

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

Contents

Better Things in 2022?	1
The Responsibility of Gospel Hearers	
A Sermon by <i>William Wilson</i>	4
David Ross (5)	
<i>Rev Ewen MacQueen</i>	11
The Gift of God	
<i>W K Tweedie</i>	14
Looking to Jesus	
<i>Mary Winslow</i>	15
“Mysteries” in the New Testament (1)	
<i>Rev D W B Somerset</i>	20
The Angels (1)	
<i>Thomas Sproull</i>	23
Book Review:	
<i>Select Practical Writings</i> by Robert Traill	27
Protestant View	29
Notes and Comments	30
Church Information	32

January 2022

Vol 127 • No 1

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

Moderator of Synod: Rev J R Tallach MB ChB, 2 Fleming Place, Stornoway, HS1 2NH; tel: 01851 702501.

Clerk of Synod: Rev K M Watkins BA, F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271; e-mail: kmwatkins@fpchurch.org.uk.

Assistant Clerk: Rev A W MacColl MA PhD, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, IV15 9JB; tel: 01349 866546.

General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; tel: 0141 332 9283, fax 0141 332 4271, e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com.

Law Agents: Brodies LLP, 15 Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh, EH3 8AH; tel: 0131 228 3777.

Clarks to Presbyteries:

Northern: Rev D W B Somerset BSc DPhil, 18 Carlton Place, Aberdeen, AB15 4BQ; tel: 01224 645250.

Southern: Rev D Campbell MA, 35B Barnton Avenue West, Edinburgh EH4 6DF; tel: 0131 312 8227.

Western: Rev D A Ross, F P Manse, Laide, IV22 2NB; tel: 01445 731340.

Outer Isles: Rev J B Jardine BD, F P Manse, Tarbert, Isle of Harris, HS3 3DF; tel: 01859 502253.

Asia Pacific: Rev G B Macdonald BSc, 60 Hamilton St, Riverstone, NSW 2765; tel: 02 9627 3408.

Zimbabwe: Rev S Khumalo, Stand No 56004, Mazwi Road, Lobengula, PO Magwegwe, Bulawayo; tel: 00263 9407131.

Zimbabwe Mission Office: 9 Robertson Street, Parkview, Bulawayo; tel: 002639 62636, fax: 002639 61902, e-mail: fpchurchheadoffice@gmail.com.

Residential Care Homes:

Ballifeary House, 14 Ness Walk, Inverness, IV3 5SQ; tel: 01463 234679.

Leverburgh Residential Care Home, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520296.

Website of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland: www.fpchurch.org.uk.

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

Published by The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Scottish Charity Number SC003545). Subscriptions and changes of address to be sent to the General Treasurer, Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year begins in January. Prices are on back cover. One month's notice is required for change of address. Queries about delivery of the magazines should be sent to the General Treasurer, not the printer.

Editor: Rev K D Macleod BSc, 11 Auldcastle Road, Inverness, IV2 3PZ. Tel: 01463 712872; e-mail: kdmacleod@gmail.com. Unsigned articles are by the Editor.

Editorial Board: The Editor, Mr F R Daubney, Rev A W MacColl, Rev D W B Somerset.

Deadline for sending material to the Editor: The beginning of the month previous to publication.

The Gaelic Supplement (quarterly): Editor: Rev A W MacColl MA PhD, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, IV15 9JB; tel: 01349 866546. Available free on request.

Youth Magazine: *The Young People's Magazine*. Editor: Rev K D Macleod BSc.

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, Mbumba.

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; **Fifth:** Cameron.

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

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

December: Third Sabbath: Bulawayo, Santa Fe.

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

Volume 127

January 2022

Number 1

Better Things in 2022?

As another year begins, we may be looking forward to better things. But if we consider the moral and spiritual trends of recent generations, we may consider that these trends are likely to continue into the future. In the United Kingdom, we may feel that the past 60 years have been particularly significant in our moral decline. One of the most serious decisions of the UK Parliament during that period was the legalisation of abortion in 1967. Over 224 000 abortions were reported in the UK in 2020; the figure for England and Wales was the highest ever, and Scotland's was the second highest. This means that, in just one year, close to a quarter of a million little human beings were killed without justification (the number who are aborted because of danger to the mother's life is a tiny fraction of the total).

Apart from anything else, the number of abortions is surely a significant factor in leaving the number of births significantly less than the number of deaths in the country. Hence there is a shortage of workers in various sectors such as care homes and transport. Much more serious is the guilt involved in the slaughter of so many unborn children. By way of contrast, in Great Britain in 2019-20 there were 664 homicides, a small fraction of the number of abortions. There is, rightly, often an outpouring of sympathy and abhorrence over a single murder, and widespread concern is expressed at times when the murder rate is increasing. Why then is the opposition to abortion, to the slaughter of real human beings, so limited? One reason is that society has been taught not to consider unborn infants as fully human.

Developments such as the legalisation of abortion and same-sex marriage, the easing of restrictions on divorce, and proposals to allow assisted suicide show that Britain, to a very great extent, no longer has a moral compass – or at any rate, a moral compass that is, so to speak, calibrated by Scripture. And preceding the loss of a moral compass was the loss of a spiritual compass. People lost sight of the authority of Scripture; they no longer believed that it was a revelation from God, and that it is therefore infallible – without error. It is without error because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, a divine Person. And a divine Person cannot say anything inaccurate. His knowledge is in-

finite; so He cannot be mistaken. Thus the Bible, from beginning to end, is totally reliable. But people generally have lost sight of the authority and the reliability of Scripture and, what is worse, much of the professing *Church* has lost faith in Scripture as the basis for its teaching.

The Bible begins with God's testimony to the fact that He created all things. But the dominant philosophy today is that the whole universe is the result of billions of years of evolution since the "big bang". Yet no explanation seems to be offered for why the "big bang" occurred. Many people are glad to believe that there is no God, no Creator; they are glad to feel confident that a godless morality is good enough, and that they may live their lives without having to take into consideration the commandments of the God of the Bible. They are glad to dismiss all fears that this God will at last bring them to judgement and cast them away to a lost eternity. Well did Moses say, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deuteronomy 32:29).

The Bible sets before us many who navigated their way through life by using a moral compass and a spiritual compass that were calibrated by what God has revealed. Consider *Abel* and his way of worshipping God: he "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain". In other words, Abel's sacrifice was according to God's revelation; Cain's was not. Abel recognised God's authority and acted accordingly; he had a spiritual compass, properly calibrated, and by God's grace he used it well.

Consider *Noah*. He lived in an extraordinarily evil generation, so evil that God was to punish the entire population of the world, apart from Noah and his family, by sending a flood that would destroy them all. God directed Noah to build an ark so that he and those closest to him would be preserved. It seemed such a foolish waste of time and effort to build that ark when, even after more than 100 years had passed, there was still no sign of the flood that would destroy the world. Noah must have had to endure much mockery but he walked with God; he knew what was the safe way to go; he went through life following God's instructions. He had a moral compass and used it to recognise what was the right direction to take.

Consider *Moses*. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb 11:24-26). No doubt there were wonderful prospects before him in Pharaoh's ungodly palace; he could probably have lived an easy life of luxury and sinful pleasure there; or he could have filled an important, influential position in the government of the country. But he could see that

he could not have God's blessing in the palace; so he felt compelled to join God's people, although they were suffering oppression. That was where Moses' spiritual compass pointed; he was thinking just as a gracious man should think; he was making use of the light that God had revealed.

Consider *Paul*. When appearing before Felix, he stated, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). He was not casual about these things; he was *striving* to have a clear conscience. His conscience, by God's grace, was moulded by the will of God revealed in Scripture. He had a moral compass and he used it.

As we look on to 2022, we may be concerned about new departures from God's law that will be promoted by those with access to the levers of parliamentary power and by the opinion formers of this generation. Yet let us remember that "the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Ps 93:4). In His sovereign wisdom He has allowed our moral and spiritual situation to deteriorate over a long period of time, but He is able to halt the forces of spiritual and moral decline and to turn the whole situation around.

The Saviour quietened the waves on the Sea of Galilee; He did so miraculously. When there are storms on the oceans and seas today, the Lord quietens the waves in His own time through His ordinary providence. In His own time, He will show that He is indeed mightier than all the forces of unbelief, secularism and false religion, which are so strong today; He will subdue them; He will send out large numbers of ministers to make the gospel known throughout the world; He will make the preached Word powerful. Especially He will pour out the Holy Spirit to bless all the means He uses to turn sinners to Himself. And He will take glory to Himself in it all.

