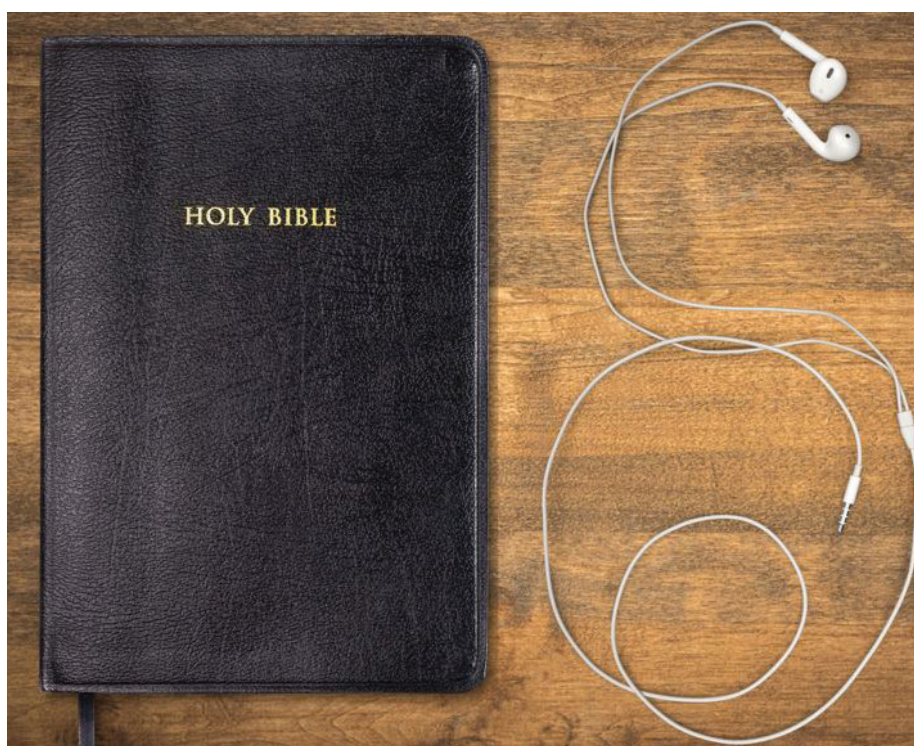


Practical

Rev. Stephen McCollum
Stornoway RPCS

SERIES

Improving Our Worship Part Three, Listening to the Scripture Reading



In this series we are taking practical steps to improve our worship. In this issue we come to the Scripture reading. The fact that Scripture is to be read in public worship is evident and I hope that we would find it very strange if there were no Bible reading. While it is a matter of wisdom for the minister to decide how much Scripture is read during each service, it can be noted that many churches read less and less of God's Word in an average service. For visitors to Reformed churches it can come as a surprise at how Bible-focused our services are, with many congregations having both an Old and New Testament reading in each service.

It is the duty of the minister to read the Scripture clearly, accurately, and

in a way which seeks to edify the congregation. It has not been the practice in the Reformed Church of having just anyone from the congregation read the Scripture publicly. The reason for our practice is that we see in the Scriptures that the public ministry of the Word (preaching and reading) is tied to the pastoral office.

Nevertheless, let me stress that although the minister alone is active in reading the Scriptures aloud, the congregation is still actively worshipping God by listening. Our Confession of faith states that "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and **conscionable hearing** of the Word... are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God..." When

the Bible is read (and as we'll see in due course, when it is preached) we are to be listening.

How Should We Listen to The Scripture Reading?

(i) Reverently

"But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66:2)

There are really two approaches to listening to the Scriptures: we can either sit over the Word (thinking we know it all) or sit under it (reverently submitting to it). Since it is the living Word of the living God we must sit under it. The Bible is like no other book. Authors die. God is the author who ever lives and ever speaks. What He says has consequence for our lives and He has the right to be heard. We must resist the tendency to getting too "used to" the Word of God that we treat it as common.

(ii) Dependently

"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." (Psalm 119:18)

We should come to worship prepared in our hearts. Part of that preparation is to be praying for the help of the Spirit. We cannot understand the Scriptures without Him - it is arrogance to think otherwise. You may have heard the passage that is read many times before, but the Spirit can bring new insight and greater depth to what we know.

(iii) **Eagerly**

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” (Psalm 19:10)

We need God’s Word and should come to it with a sense of anticipation. We don’t live by bread alone. Our attitude to the Scripture reading betrays whether we truly consider it to be better than gold and sweeter than honey.

(iv) **Obediently**

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22)

God’s Word is to be obeyed. Therefore, we must respond appropriately to the Bible reading. If a promise is announced, we are to exercise it. If a command is issued, we must obey. If a warning is uttered, we must amend our ways with trembling. If grace is offered, we should trust God for it. The more we respond to God’s Word like this, the better prepared we will be to listen in future.

How can we develop these attitudes for the public Scripture reading?

The best way is to be in the Scriptures yourself in private and in the family, day by day reading, studying, and meditating upon them. The more we know the Bible, its scope and its depth, the more meaningful the Scripture reading will be to us. The more we practise being reverent, dependent, eager, and obedient at home, the more likely we will do the same in church.

How can we train our children?

Parents will have different expectations for their children depending on the age and ability of each child. It is good, however, to try to train them to listen more attentively. I have been to churches

where children may be quiet during the Scripture reading, but they are merely doodling or playing, even though they are the age to listen. How can we help train children?

- **Looking up the passage:** The Bible has 66 books and the exact passage can be hard to find, especially for children. The order of the books needs to be learned. A good Sabbath afternoon game is to play “Sword drills” – call out a passage and the first person to get to the right place and read the verse gets a point. In worship, it is good for each child to have his or her own Bible. Older children can turn up the passage themselves; younger children will need help. Even if your child can’t yet read, the very action of holding a Bible at the right page is something that can be developed with time.

- **Noting the passage:** It is good for us all to remember which passages were read by the minister and read over them again later. It might be a good idea for children to have a notebook in which they can note down the Scripture readings. Parents can check later whether they got them right.

- **Listening to the passage:** It is too much to expect young children to be able to listen to as large a section as adults can listen to, but it’s not too much to get children to listen for something from the passage. When you have family worship, you could ask your child to listen for a key word in the passage before you read it. Or since the Bible teaches us “what we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man” (WSC 3), it may be profitable to ask your child to listen for one or two things the passage teaches about God and one or two things that it calls on us to do. It may surprise you how much children do pick up. Related to this, while it is good to read to your child from story Bibles, these should not be a replacement for actual

reading of Scripture. Story Bibles are summaries but not the Word of God. Train your children to listen to the real thing. Of course, it is not easy. Step into our kitchen after breakfast and you’ll see how difficult it is with a baby and a toddler! But we remind ourselves that perseverance is key and I hope it will pay off in the end. This point is made in the Westminster Directory for Family Worship, “Next, reading of the scriptures, with catechising in a plain way, that the understandings of the simpler may be the better enabled to profit under the public ordinances, and they made more capable to understand the scriptures when they are read...”

