

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

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

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

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Communions

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

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

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

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

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

June: First Sabbath: Perth; **Second:** Nkayi, North Uist, Santa Fe; **Fourth:** Gairloch; **Fifth:** Bulawayo, Inverness.

July: First Sabbath: Beauly; **Second:** Bonar Bridge, Uig; **Third:** Applecross, Auckland, Fort William; **Fourth:** Cameron, Vatten.

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

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

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

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

December: Third Sabbath: Bulawayo, Santa Fe.

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Where Are We Today?

As we draw towards the close of another year and look back, it is obvious that religion and morality in the Western world have continued on the downward trajectory they have followed for many decades. The Bible – the Word of God – is increasingly rejected as an authority of any kind; God Himself is despised and His Commandments are treated as if they had no authority whatever. Attendance on public worship goes on decreasing in most churches, even where great efforts are made to make that “worship” attractive to the carnal mind. Many sins are becoming more prevalent, not least those forbidden by the Seventh Commandment. There has always been a degree of immorality, but now immorality has become almost totally shameless. Even what is unnatural is flaunted by the media and celebrated in huge Pride marches. A false morality demands not only that unnatural lust be tolerated, but affirmed, causing serious problems for some people, in the course of their work for instance.

Yet God still says to everyone: “Thou shalt not commit adultery”. Man has been in rebellion against God almost from the very beginning, when Adam rejected the authority of his Creator’s command; but there is a particular degree of rebelliousness today. As perhaps never before – certainly in Western countries – people are trying to live as if there is no God. But there most definitely is a God, whose revelation of Himself in Scripture may be summed up in the words of *The Shorter Catechism*: “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth” (Ans 4). Never, probably, have more copies of the Scriptures been available, and certainly never before have they been available in more of the world’s languages – which is something very positive, and a great blessing for that time when “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Is 52:10).

Yet, at present, God is more and more removing the restraint that He imposes, in one degree or another, in every generation. He is leaving this generation to itself to a greater extent than has been seen for many generations. What we very much need is that the Lord, in infinite mercy, would

pour out His Spirit in abundance. Then there will be a widespread willingness to acknowledge God, to search His Scriptures, to trust in Him at all times, and to ask Him: “What wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

In the past, and in restricted areas, there have been times of great gospel blessing. The scene in Jerusalem, on the Day of Pentecost, should quickly spring to mind as an obvious example – when 3000 souls obtained mercy.

The time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century was a time of widespread revival. We may notice John Knox’s description of the effects of George Wishart’s preaching: “Master George was required to come to the Kirk of Mauchline, as he did. But the Sheriff of Ayr caused [men to come to] the Kirk for the preservation of a tabernacle [which held the “host”] that was there, beautiful to the eye. Some zealous [men] of the parish, among whom was Hugh Campbell of Kinyeancluch, offended that they should be debarred [from] their parish kirk, concluded by force to enter. But Master George withdrew Hugh Campbell, and said unto him: ‘Brother, Christ Jesus is as potent upon the fields as in the Kirk. He Himself oftener preached in the desert, at the sea side, and in other places judged profane [non-religious], than He did in the Temple of Jerusalem. It is the word of peace that God sends by me. The blood of no man shall be shed this day for the preaching of it.’

“So, withdrawing the whole people, he came to a dyke . . . upon the south-west side of Mauchline, upon which he ascended, the multitudes standing and sitting about him. God gave the day pleasing and hot, and he continued in preaching more than three hours. In that sermon, God wrought so wonderfully with him that one of the most wicked men in the country, Lawrence Rankin . . . was converted. The tears ran from his eyes in such abundance that all men wondered. His conversion was without hypocrisy, for his life and conversation witnessed it in all times to come.”¹ Knox only mentions one convert; very possibly there were others; certainly there were many others who, during the years leading up to 1560 in various parts of Scotland, turned from dead works to serve the living God.

Another example of an outpouring of the Spirit was in 1742. In Scotland, particularly prominent was the revival in two districts not far from Glasgow, Kilsyth and Cambuslang. James Robe, parish minister of Kilsyth, had for two years been preaching on the new birth and the work of the Holy Spirit; while William M’Culloch, minister of the Cambuslang parish had preached for almost a year on regeneration, besides holding many prayer meetings.

“The whole neighbourhood soon appeared to be wrapped in a flame of spiritual influence. Distress for sin fell on great numbers, who sometimes manifested their emotion in convulsive sobbings and protestations most difficult

¹Knox, *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, London, 1898 reprint, p 54.

to subdue. When they apprehended the grace of God in Christ, their distress was followed by a peace and joy in believing of almost rapturous intensity, and a marvellous relish for the word and ordinances of God. And according to the testimony of those most cognisant of the movement, the change effected on the subjects of the awakening was highly beneficial, not only in its religious but in its moral and social aspects. Where vice had prevailed, it was abandoned, injuries were forgiven, estranged families reconciled, restoration made of property that had been unjustly appropriated, and a new conscientiousness manifested in matters where before there had been much remissness.”² Large numbers of people were brought into the kingdom of God in these two places, many of whom had travelled from some distance to hear the Word preached, but there was also significant gospel blessing in many other parts of the country at that time.