When will this take place? This year? Of course, we cannot tell when. But we are to pray that the Lord would weaken all the agencies that Satan is using to further the interests of his kingdom. Likewise we are to pray that God's truth would be spread everywhere, that the Spirit would apply the truth to the hearts of sinners, that the cause of Christ would be built up and purified, and that God would be glorified in every part of this world in the salvation of sinners and through the holy lives of His people. These will be people who will make good use of their moral compass, calibrated by Scripture, that God freely makes available. Whatever may be true of 2022, God's people should indeed look forward to better things in the future, for He has given promises of worldwide blessing: for example, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:9).

May the Lord richly bless every reader with spiritual blessings in 2022.

The Responsibility of Gospel Hearers¹

A Sermon by *William Wilson*

Luke 10:13-16. *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgement, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me.*

To confirm the faith of the seventy disciples, and to prepare them more perfectly for the reception they were to experience from the people, Jesus told them that it would be more tolerable for Sodom than for the city which would reject their message. He immediately proceeded to declare that it would be the same for those towns in which He had been Himself, where He had done His mighty works. In whatever light the people might regard it, the proclamation among them of the glad tidings of peace was most solemnly important, both to those who received them and to those who rejected them. This had already proved to be the case in those towns on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus had so often gone and which He had now abandoned for ever. For them there was no future restoration, no new period of merciful visitation. In the purpose of God they were already numbered among the things that had been.

The towns of Galilee. The prophets had of old denounced cities such as Tyre and Sidon as having filled up the measure of their iniquities, and in the just judgment of God they had been brought down from their place of pride and levelled with the dust. The fate of these cities was an imperfect pattern of the more sweeping desolation that was to come upon these towns of Galilee: Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum. The traveller now seeks in vain for the localities where they once were. And the physical desolation with which they have been visited, how imperfectly does it shadow forth the more terrible doom which has overtaken their guilty inhabitants, to whom the Lord had spoken in the tenderest love?

But they did not hear; and now He prophesied of woe. He did not speak the language of peace but of denunciation. Now, from the borders of Samaria, He sent back to these cities this voice, which was the herald of judgement without mercy. His voice was no more to be heard in their streets. His gracious work among them had come to an end. His face, for the last time,

¹Taken, with editing, from the preacher's *Christ Setting His Face Towards Jerusalem*; the headings have been added. Wilson (1808-88) was a Free Church minister in Dundee.

was turned toward Jerusalem, and His last words to them were those of woe. His presence and work in these cities had not, for the most part, done good; although here and there He had snatched a soul from the jaws of destruction and made manifest His power to save.

A woe is pronounced. As communities, they had not known the time of their merciful visitation, and already it had passed away. They had not repented in sackcloth and ashes, in the presence of the divine majesty which had been revealed to them; and now Jesus said, Woe unto you! What took place among you appeared to you to be only child's play – at most a matter for passing wonder and curiosity, or for quibbling and fault-finding. It was really the most serious thing with which you ever had to do. Your future destiny as individuals and as communities were involved in it. You were proud of heart when you should have been humbled; self-righteous when you should have abhorred yourselves; fault-finding when you should have been docile, amusing yourselves with mere forms and shadows when it obliged you to be most deeply in earnest.

Woe to you! You found it so easy to close your hearts against that gentle voice of gracious wisdom; it did not strive nor cry; it wooed you in infinite tenderness and love; it called and warned you with the sweet sound of a silver trumpet. It was, notwithstanding, an awful voice to you. It was a voice which was awakening the echoes of the last trumpet, and was sealing your doom for ever. Woe to you, blind, hard of heart, given up to hopeless impenitence – who have not known the time nor the nature of your visitation, nor the profound meaning of those great events which took place in the midst of you; who did not see the grace and truth which were in Jesus Christ; who did not listen to the voice of your only deliverer; who, on the contrary, have been loading Him with accusations; who have pitilessly refused Him access to your hearts; who have taken Satan's part against Him and entered into a common league with the wicked one! You have already proved yourselves to be ripe for the everlasting companionship of the devil and his angels.

The individual towns. Woe to thee, Chorazin, whose inhabitants have seen the power and heard the wisdom of the Son of God! To them the manifestation of that power has been a matter only of idle wonder, and to them His wisdom has appeared to be foolishness. You have chosen your part and must abide by your choice. You have refused to become the friends of God and He must deal with you as His enemies. You might have had pardon, and peace but, having rejected them, you are under the curse. The alternative has been presented to you, and you have preferred the darkness to the light. You have chosen war rather than peace. To you therefore there is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Woe to you, Bethsaida! You have been greatly favoured, and your name might have been for ever a theme of praise. You were the birthplace and home of Andrew, Peter and Philip. The Lord gathered them from among you as brands plucked from the burning. You have beheld the marvellous transformation that was wrought on them. You have been privileged to see simple, wicked men made wise with the wisdom of God and visibly transformed before you into patterns and teachers of men. The kingdom of God has come nigh to you, and you have thrust it far away and have taken up arms against it. These ransomed souls have uttered in vain to you their silent, yet most emphatic testimony.

And there must be a deeper aggravation in your condemnation, Capernaum, which have been exalted to heaven. Yours is as the guilt of Jerusalem; and yours also must be its punishment. Your privileges have been greater than those of any of the towns of Galilee, and your plagues therefore will be "wonderful" (see Deut 28:59). You have been called Christ's own city, so long has He dwelt within your borders, and so often has He taught in your streets. Every spot within your walls has been made hallowed ground, and every spot has become a desecrated temple. You were the chosen field of the Lord's ministry, when He was constrained to flee from Nazareth and left it to its hopeless destiny, as if there He had sought an asylum for the truth, which the Nazarenes had driven forth from their borders.

His footsteps have often pressed the shore beside you, as He landed from his journeys across the Sea of Galilee. On that shore was witnessed the miraculous draught of fishes which was the instrument of making Peter and Andrew, and James and John fishers of men. It was in your synagogue that even a demoniac bore witness to the presence of the Son of God, and Satan himself owned the supremacy of Jesus and yielded to His power. Within your borders, on one day, multitudes were healed of every kind of desperate disease. In you a helpless paralytic was raised from his bed and walked about in renewed strength. From the place of the receipt of custom in you, Matthew was called to the noblest of all offices. In your synagogue, in the presence of the assembled people, a man stretched out his withered arm at the bidding of the Lord. Your streets have echoed to the sound of the most wonderful sermon that was ever heard. In your garrison a heathen centurion recognised the Divine majesty of Jesus and exercised a faith which should have been a pattern to all the house of Israel.

You have indeed been exalted to heaven. Your privileges have been manifold and unprecedented. The Lord has recorded His name in you, and made you a sacred city. His glory has shone upon you from above the mercy seat. And yet you have not worshipped before Him. Yours must therefore be the

lowest place, because it has been the highest. Your degradation will be as great as your elevation has been. Yours shall be the destiny of Satan, for your rebellion has been as his was. He was hurled from heaven down to the lowest hell for his rebellion, and there is no future deliverance for him. You shall be cast down to the same depth. The privileges you have abused and the opportunities you have neglected will sting you with unavailing and ceaseless regret. The hand that was stretched forth to save you will be found equally strong to smite. God's jealousy of His love being despised and rejected will kindle into the fire of hell.

Dundee. If all this was true of them, what shall be said of us? What end awaits us? For Jesus said with equal emphasis and truth: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth him that sent Me". The voice of Jesus, in His garb of humiliation, should have been as powerful as when His word was spoken amid the thunders of Sinai. And that word, spoken by the least of His servants and messengers now, is as influential to save or to destroy as when Jesus uttered it personally in the streets of Capernaum, or on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It is the truth spoken which proves and judges, and not the person who utters it. Has Jesus not, by that word, been present in the midst of us as He was in Galilee in the days of old? Have our privileges not been even greater than those of Capernaum? Has He not been displaying among us all the treasures of His grace? Has He not been speaking to us, as He speaks in His Word, with infinite tenderness and beseeching love, entreating and warning us with an earnestness that is appropriate to the things of eternity?

His kind works, and His wise and loving utterances, have been made known before our eyes. In this town also, as in Bethsaida and in Capernaum of old, have been witnessed those acts of transforming power by which the vile have been made noble, and the foolish made wise. Here there has been, as there was in those towns, a time of most merciful visitation. Can this time be gone for ever? This was the first town in Scotland that unfurled the banner of the Reformation. It was here that George Wishart preached and, in a later day, the godly and fervent John Willison; and, in our own day, it has been the scene of a wonderful revival. What has come of it all? Where are we now? "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him."

There is nothing which gives such force and significance to the word of Christ – nothing which so increases the responsibility of those who hear it – as a manifest conversion, a sinner being brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. The gospel has been among us, with the same manifest tokens of Divine power as were seen in Capernaum. Is the

destiny of its inhabitants to be ours also? Have we become so wearied of the gentle and loving voice of Jesus that, from henceforth, He will be constrained to speak to us in the wailing tones of woe? Now it is high time for us to awake out of sleep – to mark with heedful eye what is taking place around us and to ascertain our whereabouts.

