

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth” Psalm 60:4

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Communions

January: First Sabbath: Nkayi; **Fourth:** Auckland, Inverness, New Canaan.

February: Second Sabbath: Dingwall; **Third:** Stornoway; Wellington; **Fourth:** Larne, Zenka.

March: First Sabbath: Sydney, Tarbert; **Second:** Ness, Portree; **Third:** Halkirk, Kyle of Lochalsh; **Fourth:** Barnoldswick; Ingwenya, North Tolsta.

April: First Sabbath: Gisborne, Laide; **Second:** Maware, Staffin; **Fourth:** Glasgow; **Fifth:** Mbuma.

May: First Sabbath: Aberdeen, Donsa, Grafton, Leverburgh, London; **Second:** Achmore, Chesley; **Third:** Edinburgh, Kinlochbervie; **Fourth:** Chiedza.

June: First Sabbath: Perth, Shieldaig; **Second:** Nkayi, North Uist, Santa Fe; **Third:** Lochcarron, Uig; **Fourth:** Bulawayo, Gairloch, Inverness.

July: First Sabbath: Beauly; **Second:** Bonar Bridge, Staffin; **Third:** Applecross, Fort William; **Fourth:** Auckland, Struan; **Fifth:** Cameron.

August: First Sabbath: Dingwall; **Second:** New Canaan, Somakantana; **Third:** Laide; **Fourth:** Farr, Stornoway, Vancouver, Zenka.

September: First Sabbath: Chesley, Sydney, Ullapool; **Second:** Halkirk, Munaka, Portree; **Third:** Tarbert; **Fourth:** Aberdeen, Barnoldswick; **Fifth:** Ingwenya.

October: First Sabbath: Dornoch, Grafton, Lochcarron, North Tolsta; **Second:** Gairloch, Ness; **Third:** London, Odessa; **Fourth:** Edinburgh, Gisborne, Mbuma, Uig.

November: First Sabbath: Leverburgh; **Second:** Glasgow; **Third:** Chiedza, Singapore.

December: Third Sabbath: Bulawayo, Santa Fe, Tauranga.

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“This God Is Our God”

Psalm 48 is a song of praise to the God who really exists, the living God, the One who is truly great – infinitely so. And He is “greatly to be praised” (v 1). Unless God had made Himself known to us human beings, it would be impossible for anyone to know Him. But this God *has* made Himself known, particularly through the Bible. In a much lesser way, God makes Himself known in His wonderful works that are all around us, “for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” who refuse to believe that this God actually exists (Rom 1:20).

Again the magnificent temple that Solomon built on Mount Zion was testimony to the greatness of this God. The man who wrote Psalm 48 had, by divine grace, taken this God to be his God; he did not worship images made from wood and stone, or even from silver and gold; he trusted in this glorious God – who made the earth and all things in it, indeed the whole universe – and sought to worship and serve this great, majestic God. We today also are to trust in this same glorious God and seek to worship and serve Him, not the gods of false religions, or the gods of money, possessions and entertainment. We are not to give our hearts to any of these things as what is to be sought most earnestly as the ultimate sources of satisfaction.

As inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Psalmist sang of “the city of the great King”, where God was known (Ps 48:2,3). The temple was by far the most significant building in this city, Jerusalem, especially because this God’s seat was there. The symbol of His presence was the cloud that had accompanied Israel through the wilderness, and everyone in that nation knew that this cloud was the sign of God’s presence in the most holy place, the inner part of the temple. Both the temple and the tabernacle before it were symbols of the Church of God. And when the Psalmist sang of the bulwarks and towers of the temple, we are to recognise references to the defences of the Church. These defences, says J A Alexander in expounding this Psalm, were “untouched by the recent dangers”; none “of them have been demolished”. It is,

of course, God who is the defence of the Church, which is why it can never be put out of existence. And the individuals who belong to the Church, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, can never lose their faith in Him. They can say, "This God is our God for ever and ever" (Ps 48:14).

What does this Psalm say about "this God"? We may note three attributes:

(1.) This God is *holy*. We read of "the mountain of *His holiness*" (v 1), for Mount Zion was characterised by the holiness of God; it was where the holy God had made His seat on earth. A A Hodge speaks of "holiness, as applied to God in Scripture", as representing "first, moral purity . . . second, His transcendently august and venerable majesty". But Hodge also says, "The holiness of God is not to be conceived of as one attribute among others; it is rather a general term representing the conception of His consummate perfection and total glory. There is a glory of each attribute . . . and a glory of the whole together. Infinite moral perfection is the crown of the Godhead. Holiness is the total glory thus crowned."¹

God is our Creator, and so we are responsible to Him. He has the right to direct us how we should live. He has given us a law to show us how we should act, speak and think, and that "law is holy" (Rom 7:12) because it is a reflection of His holy nature. And because He is holy, we too, as His creatures, should be holy. This, of course, is what many in this generation want not to accept. Better, they assume, to believe that mankind came into existence through a vast number of slight, random changes than accept that a holy God created everything, with all that this fact implies about our responsibility to obey Him as our Creator. But how dangerous to ignore the fact that this holy God does indeed exist and that we are responsible to Him!

(2.) This God is *gracious*. So we read in Psalm 48: "We have thought of *Thy lovingkindness*, O God, in the midst of Thy temple" (v 9). Especially at the temple, the Israelites could think of the mercy of God to unworthy sinners, as the way of forgiveness was illustrated there in animal sacrifices. These were offered as substitutes for sinners, bearing the penalty for sin instead of them – for the just punishment for sin is death, even eternal death. The animal suffered death instead of the sinner; it was God's merciful provision for the guilty. Not that animal sacrifices could actually take away sin, but they pointed forward to the Messiah, who would come into the world in the fullness of time. In offering up Himself, He would make it possible for sin to be really forgiven in God's infinite kindness to rebellious sinners.

Paul told the believers in Corinth: "Ye know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9). What tremendous grace is

¹A A Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, Banner of Truth reprint, 1983, p 163.

to be seen when the One who was eternally rich becomes poor – with nowhere to lay His head, to be treated as “a worm, and no man” (Ps 22:6) and in the end to be crucified! And how gracious God is in the benefits He gives, and gives freely, for no human being could ever earn them. All are unworthy of them. So Paul emphasises that it is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy [God] saved us” (Tts 3:5); our works cannot merit salvation, yet in His kindness God saves sinners. And Paul follows this vital statement by pointing to these crucial elements of God’s gracious salvation: justification and eternal life.

(3.) This God is *righteous*. But how can God remain righteous when He gives such great blessings to sinners? How can God deliver sinners from the just consequences of their sins and yet be just? How can God remain just while He justifies the ungodly? First, note that those whom He justifies are the ungodly *who believe in Jesus* (Rom 3:26). Note further that Jesus has done all that was necessary to provide a salvation that is absolutely consistent with God’s justice. For Christ was a *propitiation* for sinners – a sacrifice to turn away the anger of God from them – so that, “through faith in His blood”, they might be saved and escape the wrath to come. He fully satisfied God’s justice in their place; so God remains righteous when He justifies the ungodly. Besides, Christ kept the law perfectly as a substitute for His people; accordingly, when they believe in Him, they are treated as if they had kept God’s law perfectly themselves. They are justified – they are accepted as perfectly righteous – for the sake of Christ. No one, certainly not Satan, can be heard in heaven when he lays anything against them. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died” (Rom 8:34).

Thus, if we have good reason to believe that we are looking to Christ alone for salvation, we have a right to say, “This God is our God for ever and ever”. He will never cast us off; He will never allow us to depart from Him. That is why David could say near the end of his life: “God . . . hath made with me an everlasting covenant” (2 Sam 23:5). An everlasting covenant implies everlasting love and an everlasting salvation. It implies too that God will guide His children, so that they will come safely to the end of their journey; by faith they may say, “He will be our guide even unto death” (Ps 48:14). By faith also they can be assured, even when the Church is at its weakest, that its towers and its bulwarks will never be entirely demolished. And this is part of the teaching they are to tell “to the generation following” (Ps 48:13). Let the parents of this generation so teach their children and seek God’s blessing as they do so – not least that the Holy Spirit would work savingly in each of them. And let all of us earnestly seek grace to be able to say sincerely, “This God is *our* God for ever and ever”.

The Lord's Jewels¹

A Sermon by Rev Alexander McPherson

Malachi 3:17. *And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

Malachi seems to have prophesied about the time of Nehemiah's second appearance at Jerusalem. His book reveals that the people had become self-righteous and materialistic, looking for temporal blessings at the same time as they were careless about God's worship. Confining ourselves to this chapter, we note that it begins with a prophecy of Christ's coming (vv 1-6); then a promise of plenty if the people would tithe properly (vv 7-12); then a reference to the complaining and reproachful attitude of most of the nation, who viewed religion as just a way of buying God's favour, yet charging God with failing to keep His side of the contract (vv 14-15).

There were others, however, who were of a different spirit, who feared God. He took special notice of them, and our text tells of His purpose concerning them.

1. The people claimed by Jehovah. They are described in verse 16: those among the Jews in Malachi's time who had a correct view of God and a corresponding attitude towards Him: "They feared the Lord". Godly fear is meant: that knowledge of, and reverence for, God's Majesty; submission to His authority and care to avoid offending Him. That is the mark of all who have been savingly changed and have come to repentance and faith – the very opposite of what we see in verses 7-8,13-15.

Let us remember, however, that these words of Malachi have a reference to ourselves as well, and that it is the God-fearing people of all ages whom God claims as His. Yet the contrast today is not between the godly and the self-righteous and insolent, but between the godly and a great variety of others – from those who deny God and disregard Him, through many forms of false religion, to formal adherence to the true religion. Can we distinguish ourselves from all these as persons who fear God?