In the nineteenth century, Kilsyth in particular was to see, in 1839, a further significant work of grace, under William Burns, the local minister. Prominent among those who assisted him in the work of that time was his son William Chalmers Burns. The younger Burns was to go to China as a missionary, but he was only one of a large number of missionaries who went to various parts of the world in an attempt to bring sinners, who were then walking in heathen darkness, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. This was a time when Christianity was expanding rapidly, when significant numbers of sinners were being rescued in areas where Satan’s kingdom had been carrying all before it.

Yet that same nineteenth century saw the seeds being sown of many of the unbelieving forces that have caused so much damage in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Some of that damage has already been referred to in this article; it shows us, in very brief compass, *where we are today*. Yet we must not despair; God is still working. He is still bringing sinners out of darkness into God’s marvellous light; He is still building up His people in their most holy faith and preparing them for heaven.

But what we have also seen – in references to previous centuries – is that God is able to do wonderful things on a much wider scale than we, at least in the Western world, are seeing today. How will that take place? It will be by the same means as are being used today where the gospel is faithfully preached. There will no doubt be increased earnestness and prayerfulness, but it will be as, in the time of the apostles, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:21). Let us then seek grace to pray that the Lord would pour out His Spirit on a large scale and send out many to preach the gospel to this needy generation.

²William G Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, Banner of Truth reprint, 2001, p 257.

“Sinners Shall Be Converted” (5)¹

A Sermon by John Duncan

Psalm 51:13. *Sinners shall be converted unto Thee.*

The conversion of sinners is a matter in which the gracious God takes the deepest interest. Sinners are not concerned about conversion ordinarily. Sinners are lost, but it does not much matter to them that they are lost. They do not fully know it. They are not altogether ignorant of it – conscience speaks in every man more or less, but they are not fully aware of it, and they are not willing to be so. The voice of conscience is very feeble in fallen man; the voice of depravity very loud and imperious, and it silences conscience. But while sinners are not objects of compassion to themselves, they are objects of compassion to God.

Fools, hating wisdom – Christ, the wisdom of God – love death. Not by design, but really they love death. They love what death is indissolubly connected with, and so they love death. Looking at death, they do not love it, but looking at sin – what death is the wages of – they do love sin; and they love sin so much that they will take it with death, rather than be without it. In short, they dislike death much, but they love sin so well that they will take it even with death. That is the sinner’s mind, and what is God’s mind? It is hardly credible, so He swears to it: “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?”

Sinners are lost. Who has lost us? God has lost us. And so, though sinners are under the curse of God, they are of interest to Him still, considering sinners as His lost ones. God’s lost ones – not so lost as to be out of His mind and concern. He has sent His Son, and the Son of man has come to seek and save that which was lost. O sinner, lay it to heart. Your conversion, perhaps, concerns you little; your conversion concerns your God much. You love death – that is, you love sin so well as to take it, death and all, and keep it, death and all – and you little care about returning to God, from whom you have gone away. But God cares. Mark this: if you are not converted, or turned, you die; God will pay you the wages of sin – death.

But He says He has no pleasure in it, that He prefers conversion to death. Lay this to heart, sinner, that you must be converted or damned, and that God calls you to turn rather than be damned. You will observe that David in this Psalm, when praying for the restoration of the joy of God’s salvation,

¹The last sermon on this text; it was preached in Edinburgh in 1857 and is taken, with editing, from Duncan’s *Pulpit and Communion Table*. The previous sermon in this series appeared in the August 2023 issue of this *Magazine*.

urges this as a motive: “Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee”. And let believers in their penitence make use of it too. David therefore knew that God was interested in the conversion of sinners; how otherwise would he make such a vow?

Again, the conversion of a sinner unto God is a possible thing. It is a very difficult thing, yet a possible thing. Of sinners, all away from God, there are degrees of sinfulness. Even while the latent depravity of mankind is complete, the growth of this root of bitterness is in some more, in some less. Yet the conversion of the least sinner is very difficult, and the conversion of the greatest sinner is possible. Of the least sinner it is so difficult that it is only by omnipotent grace that it is possible.

Therefore, from the very consideration that it is omnipotent grace which makes the conversion of the chief of sinners possible, do not say then, O sinner, My conversion is impossible. Instead say, My conversion is the alternative of my damnation; my damnation is inevitable if I am not converted; but my conversion, through God’s grace, is something possible. “Sinners shall be converted unto Thee.”

And if there is anyone here whose heart is so far turned that he prefers conversion to damnation, then it is very likely that he will be struck with the difficulty of conversion. For he who truly prefers conversion to damnation is beginning to attempt to turn, and he who attempts it finds its difficulty. No man knows this as a mere theory, as a mere doctrine; but when a man tries conversion – when he attempts obedience to the command of God, “Make you a new heart” – he finds that he cannot change his own heart. But in that position, there is encouragement from this, that whatever God may do with *the sinner*, “*sinners shall be converted*”.