The effects on us of preaching. What has been the effect on us personally of all this gracious ministry – of these miracles of mercy that have been wrought among us, of the earnest beseeching cry from heaven which has been so long sounding in our ears? Is it really a voice from heaven that we have been hearing? Whose are these ordinances that we observe, and whose is this Word? If it is not a delusion and a lie to say that they are God's and that God is dealing with us by them, then they are the most serious things we can possibly have to do with; the most marvellous and grandest in their nature, and the most important in their results. If this word is the Word of God – if He is speaking to us in it – is it not the most marvellous condescension and mercy on His part? Must there not be some fearful mistake on our part, if we think that we can do without it, or that we can afford to despise it?

If He who is our Creator and Judge knows that we need salvation, and has brought it thus nigh to us and offered it freely, surely it must be a fatal error to assume that we do not need it, or at least that we do not need it now. He knows where we are going, and what is to be the end of our course; and He never sends us a message too early. "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Are you wiser or more powerful than He is? Can you avert His judgement when it comes? When He invites you, can it be safe to refuse? When He draws near, can it be safe to close the door against Him? It is with Him that you really have to do – not merely with me, and these outward ordinances. You are not dealing with mere dreams and speculations. You are not hearing a voice whose echoes only serve to induce a deeper slumber of the soul. The Lord is here, in that Word through which He speaks to you and warns you. Will you dare to turn your back on Him and say, I will have nothing to do with Thee?

Warnings. The trumpet of woe has already been raised to His lips. Do not let its tones of despair be heard, pronouncing your doom. Rather turn your eye, and look on the face of that meek Lamb of God, Immanuel, in whom is the fullness of the Godhead. Picture Him to your minds as He is described in this Word of His, which endures for ever. What depth of patient love there is in His eye, what tenderness in the tones of His voice, what eloquence of passionate earnestness as He stands between you and the gates of hell, entreating you to turn back! What power there is in that arm outstretched to save and what willingness to save to the uttermost, what grace has been poured

upon His lips and what patience is stamped on that sorrowing, pitying countenance! Has He not for days and years been standing near you, restraining you from rushing upon inevitable perdition? Can you think that, after all, there is no real danger, that He has been imposing upon your fears and seeking to awaken them without cause? Can you believe that the danger is not imminent, when He has come from heaven to shield you against it?

If so, you must believe Him to be a blasphemer and a liar. I beseech you to cast off the delusion that you are dealing here with mere forms and words, and to lay to heart that it is the Lord who is here dealing with you, that He is speaking to you as really as He spoke in Capernaum, and that His word is as full of everlasting issues. It is with the Lord that you have to do here – even the Lord who, if you will not hear Him and lay His word to heart, will surely send a curse upon you.

Jesus baptized the apostle of love with the name, Son of Thunder. Nor was the name inappropriately bestowed, for there is something terrible in love. It is the most majestic and far-reaching of all emotions. It has a double voice – gentle as a breeze at evening, and loud and impetuous as the thunder. It lies at the root of the fiercest and most destructive resentments. And the wrath of the Lamb is the most terrible thing in the universe. When we look back on the past and contemplate the man Christ Jesus, trace His footsteps and listen to His voice, is there not something awful in the fact that His voice has this double key? “Come unto Me,” He says, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And He says, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida!” Alas, how infinite must have been the provocation which resulted in this change of tone! But the provocation was given, and the judgement did not tarry.

Now He is the same yesterday, today and for ever. He will not always strive with your unbelief. His word today is, Come; but His next word to you may be, Woe unto you! “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded . . . I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.” “Consider this, ye that forget God.” There is nothing incongruous or inconsistent in the fact that your rejection of His message of love and mercy should be the herald of unparalleled judgement. For in such rejection there is not only the deepest guilt, but it inevitably has a most hardening and corrupting influence. It is to prefer the false to the true, darkness to light, Satan to God. It is deliberately to renounce all that is redeeming in love and mercy, and to ripen the soul for an undone eternity. Take heed then what you do. “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

What does the attitude of Jesus towards you now mean, and His gracious intervention? It means that you are doomed to perish, that you are children of wrath. If it was not so, His whole work and word would not be relevant. The revelation of the Saviour is the surest and the most emphatic proof of the estimate which God has of your state. Do you adopt that estimate as your own and believe that you are under condemnation and need to be saved?

Alas, the secret of your indifference, just as in Galilee of old, lies here. You believe, as Eve did, the deceitful word of Satan, when he whispered in her ear, "Ye shall not surely die". But to believe that lie, although it may at first appear to be comforting, involves terrible consequences. It implies the abolition of God's law, the dethronement of justice, and the everlasting dominion of sin. It leaves you without a tribunal to which to make an appeal, and without a God to rectify the fearful wrongs that oppress and torture humanity. To believe a lie is always a deadly thing. To believe this lie is most fatal of all. There is a righteous God and an unchangeable law. And as surely as that is so, you are under the curse of that law. Is it safe for you to remain in that position? No, is it not the maddest infatuation to prefer God's wrath to His love, and woe to peace? You cannot escape from being under His government. You cannot evade His judgement.

The call for repentance. Is it not best then to come to a reckoning with Him now? What does His Word demand of you? It is repentance – that you turn from sin to God. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh to save it from destruction, his message to the people was, Repent. When John the Baptist preached to the multitudes who sought him in the wilderness, he had the same message to deliver. This also was the message which Jesus delivered. Everywhere he called men to repentance. "If the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you," He said, "they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes."

Repentance then is your first and great business. It constitutes the very evil and danger of your condition that you have loved sin and have forsaken God. Your only safety lies in loving God and forsaking sin. Your greatest sin, and the root of all the rest, is forsaking God. He is the only good; and all goodness is in fellowship with Him. Without that fellowship you become the prey of all wickedness and delusion. And herein is manifested the grace of the gospel. It is not merely a gracious saying, "Return, ye backsliding children". It is a word in the hands of a Mediator, who comes to restore the fellowship which we had lost; who is a daysman between us and God, able to lay His hand upon us both. In Christ, God has already united Himself with manhood, and in man's nature He is commanding and entreating you to come to Him. He proclaims to you that He has taken the curse upon Himself and made

peace by the blood of His cross. And He stretches forth His hand to draw you within the embrace of the Father. If you lay hold on that outstretched hand, you find a reconciled God, and for you there is no more curse or death.

The effectiveness of the gospel. Dare you refuse this offered grace? Alas, we need not put the question. The cities of Galilee refused Jesus Himself, although He spoke to them as “never man spake”, and entreated them to come to Him. We know, when we now speak in His name, that there are many who will refuse, who will cleave to their sin till it destroys them, who so hate God that they will not accept His grace. In spite of all argument and demonstration, they will remain uninfluenced. It is now as it was of old. There is something terribly humbling and alarming in Christ’s ministry, when we consider its lack of success. If He could not persuade men, who is there that can? What hope then is there in this work of ours, and what possibility of success? None other surely than that which the prophet had when he was sent to preach to the dry bones. And yet his was a very successful mission. At his word there rose up an exceeding great army of living souls, for the breath of the Lord passed upon the ghastly skeletons.

Out of these doomed cities of Galilee also, Jesus gathered the precious firstfruits of a glorious harvest. He who sends us with His message does not send us on our own charges. With Him is sovereign and resistless power, and He will be glorified in the salvation of sinners. Christ shall see His seed, and shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. By His knowledge He shall justify many. Come then from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain. Let Jesus see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Even when the trumpet of woe is being sounded, let these anticipate the coming doom, and hear His voice and live.

David Ross (5)¹

Rev Ewen MacQueen

Years have now elapsed since what was written on David Ross appeared in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* but this is not due to lack of desire to complete the narrative; yet as the old saying puts it, the lame horse will eventually reach the mill. We hope the Creator will give us this further opportunity to place on record the life of David Ross as we knew him in his last days on earth.

¹This article completes a translation, by Rev John MacLeod, of an account of the life of David Ross, Dornoch. This final article originally appeared, in Gaelic, in volume 23 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

We previously mentioned that his natural eyesight failed years before his end. But although the eyes in his head failed, the light that the Holy Spirit placed in his soul did not fail. The nearer he came to the end, the more his godliness became apparent. There was not a day or a night that he was not thinking and speaking of Christ and of that home prepared in heaven, and it was evident to everyone that his concern for the cause of God was growing daily. The ministry of the Church was increasingly a concern to him every day. He was wont to say that if there was even one among them that was not faithful, there was the danger that he would take them aside from following and defending God's cause on earth. It would be an injustice to his memory to withhold what he said to me when some ministers departed from the foundation that the divines contended for at the time of the Reformation. We were going together to a catechising meeting at Altnabathaich and on the way he turned to me and said, "What is your opinion of those that left us?" To this I answered: "I do not like to say much about them".