We may note two ways of proving that we fear God. (1) Do we think "upon His name"? God's name is *all* that He has revealed about Himself. The *all* is very great; it is a revelation through creation, providence and Scripture. Do we frequently think about God in a way that honours Him? (2) Do we speak "often one to another"? Are we ready and willing to speak to other Christians about God and His works, about His essential and sovereign

¹These are Mr McPherson's notes for a sermon he preached in London, on 18 December 1988, when he was minister there.

attributes, and about His dealings with souls as we know them? Are these the subjects that draw us closest together and that we feel to be most important? Now if our belief that we fear God is borne out in these ways, should it not give us great pleasure to know that God claims such people as His own: "They shall be Mine".

2. When God will make good His claim. In any ungodly age such as Malachi's and ours, it is likely that few will accept that the God-fearing are God's special property. They are thought of as worse than others because of their uncharitableness and narrowmindedness etc. A day is coming, however, when God – who now claims as His those whom the world regards as least likely to be in God's favour – will make good His claim. It is the day when the Lord will make up His jewels.

Here, at the very end of the Old Testament Scriptures, is a reference to what God had principally been doing since the Fall. He had been separating from the corrupt mass certain individuals who, under the influence of His grace, would fear and serve Him. And when the New Testament would be written, it would become *fully* clear that these persons were God's elect, redeemed and called.

Our text also looks forward to the *completion* of the saving process, when earth's last day shall come. When the last person has been saved, time, history and the world itself will end. The trumpet will sound; Christ will come; the dead will rise; the world will be destroyed; and Christ will judge all who ever lived in it.

Now let us see the significance of the expression, *the Lord of hosts*. The hosts are angels in great number: "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Mt 24:31). As a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats, the angels will gather together God's elect, as stated in the verse just quoted, and "they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Mt 13:41). God's claim will be made good; when placed at Christ's right hand, it will be plain to all that the righteous are God's peculiar treasure.

3. How the claim will be made good. This great host of saved sinners will be treated and displayed as *jewels*. The word means *special treasures*, and in Bible times this almost invariably meant jewels, which were immune from wear, rust and wastage.

As jewels are usually regarded as the most valuable things their owners possess, so God will make it appear that saved sinners are His most prized possession. The things of earth that its worldly inhabitants sought after will all have passed away. Earth's silver, gold and precious stones, together with

its honours, titles, power and pleasures – all will have gone. And now God will display – to angels, devils and lost men – the multitude clothed in white raiment and holy in heart, as His dearest possessions.

We must now ask, What gives these people their value in God's estimation? We know that literal jewels acquire their value on account of such things as rarity, shape, colour, brilliance and cost. These spiritual jewels are valuable for such reasons as:

(1.) *God's discernment of what grace would do* for extremely unsightly objects. In this way they reflect God's infinite wisdom; they are triumphs of His unerring choice, as a sparkling gem might be whose potential a master jeweller sees in the rough, dull piece of rock.

(2.) *The infinitely great cost of their redemption.* Yet they would have remained guilty, vile sinners had that price not been paid. These jewels are God's possession as the result of unique outgoings of the love of all three Persons in the Godhead.

(3.) The work put into their cutting and polishing, so to speak – *their sanctification.* The course of their lives was planned from eternity to be affected by innumerable things, persons and events, under the constant influences of the Holy Spirit. A stupendous divine work was entailed in fitting them for heaven.

(4.) *Their beauty after the work of preparation has been finished.* "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Is 62:3).

Let me ask those who fear the Lord how much they think of the outcome of salvation. In the midst of their ordinary tasks and religious duties, do they think with longing of the time when they shall have done with sinning and be fit to enter heaven? Do thoughts of perfect holiness spur them on to a more determined conflict with Satan, indwelling sin and worldliness? Do they – when sadly conscious of their sinful, miserable environment and weary from a multitude of tasks, and encounters with wickedness and moral filthiness – think pleasantly of the rest that remaineth to the people of God? And do they wonder that God should bear so long and patiently with them when so often they are not spiritually minded? Nevertheless the fact is sure: God will make good His claim. He will yet have His people with Himself.

4. The added promise. "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." We have just referred to the feelings of sinfulness and manifold imperfection that often trouble God's people in the world. Sometimes they are more conscious of their faultiness than of their status as adopted children and beloved of the Lord, who has shown them mercy. How will they fare at the Judgement Day? They *ought* to know that they are no longer under con-

demnation, but the Lord, in kindness to their weakness, says here that He will certainly not treat them as enemies and rebels, but as children. When His wrath will devour the ungodly servants of sin and Satan, He will spare and bless His dear children who, notwithstanding their imperfections, have served Him on earth.

God knows those who fear Him and think about His name, and He will acknowledge them and display them among His jewels. Are we among them, hoping for salvation from sin for Christ's sake, seeking to be like the Saviour morally, and to be among His jewels eternally?

An Ungodly Alliance¹

Henry Law

Genesis 6:2. *That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.*

The Bible is God's Book, therefore it is all divine. Each page gives proof. No human thought could originate such truths. No human mind could so unfold them. Infinite breadths and lengths, eternal depths and heights, are marvellously wrapped up in a few brief words. Enlightened readers see the sure conclusion. This author is more than man.

Take an early illustration: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). This sentence – the gospel of the old world – is brevity comprising boundlessness. It is a narrow field without horizon. Analyse the contents. Two antagonistic powers march forth. Two rival empires are portrayed. All earth's sons, who have been, are and shall be, appear under opposing banners. Their enmity is ceaseless. One is ultimately bruised. The other wins eternal triumphs. Thus one little map unfolds the total history of Christ and His blessed subjects, and of the devil and his cursed slaves. No mortal pen wrote this.

Doubtless the transcendent object of the verse is the God-man Jesus. The prominent spectacle is His deep humiliation, His painful sufferings, His noble achievements, His final trampling on all the powers of darkness. Christ, as the woman's bruised and conquering seed, largely fills the forefront. But as Christ personal is here, so too is Christ mystical. As the term, "thy seed", addressed to the old serpent, embraces the whole race of the ungodly; so the term, "her seed", speaking of the woman, is Christ, and all contained in Him – Christ and all the family of faith. He is "the head over all things to the

¹Taken, with editing, from Law's *Beacons of the Bible*.

Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:22,23). The head is lifeless without its members. Christ is no Christ without His people.

Thus this wonderful verse draws a broad line. On the one side, “thy seed” appears; on the other, “her seed”. No neutral standing is left. Each mother’s son is Christ’s or Satan’s. This momentous truth pervades the Word. Advance at once to gospel times. Hear Jesus: “The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one” (Mt 13:38). This world is emptiness, but some have the royalty of heavenly parentage, while others belong to the apostate spirit’s house. John echoes this: “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil” (1 Jn 3:10). The conclusion cannot be avoided: earth is the home of two discordant families.

Sometimes the separate portraits are separately exhibited. The dark compartment is not cloaked: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Jn 8:44). They were a reprobate race, and their lives proved their origin. Again: “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Mt 23:33). Here, again is a vile progeny, and their final home.

The bright contrast also gloriously shines. God is the Father of a kingly race: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12:32). Jesus is the Father of an ever-living family. His name is, “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Is 9:6). The Spirit is the Father of a spiritual creation: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn 3:6).

Thus Scripture marks out two widely-severed realms. It shows a great gulf fixed and kingdoms on each side. Vivid facts endorse these statements. Behold man’s firstborn. Let Cain and Abel be examined. Naturally they spring from the same stock. In form they correspond. Their outward frames and mental powers imply one origin. They have like features. They tread the same earth. They breathe the same air. They have like cravings and desires. They are supported by the same food. They sleep the same sleep. They converse in the same language. Great is their outward sameness.

But far greater is their internal difference. In spirit they are as estranged as pole from pole. Cain “was of that wicked one” (1 Jn 3:12). To Abel the sweet testimony is given: “By faith . . . he obtained witness that he was righteous” (Heb 11:4). All who have faith belong to heaven’s family: “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26). Therefore righteous Abel was a son of God.

One received Christ as King, for this is faith’s constant act. The other

toiled in Satan's prison-house, as all do who are strangers to this grace. One was light; the other was sightless in a dark world. One was Zion's citizen; the other grovelled as a worldling among worldlings. One journeyed in the narrow way of life; the other went downwards in destruction's broad road.

This is the truth interwoven in the text before us. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men." Diverse families are here. Some were born again, and thus a new creation made them "sons of God". Others experienced no vital change. They remained corrupt offspring of corrupt parents – conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, unclean, because the stream of an unclean fount. They were dead, because hanging on a withered branch; children of wrath, because they were heirs of the curse. Such is the mighty difference. What is the power which effects it? It must be external. For all men are equally dead-born. And death can never generate life.

The strengthless have no strength. The motionless cannot move. The speechless cannot cry. The skeleton cannot rise. The dry leaf cannot bloom. Ashes cannot brighten into flame. The power then is not inborn. Omnipotence from above achieves the change. The Holy Ghost, descending on the wings of love, and moving in the almightiness of His strength, implants new being in the heirs of life. Others, unchanged by heavenly grace, cumber the earth as moving sepulchres holding dead souls.

Here reason proudly asks : What is the cause of such a distinction? Where is the just principle? Faith with all reverence replies: The cause is wise, for it is God's wisdom; it is good, for it is God's will; it is righteous, for it is God's resolve; it is holy, for it is God's decree. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25). There is no stern severity, no arbitrary caprice, no sport of chance. "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph 1:11). True, faith reads not yet the records of the courts above, but it confidingly reposes on the word: "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (Jn 13:7).

As the tabernacle rose after a pattern marked out in the Mount, so its anti-type, the Church, rises according to an eternal model. Wisdom and love lay the first stone; wisdom and power frame the materials; wisdom and mercy fit each to its place; wisdom and truth bring forth the topstone; wisdom and grace receive the total glory. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom 11:33).

The glorious reign of truth will soon break forth. Then the chosen family shall put off their flesh and rightly put on robes of light, and show their crowns of gold. Now they are intermingled with the crowds of earth. They move as others up and down the world. In this field, the wheat and the tares

grow side by side. In this wilderness, the rare flowers are beset with weeds. In these waters, fishes good and bad promiscuously swim. In these pastures, the sheep and goats crop the same herbs. Here vessels of gold and wood, of silver and earth, have the like shape. At a banquet here guests robed and unrobed sit down. At a mill, two grind together, the one to be taken, the other to be left.