Mark, the difficulty you feel is this, that you cannot make yourself a new heart; and that difficulty lies not mainly in the uniqueness of your sinfulness. I say, not *mainly*; for “can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are *accustomed* to do evil.” This speaks of custom in wickedness as an additional difficulty. But the main difficulty lies in the depravity of nature, and that is common to you with all sinners. Well, there are some things of which Christ says that they are impossible with men, but possible with God, and your conversion, O sinner, is one among them.

Again, God has appointed means for the conversion of sinners. The conversion of sinners is not accomplished by mere moral persuasion; it is by divine power. Yet it is not so entirely by divine power that there is no use of moral persuasion – of counsels, motives and means, such as may operate on rational creatures. Therefore, sinner, if you desire conversion, be very attentive

to God's appointed means of grace. "I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

Therefore, sinner desiring conversion, see that you are very attentive to those who teach God's ways – to God Himself in His Word teaching us, to the ministry of the Word, and to all admonitions from Christian men, from all such as teach the knowledge of God's ways. For it appears that, in order to a sinner's being converted, the knowledge of God's ways is needed. Sinners, fools, "know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgement of their God". Therefore, sinner intending conversion, surely you will be asking, Who is this God? What is He? What are the ways of this God? What is the character, the way, the method of procedure of this God, from whom I have gone away and who is calling me to return?

Again, conversion is unto God. "Sinners shall be converted *unto Thee*." Now, I suppose there is nothing about conversion that sinners, even if they are in some seriousness about complying with God's call to turn, are more apt to go astray upon than this – conversion is unto God. Sinners convinced of sin find their need of conversion; and they endeavour to turn from sin to righteousness, from sin to duty, from their evil ways to good ways. That is very common, because it comes more home to the natural conscience. The knowledge of sin is by the law; therefore, when the conscience is enlightened concerning sin, the sinner turns to the law. Nor do I speak of this with thorough disapprobation – far from it.

Yet those who attempt it, if God has begun a work of grace in their souls, will find disappointment in the very attempt. In seeking to turn from sin unto duty, they will find this out: that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good;" but they are "carnal, sold under sin". So they will be brought at last to this, Unless God will interpose I am lost. True, I am welcome back again; true, if I come to God by Christ I shall be received – but I cannot come. The sinner first of all finds that he is insufficient for duty, then says, I will come to Christ, but he finds that he is as insufficient for that duty as for the other. He is so far brought off from seeking to turn from sin unto duty, and then seeks to turn from sin unto Christ when he finds himself just as unable to do that.

But, blessed be God, He is Triune – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And so the sinner is brought to realise the need of a salvation altogether of God – of the Father, in His eternal purpose and love; of the Son, in His redeeming work; and of the Spirit, as the Applier of the redemption purchased by Christ. He is shut up to Jehovah, God. "Sinners shall be converted *unto Thee*." "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth,

with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it *unto God*.” It is not said, doth turn from sin unto duty, from sin unto holiness, but “doth . . . turn from it *unto God*”.

When we turned from God, what was it to? To sin. And there is a sinner turning, and what is he to turn from? From sin. And what is he to turn unto? Unto God. That is a very solemn thing. But it was by turning from God that we turned to sin; and turn as we like, till we turn to God we are godless. If we turn from unconcern to concern, very good; if we turn from thoughtlessness to careful thought, so far exceedingly good. But observe, we are in a godless state in the midst of that, and we continue in a godless state till we turn to God. When a sinner turns from neglect of the means of grace to hearing the Word and to prayer, it is good – they are God’s ordinances, and He may bless them to him. But the written Word, glorious as it is, is not God; and prayer is not God. Prayer without turning to God is meaningless; yet to the meaningless thing the sinner will turn. But to turn unto God: ah, he shrinks from that; objections start up in multitudes, but mainly these two things: the love of sin and distrust of God’s grace.

Observe, the sinner turning to God is in a certain sense undoing what Adam did. There is a sense in which he cannot: he cannot atone for sin, and he cannot regenerate himself. But the sinner turning to God undoes it in this sense, that Adam went away, and he in conversion turns and comes back. Now, what made man *go* from God makes him *keep* from God. And that is chiefly the love of sin. In turning to God through Christ, the sinner will be saved from sin, as well as from its effects. Now, when the principle of depravity – of indwelling sin – finds that turning to God is to be its death, it informs the soul of this. Indwelling sin knows that whatever else the man may attempt he cannot stop it; but it says, If this man goes to the gracious Lord God, it will be the death of me; I shall get my death-wound in conversion; I shall be wasted away in sanctification and at last annihilated.

And the depravity of nature will not lie down like a lamb to be killed; that is one reason why the sinner will not turn to God. But his sin will not stand in the way of superabounding grace; the mercy of God flowing through Christ will stand out against all the greatest sin. And the Holy Ghost can implant in the soul a holy principle to contend with sin, and can also maintain the conflict till at last this holy principle is victorious. God can well do that, but the sinner does not want it done.

