

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; **Fifth:** Auckland, Inverness, New Canaan.

February: Second Sabbath: Dingwall; **Third:** Stornoway; Carterton; **Fourth:** Zenka.

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

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

May: First Sabbath: Aberdeen, Donsa, Grafton, Leverburgh, London; **Second:** Achmore, Kinlochberrie; **Third:** Edinburgh; **Fifth:** Chiedza.

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

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

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

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

October: First Sabbath: Grafton, Lochcarron, North Tolsta, Tauranga; **Second:** Gairloch; **Third:** Leverburgh, London, Odessa; **Fourth:** Edinburgh, Gisborne; **Fifth:** Mbuma.

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

December: Third Sabbath: Bulawayo, Santa Fe.

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Great Things

It was during the reign of Jehoiakim, one of the last kings of Judah. Great destruction was to come upon Jerusalem. Even the temple, the centre of God's worship, was to be burnt. Baruch was acting as a faithful scribe to Jeremiah the prophet. Baruch seems to have been tempted to seek great things, even in those tumultuous times, but the Lord spoke to him through the prophet: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jer 45:5). He was not to seek great things – not in any worldly sense.

We may be in very different circumstances from Baruch, but we may be open to similar temptations: to seek what the world considers to be great things, such as a substantial bank balance, a luxurious home, an expensive car, or to go far in our employment, or, more generally, to be recognised as someone important. Now, whatever good things God may give us in providence, we are not to set our hearts on them, which would be to make idols of them. Indeed, we may make idols of what may be very much less than any of the examples listed above. And God is saying to each of us: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not". We are not to make idols of anything, whether great or small. So C H Spurgeon expressed himself: "I feel I would rather be the meanest slave in [God's] kitchen than live in the best palace the devil ever built".¹

But there are great things that we should set our hearts on, great things that we should seek earnestly and urgently – such as the salvation of our souls: to be born again, to have our sins forgiven, to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, to be made holy. If, by God's grace, the blessings of salvation are ours, we are to seek further great blessings, such as: to learn more of what God has revealed for our spiritual good, to grow in grace, to be made more holy, to be kept increasingly from sin and to walk more and more in all the paths of new obedience.

We need a right perspective on life. On the one hand, we should be thankful for the good things God gives us in the temporal sphere. But the Saviour warned, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and

¹W Williams, *Personal Reminiscences of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, London, 1895, p 26.

rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal”. Many things in this world are useful, even necessary, but we are not to consider them our most valuable possessions, especially as they may be destroyed by insects or corrosion, or they may be stolen – and these are only examples of how they may be taken from us or become useless.

In any case, they are not permanent; what is more, *we* cannot presume to continue in this world for ever. So “what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mk 8:36). It should be clear that we need good things that we will not have to give up at death, which was what Jesus was pointing to when He went on to say, “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Mt 6:19,20). Spiritual blessings will last for ever; they cannot decay; they can never be taken from us. How earnest we should then be to obtain them, making use of all the means of grace within our reach and seeking God’s blessing on these means!

Paul speaks of those “that use this world”, distinguishing this from “abusing it” (1 Cor 7:31). John Calvin, in commenting on this verse, explains that Paul is speaking of “using things in a moderate and disciplined way, such as will not hinder or delay us on our journey [to heaven], but enable us to keep pressing on to the goal”. To use this world then is to receive with thankfulness the good things that God gives us to keep body and soul together in this world, and even to spend our time here in a greater or lesser degree of comfort – but not to give our hearts to these things, not to make idols of them, and instead to be so “redeeming the time” that we give priority to the needs of our souls.

Peter speaks of the end of the world – “the day of the Lord” – coming unexpectedly, “as a thief in the night”, when “the earth . . . and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet 3:10). From this he draws the lesson: “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [way of life] and godliness”. That is, because everything temporal will be destroyed, we should be altogether serious in seeking, not the great things of this world, but to be truly godly in our whole way of life. Even although the day of the Lord cannot come until God’s promises of great spiritual blessing on a vast scale are fulfilled, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is 11:9), Peter’s lesson about godliness applies equally to those who will be taken away from this world by death. Because our lives here will most certainly come to an end, perhaps unexpectedly, how serious we ought to be about being prepared for eternity and living godly – trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and seeking to live to God’s glory while we are spared in this world.

In a fallen world, where disappointment meets individuals and communities so frequently, many people will ask, “Who will show us any good?” (Ps 4:6). Matthew Henry describes such people further: “They enquired for *any* good, not for the chief good; all they want is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade . . . and what are all these worth without a good God and a good heart?” And he quotes the words of Abraham to the rich man in hell: “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things” (Lk 16:25); he had good things in plenty in the past, but he never sought the spiritual good things that brought Lazarus to heaven, the beggar who used to lie hungry at his gate.

It was David who wrote Psalm 4 and he knew the answer to the question just quoted. The appropriate answer is, “Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us”. David, in other words, was praying to God to look upon him *with favour* – which implies, to show him mercy. Matthew Henry goes on to say, “Good people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them . . . though others may speak the words of [their prayers], only they offer [them] up in sincerity. . . . All the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand, and in this they are one: they all desire God’s favour as their chief good. We should beg it for others as well as for ourselves, for in God’s favour there is enough for us all and we shall have never the less for others sharing in what we have.” To think of God’s favour is to think of the source of all the great things that we should desire, that are brought to sinners for the sake of Christ.

God showed favour to Baruch, although He did not give him the great things he might have desired. He gave Baruch a promise that his life would be spared, even in the midst of all the turmoil of the times in which he lived. So whatever good things the Lord may deny to His children today, He gives them many promises. For instance, the Saviour assures His sheep, those who sincerely follow Him: “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” (Jn 10:28). What great things are promised them here! They will be brought to the never-ending blessedness of heaven at last; they will never be lost; and no one, not the devil himself, will ever be able to destroy them; they will be safe in Christ’s keeping. And His promises are completely dependable.

Baruch was being called to contentment; so are God’s children in every generation: “Be content with such things as ye have”. And that call comes with an emphatic promise from God: “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). The promise of His presence guarantees that His favour will never be withdrawn from them. A great blessing indeed!

Repentance Encouraged¹

A Sermon by Rev H M Cartwright

Joel 2:12-14. *Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?*

We know next to nothing about Joel, but he was a prophet in Judah, probably during the reign of Joash while he was a child. His voice, crying in the historical wilderness, was conveying the word of God. And the word of God endures for ever. The beginning of the prophecy is nothing but sin and judgement, but the end is restoration. And what comes between them is nothing but the free, sovereign grace of God and a call to repentance. “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience” (*Shorter Catechism*, Ans 87). God is commanding sinners everywhere to repent. That call will hang over the lost to all eternity as a source of eternal misery. But here we have repentance with a promise of blessing attached to it. This is the repentance the Lord’s people need all their days. Repentance is a life-long experience. It is the people of God that are called here to turn to Him in repentance.

1. What is repentance?
2. Encouragement in the revelation God gives of Himself.
3. Encouragement in the hope this revelation holds out to sinners.

1. What is repentance? It is something the Lord’s people find they need all their days because of their constant failure to follow the Lord fully. The Lord generally keeps His people from scandalous outward falls. But the Lord at times says to them: But I have something against thee, that thou hast left thy first love. Though everyone thinks we are as devoted as ever, they know sometimes that they have left their first love – their prayers are hollow; they lack trust and devotion. This becomes more and more sinful and they realise they need repentance.