Thus in the state of time, the heirs of mercy and of wrath are intermixed. The flesh is their common tabernacle. An atmosphere of contagion envelops both. The spiritual seed must traverse the slippery ground of earth. The tempter marks them well and hates them most and never ceases to assail. Traitors too in the heart are active to betray. They are not, as to spirit, of the world. But, as to flesh, they are still in the world. Outward allurements woo them to forbidden paths. The old nature – still alive – looks too complacently on congenial evil. Old passions, pent up, beat rebelliously on the holy barriers. Thus countless are the occasions of transgression. Multitudinous are the pitfalls in the way.

The history of the old world brings these perils into open light. It especially shows one sunken rock, the scene of many wrecks. It raises a beacon on one tremendous precipice. It warns that marriage, designed for pure delights, is oft perverted to a deathful snare. The record thus speaks: “The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose”. Such was the ancient mischief. Alas, it has survived the flood. Those waters drowned not the fire of such lust. They quenched not the evil embers of the heart. Proneness to ungodly alliance still exists. Here still a fruitful spring of misery is found.

What inlet induces this temptation? The Word replies: the eye. “The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair.” Just so Eve saw the many beauties of the forbidden fruit. The fascination enters through the door of sight. The lovely features, the attractive look, the charm of countenance, the grace of symmetry, the beautiful frame decked in the elegance of attire, gradually fix the gaze. This gaze is danger. For the fleshy element ever has leaks, imperilling the boat. It opens many crevices to godless thoughts. It is not yet in heaven. It is not yet angelic. It has not yet escaped the tempter’s territory. Beware. Make a covenant with your eyes.

If the spark of desire once kindles, Satan is quick to fan it into flame. Conscience, at first uneasy, is soon quieted by subtle opiates. Hindering mountains will soon sink down. A path will open to facilitate advance. At each interview objections will seem less, and at last almost nothing.

There may be moments of reflection, when the spiritual obstacles may intrude. It then may be felt that the attracted hearts do not meet in Christ: that

the needles do not point to the same pole star. But then hope whispers that wedded union may soon lead to union in the Lord. The child of God will fondly trust, My tender teaching, unreserved counsels, strict example, holy walk and fervent prayer will soon issue in my spouse's thorough change. Soon the one Saviour will be our common trust and joy.

Here is ungodly compromise. No hope that good will possibly result can justify ungodly means. This principle is rotten to the core. It has been the sluice-gate of a flood of crime and girdled the earth with zones of misery. Actions from such motives are manifest transgression and a most fearful risk. Self is gratified under pretence of winning souls. Presumption madly presumes and arrogates the prerogative of God. Can man convert? No. Only He who said, "Let there be light, and there was light," can give the light of Christ. To marry, hopeful of grace being conferred, is to plunge into wild billows, dreaming that some lifeboat may possibly rescue – or that some plank may providentially afford escape.

Sometimes hearts are led on by misinterpretations of God's providence. The opportunities to speak together, the disappearance of all hindrance and the mutual wish are fondly received as tokens of God's approval. The thought is cherished: Surely this union must be of heaven, or the path would not thus open. Blinded passion finds a providence in Satan's traps. No outward barrier appears, and then the sloping descent seems smoothed by a heavenly hand. Other beguilements soon spread their lures. Checking conscience speaks no more. Then alliance joins the godly and the godless. The gracious and the graceless pass under an unequal yoke.

Alas, what fearful folly! No, what undoubted sin! How visionary the hope that any sunbeam will come from such a cloud! What incongruity! How can two walk together, whose motives, principles, desires, objects, aims, pursuits are as separate as pole from pole? One seeks God as the chief good; the other follows this world as the guide. One brings each matter to a throne of grace; the other only cares to know the policy of man. One glories in the cross; the other counts it as a weak dream. One prizes the blood of Christ as all salvation; the other scorns it as folly. One grieves that earth, with its vast multitudes, is waging war against its rightful King, and longs to send out the saving truth on eagle's wings; to the other, Christ's glory is an empty sound, a thought without reality, a shadow without form.

To find amusement in the vanities of time, to sip admiration from the cup of flattery, to flutter with the giddy moths around the blaze of merriment is the whole life. It would be easy, but more sad, to trace these paths of separation. Suffice to say, while grace is grace, it must tend heavenward; while the heart is graceless, it must shun God. Thus the sons of God and children

of men essentially diverge. What then are the fruits? Can there be harmony with no connecting cord? Can there be happiness with such dislikes? Can there be peace without agreement? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor 6:14). The house is divided. The family is at variance. The graceless may not gain. The gracious surely loses, for the spirit must be depressed. Zeal must be disheartened. Activities must be impeded. And mourning must sadly sit, where joy and gladness should sing cheerfully.

Ungodly alliance in the old world thus stands as a warning beacon. Let the regenerate mark this and be wise. If they take partners from Satan's empire, they gain no blessing, but a curse; no happiness, but woe; no solace, but discomfort; no help, but hindrance; no delight, but grief; no credit, but a shame. Woe waits on unions which are not the fruit of earnest prayer, contracted for God's glory, cemented in His love, and wholly "in the Lord."

But marriage is a typical rite. It has a symbolic meaning. It points to heavenly union. It shows the soul's alliance to the Lord. It brings Jesus before us in all His faithful love. He is the Bridegroom of the Church. The Church is His affianced bride. In such an espousal, all is right. Error here can find no place. Misery cannot arise hence. Disappointment cannot follow. The bonds and fruit are altogether holy. Their mutual converse is one stream of sanctified delight.

Reader, has your soul formed this glorious contract? Are you cemented into Christ? Is your heart wholly given to Him? Is it one with Him in devoted love? Do His vows bind you? Is your life the happy service of a faithful spouse of Christ?

If hitherto you have lingered afar off, let this hour witness your glad espousals! Hesitate no more. Draw near. He never turns in coldness from the coming soul. Only behold Him, and your love must kindle. Mark well His beauty. Compared to Him, the sun is dark; the heavens are a cheerless blank; and nature's loveliest garb but as vile sackcloth. To see Him is to love.

Behold His grace, His tenderness, His noble efforts to secure His bride. He comes from heaven. He condescends to the lowliest state. He spares not His very life. He sheds His blood to cleanse her. He hangs on the accursed tree to ransom her. He undergoes her every penalty. He bears her legal curse. He pays her every debt. He expiates her every sin. He endows her with all He is – with all He has. His righteousness is her robe. His heaven is her home. His throne is her seat. His glory is her portion. His eternity is her everlasting day. In this union there is no varying fickleness, no cooling affection, no parting. "I change not, therefore ye . . . are not consumed" (Mal 3:6). "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I

drawn thee” (Jer 31:3). “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” No treachery in her provokes divorce. He loved her in her filth and misery. He loves through all her faithlessness. He will love her through eternity’s eternal course.

Beware of ungodly alliance. Seek above all things this glorious espousal. Rest not till you can truly say, “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine”.

John Hooper – a Reformation Puritan¹

4. Put to the Test

Rev K M Watkins

For all his boldness, Hooper was soon to discover that preaching Puritanism was one thing, but holding to it in practice was another. The test came quickly. The bishopric of Gloucester had become vacant. It was offered to Hooper soon after he had completed preaching the Lenten series of sermons before the King and his Council during February and March 1550. He declined it, but that initial refusal would be hard to maintain, for the Church of England was and still is Erastian in its church government, meaning that ultimately the state rules over the Church. The invitation was effectively a royal appointment by the King, and it was not meant to be refused.

Hooper gave two reasons for his refusal: the ordination oath which called on the name of saints, and the vestments that were required to be worn by bishops. In a letter to Bullinger written at the end of June 1550, he explained: “I declined . . . both by reason of the shameful and impious form of the oath, which all who choose to undertake the function of a bishop are compelled to put up with, and also on account of those Aaronic habits [vestments] which they still retain in that calling, and . . . wear, not only at the administration of the sacraments, but also at public prayers”.²

As for the first, the oath, it ended with the words, “so help me God, all saints and the holy Evangelist”.³ Hooper’s opposition to this was consistent with his second book published in Zurich more than two years previously: “What intolerable ill, blasphemy of God, and ethnical [that is, heathenish] idolatry is this, to admit and teach the invocation of saints departed out of

¹This article is based on the fourth part of a paper given at the 2016 Theological Conference. John Hooper, influenced by Zwingli and Bullinger, the Zurich Reformers, had imbibed a more thoroughly biblical approach to reforming the Church than his English colleagues. With great zeal he had written and preached accordingly. Now he was to be put to the test.

²Letter to Bullinger written from London on 28 June 1550, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, vol 1, The Parker Society, ed Hastings Robinson, 1846, p 87.

³*The Two Liturgies with other Documents set forth by Authority in the Reign of King Edward the Sixth*, The Parker Society, ed Joseph Ketley, 1844, p 169.

this world! It taketh from God His true honour. . . . It diminisheth the merits of Christ; taketh from the law of God her perfection and majesty. . . . It condemneth the old Church of the patriarchs and prophets, likewise the Church of the apostles and martyrs, that never taught the invocation of saints. It accuseth the Scripture of God to be false . . . it maketh Christ a liar.”⁴

It is hard to believe that more than three decades after Luther had nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle church in Wittenberg, the professedly Protestant Church of England contained such a blatant remnant of Rome as this oath. Happily, it was soon to be put right. As Hooper boldly argued his case before King Edward VI on July 20, we are told that “the King declared, ‘What wickedness is here, Hooper? Are these offices ordained in the name of saints or of God?’, and, in front of everybody, personally crossed out the offending part of the oath.”⁵

That was one obstacle out of the way. The other remained, and although Hooper’s objection to the Romanist vestments was equally grounded on sound biblical argument, this requirement was not to be removed. Hooper recoiled from wearing the garments stipulated for Church of England bishops. According to his Puritan strain of Protestantism, these clothes were badges of allegiance to the Pope, unavoidably declaring the wearer to be a priest offering sacrifices to God, usurping the place of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Priest of the New Testament age. Martin Micron from Ghent, who assisted John à Lasco in pastoring the Strangers’ Church set up for Protestant refugees in London, wrote to Bullinger, “Hooper denies . . . that they are matters of indifference, inasmuch as they obscure the dignity of the priesthood of Christ, and nurture hypocrisy, superstition, etc”.⁶

Hooper could not agree with Thomas Cranmer (Archbishop of Canterbury) and Nicholas Ridley (who by then had become Bishop of London) that the vestments were *adiaphora* – matters of indifference, to be used or not used as circumstances suggest. Like the Puritans properly so called, who would arise some years later in the Elizabethan era, Hooper was captivated by the regulative principle. The Church of England was not. The Anglican approach to worship has always been Lutheran in character: provided the Bible does not expressly forbid something, it may be brought into worship if the Church

⁴From “The Declaration of Christ and His Office”, *Early Writings of John Hooper*, ed Samuel Carr, The Parker Society, Cambridge, 1843, p 35.