Another reason is distrust of God’s grace. The sinner loves sin, and so does not want to be converted; then also he distrusts grace; he does not credit that God will find it in His heart to do such a thing. The love of sin says, I must not return to this holy Lord God, for it will be the death of this beloved sin.

Unbelief says, A holy, just God will not receive me; if I go back to Him it will be presumption. But God says, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Sinner, will you be converted? Do you wish that God would convert you? Or are you set on being unconverted, on living unconverted and dying unconverted? Sinner, God is condescending to swear to you that He has no pleasure in your death; and yet He tells you that, if unconverted, you must die. We speak it reverently: God will be compelled to damn you. What is it you prefer to God? What is it? Is it better than He? One thing follows if you prefer anything to God: you must say, Adam and Eve did very right in forsaking Him; for it is better to stay where they brought us than to go to Christ, and through Him return to God; they did very right to go away, and I will stay away.

Then you must think that Jesus Christ came on a very bad errand, to separate sinners from their sins. He calls it salvation, but you must think it the worst thing He could do for them; for you still choose to retain yours. You must disapprove of God in creation and in the covenant of works – in His making man in His own image, for the end of glorifying and enjoying Him – for you say, Sin is better. You must approve of Satan, and of the act of Adam and Eve, whereby they brought you into that position in which you are well pleased to remain. You must disapprove of Jesus Christ and His mission, and must disapprove of the Holy Ghost convincing of sin and misery, testifying of Christ, and bringing sinners to Him. In short, you approve of the devil, the world and the flesh; and you disapprove of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. What kind of creature are you who does this? What kind of creatures are we all who, if left to ourselves, would do this?

But God has devised a way for bringing back His banished, and He has set His heart on the conversion of sinners. And, be they who they may, "sinners shall be converted". God says, "Yet will I gather others . . . beside those that are gathered". "Turn Thou us, and we shall be turned; for Thou art Jehovah our God."

The believer being persuaded that he is guilty of more sins than he had got a clear sight of, as he would bewail his condition before God because of these, and sorrow for them after a godly manner, so he would take them together in a heap, or as a closed bagful, and by faith nail them to the cross of Christ, as if they were all distinctly seen and known."Who can understand his errors?" said David (Ps 19:12), yet says he moreover, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

John Brown (of Wamphray)

The New Covenant¹

2. With Whom Does God Make a Covenant?

William Bridge

Fourthly, who are the subjects of this covenant, and who are the persons that God makes this covenant with?

This covenant of grace is not made with all the individual men in the world; God made a new covenant with the house of Israel, not with all the individual men in the world. If this new covenant of grace were made with all the individual men in the world, they would all have the law of God written in their hearts and would all know God and all have their sins pardoned, for so says the covenant, by an absolute promise which must be fulfilled.

On this account, it follows that Christ did not die for every individual man in the world, for Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant. Therefore if the new covenant is not made with every man, Christ did not die for every man. But the new covenant is not made with all the individual men in the world, as you have heard.

Neither is it made with all that live under the gospel. Though Ishmael lived in Abraham's house, and so the skirt of the covenant might be thrown over him, yet God says, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called". A man may be in a church, yet not of the church; as a man may be in a house and yet not of the house. This covenant is not made with all the individual men that live under the gospel.

But who is it made with? On the one hand, it is natural to a heathen to do the work of nature, because the law of nature is written in his heart. But on the other hand, plainly, if the law of the gospel is written in your hearts, so that it is natural for you to do the work of the gospel², then is this covenant made with you, for thus runs the covenant, I will write my law in your hearts.

If you are taught by God, you have a holy instinct to what is good. As the bee, being taught by God, finds the way home to the hive by instinct; and the lamb, being taught by God, finds out its mother among a thousand sheep; so I say, If you are taught by God, having an holy instinct unto what is good, then you are in covenant with God; for thus runs the covenant, You shall all know Me, and every one shall be taught by God.

¹Taken with editing from a sermon on "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb 12:24). It comes from *The Works of William Bridge*, vol 3. Last month's article answered the question, "What kind of covenant is it?"

²Especially to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (Jn 6:29). (Ed.)

If a heart of stone is taken away and a yielding heart is given unto you, whereby you yield to the impressions God makes on you, to God's instructions and to God's corrections, then you are in covenant with God; for thus runs the covenant: I will take away the heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh. A heart of flesh is a yielding heart.

If you are begotten again to God by the promise, especially the absolute promise, then are you in covenant with God. Abraham had two sons: the child of the bondwoman and the child of the freewoman. The Apostle says these were types, and wherein did they differ? Why, the child of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but the child of the freewoman was born by the promise – only by the promise, an absolute promise. Therefore I say, If you are born again by the promise, the absolute promise, then you are in covenant with God.