- **Reading the Bible themselves:** We should want our children to be literate and we should encourage them to be avid readers. There are many benefits of reading, but as Christians we recognise that reading the Scripture is the best of all. The Reformers have been consistent that the Scriptures are to be read privately, and therefore each person must learn to read. The Reformation was behind the excellent heritage of education that we have in this country. It is good therefore to get your children reading the Bible for themselves. It will begin with a short verse, read slowly, each word sounded out. With time, however, they won’t be held back. From my experience in teaching, many children are keen to read chapter books. The Bible is of course made up of many chapters. Therefore, if your children can read chapter books, there is no reason why they can’t be trying to read the Bible for themselves, a little each day. How do you get to this point? Read aloud to your children from their early days, and when they begin learning to read, don’t expect all the work to be done in school. Diligently listen to your child reading aloud. It won’t be long until they are following along in church.



Doctrinal

Rev. Stephen Steele
Stranraer RPCS

SERIES

The Law of God: Part One



Why begin a series on the Law of God? Perhaps as soon as you see the word 'law', you immediately think 'legalism'. And it brings back memories of a legalistic family background or a legalistic church experience. There may not have been out-and-out teaching that you had to obey the law to get to Heaven – but there was a focus on the outward rather than the inward. People were expected to do things which God never commanded.

For others, your objection may be more theological. After all, doesn't the New Testament tell us that we're not under law, but under grace? Does it not say that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life? Should we not be more concerned with love than with rules?

And yet if we as Christians aren't clear on God's law, we'll not last long in our twenty-first century world.

Imagine you are talking to a friend and have just taken a stand for the biblical view of marriage as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. But your friend replies: 'so if homosexuality's wrong, is it also wrong to wear clothes with two kinds of fabric? What about eating bacon? The same book (Leviticus) that condemns homosexuality condemns those things as well. You Christians pick and choose which laws you

want to keep!’ One response to that objection, which I heard from a Christian who phoned in to Stephen Nolan, was ‘that’s the Old Testament – it doesn’t apply anymore’. But that won’t do either, not least because when Jesus came he said ‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the law’ (Matthew 5:17). Instead, he came to ‘fulfil’ the law – and whatever ‘fulfil’ means, it doesn’t mean ‘abolish’!

One area where the whole question of the law becomes immediately relevant to us is in regards to the Fourth Commandment. Perhaps you don’t allow your child to play sport or go to parties on Sundays, but your friend, who’s also a Christian, does. And in support of their actions they quote Colossians 2:16 – ‘Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath’.

These aren’t small matters. Jesus himself said: ‘whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 5:19). How can we avoid legalism on one side and antinomianism on the other?

Historically, the church has navigated these difficult issues by understanding the Bible as containing three different (though at times overlapping) categories of law. This ‘threefold division of the law’ distinguishes between the moral law (summarised in the Ten Commandments), the ceremonial law (regulating Israel’s sacrificial system and matters such as ceremonial cleanliness) and the civil law (specific laws to be obeyed by the nation of Israel in the Promised Land). So called ‘New Covenant Theology’ rejects this division and says we must interpret the law as a whole. Before throwing out this distinction as a human imposition however, it should give us pause for thought when we see that the roots of it go back until at least the second century AD (as Philip Ross has shown in his excellent book on the subject, *From the Finger of God*).

The big question however is whether the Bible distinguishes between different types of laws – and it seems clear that it does. For example, after Jesus tells the people that what goes into someone from outside can’t defile him, Mark writes in his gospel: ‘Thus he declared all foods clean’ (7:19). So the New Testament itself teaches that those Old Testament laws about clean and unclean food no longer apply to us as Christians. The book of Hebrews tells us that we no longer need priests or sacrifices, because Jesus has fulfilled them. Those laws were there to teach the people about Jesus. Once he came, there was no need to keep observing them. Therefore, the ceremonial law no longer binds Christians. You can eat a bacon roll wearing a jumper of mixed fabric, giving thanks for both! And yet, while the ceremonial law is fulfilled, it’s not irrelevant – it still points us to Jesus.

The second category of laws applied to God’s people in the Promised Land. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses himself seems to explicitly differentiate ‘his covenant...the Ten Commandments’ from ‘statutes and rules’ which were to be obeyed ‘in the land’ (4:13-14). A classic example of one of these ‘civil laws’ is the requirement that new-build houses must have a parapet on their roof to stop people falling off (22:8). That specific regulation no longer applies to builders today – but the underlying principle (a due regard for health and safety) remains binding. The civil law was simply an application of the moral law to a specific historical situation.