⁵Pete Sullivan, *A Gloucester Martyr: John Hooper and the English Reformation*, Country Books, 2004, p 40.

⁶Letter of Martin Micron to Bullinger, written from London on 13 October 1550, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, vol 2, The Parker Society, ed Hastings Robinson, 1847, p 571.

desires. To this day, no attempts to correct this matter have been successful in the Church of England. The Puritans of Elizabeth I's time could not do it. The godly 2000 ejected in 1662 could not do it. No concerted attempt has been made since. The best of Anglicans, such as George Whitefield in the 1700s and J C Ryle in the 1800s, seemed unconcerned about it.

Cranmer and Ridley saw the issue as one of authority, not of mere clothing. The vestments had been appointed by both Church and Parliament. Hooper's simple duty therefore was to submit. There had to be uniformity. Individual conscience had to bow before lawful authority. That approach has some validity, except when the demand goes against Scripture, as Hooper rightly realised this did. In this case Hooper was right to apply the apostolic approach: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Hooper referred to the controversy later in a letter to Bullinger: "The question respecting the habits, which was always exceedingly displeasing to me, was gravely discussed between the Bishop of London and myself. For my part, I very properly, if I am not mistaken, found fault with the use of them in the Church, and contended for their entire removal. He, on the other hand, most urgently and pertinaciously defended their use."⁷

This was not an argument about whether ministers may wear clothing that distinguishes them as ministers before the public eye. Rather, it was an argument over the lawfulness of wearing clothes that were demonstrably sacerdotal. That is why Hooper called them "Aaronical" – their features signified priesthood, as if New Testament ministers of the gospel were sacrificing priests like Aaron of old. This was the heretical core of Romanism: that in the mass the "priest" is again offering up Christ to God, and thus perpetuating the sacrifice of the cross.

John Burcher, an English merchant then residing in Strasbourg, understood the situation well, as his report to Bullinger shows: "Hooper is striving to effect an entire purification of the Church from the very foundation. Other bishops, on the contrary, who nevertheless are men of learning and professors of the truth, are ashamed of this, because they will not open their eyes to their own errors. Hence they contend with all their might to have him entangled in the same superstitious ceremonies with themselves. They charge him with insubordination, because he positively refuses to admit any other rite of consecration than what the apostles adopted."⁸

Regrettably, Hooper obtained little support from the wider Reformed community. Only à Lasco "emphatically took Hooper's side. He not only

⁷Letter to Bullinger from Gloucester, dated 1 August 1551, *Original Letters*, vol 1, p 91.

⁸Letter of John Burcher to Bullinger from Strasbourg, dated 26 December 1550, *Original Letters*, vol 2, p 674.

shared Hooper's theology but also was of a similar bold temperament."⁹ Hooper had helped à Lasco to secure a charter for his Strangers' Church within London, but outside Anglican jurisdiction. One author has rightly noted that it is "small wonder that Hooper interested himself so much in the strangers' cause: the establishment of a model Reformed community and his own struggle against clerical vestments were essentially two aspects of the same effort, to free the English Church from the vestiges of Popery and urge it towards a more complete Reformation".¹⁰

Hooper was aware of his isolation. He wrote later to Bullinger: "The use of vestments peculiar to Popery in the ministry of the Church has been the occasion here of great disturbance. Master à Lasco alone, of all the foreigners who have any influence, stood on my side."¹¹ Both Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr, major European Reformers, were in England at the time. Whilst no supporters of the vestments, neither would they support Hooper in his contentions. Martyr wrote to Bullinger: "It is very offensive to the King's councillors, and to very many others . . . that a decree publicly received, and confirmed by the authority of the kingdom, should be found fault with as ungodly, and condemned as though it were at variance with the sacred writings".¹² But Hooper was right to find fault and condemn: the vestments were ungodly and unscriptural.

It was now that the Erastian nature of the Church of England came to the fore. Sanctions were applied to Hooper that were of a civil, not ecclesiastical, nature. Cranmer and Ridley were the leaders in this. They were godly men, but in this matter they erred. Eventually their efforts led the Council to commit the recalcitrant Hooper to the notoriously awful conditions of the Fleet prison. Even Bullinger counselled Hooper to concede. "Like Martyr and Bucer, Bullinger agreed that the vestments issue was not important enough to make such an issue over and counselled concession".¹³ With this discouragement, and after three weeks of misery in the Fleet, Hooper relented. Browbeaten and dressed in the hated garments, he became Bishop of Gloucester on 8 March 1551.

John Foxe, in his famous *Book of Martyrs*, described Hooper's elaborate

⁹Pete Sullivan, *A Gloucester Martyr*, p 44.

¹⁰Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth Century London*, Oxford, 1986, p 33, quoted in David G Newcombe, *John Hooper: Tudor Bishop and Martyr*, Davenant Press, 2009, p 104.

¹¹Letter to Bullinger written from Gloucester, dated 1 August 1551, *Original Letters*, 1846, p 95.

¹²Letter of Peter Martyr to Bullinger written from Oxford, dated 28 January 1551, *Original Letters*, vol 2, p 487.

¹³David G Newcombe, *John Hooper*, p 162.

scarlet and white clothing on the day, and commented, “What cause of shame the strangeness hereof was that day to that good preacher every man may easily judge”. Foxe did not agree with Hooper’s stand, but commended him for his attitude, saying that the “he bare and suffered patiently” the “private . . . reproach” for “the public profit of the church, which he only sought”.¹⁴

Hooper’s eventual submission was not his finest hour. It was understandable, but Puritan-minded friends could wish he had held out. “John à Lasco and those from the Strangers’ Church who had so vigorously and committedly championed his cause were understandably disappointed by his apparent capitulation.”¹⁵ John Utenhove, another refugee from Ghent involved in the Strangers’ Church, wrote to Bullinger that it was “not without the greatest regret both of myself and of all good men, nor without affording a most grievous stumbling-block to many of our brethren”.¹⁶

Unscriptural impositions like the vestments, enforced under the banner of indifference, breach the Second Commandment, which requires God to be worshipped only as He has appointed in His Word. They also unwarrantably impinge on the blood-bought liberties of the children of God to be free of the commandments of men. Instead of regretting with Foxe and others that Hooper made it an issue, we should grieve that he did not see it through to the end. Ridley himself came to see things differently in the cold light of day. When imprisoned and facing death, he acknowledged Hooper’s “wisdom” and his own “simplicity” in the matter. At his degradation preceding his martyrdom, when they dressed him in “the surplice, with all the trinkets appertaining to the mass . . . Ridley did vehemently inveigh against the Romish Bishop, and all that foolish apparel, calling him Antichrist, and the apparel foolish and abominable”.¹⁷ The 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* removed things that Hooper had objected to, although Elizabeth’s 1559 Settlement backtracked and restored the vestments.

Up to today, most have no sympathy for Hooper. Newcombe, a recent biographer, speaks of Hooper’s “stubborn stance on the matter of vestments. His refusal to compromise was in direct conflict with the established adia-phoristic thought of Cranmer, and his fanatical rejection of anything that might be construed as idolatrous would eventually end in a humiliating climbdown at his own consecration.”¹⁸

¹⁴*The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed S R Cattley, London, 1838, vol 6, p 641.

¹⁵Sullivan, *A Gloucester Martyr*, p 50.

¹⁶Letter of John Utenhove to Bullinger written from London on 9 April 1551, *Original Letters*, vol 2, p 586.

¹⁷*The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed S R Cattley, vol 7, pp 543,544.

¹⁸Newcombe, *John Hooper*, p 64.

The problem with this interpretation is that even though Cranmer's "adiaphoristic thought" had become the accepted norm in the Church of England, it was pushed so far as to become thoroughly unscriptural, and Hooper was right to contend against it, even at the expense of the Church's peace and quietness. Would there were voices in the Church of England today that would contend against its departures from Scripture in so many areas!

As for what Newcombe calls Hooper's "humiliating climbdown", it is hard to refute that description. The intriguing question is why the Most High permitted His servant to suffer it, when undoubtedly Hooper was on the right side of the argument. An explanation has been suggested along the following lines.

Sadly, neither of Hooper's objections to accepting the bishopric concerned the fact that the Episcopalian notion of the office of a diocesan bishop, possessing ecclesiastical authority over other ministers, is without a grain of biblical foundation. According to the New Testament, every pastor is a "bishop" and no pastor is to be promoted to oversee any other pastor. Each pastor's bishopric is his own congregation – his responsibility is to oversee his flock. Episcopacy, otherwise called Prelacy – the government of the Church by prelates exalted above ordinary ministers – is an invention of men. In the Church of England it is another remnant inherited from the Church of Rome.

It is hard to understand why Hooper seemed to accept this aspect of the unreformed Church of England whilst rejecting others. He had seen better: the Church in Zurich, which to him was the New Testament pattern, was not structured on an Episcopalian hierarchy headed up by prelates. Perhaps, like a number of good men after him, it was the opportunity for wider usefulness that drew him in to the snare. Anyway, it was a blind spot that cost him dear. Had he applied the regulative principle consistently, to church government as well as to church worship, he might have been spared many griefs.