And to say no more but this, if you are the seed of Christ, then is this covenant made with you, for it is made with Christ and His seed; and if you are Abraham's seed, you are the seed of Christ; for you may see how they go together, in Galatians 3: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." And if you believe as Abraham did, then you are Abraham's seed. Thus you see briefly who this covenant is made with and who are the subjects of it.

The Gospel – a Report to Be Believed¹

Thomas Boston

(1.) The gospel is a report from heaven of *salvation* for poor sinners, from sin and from the wrath of God. However dearly bought, it is yet freely made over to you in the word of promise, so that you may freely take possession of it. This report being brought to the sinner, faith trusts it as a true report, believing that God has said it; and the sinner trusts to it as good, laying his own salvation upon it. So the soul embraces the Saviour and the salvation brought to it in that report, as greedily as ever a drowning man would take hold of a rope let down to bring him out of the waters.

(2.) The gospel is the report of *a crucified Christ* made over to sinners, as the device of heaven for their salvation. It is proclaimed by the authority of heaven that Christ has died and by His death purchased life and salvation for lost children of Adam; and that they may have full and free access to Him.

¹This quotation from Boston is taken with editing from Alexander Hall's *Treatise on the Faith and Influence of the Gospel*.

Faith trusting this report as true and good, the soul concludes, The Saviour is mine. And the soul leans to Him for all the purchase of His death, for life and salvation to itself in particular.

(3.) The gospel is the report of *a righteousness* wherein guilty ones may stand before a holy God: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”; and by faith one believes there is such a righteousness, that it is sufficient to cover him, and that it is held out to him to be trusted on for righteousness. And so the believer trusts it as his righteousness in the sight of God, disclaiming all other, and betaking himself to it alone.

(4.) The gospel is the report of *pardon* under the great seal of heaven, in Christ, to all who will take it through Him: “Be it known unto you . . . that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things”. This pardon is proclaimed openly by the authority of heaven, full and free, to all, without exception, of any of Adam’s lost race to whom the report comes. The soul by faith believes this to be true, and applies it to itself, saying, This pardon is for me; it is good and suitable to my case; I will therefore lean to this word of grace for my pardon, and come in, for this is the word of God, who cannot lie.

(5.) The gospel is the report of *a physician* that cures all the diseases of the soul infallibly and freely, and rejects no patient. The soul believes it, applies it to its own case and says, Then I will trust Him for removing the stony heart out of my flesh, for curing me of the evil of backsliding, the fever of raging corruption, the running issue of the predominant lust, and the universal leprosy of the corruption of my nature.

(6.) The gospel is the report of *a feast* for hungry souls, to which all are bid welcome, Christ Himself being the maker and the matter of it too. The soul, weary of the husks of created things and believing this report, accordingly falls a-feeding on Christ: His flesh, which is meat indeed, and His blood, which is drink indeed. The soul believes and applies to itself all that Christ was, did and suffered, as what the soul shall reap the benefit of – which is feeding by faith on a slain Saviour.

(7.) The gospel is the report of *a treasure*. In it are the precious promises, and within them is precious Christ with His merit, like the gold mentioned in Revelation 3:18: “I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich”. The field it is hid in may be yours in possession; the gospel offers you the covenant as that field. Faith believes this report, and the soul lays hold on the covenant and trusts entirely to the treasure hidden there for the payment of all its debt, for its through-bearing during life, and through death, and for procuring it eternal happiness.

(8.) The gospel is the report of *a victory* won by Jesus Christ over sin,

Satan, death and the world. It is in favour of all that will join the glorious Conqueror. Faith believes this report, and the soul trusts to it for its victory over all these, as already-foiled enemies.

(9.) The gospel is the report of a *peace*, purchased by the blood of Christ for poor sinners and offered to them. Faith believes it; and trusting to it, the soul comes before God as a reconciled Father in Christ, brings in its supplications before the throne for the supply of its needs, and for believing communication to be opened between heaven and them, which was blocked up during the war that existed between them and God.

The Reformation in Italy¹

7. Further Persecution

After Ochino² fled, those in Lucca who held the same views were in danger – among them Peter Martyr, who, as well as being prior of a monastery, was pastor of a Reformed congregation. Increasing persecution was making his position in Lucca untenable and he expected that he would be forbidden to preach, through the actions of the Pope or the city authorities or his monastic order. When Martyr wrote to his congregation in Lucca to explain why he had to flee, he acknowledged that they would find it difficult “to be deprived of that spiritual comfort which God sometime gave you by my sermons, lectures and conferences which I had with you”. He encouraged them with the thought that the Holy Spirit was able to give them greater strength than before, so that there would be no damage to their salvation. He told his people that he was grieved that he had ever obscured the truth; he was now recognising that he ought to have been more explicit in his past preaching. He stated that “these sermons, lectures and conferences could not endure any longer, unless they would either have darkened the truth, or have professed things which are plainly false”.³

He wrote to those who were aware of his previous “troubles wherewith my conscience was vexed, because of that state of life which I followed”. If he was to go on as before, he told them: “I should every day have winked at an innumerable sort of superstitions; I should not only myself have executed

¹The final part of a Theological Conference paper, somewhat enlarged. The previous part, last month, spoke of a time of increasing persecution, under the Roman Inquisition. Page numbers in the text refer to Thomas M’Crie, *History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy in the Sixteenth Century*, Edinburgh and London, 1856.