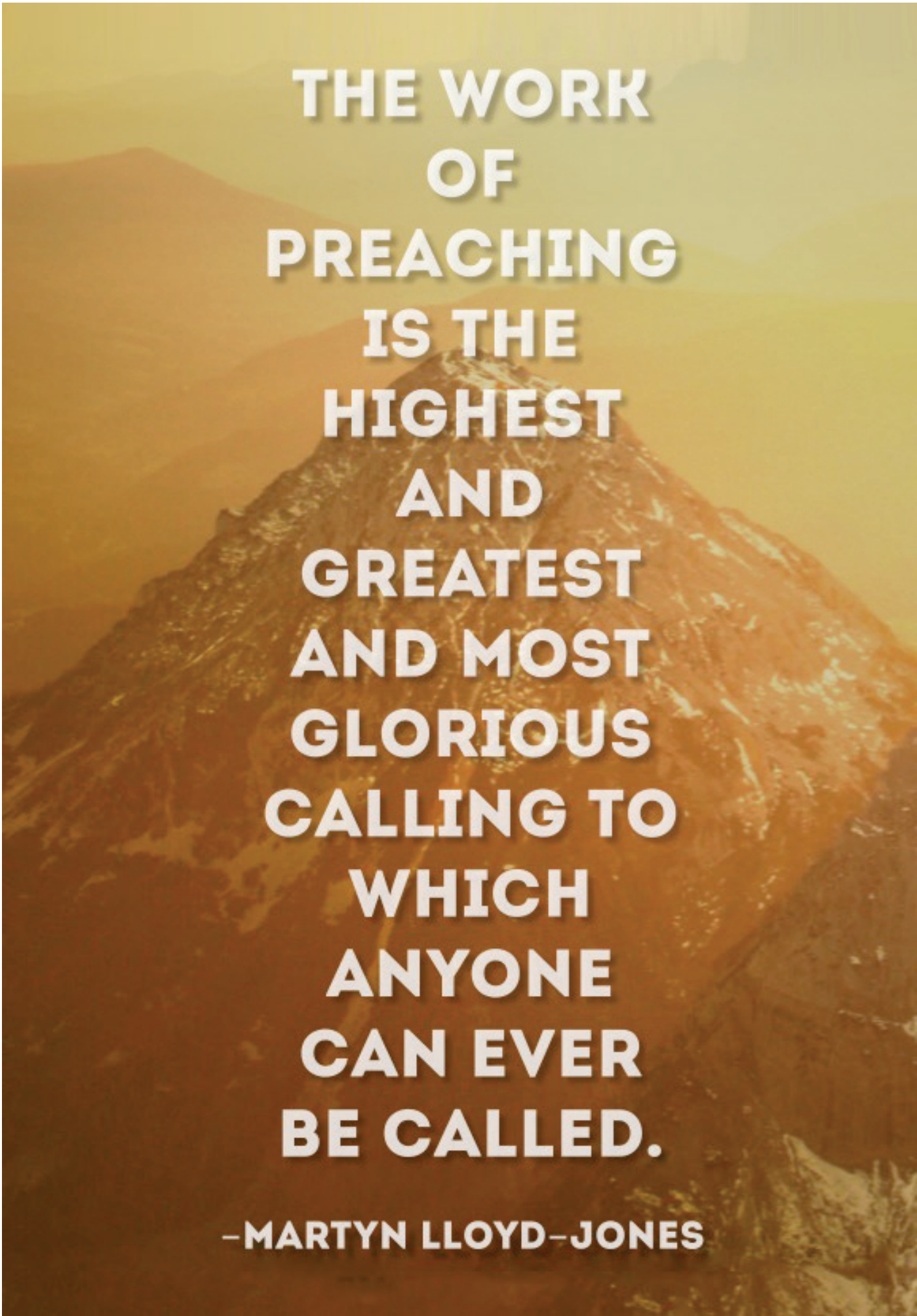
However, the Bible presents the Ten Commandments as utterly unique. Only they are spoken audibly by God to the people, and written by him on tablets of stone (a pretty good indication they were intended to be permanent!). Only the Ten Commandments were placed in the ark of the covenant, the sacred chest which was kept in the most holy place on earth.

Another big distinction is that the ceremonial and civil laws were only given to the Jews, whereas the Ten Commandments were in operation from the beginning of Creation. They are not merely Jewish laws, as they existed centuries before there was such a thing as a Jew. Rather, they are based on who God is. And so unless God changes, the commandments won’t change. For example, when Cain killed Abel in Genesis ch 4, he still knew it was wrong, even though it was centuries before the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai. In Genesis 9, it was wrong for Ham to dishonour his Father even before the fifth commandment was written in stone. When Potiphar’s wife tried to get Joseph to sleep with her in Genesis 39, he refused because he knew that adultery was wrong. When God gave the people manna in the wilderness, he told them that there wouldn’t be any on the seventh day, because it was the Sabbath. Even though the Ten Commandments had not yet been given, he didn’t need to explain the concept of the Sabbath to them – because it was inbuilt into Creation.

In fact, the commandments are not just built into Creation, they are also inbuilt into us. Romans 2:15 says that when Gentiles, who’ve never read the Bible, do the things that the law requires, they show that the law is written on their hearts (though since the fall, only fragments of it remain within us).

This should all give us pause for thought before we reject the idea of law altogether. The Bible itself distinguishes between the types of laws it contains, making clear which are temporary and which are permanent. And while sympathetic towards those burned by legalism, the misuse of the law by some does not mean there is something inherently wrong with the law itself – rather, it is ‘holy, righteous and good’ (Romans 7:12).

It is to the use and abuse of the law that we will come next time.



