

evil, about putting darkness for light and light for darkness. They (liberals) 'have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel' (see *Isa. 5:20-24*). Liberals are never satisfied until all with biblical beliefs are purged from their churches.

On the subject of 'liberalism', we draw attention to the new Banner title, *A Handful of Pebbles: Theological Liberalism in the Church* by Peter Barnes (ISBN 978 0 85151 977 7, 96 pp., pbk., £5.50/\$10.00).

#### **U.K. Students 'Getting into the Puritans'**

The UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) Team Leader for South-West England, Dave Bish, has recently told us that 'the number of students/guys in their 20s I seem to keep running into who are getting into the Puritans is remarkable and very encouraging'. Mr Bish oversees UCCF's student mission across the south-west, with responsibility for around 800 Christian students. His weblog, <http://thebluefish.blogspot.com>, contains useful material and shows keen appreciation for the ministry of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones and other Reformed writers. Mr Bish recently contacted the Trust to express his appreciation of the Puritan prayers and devotions in *The Valley of Vision* and to enquire whether an index of the sources was available. Other readers have asked the same question. Sadly, we do not have the information on which

such an index could be based. Mr Bish also expresses gratitude to the Banner of Truth Trust for making Puritan literature so easily available.

#### **Pocket Puritans**

The Trust has recently launched a new series of pocket- or handbag-sized paperbacks, the *Pocket Puritans*. They are the same size as the recent title, *The Loveliness of Christ*, by Samuel Rutherford and are an excellent way to introduce others to the Puritans, as well as a source of help on the topics addressed. They are priced at £3.25/\$6 (\$4.50 if ordered online). The first four titles are:

*Anger Management* by Richard Baxter

*Living Faith* by Samuel Ward

*Heaven a World of Love* by

Jonathan Edwards

*Impure Lust* by John Flavel.

#### **Electronic Magazine**

In addition to the printed edition of the magazine, an electronic version of each issue is sent out to subscribers by e-mail. There are reduced prices for those taking both versions; for example, the electronic version costs £12/\$15 a year, but only £7/\$7 if the printed edition is also taken. There are reduced rates for 2-year subscriptions. The electronic edition frequently contains additional content, such as extracts from forthcoming books. Fuller details can be obtained on the website or from Banner offices.

## **EDUCATION FOR TIME AND FOR ETERNITY: LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID STOW**

*Andrew R. Middleton*

David Stow (1793-1864)<sup>1</sup> lived through a period of significant change both for society and for the church. During his lifetime the traditional structure of society altered as people moved from the Scottish countryside into the large cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. He witnessed first hand perhaps the most significant event in Scottish church history since the Reformation, the Disruption of 1843.

As a Christian he had to confront the failure of the church in dealing with the extent of the upheaval that surrounded it. Presbyterian Scotland had its schools and churches built around a parochial system that, for all its faults, had served society well. Stow experienced a system that had worked well in a generation that had gone, but at the same time he could see that it was failing the teeming masses who currently were all around him in the slums of Glasgow.

Christians today are part of a society where computerization and globalization have brought another wave of change. We have an educational system that is pervaded by the same secular humanism that afflicts so much of the rest of our civilization, and we may be tempted to conclude that the only response is to withdraw into home schooling or Christian schools. The life of David Stow teaches us that there is an alternative Christian response.

#### **Lesson 1: Christians in the Past Have Had an Interest in Schools.**

It was of deep concern to David Stow as a Christian that there were parts of Glasgow that were full of people with as little knowledge and understanding of the gospel as those in India and China. Stow had an

<sup>1</sup> See the article *David Stow - Faith and Learning: 'Train up a Child in the Way He Should Go'* on pp. 8-17 of the June 2008 issue.

educational vision that extended well beyond the narrow confines of his own family. That he included education in his Christian outlook on the world is not surprising. Presbyterian Scotland had from its earliest days viewed it as part of the role of the church to support a compulsory education system, nor has it been alone in this Christian desire.