How to Listen to God's Word¹

Thomas Boston

F*irst, attending diligently to the Word* is among the things that go along with hearing it. This implies:

1. *Waiting diligently on the ordinances*, so that people make it their business to catch opportunities to hear the Word, and let none slip which providence will allow them to attend. They are to labour to come where God meets with sinners (1 Tim 4:13). Those who are only chance-customers at ordinances

¹An edited extract from Boston's *Works*, vol 2.

cannot expect good from them – whose attendance is ruled by their own convenience, without conscience of duty, causing them to come only now and then, as their fancy takes them. “Blessed is the man”, says the personal Wisdom of God, “that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors” (Prov 8:34).

2. *Diligent attention to the Word.* “Hearken diligently unto Me” (Is 55:2), listening carefully to it, as a matter of the greatest weight, keeping the mind off other things and bending it wholly unto the Word at the time. This includes four things:

(1.) *Outward seriousness*, without which attention is marred (Lk 4:20). If men do believe that it is God's Word they are hearing, outward gravity is the least degree of respect to it that they can show; therefore they are not to lay down their heads and sleep, nor to gaze hither and thither, far less to laugh or go out and in, here and there, during this time. This kind of behaviour involves contempt of God, who speaks to men by His Word.

(2.) *Fixing and bending the ear and mind to what is spoken.* Hence that counsel of the wise man: “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding . . .” (Prov 2:1,2). People must take care that they do not wander in their heart while the Lord's words sound before them. If the heart wanders, and they think on other things, how can the Word do them good, while Satan has thus stolen away their heart?

(3.) *Discerning what they hear*, so as to distinguish between truth and error, between the corn and the chaff: “Take heed what ye hear” (Mk 4:24). Therefore always mark the agreement between what is preached and the written Word, for which the Bereans are highly commended (Acts 17:11). For they who do not thus endeavour to discern what they hear do not rightly attend to the Word.

(4.) *Endeavouring to know the mind of God in His Word*, to hear with understanding. This is to attend not only to the words, but to the things wrapped up in these words; Lydia did so, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). It is not enough to hear the words, but the message from the Lord is to be weighed and seriously considered, and the mind of God in it taken up.

There is great need to attend to the Word with diligence, making serious work of it. For:

(1.) The matter in hand is *of the greatest weight*; it concerns eternity; it is a treaty of peace between God and our souls; He is proposing a method to preserve our souls from ruin: “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (Lk 16:29); and this proposal is not to be carelessly managed.

God Himself is the speaker; we should diligently attend to what He says, for His sake – and to prevent His wrath breaking out, which is threatened against those who do not listen to Him.

(2.) At best, to hear as well as we ought *will require much effort*. We are naturally dull of hearing the Lord's Word: "They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely" (Is 58:4,5). And often there is a locked door between Him and us. Hence He is represented thus, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . ." (Rev 3:20). And there is a thick wall of separation also between Him and us: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Is 59:2). And there is always much noise about us as long as the tempter is to the fore. Therefore the highest attention is necessary.

3. If we do not attend in this way, we lose, and *our loss is great*. Thomas missed one occasion of meeting with Christ, and unbelief got in upon him. And that word which we miss may be the most suitable to our case; therefore Satan watches so that he can carry it away from us. Therefore we should never miss one occasion of hearing the Word.

Second, Receiving the word rightly. This lies in two things:

1. *Receiving it with faith* (Heb 4:2). It is by the mouth of the soul that one receives the sincere milk of the Word, and drinks water out of the wells of salvation. Without faith one gets no good of the Word to his salvation, but it is as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. It must be received,

(1.) With a faith of *assent*, believing it to be true and right, assenting to the truth and righteousness of its precepts, promises and threatenings. "I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right." "Thy Word is true from the beginning" (Ps 119:128,160). It has divine authority; it is God's testimony, which therefore is to be believed for its own sake; and where the power of it comes, it captivates the soul into believing it (2 Cor 10:5). This is to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child" (Lk 18:17).

(2.) With a faith of *application*, applying it to ourselves: "Hear it, and know thou it for thy good" (Job 5:27). The Lord's word is compared to the falling rain or dew (Deut 32:2). The soul in receiving it should be as the dry and gaping ground swallowing it up as it falls: "My soul thirsteth after Thee as a thirsty land" (Ps 143:6). But most people are like smooth stones, which send it off themselves to those about them. Now this application is what makes the plaster stick, and nothing else will do it. If the word be not applied, it can do no more good than a plaster can heal the wound if it is not applied.

Now we are to apply the Word for all the ends for which it is appointed:

for our conviction (Acts 2:37), our conversion (Jn 4:45), our edification in holiness (1 Pet 2:2), our comfort (Rom 15:4), to inform our judgement and rectify our will and affections – in short, for all the purposes of our salvation; otherwise we receive it in vain.

2. *Receiving it with love.* Faith receives the Word as true, love receives it as good, and good for us (2 Th 2:10). “Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken” (Is 39:8), said Hezekiah to the Prophet. It is good for us in all the parts of it, for we need them all – the threatenings as well as the promises, its reproofs as well as its consolations. And there is a threefold love which we owe to the Word of God: (1.) A love of esteem, highly prizing it: “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12); “The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Ps 119:72). (2.) A love of desire after it: “As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet 2:2) – a longing for it. (3.) A love of complacency in it: “I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil” (Ps 119:162).

We owe this love to the Word for the Author's sake: “Consider how I love Thy precepts” (Ps 119:159); for its intrinsic excellency: “Thy word is very pure; therefore Thy servant loveth it” (Ps 119:140); and for its necessity and usefulness to us, as “a light that shineth in a dark place” (2 Pet 1:19); as our food (Job 23:12); indeed, as our very life and breath (Deut 32:47).

Third, Laying it up in our hearts. Our hearts and memories are to be store-houses for the Word, and there we are to lay it up as it comes to our hands. The Psalmist says, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Ps 119:11). How can they expect good from the Word who let it go just as it comes? But we should catch hold of it, retain it and not forget it.

We should lay it up as a precious and enriching treasure: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col 3:16), as a thing that we are in hazard of losing, and of having it stolen (Mt 13:4), and as what we will need afterwards; “Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?” (Is 42:23). Suppose it does not reach your case at present, it may be useful for what will yet be your case. You are travelling through the wilderness; lay up the Word in your mind as the traveller does his directions for the way.

The best way to lay it up is to let it make a deep impression on your spirits while you hear it, and to lift up your eyes to the Lord, asking that He may fix it in your heart. “I will never forget Thy precepts” (Ps 119:93). “I know whom I have believed” (2 Tim 1:12).

Mbumba Zending Meeting 2018

Rev I D MacDonald

The annual Mbumba Zending meeting took place in the Netherlands on Friday, April 27, the day the Dutch enjoy a public holiday to commemorate the birthday of their King. After extending personal thanks for the kindness and hospitality shown during my trip, and the thanks of the Church as a whole for their financial support of our mission in Zimbabwe, I proceeded to deliver a short address on Matthew 2:2, where we read of the wise men coming from the east, asking, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him".

Today you remember, rightly and honourably, the birthday of your King. But what we have before us here in this part of the Word of God is the birth of the King of kings. This was the greatest birth that ever was or shall be, for His conception and birth meant the incarnation of the Son of God.

He was born as a King. He was anointed to this office of King by His Father, as we are told in the second Psalm, "Over Zion, My holy hill, I have Him king anointed". To this office He was called before the world began, in the covenant of grace. News of this birth came by an angelic messenger to the shepherds: "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:10,11).

We must always remember that, before He could be a King over His people, He must first suffer and die for them as the great High Priest. When He was crucified, the title containing His accusation was: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews". This was a true description of why He was dying. He was not dying for any crime against the law of the land. Indeed He had committed no sin against the law of God. Rather, He was dying because He was the Covenant Head of His people, the King of the Jews.

Now it is remarkable that these men came from a far-off heathen land to seek Christ. Why did they come so far? Why did they make so great an effort to find Christ? Surely they felt their need of this King. You see they were far off, not only in a geographic sense from Jerusalem, but they were far off also in a moral and spiritual sense from God. We are no different, but are all by nature like the prodigal son, in the far country of a lost and ruined condition. It is when a sense of this enters the soul that the soul will feel its need of Christ.

Before a sinner will come to Christ he must also come to know about Him. Some suggest that the wise men may have had a remnant of Old Testament

revelation preserved among them, such as Balaam's prophecy regarding Christ as the Star which would arise out of Jacob. At any rate, knowledge was somehow conveyed to them that this Star had indeed arisen out of Jacob and the Sceptre out of Israel, even the Bright and the Morning Star. The star which they saw in the heavens was but a symbol of this great Star.

We too have heard of Christ. We have the Word of God, of which Peter says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19). You have heard of Christ in His Word and you need the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind in the knowledge of Christ and to draw you to seek Him.

Now in the soul of such a sinner, who has been convinced of sin and whose mind has been enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, there arises the burning question, "Where is He?" "Where is . . . the King of the Jews?" Where is Christ? This was the desire which Job had when he said, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him". The question also expresses a belief that they may come to Christ. They did not question their right to come to Him, though strangers from a heathen land. Nor are we to question our right to come to Christ, which is given in His own call and invitation.

This question includes a confession of ignorance: I am lost, I am afar off and I do not know how to find Christ. In the sinner's experience it is often not so easy to find Christ. Not that God puts difficulties in our way. Indeed there is a wonderful simplicity in the gospel as expressed in these words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved".

We now find the wise men making their way to Jerusalem. They did not find Christ there. Often the soul seeking Christ does not find Him at first. Their experience is expressed in these words, "I sought Him, I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer".

But the wise men were led to Him eventually. The God who drew them at first to seek Christ did not leave them now. The star shone again and this led them to where Christ was. So it is with the soul in whom God has begun the good work. They may have darkness for a time, but in His own time the Lord will shine upon them and reveal Christ to them. The Word of God will give light on where to find Christ. Indeed it is in the Word itself, read or preached, that He is found by the seeking soul.

