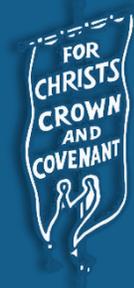




Glasgow RPCS Newsletter



ON THIS MONTH

Worship Services:

- Lord's Day Morning: 11am
- Lord's Day Evening: 6pm
- Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 7.30pm
- Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

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Fri 27th Oct

North Edinburgh RPCS organisation service

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G11 5NP

Minister's Article

31st October: Reformation Day or Halloween?

October 31st is celebrated in some churches as Reformation Day, since it is reckoned to have been the date on which Martin Luther posted his famous 95 theses on the Wittenberg church door in 1517—an event which sparked the Reformation all of 500 years ago. In most of Germany, the 31st of October is an annual public holiday.

However, for a greater number of people, October 31st is Halloween and, doubtless, more professing Christians will be involved in that than will be remembering Reformation Day. In America, where most western trends seem to originate, many reckon that Halloween has now become America's second biggest holiday. Indeed, American public schools are commonly closed on Halloween. But a quick look in your local supermarket will confirm that it is growing rapidly in Scotland too. But what is Halloween and, more importantly, is it just harmless fun?

Where did Halloween come from?

It may surprise you to know that the name 'Halloween' is connected to the word 'holy' (for example, '*hallowed* be thy name'). It means 'hallows' evening' or 'saints' evening'. So how does a 'celebration' involving witches and spirits come to be called a 'hallowed evening'?

Despite its holy name, Halloween is rooted in (and still has its context in) paganism and witchcraft. It began as the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, the 'Lord of Death' (in Scottish Gaidhlig, the evening is called 'Oidhche Shamhna' - 'Samhain's Evening'). The Celts considered November 1st as being the day of death, because, in the Northern hemisphere, with the onset of winter, they believed that Samhain, the lord of death, was overpowering the sun god—who was losing his strength. Modern day witches ('Wiccans') observe this day as the day on which the sun god dies, only to be reborn at Yule, at the time of the winter solstice when the day begins to lengthen (the birth of the sun god was celebrated on December 25th).

The Druids – the priestly class who gave spiritual direction to the Celts – taught that on the 31st of October, as well as on Beltane (May 1st), the barrier between the spirit world and ours could be crossed more easily and, as a result, on this evening, Samhain would send the spirits of the dead to walk amongst us in this world. In order to secure protection from these spirits, the Druids would gather sacrifices and offerings from the people. According to Roman historians, these sacrifices were sometimes human sacrifices. Also, large bonfires were lit in each community in order to ward off the evil spirits. All house fires were put out and new fires lit on each hearth with fire from these great bonfires.

Most, if not all, the practices now associated with Halloween, from eating nuts to ducking apples, come from these ancient pagan beliefs and rituals. People would try to protect themselves and their children from evil spirits by disguising themselves as spirits. This 'disguising' evolved into 'guising' — the practice of going from house to house in disguise and often reciting songs or verses in exchange for food. This appears to be connected to the ancient practice of giving offerings to the spirits when they would call: to give an offering would secure good fortune for the giver and protection from the recipient. Failure to give gifts to the spirits was inviting harm—hence, 'Trick-or-Treat.'

How did it get a holy name?

Some time after the establishment of the Papacy, the Roman Catholic Church adopted a policy, a spiritually fatal policy, of 'Christianising' pagan practises and adopting them into the Church ritual and calendar. The best-known example is the pagan celebration of the birth of the Sun God on December 25th, a celebration which the church 'converted' into Christmas and the celebration of the birth of the Son of God—a celebration which still contains many features of the pagan practice, although now given a Christian twist.

In the same way, the festival of Samhain was countered by designating November 1 'All Saints Day'—a celebration of the departed saints—and November 2 was designated 'All Souls Day'—a day on which to pray for the dead and to help them escape the torments of purgatory. The evening before All Saints Day, October 31st, was now to become known as 'All Saints Eve' or 'Hallows' Eve'—hence, Halloween—supposedly, a sacred evening. However, the religious trappings of this day are largely gone with the result that, in this most convoluted way, a 'holy day' with a holy name is now observed by a series of pagan practices!