“Turn ye even to Me with all your heart”. It is an inward change. Sin is a turning away from God. All sin is saying to God: Depart from us. It is an

¹A hearer’s notes of the sermon preached on the Thursday morning of the Glasgow communion season in April 2009.

evil thing, as well as bitter. The call to repent is a call to return again to God, that He would become again the reality to us that He ought to be – to let God be God and you just be His creature. It is taking our right place before Him in humble acknowledgement and thankful remembrance of His holiness. The emphasis is on the heart: “Turn ye even to Me *with all your heart* . . . and rend your heart and not your garments”. It is so easy for us to confess our sins before God – something we say every time we pray or even ask a blessing on our food. But God looks on the heart. It is the love of the heart that God requires from His people, and the turning of the heart. God’s people desire truth in the inward parts. True repentance takes to do with the heart. We need a broken heart. We are not to be satisfied to have a day of confession of sin, but we need God to bless the means to us and give a broken heart.

We are to turn with weeping, fasting and mourning. Fasting is abstaining from anything that comes between us and returning to God. Real fasting is abstaining from sin. Weeping is perhaps the quieter expressing of sorrow and mourning a more intense expression. But we are to sorrow over our sins, with godly sorrow. Yes, we are sorry for ourselves – which is never excluded in the Bible – but we must be brought on to be sorry for our sins. “Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.” That is the emphasis – that we would turn from our sins to God, that God would become a reality to us again.

2. Encouragement in the revelation God gives of Himself, in God’s own name. He is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil”. We often look to ourselves for some encouragement to hope that the Lord might come and bless us. But the great encouragement for sinners to draw near to God is in His revelation of Himself: “Gracious and merciful . . .”. That is the revelation we have through Christ Jesus. When we look at God in Christ we see a God of infinite holiness and inflexible justice that would not withhold the sword from His own Son.

But we also see that God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger and of great kindness. God is not hiding or compromising His holiness when He reveals His graciousness. That is what makes it so precious to the penitent sinner. This is God’s love expressed towards His people in a saving manner: God choosing to deal graciously and mercifully with sinners deserving His wrath and curse. That is where all blessing comes from, where the saving grace of repentance comes from.

He is slow to anger. He does not cut sinners off as soon as they sin, but He gives space for repentance. He is of great kindness. God’s grace is not a cold thing; His whole heart is in receiving the penitent.

And He repents of the evil. When a man repents, there is a change of will, but when God repents He wills a change. The evil threatened for sin is turned aside. This is the encouragement penitent sinners have. God revealed in Christ is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. If we desire repentance, let us not be looking to ourselves but to the revelation He has given of Himself, and let us plead for mercy for His name's sake. That is a very prevailing argument.

3. Encouragement in the hope this revelation holds out to sinners: "Who knoweth if He will return and repent?" We often read expressions such as "Who knoweth?", "It may be", "Who can tell?" They seem like straws, but how often such expressions have been used by God to keep poor sinners' heads above water. He has revealed Himself as a God of mercy, and who can tell if He will have mercy on me? That is often where hope begins and where hope is restored. Let us not despise that hope, however feeble it is. Yet it discourages presumption. We cannot come as though we have a right, and yet there is this hope – the hope that the Lord will leave a blessing behind Him.

Joel mentions a particular blessing here – a meat offering and a drink offering. The previous chapter mentions how the crops were destroyed. These offerings of flour and wine were offered to express how they were to be used for the glory of God and how the people were dependent on Him. But if there were no crops, there could be no meat or drink offering.

But this hope is that God would bless us in such a way that we would be able to give Him the glory and honour that is due to His name. We can only give Him what He gives us. But glorifying God is in response to the blessing He gives us. The response of grace is devotion to the glory of God, presenting ourselves as a sacrifice. This hope is a great encouragement to a penitent sinner, even a feeble hope. Hope is a great encourager of repentance. "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure." We are looking forward in providence to remembering Christ's death. What a good thing it would be if we would come in this state of renewed penitence! Not that penitence deserves a blessing, but this is what God has enjoined. The more humble we are, the lower we lie at the footstool of mercy and the more likely that we get a blessing. There is a luxury in lying low at the footstool of a sin-pardoning God. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The mercy of God should ever be both the foundation of our hopes and the fountain of our joy in everything wherein we have to do with Him.

Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy.

Matthew Henry

David Ross (4)¹

Rev Ewen MacQueen

We spent more than four years in the district where David lived. It is true that our calling often took us away from home, but rarely while at home was there a week that we did not meet David. What was always uppermost in his mind was: how the cause of Christ was prospering. There was not a minister of the Church but he desired to hear of them, and he was always asking if any young people were coming under concern: as he would say himself, "If others will not come under concern it will not be long until none of the poor veterans will be left".

Although his brother-in-law was taken away, he always had a desire or affection for Achosnich and it was to him like a summer house. When the Sabbath would be past, he would take off for Achosnich, and after he had lost the sight of his eyes and the strength of his legs, although it would be a cart that would be going for peats, David would have to go with it. He had no fear of horses and once or twice he had falls through bad drivers, but David thought nothing of it. He went to Achosnich once around the time of the Rogart Communion and after spending a short time in Achosnich he desired to get to the communion. He was sitting on a hillside and, on rising up, his foot gave way and his body fell heavily on it, injuring it badly. He himself thought nothing of it, but when the foot was attended to, they said that it was bruised and at his age (at that time he was over 90 years old) a doctor advised them to put him to bed and to keep him in it for at least a week.

Thus he, at this time, missed being at the Rogart communion and, on our bringing him home, he told us how sorry he was to have been absent. He said, "The spot where you had the communion was the first place on God's earth where I was put on my feet to speak to the question for the first time and I had a great desire to reach it again. And he got his desire fulfilled, for the next summer he was able to be present there.

His sister was removed by death many years before his own end. He had a friend who was married to a grandson of James Matheson, who lived in Badninish. David brought them both to live with himself, and they were a great comfort to him. The woman was strong to do everything necessary for his comfort, and her husband always guided him to the church. They had a neighbour who had a horse and carriage and, when David lost the strength of his legs, this man would treat him as if he were his own son. When I would

¹This article continues a translation, by Rev John MacLeod, of an account of the life of David Ross, Dornoch, which was originally written in Gaelic. The first four articles were printed in volume 22 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

be coming down the hill above the church, I could be sure that David was in the congregation on seeing the white horse.

In 1913, the congregation arranged a collection among themselves to make him a presentation. It was not because he was in poverty, but they desired to acknowledge publicly that they had not forgotten all that he had done for them. David did not know that this was being done until it was handed to him. The presentation was made in the form of a snuff box and the rest in sovereigns. He put the money in the bank and the snuff box he put to daily use.

Years before he died, before the debt incurred through building the church had been cleared, we were in conversation one day. He said, "If you would ask the congregation, or everyone that could be out next Wednesday evening, that I had a certain thing to say to them; but it is not to be mentioned until the meeting is over". Then he told me what he desired to do. "The light in the pulpit is not very bright, although I cannot see any light, I desire two lamps to be placed on either side of the pulpit. And if, in addition, the congregation was to raise £15, the money that they themselves gave me is lying in the bank and, when all is added up, we should be cleared of every debt the congregation is under. And thus it was. The meeting was called and that very evening enough was gathered to deliver the congregation from every burden under which they were and the two lamps were set in place.

This itself will reveal to people the kind of man David Ross was and how fervently he cared for the things concerning the cause of Christ and His people. There are some that take much and do little, but David would do much and say little. When the old age pension was introduced by the state, David gave the first two payments to the cause of Christ; and in the church, on the first occasion when a special collection was being taken, he said to the people that he hoped that the making of this provision would be reflected in their giving.