When the wise men found Him they fell at His feet and worshipped. All who find Christ as their Saviour come low to fall at His feet to wait for salvation and to receive it. We must be prepared to come low, as the Psalmist was when He said, "I was brought low, He did me help afford". Christ has never refused any poor sinner who came thus to His feet, for "none perish

that Him trust” (Ps 34:22), and He has said, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”. See that you seek Him yourself; seek that He would bring you to fall at His feet for mercy.

We give one mark of the soul that has found Christ. When the heart has been opened to receive Christ, then the hand will be opened to give to His cause. These men gave of their treasures to Christ. This was the case with Lydia. When the Lord opened her heart, she opened her hand to give to Christ’s people. Christ, we say with reverence, needed the gifts which these men brought. Soon He was to be taken on a journey to Egypt to sojourn in a strange land. Mary and Joseph were poor and very likely would not have had the means to finance the trip. When no one in Israel appeared to give to the Saviour, the Lord took these men all the way from the east to provide for His needs.

So in His providence He has touched your hearts to provide for His cause in Zimbabwe. It would be good for us if our true motive in giving to His cause was gratitude to Him for His gifts to us in the salvation of our souls. If you have found Him, you will worship Him as the wise men did, and the love of Christ will constrain you in serving Him: “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:14,15).

The Sin of Unbelief¹

2. More Reasons Why It Is so Serious

W S Plumer

2. He who by unbelief rejects the Word of God, and His well-beloved Son, *rejects divine wisdom*. If we say that we do not need the salvation made known in the gospel, we charge God with making a needless sacrifice and a needless provision for our souls. When one says he is well, he declares that he needs no remedy. When one says he is good enough, and justifies himself, he cannot but look upon redemption by atoning blood as either a fable or a folly – a vast expenditure to no wise purpose.

God in His wisdom determined that Christ’s work and death were necessary for our salvation. Unbelief says, We can do without a Saviour. Or if the sense of guilt is strong, then our unbelief, tending to despair, impeaches God’s wisdom by saying that the death of Christ is not sufficient, and His

¹Taken, with editing, from *The Rock of Our Salvation*. The first section, last month, emphasised the fact that “Unbelief Denies God’s Truthfulness”.

blood is not effective, to wash away our sins. We say the remedy is not adequate. We say that sin stains too deeply and guilt presses too heavily for us to hope in the atonement of God's dear Son. In this view the scheme of redemption is a failure. It lacks virtue. It does not meet human needs. Could a more heinous impeachment of God's wisdom be made? Shall man be wiser than God, who charges His angels with folly? Is it surprising that the Judge of all the earth should be offended – indeed, incensed – when men reject His Son and His gospel, which is both the wisdom of God and the power of God unto man's salvation?

3. Unbelief is *a rejection of kindness, a slighting of unspeakable mercy* offered to us by the Lord. The refusal of Jesus Christ has no parallel for ingratitude, stubbornness and daring impiety. Sovereign love holds to our lips the cup of salvation. Unbelief puts it away and says, Let Thy gifts be to Thyself, and Thy rewards to another; I do not need them; I do not trust them; I do not accept them. In unbelief, the debtor in prison refuses to let Jesus be his Surety. By unbelief, the poor naked soul refuses the spotless righteousness of Christ and cleaves to the filthy rags of its own righteousness. Unbelief refuses to permit the great Deliverer to come in and knock off the chains of fiery condemnation. It spurns the balm of Gilead, although the soul is all diseased.

God expostulates with the wicked; He says, "How shall I give thee up? As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner. My repentings are kindled together." The Father of mercy calls sinners. The Son of His love cries, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden". The Holy Spirit woos. The Church of God says, "Come". Surely it cannot be safe – it must be perilous – to esteem lightly such love and pity. It must be perilous to esteem lightly mercy bought with blood, the blood of propitiation – mercy offered to us by the Lord Himself, mercy so much needed by us all, mercy rejected by none but the perverse. God's love to sinners is amazing; Christ's love to them far exceeds any love the best man on earth bears to Him; the love of the Holy Spirit is unsurpassed. How, O how, can we slight such kindness?

4. Unbelief is *a denial and refusal of the grace of God* in the gospel of His Son. And we need all the grace offered to us. We are sinful, guilty, justly condemned, blind, ignorant, wretched, impotent. We are without strength, without holiness, without righteousness, without saving knowledge, without healing medicines, without hope, without God in the world. This is, and must continue to be, our state till we are made partakers of that grace which is rich, free, unmerited, abundant, treasured up in Christ and proclaimed in the glorious gospel. But unbelief says, Christ has died in vain; His intercession is worthless; His gospel is a fable. In robbing our souls of this mercy, we rob God of the glory of His grace. "In a word," says John Owen, "if a

man should choose to set himself in a universal opposition unto God, he can think of no more compendious way than this” of unbelief.

5. Unbelief is a *slighting of God’s power* both to save and to destroy, and of His authority as a Lawgiver and Governor. He has brought all His sovereignty to bear on the duty of faith in Christ: “This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son”. To disregard this command is to condemn all His power over us, for He requires faith in His Son under the sanction of the most awful threatenings, many of which have been already quoted.

6. The sin of unbelief is *in most cases terribly aggravated*. It is commonly a sin that has been long persisted in. If men are now unbelievers, they have been committing that sin all their days. Their lives have been lives of unbelief. For one act of unbelief, Moses was denied admission into Canaan. For one act of unbelief, Zacharias was struck dumb. But our acts of unbelief have been as numerous as the calls of mercy which we have resisted. And our unbelief has been indulged against much instruction and knowledge. Often has the light shone as clear as day. Often have we heard appeals as solemn as death and as tender as the compassions of a dying Saviour. If we are now in unbelief, we know – we have long known – it is a sin. For unbelief indulged under a much darker dispensation, the carcasses of 600 000 men fell in the wilderness.

Again, we have seen great sinners turn from sin to the Saviour and find mercy. In their renovated lives we had the proof of the power of Christ to save. We must be guilty for disregarding the lessons of such examples. Hear the Son of God Himself on this matter: “The publicans and the harlots believed [John]; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards that ye might believe” (Mt 21:32). Further, the salvation of the gospel is God’s last offer to man. When Christ’s atonement is rejected by unbelief, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. God will never send another Saviour into the world. Christ Himself said, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins”. Indeed unbelief is by pre-eminence the damning sin of all who hear the gospel and perish. It is of the nature of all sin to work death, but unbelief is the only sin which we in a gospel land commit that renders damnation inevitable. It is the act of a poor condemned criminal on his way to execution refusing a pardon. It is the act of Esau taking the pottage, eating it and giving up the birthright for ever.

And unbelief is a sin always willfully committed. So Christ Himself charges: “Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life”. So the apostles charged their hearers: Ye “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life”. Unbelief persisted in seals our perdition. It closes every door of hope and

leaves us enshrouded in the darkness of despair for ever and ever. It does all this by grieving the Holy Ghost, by vexing Him to depart from us.

7. Indeed, how can unbelief be other than *an enormous sin*, when it has its seat in pride, self-will, self-righteousness, love of riches, love of human honours and hardness of heart? “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.” “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” These are but samples of the manner in which God speaks of the causes of unbelief. All unbelief has its seat in dreadful depravity.

8. We may judge of the heinousness of the sin of unbelief from *the dreadful sentence resting on all in whom it reigns*. The Bible says they are “condemned already”. They are condemned by the first covenant, which says, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”; “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” – *it shall die; it shall die; it shall die*. And what a death!

But to this condemnation is added that of the gospel: “He that believeth not is condemned already”; “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light”. This double condemnation, how terrible! It is a condemnation from God, the Lawgiver, the Judge of all. His sentence is irreversible. And it “already” rests on unbelievers. The day of judgement will declare it and enforce it, but it will not alter it. He who lives and dies condemned will awake to shame and everlasting contempt on the morning of the last day, and will stand self-condemned as well as God-condemned at the tribunal of Christ. Beware, unbeliever, beware. Forsaking truth and embracing error, angels shrunk into devils. Forsaking error and grasping truth, sinners rise to the dignity of saints and to the companionship of angels.

Book Review

The Christian Remembrancer, Short Reflections upon the Faith, Life & Conduct of a Real Christian, by Ambrose Serle, published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, hardback, 294 pages, £13, obtainable from the F P Bookroom. Serle (1742-1812) may be known to few people today; indeed it may come as a surprise to learn that the author of this book was a civil servant rather than a minister. At the age of 30 he was made under-secretary to the second Earl of Dartmouth, whom the poet William Cowper described as a praying

man. Four years later, Serle became secretary to the Commander-in-chief of the British army in America at the time of the War of Independence. Augustus Toplady, the noted Church of England minister, wrote, "Mr Serle is one of the most learned, most devout and most valuable men I know". And John Newton spoke highly of his "solid experimental religion".

At the beginning of Serle's seventieth year, he acknowledged before God "how much of mercy and goodness" he had enjoyed. "Once I was nothing. Thy favour brought me into being. Yet, being born a sinner, Thy patience endured for many years, till Thy Holy Spirit renewed me in the spirit of my mind. . . . It was Thy grace which bestowed faith upon me and kept that faith alive from day to day. If thou hadst withdrawn Thy powerful hand, I should have been like the backsliding heifer, and have fallen by degrees into all the corruptions of the world, of the flesh, and of the devil. . . . I should soon have been both a practical and a theoretical atheist, and have lived according to my fallen nature, without God in the world. . . . Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto Thee be all the praise that I am a sinner redeemed, restored, and made willing to love, to serve, to follow, and to enjoy Thy holy truth, to walk in all Thy blessed ways!"

The author explains that his book has three parts (corresponding to the three elements in the subtitle): "the first of which relates chiefly to the word and work of God in the redemption of souls by Jesus Christ; the second to the inward and practical experience of this mediation in the heart of the believer; and the third to his outward conversation and conduct with others". After a brief sketch of Serle's life and some other introductory material, there follow close on 90 meditations, intended to encourage the reader to meditate further on these topics. Some of these meditations are spoken to the Lord, as if the writer was engaged in prayer.