Does it all matter?

On the face of it, it is impossible for us, as Reformed Christians, to look at the pagan roots and practices of the festival and the feeble Roman Catholic attempt to baptise it without concluding that we should be taking nothing to do with it at all. It seems an open and shut case. However, a great number of professing Christians do take to do with it. Why do they do so?

They do so because it so happens that the only possible defence for involvement is actually a fairly plausible one: that the original occult associations of the event are so far removed from the contemporary observance of it that it renders Halloween now, effectively, harmless. After all, what can be the problem with dressing up, going round a few doors and getting some sweets? And, for many people, that's all Halloween is and that's all they mean it to be. But, a nagging and important question still persists: is that *really* all Halloween is? I think a wider, and deeper, look will reveal that Halloween isn't quite as innocent as that. In fact, it is arguable that it is more dangerous now

than it has been for a long time and that it is continuing to get worse.

Let's begin with Wicca—essentially Paganism. According to many experts, Wicca is probably the fastest growing 'religion' in many parts of the western world and its adherents in the UK number somewhere around 150,000. On Halloween, Wiccans all over the nation will get together to conduct rituals and cast spells for healing, protection, fertility, and banishing so-called 'negative influences'. Ouija boards will be widely consulted in séances to make contact with the dead.

Wicca has made particularly strong inroads into the life of teenage girls—the very constituency most attracted by Halloween and most targeted by the advertisers. And, sadly, a good number of these young girls come from Christian homes. It is perhaps no coincidence that the rise of interest in Wicca, as well as the rise of involvement in it, grew rapidly with the publication of the Harry Potter series of books. The Pagan Federation, a promoter of Wicca, had to appoint a youth officer to deal with the flood of inquiries into paganism following the success of the Harry Potter books. Their Media Officer stated 'every time an article on witchcraft or paganism appears, we have a huge surge in calls, mostly from young girls'. Earlier this year, a prominent Wiccan said in an interview that 'for Wiccans, Halloween is a time to remember those who have died – our beloved ancestors who have passed beyond life. I'll be getting together with witchy friends to do a ritual to honour the dead. I suppose you could say it is a bit like a séance, although Wiccans don't really use that term. We put out all the lights except for a single candle and ask departed loved ones to join us for the evening, then sit in silence for a while to see if we get messages from them.'

Unsurprisingly, those who have been converted to Christ from a Wicca background are quite clear about the danger of being connected with Halloween in any way. One such convert wrote a few years ago that 'there is nothing we ever have done or will do that would make (Halloween) acceptable to the Lord Jesus.'

And then again, there's the spectre of Satanism hanging over the evening. Satanism goes well beyond Wicca and the occult generally, most notably by its use of blood sacrifice. The claims of many converted Satanists that Halloween involves animal sacrifice (and sometimes human sacrifice) as well as ritual child abuse is roundly denied by Satanists—but why should we believe representatives of an organisation which deliberately names itself after the 'father of lies' over and against the claims of those who have been converted to Christ? It is a bit rich to call yourself after a liar and expect your words to be received as the truth. In any case, the Church of Satan (an awful name) website states that after one's own birthday, the two major Satanic holidays are Beltane (May 1st) and Halloween. The fact is that Halloween is a prime recruiting time for Wiccans and Satanists and many people have testified that they were introduced to the occult at a Halloween party.

And, however innocent our intentions may be, it remains the case that millions of people, many of them children, will be exposed to films and TV programs, themed on Halloween, which will invite

them to enjoy violence, mutilation and torture. Halloween doesn't just focus on the occult—it celebrates and normalises it. And it is no surprise that many vulnerable people begin to dabble in the occult as a result. All this brings Halloween very much into the realm of spiritual warfare and forms part of Satan's plan to 'steal, kill and destroy' (John 10:10). Part of the problem undoubtedly lies in the fact that many Christians do not take the realm of the demonic seriously. Paul warns to the contrary (Ephesians 6:12-13).