The state of the nation gave him much concern as he saw the people turning away from the Word of God and being given over to so many vanities. This caused him great sorrow. As he would say himself: "They are held as prisoners by the flesh". One day we were telling him of a report that had appeared in the newspaper. It was about women in England that were getting married and desired that the obligation of being obedient to their husbands would be removed from the marriage service. "Just so", David said, "you are reminding me of something I heard about a sailor who was not getting on well with his wife. They went to the minister to see if he could bring about reconciliation. The minister began to exhort the sailor that he would have to be kind to his wife as she was the weaker vessel. The sailor

was listening but at last he said, 'If she is the weaker vessel, she will do with less sail'. I am of the view", said David, "that if I was to take her to wife and she refused to be obedient, I would let her sail away."

To show that he had an apt utterance to suit any situation, when he would see people taking more than enough of strong drink, he said that it reminded him of a story he heard of a farmer who left the lowlands and came to live inland from Dornoch. The man learned to speak broken Gaelic. It was this custom at that time that a "refreshment", as it was called, was given to the reapers. On a certain day Mr Boag (that was the name of the farmer) was preparing the "refreshment" and, after he had put everything in order, he left the vessel he had which they called "the server" outside on the window sill. Who came the way but the bird they call the snow robin or robin redbreast. He thought that it was water in the server. He plunged his head into it, plunged it in a second time, and when Mr Boag returned the robin was lying upside down. Mr Boag looked at him and said, "O poor Robin, this liquor is too strong for your weak head, but since I never saw you drink before now, I shall look after you until you recover". "Many", said David, "are like the poor robin, who do not understand that this light liquor is too strong for their weak heads."

There was something else which he used often to recount of Mr MacDonald that was in Helmsdale. Whoever he heard arguing, he would utter the words, "Seal the vision". He explained that it was one night when Mr MacDonald was in the company of other ministers that these words spoke to him. The first time they spoke to him he paid no heed to them, and the second time they spoke he received a spiritual rebuke and he left the company.

David would not engage in any duty using the English language. It was not because he was not fluent enough in English, for when he spoke to people of that language they would think that he had no Gaelic. But he was deeply impressed that it was with reverence and godly fear that sinners should draw nigh to God and, whoever might act presumptuously, David was not one of them. I remember one day discussing with him the activities of the carnal mind, how bound it was to the earth. David lifted up his head and said, "I have neither cow nor heifer, neither sheep nor goat, neither hen nor duck; nevertheless my carnal mind is as bound to the earth as much as if I had all of them". Yet others would little think that David Ross was thus afflicted, but the Lord's portion was in him and, where His grace is, the carnal mind will be there to afflict him.

It is not too much for us to say that he was in every way the wisest man that we have met in our day. When he would see that someone's usefulness to the cause of Christ on earth was coming to an end, he earnestly pled that

that person would be prepared and brought home to that habitation of which Christ said, "In My Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you." More than one could be mentioned of whom he spoke to me like this: "It is not right to pray that he should be left. There is many a failing associated with old age and it would be better if he was taken away."

One of whom he would thus speak was James Murray who was in Rogart and also Angus Grey that was in Lairg. To both of them he felt united, as he would say himself, "When they were taken away, they left a massive breach behind them".

In this connection he would tell of a conversation that took place between Alexander Gair and other friends. Alexander and these friends were walking together and Alexander turned and spoke thus to them, "O men, you are complaining of the day in which you live and the Christians of your day, but if you were living in the generation coming after you, you would say that the Christians of this generation were head and shoulders above them. And the generation coming after that, I am not going to say but there shall be among them those in whom there will be the grace of God, but they shall be so ineffective in rebuking sin and in witnessing on the side of Christ that I am comparing them to the seed potatoes that would be left to the farmer after he had finished planting and he found it difficult to decide whether to plant them or not to plant them for fear that they would not grow." "And" said Angus, "that is the poor generation that has overtaken us. They are there and I believe that they have the fear of God in them, but in view of the height to which evil has risen, they are poor, weak veterans unable to oppose the evil that is coming like a flood".

As he came to the end of his days it was indeed very solemn to see him guided in through the door of the church. When he would catch hold of the head of the pews, he would say to his guide, "I will manage myself now". Often we watched him making his way toward the pulpit, his head bald, white, without covering, bent down, pouring out his heart, saying, "O Beloved, wilt Thou not be here today? O Beloved, have mercy on us." He would proceed in this manner until the church officer placed him in his seat. But he would not long stay there. When he would hear the psalm being given out, he would be up beside the precentor in case he might miss a word. I have to say that he was my friend and guide, for he taught me in a friendly way, saying, "If you could get to their consciences, it would be better than to stir up their resentment. When their natural resentment is stirred up they will not listen to anything". His words would be like smooth oil that would refresh the heart and would overcome the opposition of nature.

Since we came to know him, the men would leave David, as they say, to

give out the question.² He would be in no haste to arise. The congregation would be silent for a few minutes and they would see David bestirring himself, while praying that the One ruling would keep him in order and also those who would be called to speak to the question. With that he would rise, his head bent and his plaid on his shoulder, and he would say, "Since I see no man is rising to give out the word, I do not wish to hinder the business of the day". While Angus Murray was alive, when he would see David arise, he would be heard saying, "O precious noble youth, may the Creator bless you". Usually, while David had his eyesight he would announce the chapter and verse in which the question was and we heard him also often saying, "There are more than 60 years since we first heard these words being given out as a question". He would then tell who it was that gave out the question and add, "How unlike I am to the men who were there".

We also heard him often say what "Havie" (Gustavus) Munro said to Dr Aird.³ The Doctor was often complaining of how few they were becoming who could really speak to the question and how he feared that they would have to dispense with the day. "O well, the man of God said, "while you have a man that will give out the question and one that can speak to it, you should not give up the question day". After he had said some words in this way on the business of the day and the low state of God's cause on earth, he would say to the minister who was to open the question, "You divide it as you see fit yourself". Throughout his last years, he would be persuaded to speak to the word that was given out, and there was no one with the least degree of spiritual discernment who would not appreciate that David Ross was a prince in Israel and not a child, for the Lord bestowed on him natural wisdom above many, as well as great grace.

At the time that King George V was to be crowned, it was a matter of great concern to him, and one that cost him many prayers, that they were proposing to change the coronation oath. And when it was changed, he said, "Many a year of prosperity and peace was enjoyed by this nation since the Protestant oath was set in place, but it is hard to believe that she will enjoy the like peace for many years after this. But I am thankful that I am found drawing near the end of my pilgrimage". Often he said to us, "The people of this place have more regard for the ground than they have for the things of eternity. I do not know where to look today for anyone that I would encourage to come forward to the Lord's Table, but there are one or two and, if of themselves they came forward, I would not take it upon myself to keep them back."

At meetings of the Kirk Session he was a bright light; he possessed much

²The fellowship meeting, most often on the Friday of a communion season.

³Gustavus Aird, the Free Church minister of Creich, in Sutherland.

patience; he was civil and he was faithful in God's house. He was not influenced by family relationships although that was laid to his charge, and also to the charge of Angus Murray in former times. From the time we knew him, we discovered that he had been taught what he did not forget till the day of his death: that the Lord's cause was more precious than anything pertaining to the flesh.

In regard to the esteem in which he was held, he was given a place by the highest men in the county, and there were few who would take upon themselves to deny that he was a wise and righteous man. Although, as they might say, they did not care for his godliness, yet they would confess that it would be good for them to be like him and that he was a wonderful man. He had friends in many places who made known how greatly they esteemed him, and in this connection we may tell what he himself, from time to time, related of a worthy man whom he knew. When he would be away at a communion and he came home again, some of the friends would be asking him if he met anyone to whom he became newly bound since he left home. The man answered, "O well, I never met anyone since I left for whom I would give a pinch of snuff". By that he meant that he had not met many that caused him much rejoicing of soul.