We may quote a few of the points that Serle makes. In a piece on unbelief, he remarks that the work of faith is "to subdue unbelief in all its activities; this often makes a sore and difficult conflict in the soul". He notes further that no one can "be reasoned by natural deductions and convictions out of unbelief into faith, but must be saved through the gift and working of the divine power, first to possess faith and afterwards to use it".

In a piece on self-seeking, Serle shows himself sensitive to the danger of seeking one's own glory: "A poor soul shall own [confess] itself, with much pain and sincerity, to be a miserable sinner; and self, from this very acknowledgement, will stir up a notion of worth in the creature, and give it to believe that there are some seeds at least of excellency within itself, which others have not, and for having of which he is higher and better than they. Self will bid some men confess themselves sinners, that they may be con-

sidered as saints.” In a later meditation, Serle notes, “Nature draweth all from its own fund, and carrieth it all back, and with interest if possible, to itself again. But grace receiveth all from God, and is never so truly delighted as when God receiveth the whole of the glory as His just return.”

On adversity, Serle, comments, “We naturally love the world and the things that are in the world; and this love, unsubdued, is the sole cause and ground of what are called mortifications and disappointments from the world. If the love of Christ prevailed more in us, it would not be in the power of outward things to give us so much pain as they do; or rather, if this love were perfect in us, we should be ashamed and sorry that these things should give us any pain at all.” On the other hand, “God’s people are seldom trusted [by Him] with much prosperity; and when they are, it very rarely appears for their good. The things of earth and time, in affluence or abundance, have a fascinating power over the carnal senses, entice them first into the ways of evil, and then (if grace prevent not) intoxicate them with it.” And he concludes this meditation: “Whatever draws us nearest to God cannot be real adversity. Whatever entices us from Him deserves not the name of prosperity.”

Two practical comments: “Whatever principles, temper and conduct cannot be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, are absolutely unholy to a Christian, and strictly to be avoided”; “O what an evil is fullness of bread, without emptiness of self and fullness of grace!”

Serle wrote several books and many spoke well of them. Thomas Chalmers, commending a reprint of the book under review, called it a “valuable treatise in which the great and essential truths of Christianity are exhibited in a luminous and practical manner”. Charles Hodge said of another of Serle’s writings that he “tends, in every page, to exalt the Redeemer, and to invite the soul to commune with Him. . . . It contains much doctrine and much experience; so intermingled that the doctrine is never dry, nor the experience ever unsound.” May many readers today find profit from the writings of this godly man who had such a deep insight into his own heart and into the remedy that God has provided for sinners!

Protestant View

The Pope and Mary

The Pope, in giving his weekly address from St Peter’s Square, referred recently to Mary as “a refuge in difficult times”. He concluded this particular homily with a “special thought” which is full of idolatrous blasphemy: “May the Mother of God be your refuge in times of joy, as well as in difficult times,

and may she guide your families so that they cultivate homes of prayer, reciprocal understanding and giving”.

That the biblical Mary was an eminently gracious person and greatly favoured in connection with God’s purpose of bringing the Saviour into the world is not in dispute. But the “Virgin Mary” that Rome sets up is held to be capable of performing actions only possible to God and also a mediatrix between God and men. This is not the Mary of the Bible. We must bear in mind that the real Mary was the mother of the Lord’s human nature and therefore the expression “Mother of God” should be avoided as it not only tends to distort our understanding of the two distinct natures in the one Person of Christ, but it also has the distinct tendency of – once again – attributing divine powers to a human being. In John 2:5 the real biblical Mary directed the wedding guests to obey Christ in all things, and that is what poor sinners need to do rather than take refuge in a false Romish goddess.

“Their idols silver are and gold, work of men’s hands they be,
Mouths have they, but they do not speak and eyes but do not see.
Like them their makers are, and all on them their trust that build,
O Israel, trust thou in the Lord, He is their help and shield.”

(Metrical Psalm 115:4-5,8-9)

AWM

Notes and Comments

The Church of Scotland and the *Westminster Confession*

A woman “elder” at the Church of Scotland General Assembly in May told the Assembly about her recent shock when she looked at the *Westminster Confession of Faith* for the first time:

“My minister had obtained copies [of the *Confession*] for the two of us who were to be ordained, and included a note with them which said among other things: ‘This edition has made none of the recent changes to the more virulent anti-Catholic sentiments’. . . . I suspect that is a common misunderstanding, that current printed editions just skip the unacceptable bits. But, no, they are all there in the print. . . . The *Westminster Confession* in print to which we all must swear still speaks of the elect who only shall be saved, and of the Popes, the Antichrist and worse. . . . Despite almost 400 years of disquiet and unease over the subordinate standard of faith, it has not changed since it was written in the seventeenth century. . . . To give that context, the *Confession* was adopted at a time when Scotland boasted of being the foremost burner of witches in Europe.”

In 1986, the Church of Scotland formally distanced itself from certain references in the *Westminster Confession* to Romanism, and the woman “elder”

seems naively to have imagined that printed copies of the *Confession* would have been modified accordingly. She does not realise, apparently, that those who print the *Confession* – such as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – generally do so because they approve its doctrines, which they do not wish to see discarded. The woman’s remarks themselves have a context of which she is “willingly ignorant”: that she lives in the perverse society of early twenty-first century Britain in which the teaching of Evolution is imposed in schools, in which men are allowed to marry each other, in which even the most brutal murderers are not executed, and in which unborn children are slaughtered at the rate of a quarter of a million a year.

It is notable that the Lord has so tied the Church of Scotland to the *Westminster Confession* that, even though she has largely rejected its teaching, its statements of truth continue to chafe and torment her unbelieving office-bearers down the centuries, from the days of Moderatism to the present. The doctrine of election, incidentally, has not been formally repudiated by the Church of Scotland, and it so permeates the teaching of the *Confession* that it would not be easy to eliminate.

The same day that the news emerged about the woman “elder” at the General Assembly, the present writer happened to meet a man – a lecturer at an American college – who was recently nearly dismissed from his lecturer’s post because his church maintained the doctrine that the papacy is the Antichrist. A Roman Catholic colleague hunted out this fact and turned it into a charge against him, and was almost successful in securing his dismissal. Satan’s relentless attempts to extinguish the doctrine that the papacy is the Antichrist raise a strong presumption that the doctrine must be true. If the doctrine were false, it would be harmful to true religion, as every false doctrine is, and therefore it would be serviceable in some way to the kingdom of darkness; therefore Satan would be inclined to leave it as it is, or even to encourage it. Those who believed that the papacy was the Antichrist would be both grievously wronging the papacy, and looking in the wrong direction for the Antichrist; and both these errors would be advantageous to Satan. The fact that he does not find the doctrine helpful, but seeks to persecute and obliterate it, serves to confirm that it is indeed a doctrine of Scripture. DWBS

Irish Referendum on Abortion

On May 25 the Irish Republic held its referendum, which sadly resulted in a clear majority voting to repeal the pro-life law stated in the Irish Constitution’s Eighth Amendment. This Amendment, nationally approved in 1983, assured the Irish people: “The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate, that

right". In the 1983 referendum, a majority of over 66% voted in approval; however, this year the tide has turned precisely the other way with virtually the same percentage now supporting the repeal.

Pro-life group, Citizen GO, has summed up the sadness felt by many saying, "The devastation caused by abortion – there are over 50 million abortions every year across the globe – has now been invited to come into Ireland", adding, "There is no easy way to say this. Ireland has rejected the right to life for its unborn Irish citizens and has made perhaps the worst decision in the country's history". The pro-life movement are now seeking ways to limit the damage caused by the proposed legislation, which is expected to offer unrestricted abortion up to the point where the baby is 12 weeks old.

The sadness is compounded by scenes of triumph on Irish streets. The BBC website shows a picture of several young women dancing in jubilation at the "victory". How tragic when they should be mourning over the potential future deaths of the most vulnerable of their fellow citizens! Lord Alton, a pro-life campaigner, comments, "Every abortion is a tragedy. With one abortion in England every three minutes, Ireland will come to regret following the British law – a law that allows abortion up to and even during birth in the case of disability". He adds, "It was bordering on the obscene to watch people celebrating an event that will lead to the ending of innocent life. Ireland will become like Ramah, where Rachel was found weeping and mourning the children that are no more". He stresses, "In Britain and now Ireland, this is the most dangerous time in history to be an unborn child. For now we weep and stand with Rachel but, as the baton passes to the next generation, we will redouble our efforts."

Amnesty International UK vociferously supported the pro-abortion campaign. Grainne Teggart, one of its spokeswomen, said that the people of Ireland have "given hope to women around the world". She ominously adds, "Northern Ireland is still subject to restrictive abortion laws. It is hypocritical, degrading and insulting to Northern Irish women that we are forced to travel for vital healthcare services but cannot access them at home. We cannot be left behind in a corner of the UK and on the island of Ireland as second-class citizens."

Former Northern Ireland health minister, and DUP member, Jim Wells, warned that the result was a "grave threat" to the unborn child in Northern Ireland. He believes it is "inevitable" that abortion clinics will be set up in border towns to "promote their services to Northern Ireland women". He said, "It will be much easier to terminate a child's life if this can be done at a clinic in Dundalk or Letterkenny rather than flying to London or Manchester". Statistics suggest that around 100 000 people (5% of the population) are alive today in Northern Ireland because it refused to introduce British abortion laws. However, the UK Government is under pressure to make abortion legal in the Province. Truly we live in "perilous times".