David replied, "I believe that, but we cannot but be thinking of their action. I was sitting at the fire in my own house one or two nights ago and a verse of God's Word came to me: and this is the verse: 'He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him'. Because of my blindness I could not see where it was written, but it was found for me. It was in connection with those that left us that these words came to me and I began to consider what the hedge was that they had broken. They broke the unity of the Church they were in, without cause; they broke the vows which they came under and it is my opinion that, if the Lord's portion is in them, the serpent of a guilty conscience will bite them before they leave this world and, if not, it will be the worse for them – they will be bitten in eternity. And if I went to Edinburgh or to any other place where any one of them is, I would prefer to listen to one of those who did not take the step that they took than to go to listen to one of them."

No one that knew him could charge him with speaking hastily; he would not give utterance to anything that he had not given careful consideration to beforehand and it was evident to the day of his death that his attachment to the truth of God was greater than to any creature of his acquaintance under the sun.

His ability to converse was not much impaired before his death, but the outward man was failing, as he would say himself: "The Creator was kind to me: He keeps the doors open. But as He takes away my strength, He takes away my appetite for bodily sustenance." We used to go and see him twice a day when he lost his ability to go to the house of God. We always found him meditating on the truth. There was a young girl in the family where he

lived and he would ask her to sing when the others would be away attending the public means of grace.

Over the last few weeks of his life on earth it was indeed edifying to be beside him. Always in his prayer there was discerned a longing to be home. Often he was heard saying, “Beloved, wilt Thou not come”. Now and again he would say, “Are you there?” And when we said we were, then he would say, “Have you ever known one who has waited as long as I have for the post to come?” It was said to him at some hour, “It will not be long, David, until you will be taken home”. To which he replied, “O, great is my fear! But the Almighty was good to me throughout my day and my hope is that He will not now forsake me.” When someone would come in to whom he was not close and he was told that such a person was present, he would say, “There was a day when there were many with whom I had more of a bond, but now I like to meet those with whom I have had less of a bond”.

He himself would quote from the chapter that he desired to be read to him and often he would name the book and the chapter. One particular day when we went into his room he cried, “Are you there?” And when we said that we were, he gave utterance to these words: “A certain portion is before me and if only I had light on it! You will find the word before me in Revelation and the fourth verse”. I understood that it was the first chapter of Revelation that he meant and because of his impaired hearing I put off my shoes and lying on the bed behind him, we read the portion to him. When we came to the end of the fifth verse and we read these words to him, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”, he lifted up his two hands, his countenance lit up and he began to preach, and in our opinion it would be good if preachers of the highest order would have the view of the glory of Christ’s Person and His finished work that this holy warrior had lying on his back, battling with death; that death which for him was without sting – through faith in the Captain of salvation, who was made perfect through suffering.

From that time until his soul parted from his body, he remained in this wonderful frame of mind. The saints that had gone to their heavenly home were before his mind, and in accordance with the custom in Sutherland at funerals, and over which David himself often presided, he would call upon people to pray until the body would be carried away. “Angus Gray from Lairg”, he said, “you will lead in prayer”, and when he received no answer he said, “Is he there?” When it was said to him that he was not there, he answered, “The end came so suddenly that the people were not aware of it”.

He remained in this heavenly frame of mind until the Most High, who graciously rules, removed his soul from its clay tabernacle. This is how David

Ross came to his end. This is how that “noble youth”, as his friend Angus Murray used to describe him, finished his journey on earth. In bringing this account of it to an end, it is not excessive to say: he was comely in countenance; wise and holy in conversation, savoury in his walk, looking up to the Son of God.

It would be good for the Church in her courts that the Lord would yet raise up those to whom we may look for guidance in the way of truth until the end of our course in this world, without giving offence to men, without harming the Word of God – to be as David was in his day, who brought to task those that erred, encouraged the sheep of the flock that were heavy with young, tender-hearted towards the lambs and a careful drover of those that were heavy with young. The lamb would receive his portion of milk, the sheep would receive portions of truth coming out of his mouth: O young beloved children, seek [the Lord], as David Ross did when a boy, while watching over the flock. The question, “Whose are you?” was to have a long-lasting effect on him and, to the end of his life, he remained of unblemished character. And if the young of the country where he was for a season valued the truth, it would cleanse them from the loathsome disease of sin that cleaves to us and which shall bring punishment at last if we are not cleansed from its guilt and pollution, in the fountain opened in the Person of the Son of God.

Many a day we were happy in the company of David and Angus, but now, since they departed, our thoughts follow them. If God spares us, our expectation is to produce a book which will place on record the lives of David and Angus; that is, if the world would give me the opportunity which I do not now have. Although I do not regard myself able or worthy to place on record the words and works of these men, they are worthy of being remembered and being found among those of whom it may be said that “the righteous man’s memorial shall everlasting prove”.

The Gift of God¹

W K Tweedie

Romans 6:23. *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

How earnest is the God of the Bible that sinners should be assured that all we enjoy is a gift from Him! Man is constantly claiming; God as constantly sets that claim aside and offers all as a gift. Is it received? Then God is glorified, and self-ruined man is laid in the dust. Eternal life is a gift.

¹Taken, with editing, from Tweedie’s volume, *Glad Tidings of the Gospel of Peace*.

Faith is a gift. The Holy Spirit is a gift. The Saviour is God's unspeakable gift. The privilege of suffering for His sake is a gift. Mercy is a gift. Peace is a gift. Pardon at last, as well as all that fits us to enjoy it, is a gift. And by the constant repetition of that truth, the pride of the self-righteous soul is re-proved; the claims of men for God's favour are disowned; they must submit to be saved by grace or never be saved at all.

Now, when the soul clearly discerns that truth, it begins to be happy for the first time. As long as the idea of merit, or deserving the favour of God, haunts the soul, it is wretched and harassed by legal fear. It never can be sure that it has done enough or repented enough or suffered enough. But when the gift of God is received – when man perceives that the only thing he can deserve, and the only wages he can earn, is death – pride is hidden from him, and he begins to rejoice in the unspeakable gift. Rejoice then, my soul, that eternal life is to be obtained for the taking.

God offers. Do you welcome? Christ has purchased; grace bestows. Are you waiting to receive? Then go in peace, your faith has made you whole. The second death has no more power over you; the original curse is repealed, or rather it is exhausted by the Saviour for you; and your blessedness, now and for ever, should be to rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in yourself.

How strange if the world was to continue in darkness after the sun has risen! How strange if the earth was to continue frozen and the forests leafless, after the warm sun of spring and summer bids them put on their beauty! And can it be less strange for the soul, visited, redeemed and saved by the Son of God, to walk only in sackcloth – in the gloom of Sinai, not the sunshine of Zion?

Looking to Jesus¹

Mary Winslow

26 July 1828. Awoke with distressing thoughts about —. As soon as I was up, I dropped upon my knees before the Lord; and without preparing my mind for prayer, as some are enabled to do, I brought my need directly before Him. My heart was troubled, and I told it to the Lord. I did plead with many tears that, as He had given His Son to die for me, He would not with-

¹Taken, with slight editing, from *Life in Jesus: A Memoir of Mrs Mary Winslow*. Copious extracts are given from her diary, from which this is an extract. She lived from 1774 to 1854 and was noted for her godliness. She was the mother of Octavius Winslow, several of whose books have been reprinted during the last 60 years; he wrote his mother's life.

hold the lesser blessing, and impart to — all that grace he so much needed to preserve him from the ten thousand snares that Satan would lay for his unguarded feet. This is the only way I can get on. When trials press upon my mind I must arise and carry them to God. To whom else can I go? I would not often tell the dearest friend in the world what passes in my mind; but I can disclose it all to Jesus! I can and do unbosom myself to Him whose compassions fail not, and who remembers I am but dust; yet pities and loves me better than I love myself. Had much more comfort and openness in prayer in the family last night. Felt the Lord very near, and eternal things all-important.

August 2. Yesterday was dear —'s birthday. I felt happy at the birth of my son, but that happiness was trifling, although all that a fond mother could feel, in comparison to what my heart experienced at the hour of his spiritual birth. I truly did travail for him a second time, that Christ might be revealed within him the hope of glory. O the gladness of that moment! Angels united in a mother's joy. The Church below, the Church above — all, all rejoiced; and Christ was well pleased to see the travail of His soul. May He, who then made Himself known to him as his Redeemer, be graciously pleased to pour into his heart the rich blessing of His grace, and fit and qualify him for great usefulness in His blessed cause. Give him, O Lord, humbleness of spirit, and stamp Thine image deep within his inmost soul.