**THE WORK
OF
PREACHING
IS THE
HIGHEST
AND
GREATEST
AND MOST
GLORIOUS
CALLING TO
WHICH
ANYONE
CAN EVER
BE CALLED.**

—MARTYN LLOYD—JONES



Church History

Rev. Stephen Steele
Stranraer RPCS

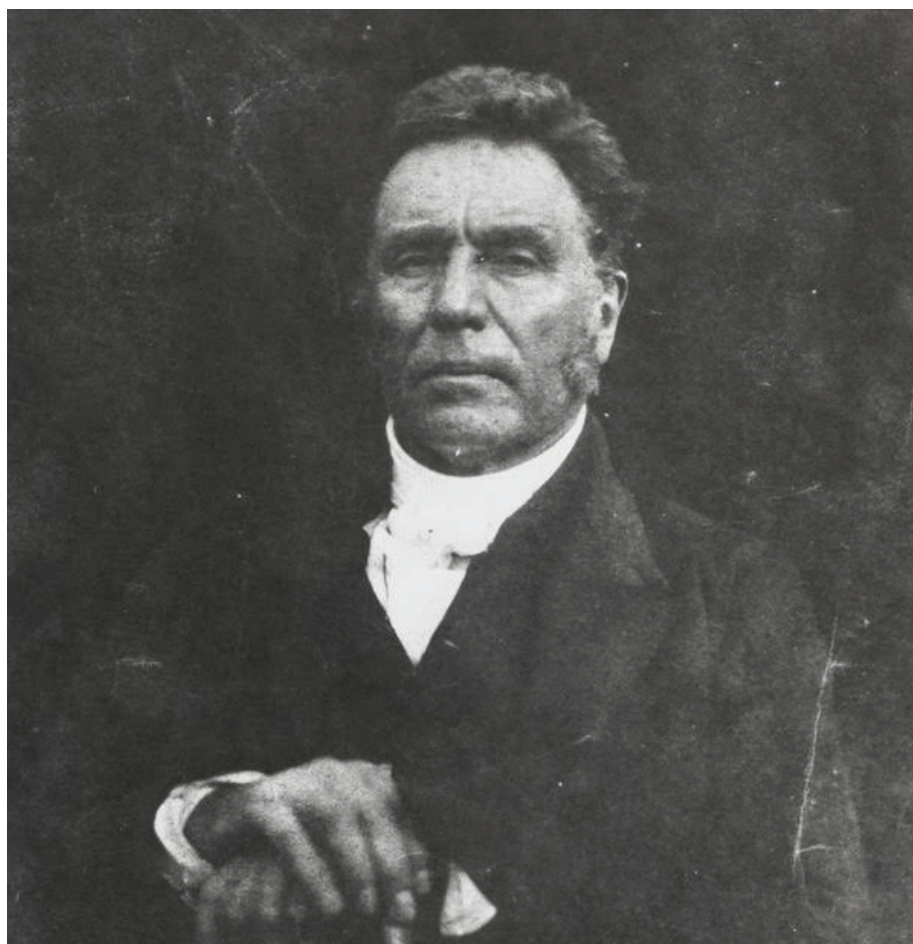
SERIES

William Symington, Part One

It would be hard to overestimate the influence of the brothers Andrew and William Symington on the Scottish RP Church. When William, the younger of the two, died in 1862 the *Reformed Presbyterian Magazine* declared that the brothers 'will be ever remembered in our community as the most distinguished ministers who have been raised up to us since the martyrdom of James Renwick'. Andrew's influence came through training generations of ministry students as the denomination's sole Professor of Theology. William's came through his writing, public speaking, and preaching ministry, first in the heartland of the Covenanters in South-West Scotland, and then in a large congregation in Glasgow at the height of the Industrial Revolution.

The fact that a 150,000 word PhD has been written on William Symington is an indication that a couple of magazine articles can only scratch the surface when it comes to his extraordinary life. This first article will deal with Symington's background, early life and years in Stranraer. A second article will cover his family life, writings, ministry in Glasgow and wider influence.

William Symington lived at a key time in the history of the Scottish RP church, being ordained less than a decade after the scattered congregations of the Reformed Presbytery had been organised into a Synod. The Covenanters who had remained outside what they saw as a



William Symington

'new' Established Church in 1688, had existed as a network of 'societies', without a minister until 1706. The first Presbytery was formed in 1743 and a Synod in 1811, with the Symingtons' father one of the elders present when it was constituted.

William was born in June 1795. After his schooling in Paisley, he began Glasgow University at the age of 15. The most significant event of his early life was undoubtedly his conversion, which took place around the time he turned 17.

When Symington was growing up, the RP Church was still suffering from a shortage of ministers. One of the effects of this is that the Lord's Supper was only celebrated once a year, at most. Writing in 1881, his sons note

'At that time it was more of a great and solemn occasion than it is now'. A number of different ministers would have taken part in the services, and crowds of people, often numbering thousands would have travelled long distances to take part.

And it was to a communion season in the summer of 1812 that he traced his own conversion. He wrote in his journal: 'My feelings and enjoyments at this period cannot be described, and often since, when contemplating my lethargy and indifference and sinful departure from God, have I recurred to this joyful season with the exclamation of Job in my heart, Oh that I were in months past'.

While there was clearly an emotional element to what happened him that

summer; he would have distinguished it from mere emotionalism. In fact, he writes elsewhere that as a schoolboy he had 'something like what may be called a religious fit' – where he and a classmate swapped their 'sinful amusements' for reading the Bible. But it did not last, and he says 'in a short time our youthful resolutions and ardent hopes were as though they had not been'.

After university, he began his studies for the ministry, which at the time consisted in attending a term of lectures each autumn under the Reformed Presbyterian Professor of Theology at Stirling. After his 4 years of training he underwent a year-long 'probationary tour' around the vacant churches.

Scotland's railway network was still a couple of decades in the future so the young Symington had to travel by pony. He called his trusty steed 'the Irishman' and the two of them travelled across the bounds of the church. At this time the communicant membership numbered over 10,000 and ministering to them involved travelling from Perthshire to Galloway and from Berwick to the Western Highlands.

He proved a popular preacher from the beginning. There's no doubt that he was an impressive orator. His sons say that his manner of speaking was more cultivated and graceful than the people had been used to from the older ministers of the denomination. However interestingly he would later instruct students for the ministry to speak naturally – and for an example of natural earnestness he told them to go to the Salt-market and watch the fish-wives bargaining and scolding.

People from other denominations, particularly the Church of Scotland, would also come to hear him – and if he was preaching somewhere for successive weeks the numbers coming to hear him would increase each time. We see from his diary that this was the case when he first preached in Stranraer, coming for a month in January 1819.

The congregation were keen to call him, however he had also received a call from the Airdrie congregation. He chose Stranraer, and that

summer made the move from Paisley to Stranraer via boat – a steamer named the *Rob Roy*.

He was ordained in the open air on the 18th of August, in front of an immense crowd, estimated at between four and five thousand people, which met in the burying ground beside the church. At the time the population of Stranraer itself was only 2,500, with 33,000 in Wigtownshire as a whole. Even allowing for the tradition of people travelling long distances for ordinations and communions, it shows the extent of Reformed Presbyterian influence in the area.

The new minister had his work cut out for him. Local newspaper accounts of the day are filled with lurid details of 'child murder by unnatural mothers' and 'melancholy deaths by drowning, starving and drunken riot'. After some time in Stranraer, we find Symington bemoaning the fact that he can't get people to give up card playing and parties on the Sabbath. He was also concerned about the growing drinking culture.

Yet even within the churchgoing population, he didn't find a ready audience. His sons say: 'Evangelical religion was at a low ebb then in that locality. The preachers were but few and far between who testified the Gospel of the grace of God; and the truths...propounded by the young minister sounded strange and startling to many ears'.

Another contemporary account says: 'evangelical preaching, at least in the Establishment, was greatly wanting in and around Stranraer as well as generally throughout Galloway'.

However Symington's greatest concern was not with the state of other congregations, but with that of his own. Soon after he came to Stranraer, the church building was rebuilt to accommodate the growing crowds coming to hear him. Surprisingly, about six months after the new building was opened, we find him down in the dumps. His brother, who has just been visiting, felt the need to write a letter to try and encourage him. It's clear from both William's preaching and his diary that he felt many of those coming to hear him were unconverted and indifferent.

Yet while his preaching was to some a fragrance from death to death, to many others it was a fragrance from life to life (2 Cor 2:16). One person who lived in Stranraer at the time writes: 'During 1819 to 1822, many whom we knew in circles all around believed, for the Gospel was powerfully sent home to his hearers by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus permanent friendships began—new societies were formed—new lives began'.

While Symington is known as a preacher, he was also a devoted pastor. He kept a record of his pastoral visitation, quite apart from the constant visits required by baptisms, marriages, illness and death. He held classes for the youth who were considering joining the congregation.