Principles to Occupy Our Hearts (2)¹

Thomas Brooks

[5.] Get this principle riveted in your hearts, *The lack of such preparations or qualifications that many men lay great stress on shall be no impediment to hinder your soul's interest in Christ, if you will but open to Him and close with Him.*² "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev 3:20). Tell me at whose door Christ stood and knocked? Was it not at the Laodiceans' door? Did they not think that their penny was as good silver as any? Did they not say that they were rich and had need

¹This piece contains the remaining five principles, which are taken, with editing, from *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, in Brooks' *Works*, vol 3. The first four principles appeared last month.

²There are some men that want to have men become better Christians before they come to Christ – before they believe in Christ – than usually they prove after they have come to Him. Surely, if legal preachers would seriously weigh the following scriptures, they would not so vehemently press the absolute necessity of such and such qualifications before faith in Christ, as they do: Mk 16:16; Jn 3:34; Heb 11:6; Rom 14:28; Jn 5:12; Mt 7:17,18, 12:33; Rom 8:2; Gal 5:6.

of nothing, when Christ tells them to their very faces that they were poor and miserable and blind and naked. None were more unprepared, unqualified and unfitted for union and communion with Christ than these lukewarm Laodiceans; yet the Lord Jesus was very ready and willing that such should have intimate communion and fellowship with Him.

“If any man . . . open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” You have further evidence of the truth of this in Proverbs 1:20-24, 8:1-6, 9:1-6. All these scriptures, with open mouth, speak out the truth asserted: the lack of preparations or qualifications shall not hinder the soul’s interest in Christ, if the soul will venture itself by faith upon Christ. I ask, What qualifications and preparations had they, in Ezekiel 16, when God saw them in their blood, and yet that was a time of love, and God even then spread His skirt over them, made a covenant with them, and they became His? What qualifications or preparations had Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus and Lydia? Yet these believed in Christ; these had a blessed and glorious interest in Christ.

But some may object, What is the meaning of that text, Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28)?

There is a threefold answer to be given to this objection:

First. Though the invitation is to those that are weary and heavy laden, yet the promise is made to coming, to believing.³

Second. This text shows only that those that are burdened and bowed down under sin, and under the sense of divine wrath, are to come to Christ, and that there is no way for them to obtain ease and rest but by coming to Christ. But this text does not show that only these must come to Christ, or that only these may come to Christ.

Third. No one scripture speaks out the whole mind of God, and therefore you must compare this scripture with the scriptures and instances already cited, and then you will clearly see that souls may believe in Christ and come to obtain an interest in Him, though they are not in such and such way prepared, nor in such and such way qualified, as some would have them.

[6.] Get this principle rooted in your hearts, *Christ is appointed and anointed by the Father to this very office of receiving and saving poor sinners.*⁴ Turn to Isaiah 61:1-4, John 6:29 and Psalm 68:18, “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also [what for?] that the Lord God might dwell among

³The dove found no rest till she returned to the ark. No more will the troubled soul till it returns to Christ.

⁴Moses was faithful in his office as a servant, but Christ as a Son (Heb 3:2-6). Christ would never have entered into glory if he had not been faithful in His offices.

them.” Christ has received gifts for rebellious sinners, for rebellious Sabbath-breakers, for rebellious swearers, for rebellious drunkards and others. “That the Lord God might dwell among them.” That is, that He might have near communion and fellowship with them.

[7.] Get this principle rooted in you, *It is the delight of Christ to give poor sinners an interest in Himself*. He is not only able to do it, but it is His delight to do it. Christ’s soul is in nothing more than this. Witness those many sufferings and deaths that He went through in this world; witness those gospel acclamations (Mk 16:16, Rev 22:17); witness those persuasive exhortations and gracious entreaties (Ezek 33:11, Mt 11:28, 2 Cor 5:20); witness divine directions and threatenings (1 Jn 2:23, Mt 11:21); witness those lamentations (Mt 23:37, Lk 19:42, Ps 81:13); and witness the inward moving of His blessed Spirit (Gen 6:3).

All of these speak out Christ’s great willingness and delight to save poor sinners; so in Psalm 40:7,8, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart;” or, as the Hebrew has it, “It is in the midst of My bowels”. Now note, the will of the Father was the salvation of sinners. This was the will of the Father: that Jesus Christ should “come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10). Now, says Christ, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God” – it is the joy and rejoicing of My heart to be seeking and saving lost sinners. When Christ was hungry, He did not go to a place where He could buy food, but into the temple and taught the people for most of the day, to show how much He delighted in the salvation of sinners.⁵

[8.] Get this principle riveted in your hearts, *As there is nothing in Christ to discourage you from looking after an interest in Him, so there is everything in Christ that may encourage you to get an interest in Him*. Look upon His name:⁶ “Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee” (Song 1:3). The name of Jesus has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it, says Chrysostom; and so have all His other names. If you look upon Christ in His natures, in His offices, in His graces, in His beauties, in His gifts and in His works, you will find nothing but what may encourage you to believe in Him and to resign up yourselves to Him. Ah, poor sinners, what would you have? Is there not power in Christ to support you, mercy in Christ to pardon you, grace in Christ to heal you, goodness in Christ to relieve you, happiness in Christ to crown you, and what would you have more? O that you would believe!

⁵Christ did so much delight, and His heart was so much set upon the conversion and salvation of the Samaritans, that He neglected His own body to save their souls, as you may clearly see in John 4.

⁶“The name of a Saviour is honey in the mouth and music in the ear and a jubilee in the heart” (quoted from Bernard).

[9.] Let this principle be rooted in you, *The surest and the shortest way to mercy, and to get an interest in Christ, is by decidedly casting the soul by faith on Christ.* There is no way under heaven to have an interest in Christ but by believing. There is no way to get an interest in the riches of Christ but this, “He that believeth shall be saved”, let his sins be never so great; “and he that believeth not shall be damned”, let his sins be never so little.

God Gave the Ten Commandments¹

Thomas Watson

If God spoke all the words of the moral law, several duties are enjoined upon us: (1) If God spoke all these words, *we must hear all these words.* The words which God speaks are too precious to be lost. As we would have God hear all our words when we pray, so we must hear all His words when He speaks. We must not be as the deaf adder, which stops her ears: he that stops his ears when God cries shall cry himself and not be heard.

(2) If God spoke all these words, *we must attend to them with reverence.* Every word of the moral law is an oracle from heaven. God Himself is the preacher, which calls for reverence. If a judge gives a charge upon the bench, all attend with reverence. In the moral law, God Himself gives a charge; “God spake all these words”. With what veneration therefore should we attend! Moses put off his shoes from his feet, in token of reverence, when God was about to speak to him (Ex 3:5,6).

(3) If God spoke all these words of the moral law, *we must remember them.* Surely all God speaks is worth remembering; those words are weighty which concern salvation. “It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life” (Deut 32:47). Our memory should be like the chest in the ark where the law was kept. God’s oracles are ornaments, and shall we forget them? “Can a maid forget her ornaments?” (Jer 2:32).