I increasingly feel that this is not my rest; it is polluted. Go where he may, rest where he will, trials and crosses await the Christian. O for faith — a constant, abiding faith that keeps a steady eye within the veil, where our tempted, tried and afflicted Saviour, now triumphant Conqueror, is seated and ever lives to make intercession for His dear people, who are following His footsteps! What a sore trial is the working of pride within the heart! I have had to conflict with this enemy of late, which I had almost thought was quite gone.

Heard an excellent sermon from the Lord's sent servant, Mr Evans, from the words, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest . . .". He was, as usual, most sweetly experimental. It was chiefly to the church, though he did not forget to address sinners.

Have had much exercise of mind and deep searchings of heart. Some new lesson in the school of Christ is daily — no, hourly — to be learned; some hidden evil to be felt; some new enemy to be encountered; some fresh, precious views of Jesus to be obtained. O how lovely, how good — exceeding good — is Jesus Christ to unworthy me! He is enough to satisfy my soul. When disappointed in what is created and I turn with a sickening feeling from the world to Christ, I find here no disappointment; here is fulness of joy, an ocean of love, a heart to feel and sympathise, an eye to pity, and a power,

an infinite power, to supply all my needs, to comfort my drooping spirits, to refresh my fainting heart, and fill me with joy and peace in believing. Jesus is an all-satisfying portion, and He is thy portion, O my soul.

Had an interview yesterday with Mr Evans. I pray the Lord to bless it. In the evening went where I need not have gone, and found the conversation of some professing Christians a great snare to my soul. Have need to pray. O Lord, not only lead me not into temptation, but hedge up my way, though with thorns and briers, that I go not into it. O the sad levity and trifling of some, even of the ministers of Christ! I am aware of the same evil in myself, and by those things lay up material for bitter repentance. On my return home, had to go to the Lord for fresh pardon, humbled in the dust. But, for ever blessed and adored be His name, to me He is love. I feel today a sweet tenderness of spirit; and while reading in the family, my heart was drawn out by faith to Christ and could not but speak of Him to my children.

Mr —, a professed minister of the gospel, has been here and has just left with — to see —. I wonder what business a man, declaring himself sent of God to lead poor sinners to Christ, has to do with the sights and shows of this perishing world. How can he exhort his flock to live above the world and all its vanities, while he himself is going after them?

As good Mr — says, it is our duty to have our eyes shut and our ears stopped to everything that is not a step in that ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. I cannot understand some Christians, and they do not understand me. I may be wrong; but when I read, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate”; “Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world”; and many other such solemn exhortations, with so many exceeding great and precious promises to the overcoming Christian, I am satisfied of the way a believer in Christ should walk, and have only to regret I so often wander from it myself. Dear Saviour, keep me near, very near Thy blessed self. Shelter me under Thine almighty, protecting wing, till the storm of life is past. And O, in infinite mercy, remember the dear lambs of the flock, and suffer them not to wander from Thee. Let them feel their own weakness and take hold of Thy strength.

Feeble in body, but very happy in the Lord, a sweet, contented, childlike spirit, looking upward and feeling, as well as knowing, that God is good. His name, to my soul, is Love. Had a delightful open view, as it were, while engaged in family prayer, of the glorious work of the all-sufficient atonement and sacrifice of the Son of God. Tears flowed while I thanked my God, and my children’s God, for this most precious covenant of grace, for my interest in it, and the sweet assurance I have that some of them also have an interest in it. Blessed, for ever blessed, be His most precious name.

I am not well, and this tabernacle seems daily to decay. Be it so; it shall be raised again at the last day, fashioned like unto His glorious body. Christ's own resurrection is the earnest given, and I know that my Redeemer liveth to fulfil His engagement. My soul rejoiceth in Christ my Saviour. Often the enemy whispers to me – when I feel a holy nearness to Jesus and my soul is very happy – that some trial is near at hand. Lord, I desire to trust in Thee, in whom is all my hope and my salvation. My children are Thy children. Blessed be Thy name for that. Help me to say, Thy will, not mine, be done. I cannot do this without the special influence of Thy Spirit.

September 1. Took possession of my pew yesterday at John Street. May the Lord, in His rich mercy, make this step a blessing to me and to my children. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” Had to contend, while in the house of God, with a wandering spirit; felt it impossible to keep my mind stayed upon the precious truths I heard, or attempted to hear. O how the world, with all its cares, crowds upon the poor pilgrim, even in his most solemn moments! He would fain say, Abide here, and I “will go yonder and worship”. What a mercy that we have a faithful High Priest at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to make intercession for all – all our manifold shortcomings, sins and transgressions.

Rev Mr W— called this morning, and mentioned that, after an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a curacy, he received a letter from his wife, saying that she had discovered that a servant had robbed them, and that she had decided to dismiss her. Mr W— wrote to say that she had better keep her for the present, as he did not have the money to pay her the wages due to her. A few days after, he returned home and found his family much tried by the girl, who had refused to remain and had gone to a neighbour's alleging, as a reason for leaving, that she would not be paid for her services. In addition to this trial, a bill came from a tradesman, demanding immediate payment. They had no money. Mr W— felt his character as a minister was at stake in a village where everything was soon known from house to house.

In this dilemma and distress they knelt down and laid their case before the Lord. In the morning the postman brought a letter. On opening it, it was found to contain a £10 note in a blank cover. This paid all demands and left a surplus on hand. O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness to the children of men! He came to relate to me this remarkable providence. My heart felt refreshed and my faith strengthened by this sweet manifestation of God's kind remembrance of his poor servant. It is good to walk by faith; to feel dependent for all and to come to Him as little children for all we need.

September 5. Find that many of my difficulties and trials – I dare not call them afflictions – arise from quarters where one least expected them. O Lord,

help me more and more to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and to expect nothing but evil from an evil world. Yet these are but little trials after all. They do not wring the heart; they may grieve and wound, but nothing more. I think I know what afflictions are – yes, the deep waters of affliction too. Bereaving providences: the joy of my heart, the companion of my youth, the father of my children, cut down as with a stroke! Dwelling in a strange land, surrounded by a helpless young family, the enemy suffered to buffet my almost-defenceless soul, the very foundations of my faith trembling beneath this flood of tribulation – these are afflictions! I was in the furnace, but the Lord stood by. Since then I have been enabled, upon my knees, amidst floods of grateful tears, to thank Him for those very afflictions that I then thought would bring me to nothing.

September 8. Have much cause to be humbled. Why does every little disappointment affect me so much? I feel truly I am a sinful creature, unable of myself to think a good thought. Never, never did sin appear so hateful, and my own nothingness so great, as yesterday at the table of the Lord. Felt something of a broken heart. I wept much, but still my hope was in the Lord, and did look up, like the wounded Israelites, to the cross of Christ. Lord, my help is alone from Thee. Strengthen me with might in the inner man, and let not my enemies prevail against me. O the hidden evil of the heart, unknown and unfelt, until the Spirit of Christ sees fit to reveal the depths of iniquity that are there. It is a sickening view; and were it not that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, I should lie down in utter despair.

September 18. How has my heart been pained today from what it has felt of evil within! How much I often discover contrary to the Holy Spirit of Christ! Today has been one of sore conflict – the spirit lusting against the flesh, and the flesh lusting against the spirit; so that I have been obliged again and again to cry to the Lord for help from on high. Nothing but the precious blood of Christ can wash this guilt away. How soon I was ruffled today! And now could weep – yes, and do weep and shall weep – for it. Lord, forgive me for Jesus' sake. O for a sanctified heart! Lord undertake for Thy unworthy creature and come not into judgement with me. Look upon me in the face of Thy dear Son, and when Thou lookest, forgive.

Account no sin little; Satan will tell you such a sin is a little sin, that thereby he may induce you to the commission of greater. But whatever some sins may be, considered comparatively, yet no sin, absolutely viewed, is little. Mind, O mind, there is no little God to be offended; no little law to be transgressed; no little hell to be punished in. And ponder this: that he who makes no conscience of avoiding these sins, which are less than others, will, if mercy prevent not, come at the length to make conscience of no sin.

Robert Shirra

“Mysteries” in the New Testament (1)¹

Rev D W B Somerset

The word “mystery” (Greek *musterion*) occurs 27 times in the Received Text of the New Testament, 22 times in the singular, “mystery”, and five times in the plural, “mysteries”. Christ, for example, speaks of “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 13:11; Lk 8:10), and Paul describes the apostles as “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1), and declares the unprofitableness of understanding “all mysteries and all knowledge” unless one has charity. There is the “mystery of iniquity” (2 Th 2:7), and the “mystery of the seven stars” (Rev 1:20) and so on.