Finally, along with the occult element, it is notable that adult involvement in Halloween is increasing dramatically and, with that, the alarming sexualisation of the evening. To begin attending Halloween parties as a child these days will now likely mean that they will be attending into their teens, twenties and beyond—when the entertainment will lose whatever element of innocence appeared to be there.

Does the Bible address the issue directly?

First of all, in God's Word, witchcraft and the whole spectrum of the occult practices were crimes punishable by death (Exod. 22:18). Moving into the New Testament, witchcraft is listed among those things which are to be renounced by believers (Galatians 5:20). Also, Acts 19:18-19 records how people who had just become Christians denounced all dealings with the occult and burned all the occult materials in their possession. It is rather hard to think of them continuing to participate in Halloween—had it been around then.

Sometimes, it can be very effective just to gather some scripture verses together and allow them to speak.

'When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or who uses practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God.'

Deuteronomy 18:9-13

'Test all things; hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.'

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priests for Me; because you have forgotten the Law of your God, I will also forget your children.'

Hosea 4:6

'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? For what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?... Therefore, come out from among them and be separate says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you.'

2 Corinthians 6:14-17

'Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.'

Philippians 4:8

'Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.'

3 John 11

'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.'

Ephesians 5:11

Conclusion

This article is written with the full realisation that well-meaning Christian parents have no intention of identifying with the evils associated with Halloween but, in the light of the above, perhaps we should all (prayerfully) ask the following questions.

First, is it spiritually safe to be involved with something that is both historically and currently intertwined with occult practices? In other words, are we sure that participating in the celebration of Halloween leaves us and our children safe from the real and active world of the demonic?

Second, by involving ourselves with this day and festival, are we helping to publicise and normalise one of the most important days on the occult calendar?

Third, are we happy to be associated, however loosely, with a celebration which, when carried out by those who take it seriously, involves overt blasphemy as well as pain for animals and, possibly, humans too?

Fourth, on an evening dedicated to the celebration of paganism, are we sure that God views sending our children out to participate—however innocent our intention and theirs—with favour?

Fifth, might there be a better, more enjoyable and God honouring way to spend the night with our children and perhaps with other Christian parents and children too?

In 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul asks some important questions: 'What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial (Satan)?'

I think we can ask in the same way 'What have Halloween and Christ got in common? What communion is there between Wicca and Christianity?' The answer, surely, is 'nothing whatsoever'. Halloween and Christianity just don't belong together.

Rev. Kenneth Stewart

Spotlight On...

Kids' Club



Talk and discussion with one of our elders, Donnie Campbell

On the first Thursday of every month (September-June) we run a club for children in the congregation between P5-S2, from 7-8.45pm in the church hall. The mothers of the children take turns in organising and leading the group, with the help of other members of the congregation—mainly students and young workers.

We engage in a wide variety of activities—sports, games, crafts, painting and quizzes, to name but a few. Towards the end of the evening, our minister or one of the elders come to speak to the children on a particular Bible story or aspect of the church, always encouraging the children to apply the teaching to their own lives. They will also pray and sing a Psalm together.

We are conscious that our children are growing up in a difficult day, where the world seeks to drive them 'to and fro'. Our prayer is that the Lord would draw them to Himself, each one, and keep them in all their ways. We all need Christian fellowship in our lives, and that includes our children: 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... but exhorting one another' (Hebrews 10:25).

We pray that kids' club will build up the children's love for each other and, even more so, their love for the Lord. We hope to soon see the day when the children of the congregation will come through the doors of the church hall, on that first Thursday of the month, followed by school friends, cousins or neighbours they have invited along. These things are in God's hands, just as our children are, which gives us great comfort yet should keep us all the more in prayer.

Insight into...