In fact, because of the nature of the RP Church at the time, Symington was also responsible for the remainders of the loose network of Covenanting societies throughout the region. These included people who were too geographically remote to regularly attend any of the current RP congregations. He began a regular yearly programme of visitation that took him away from home many days at a time, in all kinds of weather. Following one long period of illness he wrote to another minister: 'My complaints I ascribe to cold and fatigue...the week before Presbytery I rode...through bogs and moors visiting in upper Leswalt, and exposed to a keen east wind. The effects of this exertion I had not thrown off when I set off for Castle Douglas'.

The results of his visiting and preaching can be seen in new congregations established around this time in Whithorn, Gatehouse of Fleet, Kilbirnie, Sanquhar and Ettrick, along with four others in and around Dumfries.

Yet even as he saw much fruit from his ministry, he also faced personal affliction and bereavement, with his six-year-old son Robert dying in a tragic accident. And it is with this 'overwhelming tragedy' (as two of his other sons describe it) that we'll take up the story next time.



An Interview with RPCS SEMINARY STUDENTS, IAN GILLIES AND SYLVESTER KONTEH



Ian Gillies

In this edition, we interview our theological students. Ian Gillies (IG) is living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and studying at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (RPTS). Sylvester Konteh (SK), born in Sierra Leone, is living in the Gambia and studying at RPTS via Distance Learning.

Could you describe your upbringing and how you became a Christian?

SK: My upbringing was partly Muslim and partly pagan religion. I became a Roman Catholic at some point, as a result of my father. I became a Christian during an evangelistic

crusade in our community. After the crusade I could not sleep at night. I was thinking about hell and my sinful life. The next day I came to the Pastor and asked him how to be saved? He led me in prayer and invited me to the church. My conversion took place in the year 1995. If you are coming from a Muslim or pagan background you can easily tell when someone is converted.

IG: I was raised by Christian parents in Kilmacoll, near Glasgow, along with my two older brothers. In my earliest years, I did not doubt God's existence, yet I considered the means of grace to be merely something my parents wanted me to engage with. Around the age of eleven or twelve, however, these means became more meaningful to me as the Spirit opened my eyes to the truth that my parents' faith could not save me from my sin — I personally had to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. Praise be to God for granting me a spirit of repentance and faith, together with the rest of my immediate family, with whom I have been thankful to be a part of Glasgow RPCS for the past seven years.

How did God call you to the ministry?

IG: I felt an increasing sense of a call to the ministry during the latter years of my university career. As I wrestled with the call, my minister, Rev. Kenneth Stewart, was a great help to me, both through his wise counsel and Spirit-led preaching. During the summer of 2017, after my graduation from university, the Lord

used the Scriptures to confirm the calling in my own mind. I approached the Session at Glasgow RPCS and then, after a period of time working in the congregation, formally applied to the ministry. I was taken under the care of the Scottish Presbytery in March 2018. The well-known words of Zechariah 4:6 have been, and continue to be, an invaluable precept to me in considering this most important of matters — “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts”.

SK: I was always going to church, following my conversion. Through the grace of God, I became very committed to church activities, and put away most of my sinful life, for which I was known. At some point, some of my friends followed me to church. When they were asked, “Who invited you?” they said, “Nobody invited us. We wanted to know what happened to Sylvester. Since he came to this church. Everything about Sylvester has changed”

I wanted to share my faith with all my friends. I became very committed to evangelism, to the point where it became my lifestyle to share the Gospel. I would wake up in the morning around 5.00 and start going around preaching, from house to house. The Pastor I walked with, encouraged me to become a Pastor several times, but I told him to wait till the time is ripe. I wanted to preach the Gospel and see sinners saved. I am known for preaching everywhere, including ghettos, market places and street corners. My town people knew me as the radical evangelist. In Sierra Leone, you are free to preach anywhere, at any time, so I made good use of the opportunity.

This was how I realised that I was called to the ministry. I have this undying passion to share the Gospel. All the pastors who ever pastored me encouraged me to become a Pastor. I was officially set apart as an evangelist in 1999 and became a pastor in 2003.



Sylvester Konteh

How would you describe your seminary experience to date?

SK: My seminary experience has been a great joy and delight, where I have found the opportunity to enrich my soul. My greatest challenge is writing papers, which I have never previously done. However, as time goes on, I am developing this skill, as I write about issues that affect me and the world we live in, as I seek to address them Biblically. I love reading, but the seminary has given me more zeal to read and write. The Seminary has taught me ways of reading and writing that are delightful and enriching.

IG: I am thankful to the Lord for a greatly blessed seminary experience to date. While studying so far from home has been difficult at times, I came to RPTS with the belief that it was the Lord's will for me to study here, and that belief has been

strengthened by my experience thus far. I am mindful that just as there is no perfect church on this earth, so too there is no perfect seminary, yet I can say with confidence that the teaching at RPTS is faithful, the professors are devoted, and the community is warm. Studying alongside brethren from different parts of the world has been a great source of encouragement to me. Just recently, one classmate, who has had a far more difficult and trying Christian walk than I, spoke of how he literally counts his blessings at the end of each week. Thanks be to God for the many blessings I can already count from my time at RPTS.

What do you see as the primary purpose of a seminary education?

IG: We often speak of seminary “training” and that is the word I would emphasise. Paul told Timothy that to be a good minister of Jesus

Christ, he had to be “nourished” in the Word of God (1 Tim. 4:6). A true and proper seminary education will train students in the Word, immersing them in its riches. Yet, what matters most is not growing in one’s knowledge of the Word intellectually but spiritually. The primary goal and purpose of a seminary education is what Paul described to Timothy in the following verse as training “toward godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7). As B. B. Warfield states in a helpful pamphlet, *The Religious Life of Theological Students*, “a minister must be learned, on pain of being utterly incompetent for his work. But before and above being learned, a minister must be godly”. As seminary students preparing to exhort and encourage the Lord’s people towards godliness, how vital it is that we be practicing what we will preach – by the grace of God alone.

SK: The primary goal of a seminary education is to enrich and empower the soul, in order to become more effective and relevant to the call to the ministry. I cannot give what I don’t have.

What book have you found most helpful in your first year of seminary?

SK: The book I found most helpful is *Gospel Worship* by Jeremiah Burroughs. I come from a corrupted

worship background and I am living amongst a people of corrupted worship, whilst seeking Biblical ways to transform worship in my generation. God intends great honour to His name, as noted by Burroughs, as His name is to be Holy. “I will be sanctified in them that draw near me, and before all the people, I will be glorified” (Leviticus 10:3).