According to a paper entitled “A Study of ‘Mystery’ in the New Testament” in *Grace Theological Journal* in 1985 by Galen Wiley, there was no “comprehensive monograph” on the word *musterion* at that date, and I am not aware of any that have appeared since. The work by the evangelical Church of Scotland professor Thomas Crawford (1812-1875), with the promising title, *Mysteries of Christianity* (1874), turns out to deal with “mysterious” doctrines such as the Trinity, the incarnation, election, and the Divine purposes, rather than following the New Testament usage of the word. There is a big overlap, of course, but the book sheds little light on many of the New Testament “mysteries”. The most useful general discussion of “mystery” that I have found is Richard Sibbes’ “Fountain Opened” on 1 Timothy 3:16 in volume 5 of his *Works*.

The purpose of this paper is to consider what is meant in the New Testament by a “mystery”; to try to organise the New Testament mysteries in some way; and to give a brief examination of all of them, especially those that tend to receive less attention.

1. The biblical meaning of the word. The biblical meaning of the word “mystery” is somewhat different from ordinary usage. The ordinary meaning of the word is: something which is *difficult to explain or understand, at least at present* – something which has puzzling features for which we cannot yet account.

A biblical mystery, on the other hand, is something which was *hidden and unobserved but has now been disclosed*: “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, *which was kept secret* since the world began, but *now is made manifest*, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all*

¹The first section of a paper delivered at the 2021 Theological Conference.

nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:25-26). So a biblical mystery is not necessarily difficult to understand intellectually, but is something that was kept secret, or largely so, by God until the time of disclosure.

Biblical mysteries have various spiritual features, the first of which is that it *takes spiritual insight to discern* a biblical mystery. It is “the wisdom of God in a mystery”: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:7,14).

The natural man looks at a biblical mystery and sees very little, or even nothing, and may be very dubious about the claimed disclosure, for example the doctrine of the resurrection: “Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor 15:51-52). The natural man rejects this, but the spiritual man sees by faith both the wonder of the Divine hand accomplishing the work and the Divine instruction intended.

A second feature, therefore, of a biblical mystery is that it has *an element of wonder*. The hand of God is behind it, and He is the God of wonders. One reason why the subject of New Testament mysteries deserves independent study is so that we do not miss any of these wonders that God has disclosed. What is the particular wonder in the “mystery of iniquity” (2 Th 2:7), or the “mystery of the seven stars” (Rev 1:20)? We shall try to think about these questions.

Closely related is the third point, which is that a biblical mystery has a special *element of instruction*. “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:9-10).

God’s purpose in sending Paul to preach the gospel was that, through the gospel and its effects in the salvation and edification of the Church, even the very angels might receive instruction in the manifold wisdom of God; and if they receive instruction, then certainly we do as well. We are not only to wonder at mysteries but to learn from them. God is teaching us about Himself and about Christ and about ourselves and about the Church, through these mysteries, and we need to give them particular attention. Ministers are “stewards of the mysteries”: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1). One purpose

of this paper is to give an “inventory” of the mysteries of God to ensure that we are not neglecting any special points of instruction.

2. *How many mysteries?* Is there one great mystery in the New Testament with many subordinate branches, or are there numerous mysteries on the same level? In his comment on 1 Timothy 3:16, Andrew Fausset (1821-1910) of the “Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown” commentary takes the position that there are six mysteries in the New Testament: the incarnation (1 Tim 3:16); the mystery of iniquity; the mystery of marriage; the union of Jew and Gentile in one body (Eph 3:4-6); the restoration of Jews; and the resurrection. On the other hand, Galen Wiley, in the paper referred to, thinks that there is just one central mystery, with various branches.

In this paper, somewhat tentatively, we take an intermediate position, along the lines of Richard Sibbes. We view the “mystery of godliness” (1 Tim 3:16) as the great mystery, and then group all other New Testament mysteries under the six heads that Paul gives there: “God was manifest in the flesh”, “justified in the Spirit”, “seen of angels”, “preached unto the Gentiles”, “believed on in the world”, “received up into glory”. This organisation may be a bit forced on occasion, but, for the purposes of this paper, it does at least reduce the number of headings to something manageable. We begin therefore by considering the great mystery, the mystery of godliness.

3. *The mystery of godliness.* In 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul says, “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory”. Many modern writers think that Paul was quoting an early Christian hymn, and I want to come back to this view later because I think it is an important error which Satan has used to deprive the Church of some of her riches. For the moment, I would just say that this view can be rejected out of hand because it is exceedingly improbable that an uninspired hymn-writer could have expressed so many profound and important truths in so few words. The theology of 1 Timothy 3:16 is far beyond that of the early Church, barring the Apostles. In his comments on the theology of the early Church, Herman Bavinck observes that the surviving writings show how little the early Church had entered into the depth and riches of the New Testament teaching.² The development of theology, and the “quarrying” of the Bible, has been a slow process, and there simply was not the theological understanding at that stage, apart from any other considerations.

Thayer’s *Lexicon* interprets “the mystery of godliness” as “the mystery which is held by godliness and which nourishes it”. We suppose that “the mystery of godliness” is to be identified with “the mystery of God” (Rev

²Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Baker Academic, 2006, vol 3, p 253.

10:7); and also with “the mystery of the faith” (1 Tim 3:9); but in one it is named according to its principal subject, “God”; in another according to its substance, “the faith” (“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)), and in yet another according to its practical effect in believers, “godliness”.

The six elements of this mystery of godliness, following Paul, are: (1) the incarnation of Christ (“manifest in the flesh”); (2) the justification of Christ (“justified in the Spirit”); (3) Christ’s appearance before angels (“seen of angels”); (4) the preaching of Christ as Saviour to men, and in particular to the Gentiles (“preached unto the Gentiles”); (5) the gift of faith (“believed on in the world”); (6) the exaltation of Christ (“received up into glory”). We will consider these six elements in turn.

The Angels (1)¹

Thomas Sproull

Included in the work of creation was a class of beings called angels; they are frequently mentioned in Scripture. The word rendered *angel* in English means a messenger in both Hebrew and Greek. Its application to the angels indicates one special end for which they were created.

We are taught in *The Larger Catechism* that “God created all the angels spirits, immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, to execute His commandments, and to praise His name, yet subject to change”. We shall consider:

1. The relation of angels to God as His creatures.

(1.) *God created them in the beginning.* On which of the six days the angels were made the narrative does not inform us. But from other parts of Scripture we learn that they were among the first effects of creative power. In the words of God to Job, this is made very evident: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . Who hath laid the measures thereof . . . or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7). By the “morning stars” and “the sons of God”, angels are unquestionably meant. We find mentioned “an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14) and “sons of God” (Job 1:6).

In the address to the king of Babylon, “How art thou fallen from heaven,

¹The first part of a chapter in Sproull’s *Prelections on Theology*, his lectures in the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. He lived from 1802 to 1892.

O Lucifer, son of the morning?” (Is 14:12), there is evidently a reference to the leader of the fallen spirits, to whom the haughty monarch is compared. He is called the son of the morning, or morning star. Those spiritual beings called by this name were witnesses of the phenomena of the third day of creation, when the waters were gathered together unto one place and the dry land appeared (Gen 1:9). It was then that the foundations of the earth were laid, amidst the joyous acclamations of these sons of the morning. In Psalm 104:4,5 the creation of angels and laying the foundations of the earth are placed together, as exhibiting the glory of God and as matters of praise and thanksgiving. “Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire; who laid the foundations of the earth.” There is probability in the conjecture that the angels were created on the first day, when God said, “Let there be light, and there was light”.

(2.) *God created the angels spiritual beings.* “Who maketh His angels spirits” (Heb 1:7). They have no bodily parts. “A spirit”, said Christ, after His resurrection, “hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have” (Lk 24:39). By this they are distinguished from men. But though their essence is spiritual, they are nevertheless finite and dependent.

Angels are persons. Each one of them has a personal subsistence. Personal acts are ascribed to them. They study the works of God: “Which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:12). To the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:10). Angels had communion with men: with Abraham (Gen 18:2), with Lot (Gen 19:1), with Jacob (Gen 32:1) and with others. An angel was sent to Zacharias and foretold to him the birth and mission of John the Baptist (Lk 1:11); and to Mary, making known to her that she was to be the mother of Jesus Christ (Lk 1:26). By the agency of angels, divine judgements were inflicted. An angel smote the Israelites with pestilence for the sin of David (2 Sam 24:17). By an angel the great body of the Assyrian army was cut off in one night (2 Ki 19:35).

When angels appeared as men, they assumed bodies provided for the occasion. These bodies were laid aside when they had served the end for which they were assumed. It is evident that, by an act of their will, they could assume their normal condition and disappear, as in the case of the angels that were at the sepulchre of Jesus Christ (Jn 20:12).

(3.) *Angels are endowed with great wisdom.* Wise “as an angel of God” is a proverbial expression used in Scripture (2 Sam 14:20, 19:27). Free from the encumbrance of bodies, their minds act directly on the objects that attract their notice, not through the organs of sense. To them there is no process of perception. Their minds conceive immediately the subject of thought. Not only

are their conceptions more clear and distinct than if received through outward channels but also the knowledge received will be more enlarged and varied. They cannot forget anything and they never err in reasoning from known facts. The angel that announced to the shepherds the birth of Jesus Christ was fully acquainted with the prophecies that foretold His advent and could state with certainty that the child born in Bethlehem was the promised Messiah.