The Value of Motherhood

By Katie Fraser

Motherhood is becoming increasingly undervalued in our culture. In 2014, two of the world's most successful brands, Facebook and Apple, made headlines by offering to freeze the eggs of their female employees in the United States. While both companies claimed that the perk arose out of a deep care for their employees and their families, the not-so-subliminal message was clear: give us your best years, and we'll let you leave the kids until later. Another tragic example is, of course, abortion; where a child's life is disposable at their mother's will, merely because of his or her infringement on her so called bodily autonomy. As our own minister has pointed out, some eminent feminists have even said that women will never experience true liberation so long as they alone have the capacity to bear children. Motherhood is considered a burden, not a blessing.

We may not agree with Facebook or Apple, but the attitude behind their decision likely influences us more than we are aware of. We can be tempted to consider our children as secondary to our own personal fulfilment. As James and I await the birth of our first child next month, I have come to see that much of my own thinking on motherhood has been borne out of this world and not established in God's word. As with many other issues, I have had to unlearn the narrative of the secular worldview, and teach myself the truth of the Bible.

I attended a school that valued academic achievement and worldly success very highly. I was petrified of failure and genuinely considered my fifth year of secondary school to be the most important of my life. Despite my untrusting attitude, God gave me the grades I craved and I started studying law at the University of Edinburgh. After a four-year undergraduate degree, a one-year diploma and a two-year traineeship with a global law firm, I qualified as a solicitor in September 2016. Five months later, James and I were delighted to find out that we were expecting our first child.

We had already decided that I would stop work if we were blessed with children. After all, even if our income wouldn't be anywhere near the same level, our circumstances, unlike those of some others, meant that it was possible for me to do so. So, the choice lay simply between choosing to further my career or investing my time and energy into motherhood—and, despite the obvious temptation of just following my career, the choice seemed straightforward. However, when that theoretical decision became a reality, the priorities of the world began to creep back into my thinking. I received a permanent job offer, a positive appraisal and was even given a pay rise. I was tempted to think that to stop work now would be a waste of my seven years training, not to mention those precious Higher results. The education I received was always in pursuit of success, and now that I had obtained that success, it seemed irrational to throw it away.

Thankfully, while these thoughts invaded, God enabled me to overcome them and gave me encouragement in the most unexpected places. When I told the senior partner at my work that I was turning down the permanent job offer to look after my child, a wide smile immediately appeared on his face and he told me that he thought I was making the right decision. Why? Because his wife stayed at home with their children and he experienced first-hand the invaluable benefits of that for his whole family. My boss' reaction was a rebuke to me. If this man, who is not—to my knowledge—a Christian, could see the value of a mother, who was I to set my worldly priorities above God's? I am thankful for my job, but I know that God has now called me to a new role, and when I start to think about that calling God's way, it seems one of the most precious in the world.

In the bringing up of children, God uses mothers to teach and shape souls for Him. Mothers are the ones primarily tasked (humanly speaking) with forming a child's character. We have the privilege of teaching them God's precious commandments, of explaining to them how they were lovingly knit together by His creative power, and, most importantly, how He sent His son to die for their sins so that they could be reconciled to the King of Kings. Our own Christian example is likely to be the most influential in our child's earliest years. Utterly unworthy as we are to be tasked with such a responsibility, God has given it to us, and, in His grace, He will even use it to make us more into the likeness of His Son.

Not only, then, should we value motherhood *despite* the world's degradation, but we should also, in a sense, value it *because* of the world's degradation. We are told in 1 Corinthians 1:27 that God chooses the things that are considered weak and foolish by the world, to put to shame the things that world calls wise and mighty. Others may not think very highly of giving up a successful career to devote your life to changing nappies and cooking meals, but God values any task done for His glory and He will use our obedience to exhibit the truth of His word. In the words of Charles H Spurgeon, "You are as much serving God in looking after your own children, and training them up in God's fear, and minding the house, and making your household a church for God, as you would be if you had been called to lead an army to battle for the Lord of Hosts." The wonder of obedience to God is that we can apply this verse to any calling God gives us, not just motherhood, no matter how little the world thinks of it.