(4) If God spake all these words, then *believe them.* See the name of God written upon every commandment. The heathens, in order to gain credit to their laws, reported that they were inspired by the gods at Rome. The moral law has its pedigree from heaven; He Himself has said it. God spoke all these words. Shall we not give credit to the God of heaven? How would the angel confirm the women in the resurrection of Christ? “Lo,” said he, “I

¹An edited extract from Watson’s *The Ten Commandments*. The article is a set of points of application, based on the words: “And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Ex 20:1,2).

have told you” (Mt 28:7); I speak in the word of an angel. Much more should the moral law be believed, when it comes to us in the Word of God. “God spake all these words.” Unbelief takes away from the virtue of God’s Word and makes it prove abortive. “The . . . word did not profit . . . not being mixed with faith” (Heb 4:2). Eve gave more credit to the devil when he spoke than she did to God.

(5) If God spake all these words, then *love the commandments*. “O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps 119:97). “Consider how I love Thy precepts” (Ps 119:159). The moral law is the copy of God’s will, our spiritual directory; it shows us what sins to avoid, what duties to pursue. The Ten Commandments are a chain of pearls to adorn us; they are our treasury to enrich us; they are more precious than lands of spices, or rocks of diamonds. “The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Ps 119:72). The law of God has truth and goodness in it (Neh 9:13) – *truth*, for God spoke it; and *goodness*, for there is nothing the commandment enjoins but it is for our good. Let this then compel our love.

(6) If God spoke all these words, then *teach your children the law of God*. “These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children” (Deut 6:6,7). He who is godly is both a diamond and a magnet: a *diamond* for the sparkling of His grace, and a *magnet* for His attractive virtue in drawing others to the love of God’s precepts. A good man benefits others more than himself. You that are parents, discharge your duty. Though you cannot impart grace to your children, yet you may impart knowledge. Let your children know the commandments of God. “Ye shall teach them your children” (Deut 11:19). You are careful to leave your children an inheritance: leave the oracles of heaven with them; instruct them in the law of God. If God spoke all these words, you may well say them over again to your children.

(7) If God spoke all these words, *the moral law must be obeyed*. If a king speaks, his word commands allegiance; much more when God speaks, His words must be obeyed. Some will obey partially, obey some commandments, not others; like a plough which, when it comes to a stiff piece of earth, resists; but God, who spoke all the words of the moral law, will have all obeyed. He will not dispense with the breach of even one law. Princes indeed, for special reasons, sometimes dispense with penal statutes, and will not enforce the severity of the law; but God, who spoke all these words, binds men with a legal summons to yield obedience to every law.

How come saints and angels above to be so blessed? Is not holiness and a conformity to God the greatest part of their happiness?

James Janeway

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria (5)¹

George Hutcheson

John 4:13,14. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

1. A great cause of men despising spiritual things is their ignorance of them, and of their excellency and worth; therefore Christ takes so much pains to make this clear.

2. A special means helping to point out the worth of spiritual things is to compare them with earthly things, and to take up what is of super-excellent worth in the first above the second; for thus Christ commends this living water.

3. Whatever pains men take to follow after, or drink up, outward contentment, yet they will find no abiding satisfaction in them and will sooner drink them dry than quench their own thirst; for what is said of this water is true of all things of the same kind.

4. The Lord hath so ordered it that men's outward necessities should often recur after the use of means, so that they may be humbled and made to depend constantly on providence and to seek better things, yet with the thankful use of what they have. In particular, God has put men to much trouble to uphold a cottage of clay [that is, their body], and has formed it so as to need new supplies constantly, that we may mind our mortality daily. This dispensation of providence points out this: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again".

5. Although Christ purchased the water of life, yet it must be His free gift to us, who cannot buy it; and His offer includes a promise of giving it to everyone who will receive it in the due order, without respect of persons; for so much is implied by calling it "the water that I shall give him". He does not say, I can give, but "I shall give him" – that is, if he will receive My offer, "whosoever" he be.

6. Whoever partakes of the true grace of God, it will so refresh and satisfy him as to quench his thirst after vanity and earthly delights and make them tasteless, and to give him contentment in the lack of all things. So much is implied, in part, in this promise, "Whosoever drinketh of [this] water . . . shall never thirst".

7. Although those who enjoy the grace of God in part will still need and desire more of it, while they are in this life (1 Pet 2:2,3; Mt 5:6), yet they

¹These are the "Doctrines", or lessons, as edited, that Hutcheson (1626-74) draws from this verse, in his *Exposition of the Gospel of John*.

shall never fall again under a deadly thirst of a total lack of this water, a seed still remaining in them. Their mouth being still at the well, they are rather quenching thirst than thirsty, and when they have gotten their full draught at the end of their race [at death], they are satisfied and never thirst any more; for so much also is included in this promise, He “shall never thirst”.

8. Whosoever receives the true grace of Christ, in any measure, also gets the Spirit of Christ, as the fountain, to make grace enduring in itself and its effects; for “the water . . . shall be in him a well of water”.

9. The Spirit and grace of Christ in believers is not a stream or a pond, that may run dry, but “a well”, and a “springing” well, of inexhaustible fullness, virtue and refreshment. Nor is it a well that may rot and give water a bad taste, but it is a springing well, still fresh; and where the Spirit is entertained, formality will be a stranger. Nor is it only a spring to abide within its banks, but a well of water “springing up”, or leaping up and watering all about it. The Spirit and grace of Christ flow out in all the behaviour of men who receive them, making them fruitful, and they will never leave off their duties. But the more they do, still the more they will undertake, and be active and vigorous in them, as a well boiling up. It flows out also upon others, unto their good and edification, according to the station and calling in which God has placed them.

10. As the truly godly have no last day for their religion but eternity, and their desire is to keep fresh till the end, so where the Spirit of Christ is, He will still be breathing out His virtue and riches from day to day, and letting out more and more to the sinner till eternity will come, when all the banks of incapacity, sin, distance, ignorance, mortality and so on, being broken down, and the windows of heaven being opened, this stream and well becomes an ocean. And grace, smothered here under corruption and infirmity, is able to expand itself in glory; for it shall be “a well of water springing up into everlasting life”.

Christ Is God¹

J C Ryle

We should mark *how kind and merciful Christ is to dull and slow believers*. Nowhere perhaps, in all the four Gospels, do we find this part of our Lord’s character so beautifully illustrated as in the story before our eyes. It is hard to imagine anything more tiresome and provoking than the

¹Taken, with editing, from *Expository Thoughts on John*, vol 3. Here is a section of Ryle’s general comments on John 20:24-31.

conduct of Thomas, when even the testimony of ten faithful brethren had no effect on him and he doggedly declared that, unless he would see with his own eyes and touch with his own hands, he would not believe.

But it is impossible to imagine anything more patient and compassionate than the Lord's treatment of this weak disciple. He does not reject him or dismiss him or excommunicate him. He comes again at the end of a week, and apparently for the special benefit of Thomas. He deals with him according to his weakness, like a gentle nurse dealing with a froward child: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side". If nothing but the grossest, most material evidence could satisfy him, even that evidence was supplied. Surely this was a love that passes knowledge and a patience that passes understanding.

A passage of Scripture like this, we need not doubt, was written for the special comfort of all true believers. The Holy Ghost knew well that the dull, the slow, the stupid and the doubting are by far the commonest type of disciples in this evil world. The Holy Ghost has taken care to supply abundant evidence that Jesus is rich in patience as well as compassion, and that He bears with the infirmities of all His people. Let us take care that we drink in the Lord's spirit and copy His example. Let us never set men down in a low place, as graceless and godless, because their faith is feeble and their love is cold. Let us remember the case of Thomas and be very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Our Lord has many weak children in His family, many dull pupils in His school, many raw soldiers in His army, many lame sheep in His flock. Yet He bears with them all and casts none away. Happy is that Christian who has learned to deal likewise with his brethren. There are many in the Church who, like Thomas, are dull and slow; but for all that, like Thomas, they are real and true believers.