IG: Without doubt, Jeremiah Burroughs’ *Gospel Worship*. This is a collection of fourteen sermons based on God’s judgement on Nadab and Abihu for the “strange fire” they offered in Leviticus 10. Burroughs goes through each element of worship, describing how the Lord desires His people to come before His throne of grace. The sermons are convicting and challenging, yet encouraging too. A heightened view of the worship of God would surely benefit the Church in our day, thus *Gospel Worship* is not just a book I would encourage every pastor or seminarian to read, but every Christian who sits in the pew and engages in the worship of God.

What vision do you have for your ministry, post-seminary?

IG: I can only echo that great petition of our Saviour, “Thy will be done”. I do have a great burden for my homeland, which has only grown since commencing my

studies. Nevertheless, I am in the hands of the Lord and seek wisdom and discernment to know His will upon completion of my studies. The Psalmist expressed his delight to do the will of the Lord, and I pray for such a spirit when the Lord shows me how and where He would have me serve in His kingdom.

SK: The vision I have for ministry, post-seminary, is to make disciples of many generations. What I have learned, I will entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

How can the Scottish RP Church remember you in prayer?

SK: The Scottish RP Church can remember me in prayer for the effective witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, remember my family and for the church to “grow in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), “to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” (1 Corinthians 15:58), with deeds of kindness and charity.

IG: Please pray that I would fulfil my chief end during my seminary years — giving glory to God and enjoying Him. Pray for my classmates, particularly Pastor Konteh in The Gambia — may iron sharpen iron, such that we would grow in our relationships with another as we seek to grow in our relationships with the Lord. Pray too for the professors and staff, that they would be encouraged in their souls as they seek to equip us with the whole counsel of God. May RPTS be greatly used in serving His kingdom. Finally, pray for more labourers, in Scotland, the USA, and throughout the world — the harvest is plentiful, yet the labourers are few. As you pray for these things, be assured of my prayers for you! Paul wrote of His longing to be reunited with the church in Thessalonica, among other places. In similar manner, I hope it will not be long before I resume fellowship with you all.



Ian & Sylvester witnessing in Gambia



Airdrie Session with the McMillan's



Presbytery at the Induction

Airdrie

On the 9th March 2019 the Airdrie RP Church was packed with over 130 people for the induction of Rev. Andrew McMillan as the minister of the congregation. It has been a joy to see the Lord's provision and care through this whole process and that joy was reflected in the induction service. Rev. Stephen McCollum, the moderator of Presbytery, preached on Ezra chapter 7. He spoke of how Ezra set his heart on the Lord through the studying of the Law of God, the doing of the law, and the teaching of the law. After the worship service, there were various speeches and we then enjoyed a lovely lunch and further time of fellowship. We thank the Lord for all He has done for the Airdrie congregation, and we look forward to what He will do in future.



Let them Live

Glasgow

On Friday the 29th March, men and women from all five of the RP congregations in Scotland gathered in Glasgow to hear a presentation on the pro-life group in the Irish RP Church. Our ladies' pro-life group had organised the event. Rev. Joel Loughridge and Rev. Philip Dunwoody spoke about Let Them Live, a pro-life organisation under the oversight of the Cookstown RPCI Session. Some of the aims

of the Let Them Live organisation are: to proclaim the Gospel in the public square; to rally more Christians together in the fight against abortion; to train Christians to apply the gospel in discussions around abortion; and to provide loving support for mothers and children. It was an encouraging and challenging evening.

We rejoice that we had two new members by profession of faith at the

last communion and two baptisms since then.

North Edinburgh

On Sunday 17th February a large number of family and friends joined the congregation for the morning service and the baptism of Peter and Emma Loughridge's daughter Alisha.

Joel Loughridge, pastor of the Cloughmills congregation in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, led the service and preached on the theme 'What is the Meaning of Baptism?' (from Matthew 28:16-20 and Galatians 3:21-4:7). After the sermon Mark Loughridge, pastor of the Letterkenny and Milford congregations in Ireland, put the vows to Peter and Emma, baptised Alisha and spoke briefly on Genesis 48:15-16. This was followed by lunch together in the school.

On Sunday 17th March, at our communion service, Ben and Suzanne Lowery came into membership of the congregation. We thank God for these encouragements.



North Edinburgh RPC

Stornoway

Our February Communion services were taken by Rev. Kenneth Stewart (Glasgow) and Rev. George Macaskill (APC). It was good to sit under the preached Word and to enjoy times of fellowship together. The Lord's Supper is a strengthening ordinance and we were glad to eat and drink together. We continue to pray for those who attend worship but have not professed faith.

As we couldn't book our usual premises for all of the Communion services, we approached the Brethren to ask about using their Hall for the extra services. Subsequently, we enquired about using their Hall regularly for our prayer meeting on Thursdays. We are thankful to them for consenting as it provides a less distracting venue for our prayer meetings. Our Lord's Day services continue at the Bridge Centre, but we continue to make it a matter of prayer that we would have premises of our own, both a church building and a manse. We are thankful for those outside the congregation who have contributed to our property fund and continue to pray for the Lord's provision.



Stranraer

Stranraer's long history as an RP congregation (dating back to 1796) has led to a few gospel opportunities recently. Given that 2019 marks the 200th anniversary of William Symington's ordination here, Stephen spoke about his ministry at a meeting of the local history society. As part of it, he got to explain what an evangelical Christian is (and isn't), and what Symington's book on the Atonement and Intercession of Christ is about.

Soon after this Stephen met up with the great granddaughter of a previous Stranraer minister, an academic who is doing research with the aim of writing a book. It was another opportunity to share something of what we believe. In March a plaque was erected by another local history group to mark the decade-long ministry of the Covenanter John Livingstone in Stranraer.

We pray that historical interest in these men will lead to faith in their Saviour.

PRESBYTERY NEWS

Over the last few months: the RPCS got a new website – you can check it out at www.rpcsotland.org. The website is a great way of keeping updated with news and events throughout the Presbytery. It even includes a useful resources page with an archive of material about the Scottish RP Church and publications by RPCS ministers.

Reformation Tours continues to lead tours of the history of the Reformation and Covenanting period of our country. Recently, a new "Castles of the Scottish Reformation Tour" has been added as an option for those wishing to learn more of this important history. Reformation Tours has also produced several

brief historical videos which can be viewed on its website, www.reformationtours.org.

A Presbytery-wide collection taken in September 2018 for the theological training of our students raised £6138.