²For Ochino, see last month’s article.

³Philip McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, Oxford, 1967, p 263.

superstitious rites, but should also without all reason have required them of others: many things should I have done otherwise than I judged or taught.”⁴ Martyr’s conscience was now awake to the sinfulness of continuing in his present position, observing rites such as the mass, which he described as “superstitions” – rites that were, he now thoroughly recognised, altogether unscriptural. If he would continue any longer within the Roman system, he would not only be observing these rites himself but requiring those under him to carry them out also. A twentieth-century historian notes, “It was doubtless the celebration of the mass that tormented his conscience most. . . . Martyr, who was to become one of the foremost and most formidable champions of Reformed [teaching on the Lord’s Supper], was already in substantial agreement with Bullinger, Calvin and Zwingli.”⁵

Martyr rode quietly away from Lucca in 1542, bound for Switzerland. As he crossed the Alps, he prayed, “Since Thou, my Lord, hast dealt so mercifully with me, as Thou wouldest make me partaker of Thy truth and reveal unto me my Redeemer Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, grant moreover, I beseech Thee, that this treasure of Thy holy gospel lately written in my heart, may with me be preserved, increase and bring forth fruit, in whatsoever sort it shall seem good unto Thee. And for my part, behold, I offer myself unto Thee, even as it shall seem good unto Thy will. . . .”⁶ Accompanied by some other fugitives, Martyr arrived, at the end of his long journey, in Zurich, where he received a warm welcome. Through Martin Bucer, the Reformer of Strasbourg, Martyr was given an academic appointment in that city. In 1547 he became Professor of Divinity in Oxford University but again had to flee when Queen Mary came to the throne. He died in 1562 in Zurich. The Protestant congregation in Lucca continued after Martyr left; it was protected by some influential men in the city, and numbers even increased for a time.

The Inquisition had originally been founded in the twelfth century. When the Pope became afraid that whole cities, such as Lucca, would leave the Roman Church – as Geneva, for instance, had done – he reconstituted the Roman Inquisition in 1542, with Caraffa, later to become pope Paul IV, as Inquisitor-General. That brutal institution was to try all cases of heresy, but it did not have that power in every country. M’Crie states that “Popish historians do more homage to truth than credit to their cause when they say that the erection of the Inquisition was the salvation of the Roman Catholic Church in Italy” (p 123). There could now be no hope that those accused of heresy would receive justice, and many Protestants fled. The Inquisition

⁴McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, p 267.

⁵McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, p 268.

⁶McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, p 293.

filled their prisons with those who remained. In most of Italy, public profession of the Protestant religion was suppressed. Yet private meetings continued and the Inquisition spent 20 years seeking to rid the country of those who attended these meetings.

Faventino Fanino, a native of the papal states, was one of the first Italian martyrs. He profited from reading the Bible and other religious books translated into Italian. He then tried to teach his neighbours the truths of the gospel, but was imprisoned. He was released after his friends persuaded him to recant, but he became very distressed when he considered what he had done. But some time later, he tried more zealously to show his fellow countrymen their errors and pointed them to the way of salvation. He hoped that, when a few had been converted, they would teach others and he would move somewhere else. After evangelising in several places, he was again arrested and brought in chains to Ferrara. Not even his wife and sister could persuade him to recant a second time. He told them: “Let it suffice you that, for your sakes, I have once denied my Saviour. Had I then the knowledge which, by the grace of God, I have acquired since my fall, I would not have yielded to your entreaties” (p 167).

Fanino had many visitors in prison; many of them felt edified by his teaching and prayers. After visitors were barred from seeing him, he set himself to teach his fellow prisoners. Some of them acknowledged, after being released, that “they never knew what liberty and happiness were until they found them within the walls of a prison” (p 168). Fanino was then placed in solitary confinement; so he turned to writing letters and longer pieces and succeeded in sending them to his friends. In 1550 Pope Julius III ordered him to be put to death. He was strangled before being burnt and, so that no one would see his execution, it was all done in the early morning.

We have already met Aonio Paleario – not a cleric but an academic philosopher – when he was accused of heresy and acquitted.⁷ In 1566 he was Professor of Eloquence in Milan, his final position. At that time Pius V was elected as the next pope, and Paleario at once realised that he was in danger, as were all who were “not slavishly devoted to the Papal See”.⁸ One can see how dangerous Pius was from a decree which he issued giving inquisitors total protection from all opposition.