We should mark also in these verses, how *Christ was addressed by a disciple as "God" without prohibition or rebuke on His part*. The noble exclamation which burst from the lips of Thomas, when convinced that his Lord had risen indeed – the noble exclamation, "My Lord and my God" – admits of only one meaning. It was a distinct testimony to the blessed Lord's divinity. It was a clear, unmistakable declaration that Thomas believed Him to be, not only man, but God. Above all, it was a testimony which our Lord received and did not prohibit, and a declaration which He did not say one word to rebuke.

When Cornelius fell down at the feet of Peter and would have worshipped him, the Apostle refused such honour at once: "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26). When the people of Lystra would have done sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, "they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people,

saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you” (Acts 14:14). But when Thomas says to Jesus, “My Lord and my God”, the words do not elicit a syllable of reproof from the holy and truth-loving Master. Can we doubt that these things were written for our learning?

Let us settle it firmly in our minds that the divinity of Christ is one of the grand foundation truths of Christianity, and let us be willing to go to the stake rather than let it go. Unless our Lord Jesus is very God of very God, there is an end of His mediation, His atonement, His advocacy, His priesthood, His whole work of redemption. These glorious doctrines are useless blasphemies, unless Christ is divine. Let us bless God for ever that the divinity of Christ is taught everywhere in the Scriptures and stands on evidence that can never be overthrown. Above all, let us daily repose our sinful souls on Christ with undoubting confidence, as one who is perfect God as well as perfect man. He is man and therefore can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is God and therefore is “able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him”. That Christian has no cause to fear who can look to Jesus by faith and say with Thomas: “My Lord and my God”. With such a Saviour we need not be afraid to begin the life of real religion, and with such a Saviour we may boldly go on.

Book Reviews¹

Do Thyself No Harm, *The Works of John Macdonald of Ferintosh*, vol 1, published by Reformation Press, 343 pages, hardback £23.85; paperback £14.90. John Macdonald (1779-1849) is still relatively well known, in some circles, among Scottish Presbyterians – not as a writer, but as a preacher. He laboured assiduously, not only in his own Black Isle parish, but throughout the Highlands and beyond, as he went about preaching the gospel, most notably in places where the local minister’s preaching was more or less devoid of the good news about Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

No fewer than four sketches of Macdonald’s life make up the first section of the volume under review. Inevitably there is overlap between them but, as the Foreword states, “various facets of his character and ministry are depicted” in them. A fuller biography, *The Apostle of the North*, was written by his younger colleague, John Kennedy of Dingwall, and is a good picture of his life, not least of his remarkable efforts to spread the pure gospel over a wide area – not only in his native Highlands, but also in the remote islands of St Kilda, and districts in southern Ireland. (Contrary to what is said in the

¹Both books reviewed here are available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

newly-published work, *The Apostle of the North* is still available from Free Presbyterian Publications.)

The second main section of *Do Thyself No Harm* consists of sermons that Macdonald preached. The first of these provides the title for the book; it was known as the “Cholera Sermon”, and was based on the warning of Paul and Silas to the jailer in Philippi. In 1832 there was an outbreak of cholera in Dingwall and, as Kennedy described the situation, “men were compelled to think of death and to ask if they were prepared to meet it. Conscience was awake, and men were disposed to listen to one who called them to ‘flee from the wrath to come’. The ‘Apostle of the North’ was just the preacher for such an occasion. No other could more vividly portray the danger, more clearly indicate the only way of escape, more earnestly urge men to flee ‘for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them’.”

Macdonald’s first main point in the sermon was: “Do no harm to your body”. He warned against idleness and excessive drinking and “neglecting the means for restoring us to health”, and he went on to give advice relevant to the cholera outbreak. The second main point was: “Do no harm to your souls”. In particular, he warned his hearers against “harming the soul by continuing in sin”, “by not caring about it”, and “by refusing salvation”. The sermon was preached in Gaelic, and printed at the request of the local Board of Health – something that would be highly unlikely today. It is now for the first time printed in English. There are eight sermons in all, but some of them are only notes of what was said.

A third section reprints two booklets on the Gospel of Matthew. One of them gave Macdonald’s notes for his lectures on chapters 1-4 (a *lecture*, in this sense, is an expository sermon; ministers such as Macdonald might preach many consecutive lectures on a passage). The other booklet was entitled *The Sermon on the Mount*, but concludes after chapter 6, verse 9.

Here are two quotations from *The Sermon on the Mount*. First, some lessons from the blessing the Saviour pronounced on “the peacemakers”:
“(1) The reverse of this character must be called the children of the devil. (2) How necessary to cultivate this character. (3) The more one resembles God, the more does he possess it. (4) Saints, cultivate it more; sinners, seek to possess it.”

Secondly, we may quote from Macdonald’s general lessons from the Beatitudes. He begins by pointing to the marks given of Christians: “(1) What a change does grace produce on sinful men, from characters quite the reverse by nature, making them such as [are] here represented. See this in Paul, and in true men in all ages. See also Isaiah. And what could effect the change but almighty grace? Have we felt it? . . . And let those who are destitute of these

characters have recourse to the same almighty grace. (2) See what constitutes the Christian character. Any one of these characters demonstrates the truth of one's Christianity, and connects with all the rest, but it is the union of the whole that constitutes the Christian character. Each may be assessed in its place, and all in succession, but they must all have their place and exercise. How completely was this the case in Christ. Those in whom they shine most, approach nearest to Him. . . . (3) The nature and excellency of true religion."

Macdonald then turns to the *blessedness* of Christians: "(1) See Christ's goodwill to men, and what affection, interest, and tenderness does He manifest and express in this passage. (2) How certain they are of support and consolation through this life. (3) What felicity and glory awaits them in the heavenly world, when their poverty, mourning, etc shall be over, and they are put in possession of all these blessings.

"Therefore you who possess these characters are blessed; you who desire them, follow on – look to Christ. You who have them not are under the curse."

A final section provides English translations of Macdonald's Gaelic poetry. In some cases the English translation is in verse; in other cases no versification is attempted. Throughout the book, background information has been helpfully supplied by the publisher.

John Macdonald was a remarkable preacher in his day. It cannot be expected that the full force of a preached sermon will be felt from the printed page, but it would be good if even a degree of the blessing which followed many of his sermons when preached would fall on those who read this book. As Dr Robert Dickie notes in his Foreword, "the most earnest and faithful preaching will only benefit hearers if it is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit". That is the power we need today. May that power again accompany the preached Word in our time and accompany also what is reproduced in books such as this!

The Adoption of Sons, Its Nature, Spirit, Privileges, and Effects, by Thomas Houston, published by Ettrick Press, paperback, 212 pages, £8.50.

There are very few Reformed books on this subject available today; so this reprint from 1872 is welcome. It carries the further sub-title, "A Practical and Experimental Treatise" and comes from the pen of a Reformed Presbyterian minister in Northern Ireland, who lived from 1803 to 1882. He wrote several books, which were collected in four volumes towards the end of his life. A biographical sketch quotes his own words: "I owed much to the instruction and training and example of simple-minded and godly parents" (presumably *simple-minded* points to their limited education, but they were obviously by no means illiterate, for Houston's father was pointing him to respected authors

such as Thomas Watson and Thomas Boston). Houston was converted in his teens and was licensed to preach at the end of 1826. He was minister of a congregation near Belfast for 51 years, until his death; he also served his denomination as a professor.

The sonship of believers, who are in the family of the Most High, is a very high privilege. Houston speaks of God's family as "a separate society, called out of a world lying in the wicked one, and each individual responding to the Saviour's gracious and powerful invitation, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and I will receive you'". He then speaks of it as "a holy family. This is its grand characteristic. 'Israel was holiness to the Lord' (Jer 2:3)." In this section, the author makes two further points: it is a loving family and one that brings blessing.