KHM

FREE PRESBYTERIAN PLACES OF WORSHIP

Scotland

- Aberdeen:** 2 Alford Place, AB10 1YD, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Tuesday, 7.15 pm. Rev D W B Somerset BSc DPhil, 18 Carlton Place, Aberdeen, AB15 4BQ; tel: 01224 645250.
- Bracadale Duirinish-Strath:** **Struan:** Sabbath 12 noon. **Glendale** and **Vatten:** Sabbath 6pm, alternately. Thursday 7 pm, rotating between Struan, Vatten and Glendale. Contact Rev I D MacDonald; tel: 01478 612110.
- Dingwall:** Church, Hill Street: Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. **Beauty** (Balblair): Sabbath 6.30 pm, Thursday 7.30 pm. Contact Mr A MacLean: 01349 862855.
- Dornoch:** Sabbath 11.30 am. Manse tel: 01862 810615. **Bonar:** Sabbath 6 pm. Wednesday 7.30 pm (alternately in Dornoch and Bonar). **Lairg:** Church and Manse; **Rogart:** Church; no F P services. Contact Mr A Sutherland; tel: 015494 02115.
- Dundee:** Manse. No F P Church services.
- Edinburgh:** 63 Gilmore Place, EH3 9NU, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev D Campbell, 35B Barrton Avenue West, Edinburgh EH4 6DF; tel: 0131 312 8227, e-mail: dcampbell1560@gmail.com.
- Farr** (by Daviot); Sabbath 12 noon. **Tomatin:** Sabbath 12 noon. **Stratherrick:** Sabbath 12 noon. (Each of these services is held once in three weeks as intimated). **Farr:** Thursday 7.30 pm (as intimated). Contact Mr M J Schouten; tel: 01463 221776.
- Fort William:** Monzie Square, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm as intimated. Manse: 15 Perth Place, PH33 6UL; tel: 01397 708553. Contact Mr D A McKinnon. Tel: 01397 702597.
- Gairloch** (Ross-shire): Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm. Prayer meeting in **Strath**, Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev A E W MacDonald MA, F P Manse, Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BS; tel: 01445 712247.
- Glasgow:** St Jude's Church, 137 Woodlands Road, G3 6LE. Sabbath 11 am and 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev R MacLeod, 4 Laurel Park Close, Glasgow, G13 1RD; tel: 0141 954 3759.
- Greenock:** Sabbath 2.30 pm, held in Free Church of Scotland Hall, 14 Jamaica Street, PA15 1XX. Sabbath 2.30 pm. Contact Rev R MacLeod; tel: 0141 954 3759.
- Halkirk:** Sabbath 11.30 am; Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev W A Weale, F P Manse, Bridge Street, KW12 6YG; tel: 01847 831758. **Thurso:** Sabbath 5 pm; **Strathry:** Sabbath: 6.30 pm (first and third Sabbaths of month).
- Harris (North):** **Tarbert:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm. **Tarbert** and **Stockinish:** Tuesday 7.30 pm alternately. Rev J B Jardine BD, F P Manse, Tarbert, Isle of Harris, HS3 3DF; tel: 01859 502253, e-mail: northharris.fpc@btopenworld.com.
- Harris (South):** **Leverburgh:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. **Sheilebost:** as intimated. Manse tel: 01859 520271. Contact Rev J B Jardine; tel: 01859 502253.
- Inverness:** Chapel Street, IV1 1NA, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev K D Macleod BSc, 11 Auldcastle Road, Inverness, IV2 3PZ; tel: 01463 712872.
- Kinlochberrie:** Sabbath 6 pm; **Scourie:** Sabbath 11:30 am, Tuesday 7 pm (as intimated). Contact Mr A Ross; tel 01971 502099.
- Kyle of Lochalsh:** Sabbath 6 pm. Manse tel: 01599 534933. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.
- Laide** (Ross-shire): Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev D A Ross. F P Manse, Laide, IV22 2NB; tel: 01445 731340.
- Lochcarron:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Manse.
- Lochinver:** Church. No F P services at present. Manse.
- Ness:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev A W MacColl MA PhD, F P Manse, Swainbost, HS2 0TA; tel: 01851 810228.
- North Tolsta:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thursday 7 pm; 1st Monday of month 7 pm. Manse tel: 01851 890325. Contact Rev J R Tallach; tel: 01851 702501.
- North Uist:** **Bayhead:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm (fortnightly). Manse tel: 01876 510233. Contact: Rev J B Jardine; tel: 01859 502253.
- Oban:** Church and Manse. No F P services at present.
- Perth:** Pomarium, off Leonard Street. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Contact Rev D Campbell; tel: 0131 312 8227.
- Portree:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev I D MacDonald, F P Manse, Achachork, Portree, IV51 9HT; tel: 01478 612110.
- Raasay:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Saturday 7 pm. Contact Rev I D MacDonald; tel: 01478 612110.
- Shieldaig:** Sabbath 11 am; **Applecross:** Sabbath 6pm. Tuesday 7 pm (alternately in Shieldaig and Applecross). Shieldaig manse tel: 01520 755259, Applecross manse tel: 01520 744411. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.
- Staffin:** Sabbath 12 noon, 5 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev D Macdonald, F P Manse, Clachan, Staffin, IV51 9HY tel: 01470 562243.
- Stornoway:** Matheson Road, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. **Achmore:** Sabbath 12 noon; Tuesday 7 pm. Rev J R Tallach MB ChB, 2 Fleming Place, Stornoway, HS1 2NH; tel: 01851 702501.
- Tain:** Church and Manse. **Fearn:** Church. No F P services. See Dornoch and Bonar.
- Uig (Lewis) Mivaig:** Sabbath 12 noon Gaelic, 6 pm English; Wednesday 12 noon. Manse tel: 01851 672251. Contact Rev A W MacColl; tel: 01851 810228.
- Ullapool:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Manse: Quay Street, IV26 2UE; tel: 01854 612449.

England

- Barnoldswick:** Kelbrook Road, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Friday 7.30 pm; Wednesday 8 pm, alternately in Sandbach and Gatley. **South Manchester:** Sabbath 6.00 pm, in Trinity Church, Massie Street, Cheadle (entry at rear of building). Rev K M Watkins BA, 252 Brierciffe Road, Burnley, BB10 2DQ; tel: 01282 835800.
- Broadstairs:** Sabbath 11 am, 5 pm at Portland Centre, Hopeville Ave, St Peter's; Tuesday 7 pm at Friends' Meeting House, St Peter's Park Rd. Contact Dr T Martin; tel: 01843 866369.
- London:** Zoar Chapel, Varden St, E1. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.15 pm. Rev J MacLeod MA, 6 Church Ave, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6BU; tel: 0208 309 1623.

Northern Ireland

- Larne:** Station Road. Sabbath 11.30 am, 6.30 pm. Contact Rev K M Watkins; tel: 01282 835800.

Canada

Chesley, Ontario: Church and Manse, 40 Fourth Street SW. Sabbath 10.30 am, 7.30 pm; Tuesday 8 pm. Contact: Mr David Kuiper; tel: 519 363 0367; or Mr Gilbert Zekveld; tel: 519 363 5899. Manse tel: 519 363 2502.

Vancouver: Burnaby Community Room, 3605 Gilmore Way, Burnaby, BC, V5G 4X5. Sabbath 9.30 am, 6.30 pm. Contact: Mr Douglas Spratt, tel: 604 990 4051, or Mr David Kuiper; tel: 519 363 0367. E-mail: info@fpchurchvancouver.ca.

USA

Santa Fe, Texas: Church and Manse, 4031 Jackson St 77517. Sabbath 10.30 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Contact Mr Joseph Smith; tel: 409 927 1564.

Australia

Grafton, NSW: 172 Fitzroy Street. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev G G Hutton BA PhD, 3 Martin Crescent, Junction Hill, NSW 2460; tel: (02) 6644 6174; e-mail: grafton@internode.on.net.

Sydney, NSW: Corner of Oxford and Regent Streets, Riverstone. Sabbath 10.30 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev G B Macdonald BSc, 60 Hamilton St, Riverstone, NSW 2765; tel. (02) 9627 3408; e-mail: sydneyfpchurch@aapt.net.au.

New Zealand

Auckland: 45 Church Street, Otahuhu. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev J D Smith, 9 Pedlar Place, Conifer Grove, Auckland; tel: 09 282 4195.

Gisborne: 463a Childers Road. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev C Hembd, 14 Thomson St, Gisborne 4010; tel: 06 863 3140.

Tauranga: Girl Guide Hall, 17th Avenue, Sabbath 11 am, 7 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Contact: Mr Dick Vermeulen; tel: 075443677.

Wellington (Carterton): 124 High Street North, Carterton. Sabbath 11 am, 4 pm; 3rd Wednesday of the month (not secondary school holidays) 7.30 pm. Contact: Mr Hank Optland, P O Box 150, Carterton, 5743; tel: 02 7432 5625.

Singapore

Singapore: Sabbath: 9.30am and 5.30 pm; Beacon International College, 70 Martaban Road, Singapore 328667 (entrance is opposite 37/39 Mandalay Road); Wednesday: 7.45 pm, Lion Building B, #02-11, 12 Arumugam Road, Singapore 409958. Contact: Mr Bernard Yong, 4 Chuan Place, Singapore 554822; tel: (65) 6383 4466, fax: 6383 4477, e-mail: byong1@singnet.com.sg.

Ukraine

Odessa: F P Mission Station, 3 Pestelya Street, 65031. Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 6 pm. Rev D Levvtskiy; tel: 00 38 048 785 19 24; e-mail: dlevvtskiy@gmail.com; or contact Mr I Zadorozhnyi, P O Box 100, Odessa-91, 65091; e-mail: antipa@eurocom.od.ua.

Zimbabwe

Bulawayo: Lobengula Township, PO Magwegwe, Bulawayo. Rev S Khumalo, F P Manse, Stand No 56004, Mazwi Road, Lobengula, PO Magwegwe, Bulawayo; tel: 00263 9407131, e-mail: skhumalo.byo@gmail.com.

Ingwanya: Church and Secondary School. Rev A B MacLean. Postal Address: Ingwanya Mission, Private Bag T5445, Bulawayo.

Mbuma: Church and Hospital. Rev N Sibanda. Postal Address: Mbuma Mission Hospital, Private Bag T5406, Bulawayo.

New Canaan: Church.

Zenka: Church. Rev M Mloyi. Postal Address: Private Bag T5398, Bulawayo; cell phone: 00263 712 765 032.

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