Katie with her husband, James

RP Global

Read about the recent organisation of an RP Church in Las Vegas, Nevada...

(source: Gentle Reformation, www.gentlereformation.com)

It should be noted that the following article was written before the tragic mass shooting on October 1st, in which at least 58 died with hundreds more wounded. Such events, while very plainly highlighting the evil of the human heart, also serve to remind us of the brevity and uncertainty of life and how suddenly we can be summoned out of this world to give our account before God – and how vital to be sure that we are ready: ‘Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming’ (Matthew 24: 42).



In late August, on Dean Martin Drive in Las Vegas, Nevada, forty-seven people gathered for worship in the back room of a rented church building. From the perspective of the world's desert-playground, the called service of public worship was less than noteworthy. It went totally unnoticed, I am sure. The night before this worship service McGregor and Mayweather boxed at MGM on "the strip" while millions watched over pay-per-view. Millions of dollars—or more—were spent at tables and in slot machines. But which event had eternal significance? Las Vegas Reformed Presbyterian Church was established.

In 2012, a group of friends committed to confessional presbyterianism approached the RPCNA's Pacific Coast Presbytery with a Macedonian call: "Brothers, come over and help us!" Since that time the small Pacific Coast Presbytery sent ministers and prayers, gave oversight and counsel, as well as loved, taught, and encouraged this small group of friends and worshipers. Over time the small group grew to include several new families and singles.

Not all were happy. "Your church is doomed before it even begins." That was the comment of one

local who encouraged one of the worshipers to close up shop—don't waste your time planting a church like that. A confessionally reformed church will never flourish in this city—especially with a *cappella* psalm singing! Another person commented that the “RPCNA's money” should not go to help out in such a city as Las Vegas. Why would we plant a church *there*? It is so sinful. It is so unsafe. I've heard that with my own ears.

The Lord is faithful. The desert rose will blossom.

After five years of proverbial blood, sweat, and tears, the Las Vegas Reformed Presbyterian Church was established. It did not draw the attention as that of the Mayweather victory or the wows and amazement of *Cirque du Soleil*; but there is eternal significance. Out of the desert blossomed an outpost of Jesus Christ—an outpost from where the gospel will go forth. The lives of broken people will be healed. Sinners will become saints. The crooked will be made straight. An oasis has formed in the midst of a spiritual desert (The metro-population of Las Vegas is just shy of 2 million souls—and those two million souls are served by four NAPARC congregations. Four! A spiritual desert indeed.). The prophet Isaiah reminds us that under the gospel administration, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad... and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”

The presbytery oversaw the new members covenanting together to “live together in brotherly unity as an organized congregation... being obedient to the courts that are over them in the Lord, and that by a godly life they will seek to promote the purity, peace, and prosperity of the church as a whole.” The members then signed the covenant and proceeded to call their first minister. The gospel call was unanimous.

The desert rose will blossom.

Sometimes I am accused of being overly-optimistic. That's okay. My optimism is not in my presbytery's abilities or the abilities of the minister that the newly formed congregation called—but my optimism is in the promises of the gospel and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ—confident that even desert places will flourish under the preaching of the Word.

Will you join me in both rejoicing and praying as this new congregation seeks to serve Jesus Christ in what the world calls “Sin City?” Will you pray for the minister that they called as he contemplates this Macedonian call? Will you pray that from this desert place the gospel would go forth in power and might unto the glory of Jesus Christ.

May she continue to blossom under the preaching of the Word.

Rev. Nathan Eshelman, Los Angeles RPC

The Fire of Reformation

As the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is being celebrated this month, 'Christ's Refining Fire of Reformation and Your Spiritual Life' emphasises the importance of personal, inward reformation...