"This adoption of sons", Houston says, "is properly a divine act and declaration." He further states: "The adoption of the elect . . . originates from God's eternal love and sovereign grace. Its objects were children of wrath and aliens from God; of the family of the evil one, and under condemnation. Yet, in the Father's eternal decree, they were chosen in Christ . . . associated with Him before the foundation of the world; predestinated to sonship; and all this as expressive of His wondrous love towards them, and His infinitely gracious and tender interest in them."

The author speaks of God as the father of the saints: "His fatherhood to them is a *gracious* relation, standing in the covenant of redemption, and fully exhibited in their union to Christ, the only begotten Son". He further insists that God's "fatherly relation to believers is in and through Christ", and that "the fatherhood of God, which believers enjoy through Christ, is to them the source and assurance of all blessing for time and eternity. They are entrusted to the Father's infinite and eternal love, and nothing shall ever be able to separate them from it. He pities them as a father does his children. Even when they are wayward and rebellious . . . and they are chastised with the rod of men . . . He heals their backslidings, and restores them again." All this is in complete contrast to ideas about the universal fatherhood of God.

Other chapters deal with the believer's relation to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit; "fellowship in the adopted family"; and "the spirit of the adopted". A further chapter draws attention to "the privileges of sonship". Houston emphasises that "adoption is itself the grandest distinction and highest privilege that God confers upon any human being We cannot speak on this subject without declaring the riches of divine benevolence towards the saints, and the peculiar honour and happiness which, in consequence, they enjoy." Among the *privileges* the author discusses are the following: "an interest in the love of their heavenly Father", "access with boldness into His presence",

“the surest divine protection”, “abundant provision for all their needs”, and “guaranteed deliverance and final victory”.

Houston addresses “the duty of those who lack evidence of their sonship”. He counsels those in this situation to be “diligent[ly] searching for the causes” of their lack, “seeking to rest in the promise”, “walking in the pathway of obedience”, “believing in the Lord Jesus”, and “praying in the Spirit”.

The final chapter deals with “practical uses” of the teaching he has given on adoption. This doctrine “shows the fearful state of those who are not adopted”, “calls adopted ones to walk” as God’s children, “provides clear marks for self-examination”, “supplies motivation to seek the blessing of sonship”, “supplies consolation”, and “gives a solid foundation for hope”.

Adoption is an important doctrine, as should be clear from the chapter headings and other quotations given above. It is probably given less attention than it ought to receive. A prayerful reading of Houston’s book ought to be profitable, particularly for God’s children, so that they may better understand the privileges that are theirs.

Protestant View

Another High-Profile Figure Joins the Church of Rome

The former Anglican bishop of Rochester, Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, is the latest high-profile figure from the Church of England to join the Church of Rome. Dr Nazir-Ali was the first person born overseas to become a diocesan bishop in the Church of England and was a prominent voice on behalf of persecuted Christians throughout the world. He has spoken against abortion and was not a supporter of same-sex “marriage”. He has stated that the Church of England is being eroded by “neo-Marxist theory developed to create conflict by dividing people into victims and villains”.

Dr Nazir-Ali’s perversion to Popery will be regarded as a loss to Evangelicals in the Anglican Church and a fillip for Romanism, serving to strengthen the false claim that Rome represents the only authoritative voice on moral and spiritual issues. It highlights not only the disintegrating state of things under the leadership of Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby but it shows how a spiritual commitment to the scriptural principles of the Reformation is so patently lacking even in the more conservative sections of the Church of England.

AWM

Christ Himself in His human nature shrunk from suffering as suffering, but not as the Father’s appointment.

John Kennedy

Notes and Comments

Assisted Dying Bill

Baroness Meacher's private members bill on assisted dying was debated in the House of Lords on October 22. It passed through its second reading and will now proceed to the Committee stage, when it will be subjected to line-by-line scrutiny and any amendments made.

The Bill faced formidable opposition with more than 60 members of the Lords speaking against it. Lord Winston questioned the euphemistic way that the Bill was referred to and said, "Assisted dying could equally be used to apply to palliative care. It seems to me that this title, 'Assisted Dying', does not represent what is intended. . . . Euthanasia . . . is actually what we are talking about."

Baroness Campbell, who suffers from a degenerative terminal illness, said the Bill "would alter society's view of those in vulnerable circumstances by signalling that assisted suicide is something that they might or ought to consider. Disabled people with terminal conditions or progressive conditions like mine are alarmed by the misleading narrative of autonomy and choice. We must not abandon those who can benefit from high-quality health and social care to the desperate temptation of assisted suicide in the guise of compassionate choice."

Lord Alton commented that, "notwithstanding the good intentions of those who produce these recurring bills, the same unanswered questions about the risks to vulnerable people and the lack of safeguards remain, and they remain unanswered".

The Christian opposition was not without its advocates. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said that there was "unanimity" on the benches of the bishops that the law on assisted dying "does not need to be changed". Lord Farmer said, "This Bill facilitates death without reference to those most impacted by it. It is an atheist's bill, denying God and denying eternity."

In the House of Lords, at the second reading, a bill does not need to win a vote to proceed to the next stage, and Baroness Meacher's group did not push for a vote, presumably because they did not feel they had sufficient support to win. If it had gone to a vote and she had won, it would have been a great encouragement to the campaign to introduce assisted suicide. Although the Bill now proceeds to the Committee stage, it is unlikely to be given time to be debated in the House of Commons and become law, because it is not supported by the Government.

Catherine Robinson, spokesperson for Right To Life UK said, "We have

increasing evidence that people's wishes to die are transient. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing, for example, surveyed 8174 people over the age of 50 and found that 3.5% expressed a wish to die, at Wave 1 of the study. However, 72% of these participants no longer reported a wish to die when reassessed two years later. We should seek to care for those experiencing suicidal thoughts, rather than state-sanction their deaths."

Following the British Medical Council's decision to take a neutral stance, almost 1700 doctors wrote to the UK Health Minister to oppose the weakening of assisted suicide law. "We would not take patients' lives", was their firm statement. We should be thankful that so much opposition has been expressed, but this is the fourth time in recent years that a bill such as this has been proposed.

Meantime in the Scottish Parliament, Liam McArthur, MSP for Orkney, has proposed a Member's Bill which would allow mentally-competent adults who are terminally ill to be able to choose assisted death. A period of consultation has begun and is due to close on the 22 December 2021.

There is a real determination by supporters of euthanasia across the whole of the UK not to take no for an answer. We must insist that our parliamentarians keep saying no. Supporters of a change in the law see themselves as compassionate and caring, but ultimately it is not compassionate to encourage someone to terminate their life; suicide is a sin with no time for repentance. The Sixth Commandment requires us to make all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and the life of others. The sovereign God gave us our existence, and only He has the right to take it away; our times are wholly in His hands.

FRD

The Treatment of Women

The Bible says that the woman was created to "help" the man (Gen 2:18) and is "the weaker vessel" (1 Pet 3:7). This "weakness" is both physical and emotional, but it is only "on average" that women are weaker than men. There have been spiritually and emotionally strong women like Deborah, who was more resolute than Barak (Jdg 4:8-9), and there have been physically strong women like Barbara Hamilton, the Covenanter and sister-in-law of Robert Blair. When the Presbyterian women intended to petition the Treasurer, the Earl of Traquair, in 1637, they appointed "the oldest matron" to present their paper, but Traquair deliberately brushed past her, "which, being perceived by Barbara Hamilton, she appears and pulls the paper out of the old weak woman's hand, and coming up to Traquair did with her strong arm and big hand fast grip his gardie [arm] saying, 'Stand, my Lord, in Christ's name, I charge you, till I speak to you'".