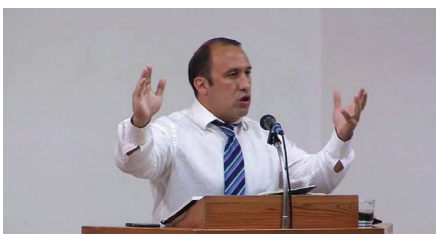


GLOBAL NEWS

Ireland

The denomination is starting the process of a church planting work in Nerja, Spain with Mr Isaac Berrocal, a graduate of its Theological College. The Berrocal family will be leaving for Spain in June. Please remember this work in your prayers.

The denomination is also preparing for their programme of summer Junior and Senior Camps and GO Teams as well as a new Theological Foundations for Youth (TFY) programme. TFY is a week-long intensive course in Biblical doctrines to teach what the church believes and why.



Isaac Berrocal



Rev. Roy Blackwood

France

The congregation has just bought a manse for Rev. Andrew Lytle, beside which there is land on which they plan to build a church. Please pray for the sale of the Lytle's house and for the renovations and building work that will now take place.

North America

Rev. Roy Blackwood, retired minister in the RPCNA, died on the 24th February 2019. Rev. Blackwood had a heart for church planting and a number of RP churches in Indiana and RP ministers credit him and his vision for the expansion of Christ's kingdom



Rev. Colin Samul



Rev. Chris Myers

as instrumental in their existence and calling. Rev. Blackwood was a great friend to the RPCS, having studied for his PhD in Scotland and having written his PhD on William Symington, the famous RPCS minister. The church of which he was a minister, Second RP in Indianapolis, gave key support both in prayer, financially, and through visits to the RPCS at a point in its history when it was in a very fragile state and such support was much needed.

Chris Myers was ordained as minister of First RPC in Phoenix, Arizona on the 30th March and Colin Samul was ordained as minister of Great Basin RPC in Reno, Nevada on the 5th April.

Stillwater RPC in Oklahoma has started a church plant in Oklahoma City. Please pray for this fledgling work.

Australia and Japan

After two years of the RP Church in Australia sending a mission team

to Japan, this year the Japanese church sent a team to Australia. It is encouraging to see these two Presbyteries working together.

Asia

The churches in Asia continue to grow, with one country having its first minister ordained. Continue to pray for the men who labour in preaching in these countries.

South America

The RP church plant in Chile is hoping to be organised as a congregation by the end of the year. The standards of the RPCNA have now been translated into Spanish. The Central and South America Committee continues to meet with those from a variety of countries who are interested in joining the RPCNA.



Oklahoma City RPC

TEENS

What do I do about church when I'm away from home?

Rev. Peter Loughridge
North Edinburgh RPCS

This article (since it's part of a Teens Q&A series) will be dealing with what to do when we're away from home for college or university. However, many of the same principles apply even when we're away for a shorter period – for example, when we go on holiday, or if we travel with our work, or for a short-term placement as part of our studies.

It's vital that we even ask or consider this question, and that we ask it early in the decision-making process. Hopefully you're not reading this article too late! Don't pick a university and then begin to wonder about church. Or worse – don't wait until you wake up on the first Sunday after you've moved into your halls of residence and then think 'Where will I go today?'

If you see a course that's best suited to your plans and your preferences, and that seems to hold the best prospects for your career and your academic or professional development, but it's in a city where you won't have a good church to attend, ask yourself – what matters more to me? Would I be willing to choose what might not be the top option (in terms of my personal preferences) if it has better possibilities in terms of a church

to attend? If there's not a good church option then, regardless of the possible impact on salary or career prospects, pick somewhere else.

Church is not like all the other clubs and societies on offer at university, that you might try occasionally or skip in weeks where you're too busy. Hebrews 10:25 warns us against: **neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some ...** Psalm 122:1 says: **I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"**

Someone might say: 'But church is only for a few hours each week. My course takes up 30-40 hours per week (or 11 hours if you study geography like I did!) and it affects my entire working life. Should I not prioritise my studies?' But church is much more important to us than simply where we spend a few hours per week. We need somewhere we can worship our God, hear His Word taught, have fellowship with other Christians, and receive care and oversight and accountability from fellow believers too (which is particularly important if we're away from our family and home congregation).

Also, don't think: 'It's only for a few years. And I'll be home at different times throughout the year. It doesn't matter about finding a church there'. At university your Christian beliefs and actions and choices will most likely be put to the test more than they ever have been up to this point. It will be almost impossible to face that without the blessings of public worship and the support of a church family.

Ask your home minister or elders for advice. They're accountable to God for your spiritual wellbeing. I'm sure they would be very willing to do whatever they could to help you find a good church. The Church of Jesus Christ – especially within the British Isles, but worldwide too – has many connections. Often someone will know someone who knows someone! Some Christian newspapers, magazines and websites offer a listing of churches for those who are searching.

If we trust that God is sovereign and good, He can provide an opportunity for study in a place that's good for our souls and good for us academically. It's right that we should want to honour God in our attitude towards our studying. We just need to be careful what our false gods might be.

CHILDREN'S STORY

OUR BODIES AS TEMPLES

In the last issue of this magazine, we were learning about the persecution of the church in China, and how the church is like a body. We learnt that we each have different roles to fulfill in that body, but that we are all important and valuable in doing God's work.

The Bible has quite a few things to say about bodies, but recently in Glasgow we have been hearing about a particular verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 19, where Paul describes the Christian's body as a 'temple.' Does that seem strange to you? Let's think about it and see if we can understand it.

Paul is comparing the Christian's body to a temple. What do we know about temples? Well, we know the Israelites had one in Jerusalem long ago. We know it was a very special, important and beautiful building. We know it was set apart for worshipping God, and that God lived in it and gave the directions for how it was to be built and used. We know that God met with His people there.

These things will all help us to understand what Paul means when he says our body is a temple. It means, if we are Christians,

1. Our body is designed and built by God.
2. God has set it apart for His worship and glory.
3. God lives in us.

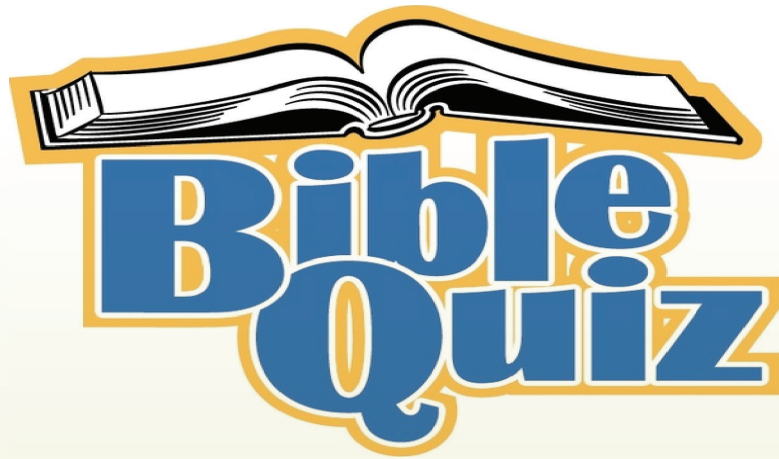
Aren't these amazing thoughts? They each tell us so much about who we are and who we are becoming. They tell us that God knows and planned every part of our body because He loves us and He always does what is good. The Holy Spirit then lives inside us, and He works in our hearts to teach us to love what is good and hate what is evil. And finally, He has made it so that our bodies can be used to worship and honour Him.