(source: Reformation Scotland, www.reformationscotland.org)

We need the Holy Spirit and fire. The spirit of reformation is a spirit of burning (Matthew 3:11). We need this to purify our sins against God and towards others (Isaiah 4:3-4).

Christ's Church is like silver that is full of dross and needs refined. When the Lord has burned away the filthy dross of His church (Isaiah 4:5) she becomes a glory or a praise in the earth. Yet she must go through the fire of affliction and trial first (Zechariah 13:9) to come out as pure refined gold.

The Scottish minister George Gillespie lived during a time of reformation. The following helpful teaching is extracted and updated from one of his sermons. He shows us the real nature of spiritual reformation. Outward change is not enough. There must be deep inward refining.

'he is like a refiner's fire...he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver' (Malachi 3:2-3)

Purified Silver

The best silver that comes out of the earth has dross in it. It needs the refiner's fire. The best of God's children have the dross of remaining indwelling sin that needs to be purged away. This is what made Paul say: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest...I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27). He did not want to be like reprobate silver which is not refined but cast away. There are also sinful pollutions of the world that attach to us (James 1:27). We need purifying from them.

Purified in Your Trials

Our afflictions are trials which are used to refine us (Psalm 66:10,12; 1 Peter 1:6-7). Afflictions often go along with faithfulness to Christ or come after a time of reforming the Church (Luke 12:49, 51). The reformations in Judah soon faced opposition from enemies (2 Chronicles 32:1; 14:9; 20:1).

During the most thorough reformation in Judah, God still threatened punishments (Zephaniah 1:2-17). This was because there was a lack of real and personal reformation. God is a wise refiner. He will not take the silver out of the fire until the dross is removed (Ezekiel 15:7; 22:19-20).

These trials are a refining, not a consuming fire. A remnant will be brought out of the fire as gold (Zechariah 13:9; Zephaniah 3:12-13). The Lord is gracious and merciful even if we are not as purified from the fire as we should be (Isaiah 48:9-11).

Purified From Your Sins

This refining must involve putting our sins to death (Galatians 5:24). We must be willing to have our sins put to death. We must not only take Christ as our righteousness and life, we must also take Him as a refiner's fire. It is painful to go through this refining fire and lose the sins to which we are attached. We have nothing to lose except our dross.

Christ is both the refiner and the refiner's fire. You will be refined by Him and in Him. You only deceive yourself if you think you can be refined in any other way. The blood of Jesus not only cleanses us from guilt but purges our consciences (Hebrews 9:14). Putting our sins to death (Galatians 5:24) is possible for all who are Christ's through His strength.

In the News...

‘Schools in the UK will be rated for how ‘trans-friendly’ they are by an education review group’ – The Christian Institute

(source: www.christian.org.uk/news/schools-tested-trans-friendliness)

Bernadette John, a director at the Good Schools Guide, announced the move yesterday and said the issue of transsexualism in schools has been “building up” in recent months.

The announcement comes shortly after a Christian couple withdrew their six-year-old son from a Church of England school after it failed to consult with parents on new rules regarding transsexualism.

Enquiries

John said ‘inspectors’ from the guide will “certainly be asking headmasters” in the future about their treatment of transsexual pupils. John said the guide plans to draw up a list of schools that have a ‘good’ track record on transsexual issues and “might make a point” of highlighting schools that are “utterly outstanding”.

There are reportedly around 150 schools in the UK – out of tens of thousands – that have already adopted gender-neutral uniform policies.

Transphobic behavior

Last week, Nigel and Sally Rowe spoke out after another child began coming into school dressed as a girl, and asking to be called by a girl’s name. The parents said they received a letter outlining a new policy against ‘transphobic behaviour’.

Under the new policy, children are deemed guilty of ‘transphobia’ if they experience ‘feelings of discomfort’ at another child being transsexual. Nigel and Sally intend to challenge the policy in an educational tribunal and have withdrawn their son from the school.