S. J. Curtis begins his standard text, *The History of Education in Great Britain*, with these words:

'An institution older than the House of Commons, older than the Universities, older than the Lord Mayor, older even than the throne or nation itself.' In these words, A.F. Leech emphasised the antiquity of the school of York Minster. In these days, when men are apt to associate education predominately with the State, it is useful to remind ourselves and others that our English schools were the creation of the Church and took their rise almost at the same time as the introduction of Christianity into this island.<sup>1</sup>

Not only was the British education system the product of her churches, but also the teacher training system in this country began with David Stow and his Christian reaction to what he saw. His Normal Seminaries were the first modern teacher-training institutions. As we consider the history of our education system in the U.K. it is easy for us to miss, especially in an age where many schools are heavily humanistic in their thinking, that this system has built into it many of the hallmarks of our Christian past.

### **Lesson 2: A School Should Provide an Education that Prepares the Student Both for Time and for Eternity.**

David Stow's work in education began with his endeavours in Sabbath Schools. He progressed into the church day-schools movement, and the teaching that he provided was designed to equip students both for life and for eternity. He offered an education that was enjoyable, and learning that was truly understood; his focus on winning the mind rather than on mere forced repetition is surely a cornerstone of all good education. While he aimed to produce students who were fully prepared

<sup>1</sup> S. J. Curtis, *History of Education in Great Britain*, 7th Edition (London: University Tutorial Press, 1967).

for the jobs that were open to them at the time, he did not neglect their eternal welfare.

Today in England the legal framework that governs schools in these areas can be divided into two sections that have a clear overlap. The first is the statutory requirement to encourage pupils' 'Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural' (SMSC) development. The second is the legal obligation to conduct a daily act of collective worship.

The statutory requirements for SMSC development are laid out in what is the basic starting point for all of a school's curriculum planning, the 1988 *Education Reform Act*. This begins with:

The curriculum for a maintained school (must be) a balanced and broadly based curriculum which —

- (a) Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and—
- (b) Prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (Education Reform Act, 1988, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1 [2]).

While schools often claim that there is a legal requirement to provide Information and Communications Technology training, or a set of enterprise lessons, and while this is true from an advisory standpoint, the demand for a curriculum that promotes SMSC is of a totally different character. The need for SMSC to be at the heart of a school's curriculum planning is at the core of all the major educational legislation that England has produced in the last fifteen years.

It must, however, be admitted that the SMSC requirements, while allowing for a specifically Christian interpretation, also permit a broader more humanistic approach. Unless Christian young people are led to a vocation in the classroom the Christian interpretation will not be adequately maintained. How can we expect a secular world to ask secular teachers to deliver a specifically Christian interpretation?

In addition to the duties to promote SMSC across the school, the leadership team of a school has the duty to provide children with a daily act of collective worship. This daily act of worship must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Parents have a right to ask to

have their children withdrawn from the act of collective worship if they do not approve of its content. The law does allow for this character to embody the precepts of other faiths if the school population is overwhelmingly of that other faith (70% or more). However, even in these cases the daily act of worship must retain Christian influences as well as those of the other faith.

### **Lesson 3: A Christian Should Seek to Work with the State to Provide a Good Education.**

In 1835 Stow had expanded the work of the infant and senior Drygate schools, and he was seeking to place them on a proper footing. Both he and Thomas Chalmers were firm believers in the establishment principle, which accords the state and the church separate, distinct roles, but which requires that they be mutually supportive of one another. At the time of the Disruption, Chalmers, as a believer in establishment, was eager to stress that the newly-formed Free Church was not a voluntary church. Similarly, Stow entrusted his life's work to his belief in this principle (with sad consequences, as it turned out). They saw schools not merely as the private concern of individuals but quite reasonably as an interest of the state. It was Martin Luther who wrote

Even if there were no souls and there were not the least need of schools for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one reason would suffice to cause the establishment of the best schools everywhere, namely that the world needs accomplished men and women also, for maintaining its outward temporal prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

Though I am currently an Assistant Headteacher in a state secondary school in Derbyshire, in my previous school I had a form group. I used to pray with its members every morning during tutor time. Some mornings this felt very mundane – we stood and we prayed – but my students seemed to appreciate it. Other mornings it was the only thing to do! I will always remember searching for the words as I stood before a bewildered group on the morning when a much-loved member of the sixth form had been killed in a car accident. I also well remember the

<sup>2</sup> Cited in J. MacInnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland, 1688 to 1800*, Aberdeen University Press, 1951, p. 221.

tears in our eyes as I tried to express my own emotions in the only way I could as I prayed with them amidst the turmoil of 9/11. How else could I talk to a group of thirty thirteen-year-old children living in the sudden fear of a world where terrorists had flown planes into buildings, and who had watched, as I had, the unimaginable horror of people jumping from buildings and hitting tarmac many, many feet below?