(4.) *Angels are perfectly holy.* They were created perfectly holy and they never defiled themselves with sin. By the word *holy* they are distinguished from those that sinned. "When the Son of man shall come . . . and all the holy angels with Him" (Mt 25:31). They behold the face of God, who is "glorious in holiness" (Ex 15:11, Mt 18:10). Holiness with them is not a mere negative property, the absence of sinful dispositions and desires. It is an active principle pervading their whole being, stimulating them to holy deeds. The holiness of God is the object of their highest admiration and joyous praise. The seraphim in the vision Isaiah saw proclaimed the holiness of God: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts" (Is 6:3). And in the vision of John, the four living creatures are heard admiring this divine perfection. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (Rev 4:8).

In contemplating and admiring the holiness of God, these spiritual beings enjoy the highest degree of happiness of which their holy nature is capable. They worship God in the beauty of holiness. In His service they are diligently employed. Preserved in their fidelity when others fell, they devote themselves with unflinching energy to counteract the malign influence in the world of those who did not keep their first estate. Hating sin with the greatest abhorrence, they look forward with joyous expectation to the time when the kingdom of Christ shall be established in the world, and the whole "earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord".

(5.) *Angels possess great power.* We read that mighty angels shall attend on the Lord Jesus when He comes to judge the world (2 Th 1:7). They exercise power, both mental and physical. They exert a vast influence over the minds of men and effect unexpected changes in the apparent course of events. In one of the visions of Daniel we have a remarkable instance of this. At the close of his prayer recorded Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel appeared to him to give him knowledge of the future. In Daniel 10:12,13, we have an account of the influence that the angel employed in the Persian court. He spent 21 days in dealing with the prince, by suggestion, to induce him to favour the Jews; this he accomplished with the aid of Michael. A mighty change was effected in the affairs of the kingdom, that resulted in the restoration of the captive people to their own land.

How spirits can put forth physical power, we cannot understand. That

they can do so is clear from instances recorded in Scripture. An angel rolled away the great stone from the entrance of Christ's sepulchre (Mt 28:2). An angel opened the doors of the prison where the apostles were confined (Acts 5:19). An angel broke off the chains from Peter's hands and released him from bondage (Acts 12:7). Their power is employed in protecting the saints from dangers. Of this we are assured by the promise of God. "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps 91:11,12).

(6.) *Angels are very active.* They move with amazing swiftness. Heaven is their home. They are called the angels of heaven. Thence they are sent to all parts of the universe to do the will of God. If, as is probable, heaven is the centre of the works of God, at an immeasurable distance from the earth, with what inconceivable speed must they traverse the intervening space to perform the errands on which they are sent! We are informed that the angel Gabriel, "being caused to fly swiftly", came to Daniel "about the time of the evening oblation", before he had finished his prayer (Dan 9:21). He went forth to bear his message in answer to the prayer, at the beginning of the supplication, and now, before it was ended, he was present. The prayer is short; it could be repeated in a few minutes. Within that brief space of time the heavenly messenger had traversed the vast distance.

In the vision of Ezekiel, in the first chapter of his prophecy, there is a representation of the administration of the kingdom of providence. Angels are referred to as four living creatures, that came out of the midst of the fire (v 5). Of these it is said that they "ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightening" (v 14). It is evident that the comparison is intended to give an idea of the speed of their motion. The time that it takes the electric current to pass between the two most distant points connected by the wires is scarcely appreciable.

Quick as thought is an expression used to convey the idea of instantaneousness. Thought passes at once to the most distant point. The movements of the angels and of the saints in heaven may be as rapid as the operations of the mind. They may only need to think of a place and will to go to it, and be there at once. Whether or not this conjecture is correct, it is certain that they are speedy instruments to do the will of God.

(7.) *The angels are very numerous.* We read of an "innumerable company of angels" (Heb 12:22). In the vision of Daniel, "thousand thousands . . . and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before . . . the Ancient of Days" (Dan 7:10,13). John in the same way enumerates the angels that surround the throne (Rev 5:11). The service required of them shows that they are a vast multitude. They are ministering spirits for the saints, to counteract and foil

the attempts of evil spirits to do them harm. We read that a legion of devils were in one man (Lk 8:30). We may well conclude that a large number of holy angels are engaged in defeating their machinations.

(8.) *There are different orders among the angels.* They are the “principality and power”, above which Christ was exalted when He sat down on the right hand of God (Eph 1:21). And to them, as principalities and powers, is made “known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10). Their state in heaven is described by similar terms (Col 1:16). There is subordination among the fallen angels. Satan is called “the prince of devils” (Mt 9:34). This order, we conceive, was established in heaven before they were cast out for their rebellion.

(9.) *Angels are immortal.* The Lord says of the saints, when comparing their future with that of the angels: “Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels” (Lk 20:36) of God. Their immortality is not an inherent essential principle of their nature; God “only hath immortality” (1 Tim 6:16). They have an existence of eternal duration by the will of God.

Book Review

Select Practical Writings, by Robert Traill, published by the Banner of Truth Trust in their Puritan Paperbacks series, 282 pages, £6.25, obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

Those who are familiar with Traill’s savoury and searching sermons will agree with the statement in the Introduction to this edifying book: “Of the value of Traill’s writings it would now be superfluous to speak; that has been equally confirmed by his contemporaries, and by each succeeding generation. . . . They have recognised the vigour of his intellect, the conclusiveness of his reasoning, and the pure, simple and nervous [vigorous] style in which they have been embodied; and better still, they have appreciated the zeal, the sincerity, and fervent piety with which his writings are pervaded.”

The prefatory note says of him: “Friend of William Guthrie of Fenwick, attendant of James Guthrie of Stirling on the scaffold, son of the Greyfriars church manse where the 1638 Covenant was signed, Scot ordained in England, exile in Holland, prisoner on the Bass Rock, scholar, preacher and saint – Robert Traill lived to span the ripest period of the Puritan age”.

These select practical writings, first published in 1845 by the Free Church of Scotland and now part of the present publisher’s Puritan Paperbacks series, consist of 17 sermons. They are practical, not only in the sense that the preacher very closely applies to his hearers the doctrine expounded from the text,

but also that he handles particularly practical subjects such as, Frustrating the grace of God (six sermons on Galatians 2:21, "I do not frustrate the grace of God . . ."), "By What Means Ministers May Best Win Souls", Sinners entering in at the strait gate (three sermons), and Believers working out their salvation. Other sermons deal with God being a consuming fire, God being the Father of the godly, God revealing His deep things to the soul by His Spirit, and the unsearchable riches of Christ. The last two sermons in the book explain clearly the difficult passage, Hebrews 6:4-6, about the impossibility of restoring certain enlightened ones who have apostatised from their profession of Christianity.

"What is it to frustrate this grace of God?" Traill asks in his first sermon. He answers, "The word that I remember in the original is used, 'Ye make void' (or 'reject') 'the commandments of God'. . . . The true grace of God itself can never be frustrated; it always reaches its end, for it is almighty: but the doctrine of the grace of God is many times rejected. . . . The grace of God is an irresistible principle of salvation: never man had one mite of the grace of God but he was saved by it. Christ Jesus hath two quivers, if I may so say: there is a common quiver, out of which He draws some arrows, and shoots them at sinners, and they can fence against these well enough, and never be hurt by them; but then He hath other arrows, that are marked with His love, and sent by His power, and there is no guarding against them."

On winning souls, Traill says, "How little of Jesus Christ is there in some pulpits! . . . Whatever the law doth in alarming sinners, it is still the gospel-voice that is the key that opens the heart to Jesus Christ. Would ministers win souls? Let them have more of Jesus Christ in their dealing with men, and less of other things that can never profit them that are exercised therein."

He preached a most solemn and searching sermon, on God being a consuming fire, on a Thursday before the administration of the Lord's Supper in London (it was the first time he preached in the city). He was concerned about the lack of the holy, gracious fear of God and the weakness of it among many professing Christians, as evidenced especially by their loose conduct and light views of sin. Serious meditation on God, says Traill, is "the most clear token of a lively serious Christian. . . . Let a man set aside some time every day, or in the silent watches of the night, to muse and think again and again of God, and of what is revealed of Him in His word and works, and let the heart be exercised therein, and you will be finding light and life flowing in upon your soul; you will find fear of that glorious One quickening your soul."

His sermon on the unsearchable riches of Christ is truly a wonderful compendium of Scripture teaching on the person and work of the Saviour.