For this last part, we need to use all of our bodies. We can use our legs to take us to good places – places where many of the people love God (like

church), or places where we can tell the people about Him (like school), or where we can do good and helpful things for those who might need it. People need help for different things all around us, and it is always a kind thing to offer to someone!

Our hands can be used to make and build things, or to show love and kindness to others. Our mouths can be used to say good and kind things, to sing God's praises and to share the Gospel. We can make sure we use our ears to listen to our parents, our ministers, our teachers and our friends. Sometimes our friends are sad or worried about something and we can honour God by listening to them well. We can use our eyes to read the Bible and other good books, and to look at the beautiful world around us and the good things that are on our TVs or computers. There are so many ways to honour and glorify God with our bodies!

Margaret Murray, Glasgow RPCS



JOSIAH

Brenda McCollum, Stornoway RPCS

Josiah was a king in Judah. In the Old Testament there were many bad kings and only a few good kings. Josiah was one of the good kings. He became king when he was 8 years old. Can you imagine becoming a king or queen at 8 years old? His father and grandfather were both bad kings. How did Josiah become a good king? The Book of the Law (God's Law) was found and read to Josiah and he obeyed what it said. He stopped his people from worshiping idols and told them to worship and obey God.

Using 2 Kings 22-23 answer the following questions.

How many years did Josiah reign (22v1)?

- a) 5 b) 47 c) 31

Who found the Book of the Law (22v8)?

- a) Shaphan the scribe b) Hilkiah the high priest c) Jedidah, Josiah's mother

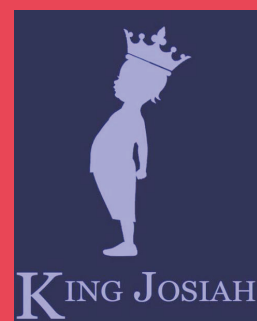
What did the king do when he heard the Law read (22v11)?

- a) tore his clothes b) wept c) rejoiced

Read 2 Kings 23v25 and fill in the blanks.

Now _____ him there was no king _____ him, who _____ to the Lord with all his _____, with all his _____, and with all his _____, according to all the Law of _____; nor _____ him did any arise like him.

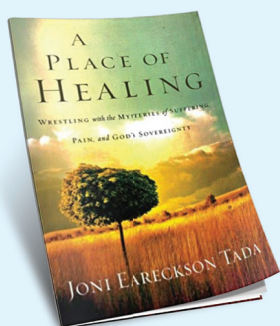
The story of Josiah teaches us that we are never too young to serve the Lord.



Send me a drawing of a part of this story by the 1st July and I'll send a prize for the best one.
My address is RP Manse, 63A Newmarket, Isle of Lewis, HS2 0ED



RECOMMENDED READING



A Place of Healing

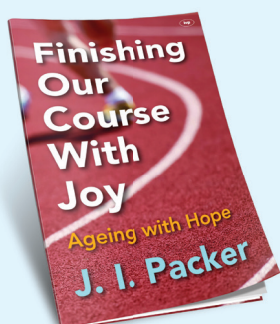
Joni Eareckson Tada

As a result of a diving accident, Joni, a lively and active seventeen year old, was suddenly catapulted into a quadriplegic lifestyle.

Now, years later she finds herself facing excruciating and chronic pain. Her former questions of Why? Why? Why? resurface. Once again she wrestles with the mysteries of suffering, pain and God's sovereignty, this time from a more experienced Christian perspective as she deals with the benefits of suffering and the purpose the Lord has in view. Her advice in the midst of it all is what Paul gives in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Be joyful always; Pray continually; Give thanks in all circumstances."

This is a humbling and inspiring book based not on the theoretical but on the experiential, showing us how to respond to painful and mysterious providences in a manner that will bring glory to God. I heartily recommend it.

Marietta MacDonald



Finishing our Course with Joy

J. I. Packer

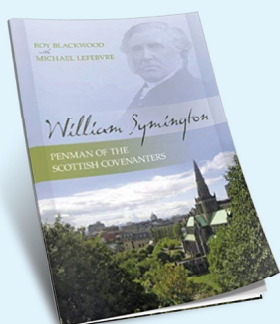
IVP

This book is about the Christian attaining the 'golden years' and how to deal with this 'last lap' of the Christian race. Being a theologian and biblical scholar as well as an active nonagenarian, he can speak from his own experience and personal knowledge of God and His Word.

He is concerned to deliver the Church as well as the individual 'Christian Senior' from succumbing to the secular western world's approach to retirement with its emphasis on self-indulgence of every form which inevitably leads to an unhealthy narcissism as well as to disappointment. He shows that the picture the Bible presents is one that is all about growth, maturity and usefulness.

This is a very stimulating and challenging book, easily read and, though aimed at 'Christian Seniors', should be read by Christians of all ages. As one reviewer advises, "don't wait until you are sixty or seventy to read this book, start now and finish well".

Rev. Donald MacDonald



William Symington: Penman of the Scottish Covenants

Roy Blackwood and Michael LeFebvre

Reformation Heritage Books, 2009

Published ten years ago, this book is particularly worth highlighting in 2019 for two reasons. First, its author (RPCNA minister Roy Blackwood) has just passed away, and secondly, the minister he wrote about, William Symington, was ordained 200 years ago this year.

Symington is one of the most widely known and influential Scottish RPs in the denomination's history, perhaps second in fame only to John G. Paton, who went as a missionary to the New Hebrides through Symington's influence.

The first third of the book consists of a biography of Symington, minister in Stranraer and then Glasgow, who, along with his brother Andrew 'led the RPC out of an attitude of narrow provincialism focused on self-preservation and into a sense of missionary responsibility for the Church in Scotland and throughout the world'. The rest of the book contains summaries of his two major theological works, on the priesthood and kingship of Christ. An invaluable resource.

Rev. Stephen Steele

“Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!
Let them lead me;
Let them bring me to Your holy hill
And to Your tabernacle.”

- Psalm 43:3