As the time came for this group of children to leave I was struck with the problem, What should I do? How could I mark their passing from my care into the world with a gesture that might help them understand some of the love that I felt for them? In the event I bought each one a Bible and then enclosed a personal message to every student in the hope that they would keep their copies and maybe in time learn from them.

As I related that last action to the Head of a local Roman Catholic School, she asked, 'How did the parents react?' I told her of a parent who was on the school governing body with me who came up to me that evening, held me by the hand and said, 'I just want you to know that you made my wife cry today.' He explained that she had been shown the Bible, then went on to thank me for all the support that I had given his daughter. I could have given an account of all the other parents and children who wrote to me afterwards to thank me. The Roman Catholic Headteacher looked at me and said, 'Do you know why they were all so thankful?' She continued, 'It is because you were setting a moral lead for their children.' Then she explained her feelings that all too many children were growing up in homes where morality and values were taboo. I wonder how much farther on we have moved from the Saltmarket of David Stow, where most children had only heard the name of Jesus from profane swearers.

David Stow felt that it was his duty as a Christian to reach out into his community and to become involved with it, in order to follow the command of his Master. In taking this practical approach he is by no means a unique example for us to follow. As Sir Frederick Catherwood comments:

Weber looked for the background to the ideas of this new generation and found it in the Protestant conception of 'calling' . . . The

valuation of the fulfilment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form of moral activity . . . Weber says that the Protestant identifies true faith by objective results, by conduct which serves to increase the glory of God.<sup>3</sup>

As Puritanism and Evangelicalism developed throughout England they concentrated on three areas of the Christian life. Paul Sangster puts it in these terms:

The Evangelicals taught in three spheres, in the home, in their schools, and in the church.<sup>4</sup>

Wesley and Whitefield also formed schools, one example of which is Kingswood School near Bristol. Some of these institutions may appear very austere today; the students rose at 4 am for devotions and had a final service at 7 pm before bed at 8 pm. Kingswood, in Wesley's day, taught an array of subjects to pupils across the social strata. In 1758 Wesley, determined to maintain the character of the school, assured the Methodist conference that he would either kill or cure the institution – he would either have a Christian school or none at all. At a similar time, the SPCK (Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge) was establishing charity schools throughout the length and breadth of the country (which would number over two thousand by the end of the eighteenth century).

Rowland Hill and Hannah More (friends of the social reformer William Wilberforce) were establishing schools, with no barriers to entry, that taught the young and emphasized morality. A new work by K. Harris<sup>5</sup> has recently been published which addresses the gap in our knowledge of 19th century Evangelicalism and schools. It is not possible to detail here, for example, the tremendous influence that was exercised by Robert Raikes and the Sunday School movement.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> H. F. R. Catherwood, *The Christian in Industrial Society* (London: Tyndale Press, 1964).

<sup>4</sup> P. Sangster, *Pity My Simplicity – The Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children, 1738–1800*, (London: Epworth Press, 1963).

<sup>5</sup> K. Harris, *Evangelicals and Education* (London: Paternoster Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> I would refer interested readers to P. B. Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England 1780–1980*, 1986, National Christian Education Council, and

### Lesson 5: Christians Should Be Involved in Schools at All Levels.

David Stow began his work by devoting much of his own personal wealth to building schools as a philanthropic and evangelical exercise. He saw a need to train up teachers capable of providing suitable education and went on to establish Normal Colleges. He did not erect entrance barriers in his schools, and they were open to children from all levels of society. This was in an age more conscious of social differences than we are today. At the Disruption he left the Established Church only when it tried to force him to pledge allegiance to the General Assembly. When he left he took with him directors, teachers, staff and students. Those around him were committed to his Christian principles, which were shared at all levels of his schools and colleges.