Towards the end of his third sermon on Matthew 7:13,14: "Enter ye in

at the strait gate . . . ”, he encourages believers: “After reflecting on and examining of your way, if you find you are in the strait way that leads to life, then, I exhort you, be cheerful: go on in the strength of the Lord. Your way hath a good end, and you shall shortly feel it: your helper is strong. Be painful and diligent; strive on, wrestle, press through all! Weary not of well-doing; mind your work heartily; your reward is sure. Bring forth your faith and patience, and use them nobly, for great shall be your victory in the latter end of the day.”

We heartily commend the prayerful perusal of this volume. There are parts of it which require more than ordinary concentration, but Traill is a master in rightly dividing the Word of God. May his *Select Practical Writings* be blessed to many to bring them to be doers of the Word. (Rev) *N M Ross*

Protestant View

Praying to the “Saints”

The awful corruption exhibited in the worship of the Church of Rome extends to the adoration of images (which was noted in a previous comment) and also to praying to the “saints” and to venerating their relics. It is important that Protestants have an intelligent understanding of the biblical reasons why such practices are idolatrous and why, consequently, any participation in Romish worship is sinful.

The English theologian Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699) responded to the popish argument that Revelation 5:8 is a reference to the saints making ongoing intercession in heaven. He maintained that the prayers of the saints mentioned there refers to their prayers on earth, not to any ongoing intercession in heaven.¹

Stillingfleet also dealt with the suggestion that praying to the saints in heaven is no different from requesting a believer on earth to pray on one’s behalf. He noted that requesting prayer from a Christian on earth involves no danger of believing that they are in a position to grant the blessing we desire, whereas invoking the “saints” in heaven may very readily lead to the false idea that they actually have the power to bestow such blessings as might be requested. This is to attribute divine powers to mere creatures and, when introduced into services of worship, makes such worship idolatrous. While Rome professes not to hold such a view, in practice it encourages that very thing. Rome teaches that departed believers are “mediators of intercession”

¹Stillingfleet, *The Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome Truly Represented*, Edinburgh 1845, pp. 81-91.

but not “mediators of redemption”. It is this subtle and unbiblical distinction which Roman Catholics use to justify including the names of “saints” in their prayers while they are professing to call upon God.

In his notes on Stillingfleet’s work, William Cunningham refers to the Romanist dogma that God grants spiritual blessings through the merits and grace of the saints. This deadly teaching not only leads to idolatrous worship; it entirely subverts the scheme of salvation through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The Word of God unambiguously asserts that there is “one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5) and that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” but that of Christ (Acts 4:12). *AWM*

Notes and Comments

Online Abuse

There is much hateful abuse in circulation at the moment. To some extent this may always have been the case, but the internet and social media now allows so-called “trolls” to express their opinions immediately and anonymously in a way they would have had no outlet for in the past. Lack of respect for authority and indifference to the feelings of others fuel online abuse. By changing letters in offensive words, writers avoid the censorship of the search engine, but the threats and filthy language are obvious. Since the Fall, the heart of man has been “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), but the Evil One is taking advantage of the ease of modern communication to stir people up to share publicly the wickedness and hatred that is in their hearts.

The abuse received by members of all parties in all the UK assemblies is shocking, with female members being particularly singled out. The Labour MP, Diane Abbot, said, “When I was a new member of parliament, you might get one racist letter a week. But that was because if you were racist and you wanted to abuse an MP, you had to write a letter, you had to put it in an envelope, you had to put a stamp on it and you had to put it in the letter-box. Now, some days, we can get hundreds of items of abuse, depending on what happened the previous day. It’s the volume of it which makes it so debilitating, so corrosive, and so upsetting. It’s the sheer volume and the sheer level of hatred that people are showing.” Some MPs did not stand for re-election at recent polls, and some who were elected are thinking of resigning because of the constant abuse and threats of physical and sexual violence, and even death, to themselves and their family members.

Another example is the treatment meted out to those who do not go along with the agenda put forward by the “trans” community. The novelist, J K Rowling, is still under attack for saying that there are two sexes, male and female, and standing firmly by that. The university professor, Kathleen Stock, asserted that we are created male and female and was hounded into resigning by a combination of wilful ignorance of her published work on the subject of gender, and juvenile hysteria. Our national acquiescence in the LGBTQ+ agenda can be described by this quote from the American philosopher and mathematician, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, who says, “Quite small minorities can corral large but quiescent majorities into apparent obedience to the minority conviction, so long as the minority are fiercely intolerant, and the latter disposed to opt for a quiet life. Particularly this is true where deferring to the minority doesn’t too greatly inconvenience the majority.”

A further sad example of online abuse is the dreadful bullying which goes on between school children. The cruelty is considerable and terribly malicious. Self-worth is stripped to unbearably low levels; this has in some cases resulted in the suicide of the victims. One doesn’t expect children to be so hardened in their wickedness as this form of behaviour would indicate. The lack of a Christian upbringing must play a part.

Truly “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” (Prov 12:10). The Lord Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Lk 10:27). *FRD*

The Cairngorm Tragedy and the Sabbath

The Cairngorm tragedy of November 1971 has recently been in the public eye on its fiftieth anniversary. Five teenage schoolchildren and a group leader died on the Cairngorm plateau when they got trapped in a blizzard for two days. They ascended around Saturday lunchtime, meaning to spend the night in a bothy and then to return a different way on the Sabbath, but they could not navigate in the blizzard and they never reached the bothy.

Many lessons were learned from the sad event, regarding both school trips and mountaineering arrangements, but one lesson that was not learned had to do with honouring the Sabbath. As with many other mountaineering mishaps, if the victims (and their parents) had respected the Sabbath, they would not have been on the mountain at that time. “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to

ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Is 58:13,14).

DWBS

Judging Right Judgement

One consequence of the Cairngorm tragedy was the demolition of three “emergency shelters” which the army had built on Cairngorm. The first party from the school trip reached one of these stone shelters and survived, but the second party failed to do so and was trapped in the open, with six out of eight dying.

Opinions were divided as to the wisdom of retaining the shelters. On the one hand, the shelters had saved the lives of the members of the first party; on the other hand, the shelters had contributed to the deaths in the second party because the children would not have been on Cairngorm plateau in such circumstances had the shelters not existed. Furthermore the shelters were badly situated, sometimes disappearing under feet of snow for the winter, and there had been calls for their demolition even before the tragedy occurred. After much discussion and disagreement, even among mountain-rescue experts, the shelters were demolished in 1975.

In online comments on the Cairngorm tragedy, the demolition of these shelters receives recurring denunciation. Many lay hold on the obvious argument that “shelters save lives” and do not realise that there were strong arguments on the other side as well. Because they can grasp one obvious aspect, they assume that they have a full understanding of the whole issue, from which they infer that the demolition of the shelters was a stupid and thoughtless response to the tragedy and worthy of condemnation. The idea that one simple argument automatically suffices to settle a discussion is the essence of a trap. The hungry animal sees a clear reason for entering the trap, but misses the even stronger reason for staying out.

“The Lord is a God of judgement” (Is 30:18), and one aspect of the image of God in man is that we should be judicious in the exercise of judgment. We must be ready to hear opposing points of view and come at last to a balanced conclusion. “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas 1:19). “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Prov 18:13).

DWBS

Church Information

Student Licensed

At its meeting on November 23, the Zimbabwe Presbytery licensed Mr T Mwedzi to preach the gospel.

(Rev) *S Khumalo*, Clerk of Presbytery

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:** 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.
- North Tolsta:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thursday 7.30 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. No F P services at present.
- Perth:** Pomarium, off Leonard Street. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev A B MacLean, 5 Main Road, Luncarty, PH1 3EP; tel: 01738 828762.
- 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 Gattley. 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.

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:graffton@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@aap.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 Levytskyi; tel: 00 38 048 785 19 24; e-mail: dlevytskyy@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.by@gmail.com.

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

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

New Canaan: Church.

Zenka: Church.

Free Presbyterian Church Bookroom

133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE Tel: 0141 332 1760

E-mail: sales@fpbookroom.org

Book Selection

	RRP	Offer
Addresses to Young Men by John Angell James Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2020, pbk, 499 pp	£14.99	£11.99
Charity and Its Fruits by Jonathan Edwards Crossway, 2012, pbk, 348 pp	£23.99	£18.49
The Parable of the Ten Virgins by Thomas Shepard Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2006, hbk, 635 pp	£19.99	£15.99
The Pastor of Kilsyth by Islay Burns Banner of Truth, 2019 [1860], hbk, 305 pp	£12.50	£9.99
The Story of the Scottish Church by Thomas M'Crie Free Presbyterian Publications, hbk, 592 pp	£14.50	£11.49

(Postage is extra)

Subscription rates, including postage:

FP Magazine £26.00 (£2.00 per copy) • YP Magazine £15.00 (£1.00 per copy)

Combined £39.00