Understanding the issue

The issue of transsexualism – wanting to change physical sex because you feel you are ‘in the wrong body’ – has become increasingly high profile in recent months.

'Maldives - Christians losing the few rights they have' – Barnabus Fund (source: www.barnabasfund.org/news/Analysis-Maldives-Christians-losing-the-few-rights-they-have)

Christians in the Maldives have few rights, but until now at least the courts would protect those rights. Now, however, the government is increasingly controlling the courts and simply ignoring the law, leaving Christians in an even more vulnerable state.

The Maldivian government has just suspended one-third of all lawyers in the islands after they tried to submit a petition to the Supreme Court calling for the rule of law to be respected. The 56 lawyers who signed the petition were suspended from practicing by the government.

Despite being a popular tourist destination, the Maldives is one of the most difficult places in the world to be a Christian. The 2008 Maldivian constitution bans Muslims from becoming Christians, which leaves open the question as to whether someone who becomes a Christian could be stripped of their citizenship.

In 1998, the government arrested 50 Maldivians suspected of having become Christians, and is thought to have tortured them. Any Maldivian even found to have a Bible in their house faces a prison sentence. There were signs of hope in 2008, with the election of President Mohammed Nasheed, of the Maldivian Democratic Party, who called for a "tolerant" form of Islam. However, he was forced out of office in 2012. He was recently granted political asylum in the UK, after being sentenced to 13 years in prison for "terrorism" in a trial that the UN said was politically motivated.

All of this makes the plight of Maldivian Christians even more precarious. The Maldivian government appears to be pursuing a slow process of Islamisation, possibly partly in response to the challenge from the Maldives' other opposition group, the Islamist Adhaalath Party. Last year, the government passed a Defamation and Freedom of Speech Act, which criminalised any comments against "any tenet of Islam", in effect an Islamic blasphemy law.

In some countries, Christians suffer because of repressive laws that restrict freedom of religion. In others, whilst the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Christians suffer because the government simply ignores the law. This latest development suggests that Christians in the Maldives are now being oppressed in BOTH ways. They suffer because of laws preventing them openly living as Christians, and now the government is simply ignoring even the few legal freedoms they do have.

Our prayer is that the Lord would show mercy in such a day of confusion in our land, and that He would presence Himself with our brothers and sisters enduring days of persecution in other lands throughout the world.

Kids' Challenge

Daniel and his friends were taken from their homes to Babylon in the 6th Century BC, where King Nebuchadnezzar encouraged them to ignore what God had taught them and eat of his delicacies.

Read Daniel 1 to see the great example these young men set in the way in which they responded to this peer pressure.

You can then complete the wordsearch below!

Daniel and His Friends Obey God

NKJV

N B T G D R L X L G Q V T X
 E B E L T E S H A Z Z A R B
 B D N Q Q Y L N B R L B K M
 U C A X Y K P I L P Q K N M
 C V H N J M B R C Y R L Z Q
 H E D A I R K N M A M L J R
 A G D Y L E R N J T C D Z D
 D E B W N D L T R B D I Y M
 N T T A A D E V W L N N E V
 E A Y J B T R A W I N E Q S
 Z B R T V Y E J N J S Y Q Y
 Z L K D L B L R J G Z D D Z
 A E D B M N Q O J Z B Q O T
 R S P L R Y M Z N R Z N L M

CLUES

The King

Who the book is named after

Location of exile

Language/literature being taught

Daniel's New Name

What the king wanted them to eat

What the king wanted them to drink

What they ate

What they drank

Number of days tested for

God gave them knowledge, skill and ...

MEMORY VERSE

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
 But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Proverbs 1:7

Visit the links below for further information on:



Our church: www.glasgowrpcs.org



The Scottish RP church: <http://www.rpcscotland.org/>



The global RP church: <http://rpglobalalliance.org/>



Other sources used: www.gentlereformation.com
www.reformationscotland.org
www.christian.org.uk
www.barnabusfund.org

Glasgow
RPCS
Newsletter

October 2017

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9