Christians in England have built and maintained our school system throughout history. They aimed to develop rational literate men and women who would be open to the intellectual appeal of the Bible and who would be useful in their generation. Christians did not see learning and work as ends in themselves but rather as something that increased the kingdom of God on the earth. They viewed people as possessing immortal souls, and as those who should be shown love by demonstrating a concern for both their temporal and their eternal prosperity.

In a generation when we can all too easily write off the present and look back in an idealistic fashion to the past, it is easy to think that schools are populated with left-wing liberal intellectuals who are rubbing their hands at the prospect of making atheists out of our children. My experience in U.K. schools would be just the opposite. I see many teachers who are fighting to maintain what they see as the basic societal values of their own youth (some in total ignorance that these are Christian principles). Teacher after teacher bemoans the different crazes that strike our classrooms based on the latest ideas that come, for instance, from television. W. R. Niblett comments:

A child now growing up in England will in very many cases go to school from a home which has relatively few definite beliefs and moral principles to pass on. But more significant still, in some

J. Ferguson, *Christianity, Society and Education – Robert Raikes, Past, Present and Future*, SPCK, 1981, for further information on these areas.

ways, it may well be a home which offers comparatively little in range of experience . . . suburban living tends to banish birth, death and severe pain to nursing homes, to keep eccentricity and enthusiasm out.<sup>7</sup>

His observations are almost fifty years old. Without a doubt those trends have continued, and those children are now the parents of today.<sup>8</sup>

Many schoolteachers support basic Christian ethics, not out of any religious convictions, but because such principles fit in with what they view as human nature at its best. They might look at the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, and take them as examples of ideal conduct, while not asserting the divinity of the Speaker. At all levels schools are populated by people who want to uphold and support the structures of society; with encouragement they usually express these views in moral terms.

The question arises: what position would David Stow have adopted in our own generation? Some Evangelicals are pursuing the home schooling route as the option that they think best fulfils their needs and those of their children. Others advocate the rise of Christian schools, and, provided these are open to the community, their approach is similar to that seen in the early actions of Stow. Yet in the U.K. we also have a contemporary example of Christian involvement in schools. Recently the Government has pursued the potentially divisive course of asking industry to sponsor schools. This has resulted in the rise of the City Academy. One investor in City Academies has been Sir Peter Vardy, a millionaire and a Christian. He has invested several million pounds in establishing academies in various parts of the country. The most famous is Emmanuel College, Gateshead, which is in a socially-deprived part of North-East England. The fame of Emmanuel College has been spread by its policy of teaching Creationism alongside Evolution in science lessons. This has outraged a few people and has led to stinging attacks from Dr Richard Dawkins.

<sup>7</sup> W. R. Niblett, *Christian Education in a Secular Society*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Comments like these help to bring home the calling of Christian motherhood. See W. J. Chantry, *The High Calling of Motherhood*, Banner of Truth, 1986.

In a recent OFSTED report (OFSTED is now the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), dated March 2006, the school was given an outstanding grade in virtually every category. The report comments:

What makes Emmanuel College remarkable is the extent to which stakeholders celebrate its achievements and endorse its methods yet retain a self-critical approach . . . All members of the community carry a card that states the college's mission Statement and core values, among which is humility. This quality shines through senior leaders' self evaluation.<sup>9</sup>

To parents, who come from a range of religious, ethnic and social backgrounds (this is a State school after all!), the school is 'patently the best school in the area'. Two thirds of its students come from socially and economically disadvantaged areas, but their progress puts them in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country for achievement. The first comment underneath the outstanding grade for personal development and well-being reads:

'The school provides a good foundation for society as it demonstrates, and promotes, *confidence*, self-esteem and good moral principles' – a comment typical of many written on questionnaires returned by parents. The specific Christian ethos of the college ensures that the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development lies at the heart of all that it does (emphasis added).<sup>10</sup>

With examination results that are amongst the best in the country and a set of glowing OFSTED reports, perhaps the media ought to be examining the success story that is Emmanuel College and asking what lessons could be learnt from it by other State schools.