When the books are opened at the Day of Judgement, one of the chapters will record all the evils in the history of the world that have been perpetrated against women. A vast number of women have been enslaved for immoral purposes, even to the present day, and even in Britain; and innumerable other women have been subjugated on principle, their whole lives being dismissed as of little value. The current denial of secondary education to women in Afghanistan is just the latest example of this.

Getting a right balance on this issue is difficult. In the later nineteenth century, the vast wealth of the Victorians highlighted the restricted, empty lives of many rich women, and a clamour arose for greater opportunities for women in education and employment. The pendulum swung rapidly to the opposite extreme – as so often in human affairs – and by the 1920s, D H Lawrence was already complaining about “cocksure women and hensure men”. The ongoing stridence and belligerence of the feminist movement, however, should not blind us to the continued oppression of many other women who may not be involved in that movement. In particular, it is remarkable how little the feminist movement has done to counter the subjugation of women under Islam.

When all other theories and arrangements have been tried and found wanting, it is the biblical pattern that, at last, will prove to be correct. The woman is indeed “the weaker vessel”, and it is the application of this general principle that will bring her the greatest honour, protection and fulfilment. In the New Testament Church, Elisabeth, Mary, Anna the prophetess, the woman of Samaria, the Syrophenician woman, Lydia and Priscilla were all given a high place. Eve was to be a “help” or ally, “meet for” or “corresponding to” Adam. She was created for the man (1 Cor 11:9), and was to be his “glory” in this world (v 7), and of equal value with him in eternity: “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). It is not the feminists who are the true friends of female wellbeing but the Christian Church. *DWBS*

Global Warming

As this piece is being written, COP26, the global summit on climate change, is drawing to a close in Glasgow. The point of this note is not to comment on the wider issue, except to say that it should be no surprise if sinful humanity has caused damage to the climate pattern in the world.

Rather this note is intended to stress that climate change will not bring human life in this world to an end. This world *will* come to an end – but as a result of the Lord Jesus Christ coming a second time. Yet “while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter,

and day and night shall not cease” (Gen 8:22). That is God’s promise. Although, in Noah’s time, He brought the flood on the whole earth, as a judgement, because “the wickedness of man was great in the earth”, yet He has made clear that He will never in any such way destroy mankind again.

Certainly human wickedness is great today, but God still makes “His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt 5:45). What reason for thankfulness!

It is also sure that “the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Mt 5:31,32). He will then bring all generations to judgement. What reason to be prepared!

Church Information

College and Library Fund

By appointment of Synod, the second of the year’s two special collections for the College and Library Fund is due to be taken in congregations in December.

W Campbell, General Treasurer

Magazine Prices

Regrettably prices of both *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and *The Young People’s Magazine* have had to be increased for 2022 because of increases in the cost of printing and of postage, after remaining unchanged since 2013. Subscription rates, including postage, will now become: *Free Presbyterian Magazine* £28.50 (£2.20 per copy); *Young People’s Magazine* £16.50 (£1.10 per copy); both magazines together £43.00.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

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The Free Presbyterian Magazine

2021

Volume 126

Editor:
Rev Kenneth D Macleod

*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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Scotland

- Aberdeen:** 2 Alford Place, AB10 1YD, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Tuesday, 7.15 pm. Rev D WB Somerset BSc DPhil, 18 Carlton Place, Aberdeen, AB15 4BQ; tel: 01224 645250.
- Bracadale Duirinish-Strath:** 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, IV15 9JP: Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. **Beauly** (Balblair): Sabbath 6.30 pm, Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev A W MacColl MA PhD, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, IV15 9JB; tel: 01349 866546.
- 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; no F P services. Contact Mr J Campbell; tel: 01863 766296.
- Edinburgh:** 63 Gilmore Place, EH3 9NU, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev D Campbell MA, 35B Barnton 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). Contact Mr M J Schouten; tel: 01463 221776.
- Fort William:** Monzie Square, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm as intimated. Manse: 15 Perth Place, PH33 6UL; tel: 01397 708553. Contact Mr D A McKinnon. Tel: 01397 702597.
- Gairloch** (Ross-shire): Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm. Prayer meeting in **Strath**, Thursday 7.30 pm. Manse tel: 01445 712247. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.
- Glasgow:** St Jude's Church, 137 Woodlands Road, G3 6LE. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev R MacLeod BA, 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, 5.30 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev W A Weale, F P Manse, Bridge Street, KW12 6YG; tel: 01847 831758. **Thurso:** Duncan Street; and **Strathlyon:** no services meantime.
- 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. Rev K M Watkins BA, F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271.
- 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.
- Kinlochbervie:** Sabbath 6 pm; **Scourie:** Sabbath 11:30 am, Tuesday 7 pm (as intimated). Contact Dr 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.
- Ness:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Manse tel: 01851 810228. Contact Rev K M Watkins; tel: 01859 520271.
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- 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. No F P services at present.
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- Portree:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7 pm.. Rev I D MacDonald BA, F P Manse, Achachork, Portree, IV51 9HT; tel: 01478 612110.
- Raasay:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 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. 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.
- Uig (Lewis) Mivaiga:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 12 noon. Manse tel: 01851 672251. Contact Rev K M Watkins; tel: 01859 520271.
- Ullapool:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Manse: Quay Street, IV26 2UE; tel: 01854 612449. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.

England

- Barnoldswick:** Kelbrook Road, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm.; **South Manchester:** Sabbath 6.00 pm, in Trinity Church, Massie Street, Cheadle (entry at rear of building); Wednesday 8 pm, alternately in Sandbach and Gatley. Contact Mr R Middleton, 2 Emerald Drive, Sandbach, CW11 4ND; tel: 01270 761673.
- 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 2AW. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.15 pm. Manse: 6 Church Ave, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6BU; tel: 0208 309 1623. Contact Mr Hugh Campbell; tel: 01923 442497.

Northern Ireland

- Larne:** Station Road. No F P services. Contact Rev R Macleod; tel: 0141 954 3759.

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. No services at present. Contact: Mr Hector Ross, tel: 1-647-355-0844; e-mail: hector.ross@outlook.com, or Mr David Kuiper; tel: 1-519 -363- 0367; e-mail: info@fpchurchvancouver.ca.

USA

Santa Fe, Texas: Church and Manse, 4031 Jackson St 77517. Sabbath 10.30 am, 5 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.

Carterton: 124 High Street North, Carterton. Sabbath 11 am, 4 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Contact: Mr Hank Optland, P O Box 150, Carterton, 5743; tel: 02 7432 5625.

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: 45 Cliff Road. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Thursday 6.30 pm (once a month as intimated locally). Contact: Rev J D Smith; tel: 09 282 4195.

Singapore

Singapore: Metropolitan YMCA Singapore, 60 Stevens Road, Singapore 257854: Sabbath: 9.30 am and 5.30 pm at Palm Room; Wednesday: 7.30 pm, at Cypress Room. Contact: Mr Bernard Yong, 4 Chuan Place, Singapore 554822; tel: (65) 6383 4466, 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 Levyskyi; tel: 00 38 048 785 19 24; e-mail: dlevysky@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.

Ingenya: Church and Secondary School. Postal Address: Ingenya Mission, Private Bag T5445, Bulawayo.

Mbumba: Church and Hospital. Postal Address: Mbumba Mission Hospital, Private Bag T5406, Bulawayo.

New Canaan: Church.

Zenka: Church.

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