The decree begins: “Pius, a bishop, servant of servants to God of eternal memory. If to us belongs the daily care of protecting all the ministers of the church whom we have received from God, under our safe and secure patronage, with how much more anxiety ought we to guard those who are

⁷See page 330 in last month’s issue of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

⁸M Young, *The Life and Times of Aonio Paleario*, vol 2, p 537.

employed in the Holy Office of the Inquisition, in searching out heretical depravity, and see that under the shield of the inviolable authority of this see, they are protected from all dangers in the execution of their ministry for the exaltation of the Catholic faith.” After 14 autocratic paragraphs intended to facilitate the persecution of those who truly believed Scripture teachings, Pius has the blasphemous nerve to conclude by expressing to the Most High his “desire that my ways may be directed to keep Thy statutes”. The words of the Saviour to Saul of Tarsus are appropriate here: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” (Acts 9:4).

One of Paleario’s correspondents in Basel was Mino Cirsa, who was so disturbed at the election of Pius V that he wrote a book in which he argues for the main doctrines taught by the Reformers: particularly (1) that the Pope is the Antichrist, (2) that the mass is greater idolatry than that of the heathen, (3) that man is justified by faith in Christ and not by his own works, (4) that purgatory is a papal invention, (5) that there are only two sacraments.

Paleario had for a long time prepared himself for a violent death; he looked forward to the blessedness of heaven. He was summoned to Rome, on a charge of heresy, around 1567 – because, it was alleged that he had published “a little book in which he artfully concealed the mortal poison of heresy” and had also “repeated the same things” in a speech to the rulers of the Republic of Sienna, in central Italy.⁹ The book in question was *The Benefit of the Death of Christ*, and what was claimed to be “the mortal poison of heresy” was no doubt the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone, not by works. He had written 25 years earlier that, in his book, he had “confirmed by most ancient and certain authorities, and declared . . . that all sin was cancelled and forgiven in those who turn to Christ crucified and with full faith in Him, and trust in His promises, confidently rest on One who cannot deceive”.¹⁰

This was still what he believed, but he seems also to have been charged with three other “errors”: (1) denial of purgatory, (2) disapproval of people being buried in churches, (3) despising all religious orders and their garments. A hostile witness claimed that “he fully approved of all the heretical doctrines written in various commentaries and that there was no error of Oecolampadius, Luther, Bucer, or other heretics which he had not embraced”. This witness concluded that Paleario’s own words, at his trial, “prove him to have been a thorough heretic and worthy of the severest punishment”.¹¹

It was obvious to Paleario that the judges at his trial were determined to

⁹Young, *Aonio Paleario*, vol 2, p 556.

¹⁰Young, *Aonio Paleario*, vol 2, p 558.

¹¹Young, *Aonio Paleario*, vol 2, p 559.

have him put to death. He is reported to have told them: "I am determined to follow the counsel of the blessed Apostle Peter, who said, 'Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously'" (p 181). Paleario was condemned and, after spending three years in prison, was sentenced to be hanged and his body to be burnt. This sentence was carried out on 3 July 1570, when he was 69.

Before he was led out to be executed, Paleario wrote to his wife and to his two sons. In his letter to his wife he wrote, "I would not wish that you should receive sorrow from my pleasure [dying and going to heaven], nor ill from my good. The hour is now come when I must pass from this life to my Lord and Father and God. I depart as joyfully as if I were going to the nuptials of the Son of the great King, which I have always prayed my Lord to grant me, through His goodness and infinite mercy. Wherefore, my dearest wife, comfort yourself with the will of God and with my resignation,¹² and attend to the desponding family which still survive, training them up and preserving them in the fear of God, and being to them both father and mother" (p 252). M'Crie's verdict on Paleario was: "When we take into consideration his talents, his zeal, the utility of his writings, and the sufferings which he endured, Paleario must be viewed as one of the greatest ornaments of the Reformed cause in Italy" (p 182).

Others too were put to death at this time, during the storm of persecution unleashed by Pius V. Among them was Bartolommeo Bartoccio, the final witness for the truth that we will consider. He was born into a wealthy family and was introduced to Reformed doctrine while a soldier. After returning home, he was zealous in passing on scriptural truth, and several of his relations were converted. He became seriously ill and refused to have a priest come and hear him confess his sins. He also resisted all the arguments put forward by the local bishop, who was attempting to bring him back to the Romanism that he had turned his back on.

Bartoccio was accordingly summoned, along with his companions, before the Governor. Though he had not fully recovered from his illness, he got up through the night and succeeded in climbing over the city wall, with the help of a pike, and was able to escape to Venice. He moved on to Geneva, where he married and became a manufacturer of silk. But in 1567 he visited Genoa on business and there he was discovered and arrested. He was then sent on to Rome and, after almost two years' imprisonment, he was sentenced to be burnt alive. The cruel sentence was carried out, but Bartoccio did not flinch.

¹²That is, he was resigned to God's will in what was going to happen.