It might be argued that one of the core lessons for school leaders is to put students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at the centre of the school. The passage on leadership and management in the OFSTED report for Emmanuel College contains what is to me an inspiring

<sup>9</sup> OFSTED, *Emmanuel College – Inspection Report*, Unique Ref. 108420, OFSTED, 2006. Available from [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

rational statement. After grading the school's leadership as outstanding, commending its effectiveness, and praising the way it has won the affection of its middle leaders and promoted a leadership strategy focused on winning hearts as well as improving academic standards, the report states:

The vision is transmitted with absolute clarity; one of the newest staff commented, 'Character first – that's what we're interested in.'

Quite so, and every school should be!

\* \* \* \* \*

I think we all need to consider these lessons from the life of David Stow. There is a desperate shortage of Christian teachers, and that in itself has its own effect on the morals of society. Christianity does not belong in a bunker, nor should Reformed religion be found in a monastery. Young Christian men and women who want a profession that will allow them to proclaim their Master on a daily basis to thousands of children – some of whom will have no other point of contact with Christianity – should consider teaching. In influencing the rising generation there can be few more vital roles than that of the Christian schoolteacher.

Christian parents in the U.K. are often concerned about the values and ethos of their local schools. I would encourage them to follow the example of Stow and to become involved in the education system. Each U.K. school has a governing body. Christian school governors have the role of critical friend to the headteacher, and it is a role from which they can enquire in a very unthreatening and non-confrontational manner about pertinent issues such as policies for 'SMSC' and daily acts of worship. Christians can encourage and suggest changes to policies that would bring them more in line with the historic position of schools as supporting Christianity. By helping the schools and working with them in areas that are difficult they will influence their localities for good – especially if they can suggest local ministers who might want to help with a religious assembly (something that many headteachers feel deeply uncomfortable doing themselves).

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Reason for God – Belief in an Age of Skepticism**

Timothy Keller

Dutton Press, 2008, 293 pp., hbk, £12.00/\$24.95 (available in the U.K. from the Good Book Company, Amazon.co.uk, or other online sources).

ISBN: 978 0 525 95049 3

Tim Keller, Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York, has written a very significant book. Using his profound grasp of Scripture and Reformed Theology and his significant gift of interacting with secular culture, he engages with objections to the gospel and presents Christianity as the need of the world. Already, people are listening, as even the secular best-seller lists in the States indicate. It won't be many years before *The Reason for God* is used in the same way as *Mere Christianity* was in an earlier generation, and with its Reformed distinctives we have reason to be grateful for its arrival.

The book is written in two parts, each of seven chapters. The first half ('The Leap of Doubt') traces the common struggles people have with Christianity, such as its relationship to science, the authority of Scripture and the reality of suffering. Each is designed to stand alone. Between the two halves is the 'Intermission', a short section in which Keller prepares the ground for part two, as he encourages the reader to think

through the nature of proof which one might expect in the quest for God. The second half ('The Reasons for Faith') builds a picture of Christian belief, with the chapters relating more sequentially to each other. The 'Epilogue' then explains the necessary steps to starting new life in Christ.

Keller is a clear and winsome communicator, a man who is at home with his subject, and eager to get readers engaging seriously with the gospel. The book is very readable. Constant quotes from secular and religious thinkers and a range of literature make it an absorbing read. This is a book which our men's reading group at church is working through, and they're all finding it provocative and nourishing for their faith, as well as sharpening them for evangelism. I plan to give a copy of the book to my non-Christian next-door neighbour, and I would see it as a great book to lend to any thinking, secular person.

Not every believer will appreciate this book. For some there will be insufficient referencing of Scripture. Others might complain that Keller does not give a full and balanced scriptural view on all of the topics he tackles. I think this criticism would be harsh; it would be just like criticizing a sermon that does not say everything on a given subject. The author has given us more than enough to challenge unbelief and to show the immensity of God's grace in Christ.

Preachers need to read this book. Too often we revert to tired and worn-out ways of explaining truths;