As the flames enveloped his body, he was heard to cry, “Victory, victory”. **Conclusion.**¹³ However extensive the range of the Italian Reformation may have been, its failure was tragic. But it may be explained to a considerable extent. Among the various states that comprised sixteenth-century Italy, only the Republic of Venice had sufficient courage to resist the interference of the papacy in its internal affairs, but even she succumbed to the threats of the papal court and the terrors of the Inquisition. John Stoughton, a church historian, writes, “The Holy Office [the Inquisition], equipped with extraordinary powers by successive popes, proved a tremendous engine of persecution, and before it one individual after another quailed. Some . . . bravely stood the fire, but large numbers recanted and others, warned or discouraged by their example, feared to enlist in the ranks of [the Reformed]. Persecution in Italy, as in Spain, carried out with relentless fury, did its work with frightful success. The unity of purpose and effort in the proceedings of the Holy Inquisition throughout Italy was a chief factor in the repression of Italian Reform.”¹⁴

Stoughton points to the eloquence of Ochino and Peter Martyr but feels that their sermons and their writings affected only the upper classes and the intellectuals – that, unlike Martin Luther, Hugh Latimer and John Knox, they did not really reach those whom one might call ordinary people. Stoughton also refers to personal defects in these and other Italian preachers, which hindered the success of the Reformation, but one must be careful to remember that God’s human instruments are always human, with all their natural frailties and remaining corruption. A further point, which may be related to the fact that Italy was then made up of a multitude of separate states, is that the Reformed movement in Italy lacked structure. Besides, most of those who were leaders in the movement remained within the Church of Rome, unless they fled from Italy. Yet we must stress the terrible severity of the persecution waged by the Vatican and its more ardent local followers, but especially the Inquisition. The result of this persecution was to eliminate the Reformation from Italy.

We have, in this conclusion, glanced only at the human factors involved, but we must remember that, in God’s holy providence, it was not His purpose to bring about a thorough reformation in that country. But He was able to do so. Let us pray for a lasting reformation of the professing Christian Church in all parts of the world in our time, and that the gospel would spread everywhere and be so blessed by the Holy Spirit that the whole earth would be filled with God’s glory!

¹³Much of it is based on the first part of John Stoughton’s conclusion in his *Footprints of the Italian Reformers*, London, pp 295ff. The prefatory note to his book is dated 1881.

¹⁴*Footprints of the Italian Reformers*, p 297.

Doing God's Will¹

W K Tweedie

Matthew 6:10. *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

In this petition we have a model set up, and a prayer for power to follow that model. The model is the mind and will of the holy God as it rules unchallenged in heaven; and the prayer is that earth may become as heaven – that is, a prayer for the utter extinction of sin, and the universal prevalence of holiness; for “the will of God” is only another name for the complete observance of all the commandments.

Now (1) consider *the model*, that we may learn what the copy should be: How is the will of God done in heaven?

It is done *universally*. Not one among the ranks of the sinless has a single thought or a single desire at variance with the mind of Jehovah. The angels and archangels, with all the host of heaven, have no will but His. If trial and tears could enter among them, all would be submitted to, because He had sent it. It is as if one heart and soul animated the whole. Their very nature would be outraged if there was one among them all who dissented. Having but one God and King, they have but one law; and heaven would cease to be heaven if violence was done to the universal concord that is there.

God's will is done *continually*. Never for the twinkling of an eye does a thought wander from the great centre of all blessedness; but as the heart in living men is continually beating, so the continual and unbroken desire of all heaven is that God may be all and in all.

All this is done *cheerfully*. The city of God does not contain a single inhabitant that does not delight to do His will. It is their blessedness because it is His pleasure; and whether their commission is to live in the uncreated light of God's countenance, or for an angel to hasten on an errand of mercy to some suffering child of God, their obedience is equally prompt and joyous. They are “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”. Nothing has occurred to separate their minds from Jehovah. His will is therefore theirs, His law and pleasure theirs; so that though men on earth find it difficult, even when they soar highest, to comprehend what heaven will be, this may be regarded as a description of its blessedness: All that enter there do God's will universally, continually and cheerfully.

Now (2) we are taught by the Lord Jesus to *pray* that the earth may become blessed again by the prevalence of such a spirit here. With the purpose of restoring man's happiness, and lifting him from the wretchedness into

¹Taken with editing from *The Christian's Daily Companion*.

which his revolt from God has sunk him, the Shepherd of Israel would guide us back to the spot from which we fell. And what is so reasonable as that God's will should be to give a law to His intelligent creatures? What so reasonable as that God, who is love, should be allowed to regulate our movements and apportion our lot?

Yet how hard is the task for proud, fallen man to take God's will for his! In the beginning, the tempter succeeded in alluring us from God, by holding out the prospect that we should be as gods unto ourselves; and as that was the first lure held out to man, it still too fatally succeeds in keeping him far from God. He either obstinately opposes, or rebelliously murmurs against, the Almighty's purposes. And if the holiest child of God would strictly watch the movements of his mind for a single day, he would discover how prone his heart is to feel – whatever his lips may express – like those who say, Who is the Lord, that He should be God over us? He is surprised and disappointed and murmurs when the Most High does not act according to the desires, or purposes, or pleasures of His sinful creature.

Hence the difficulty of cordially praying, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven". It is reasonable for afflicted man to have God's will concerning him accomplished, and it would be full of blessedness. Yet so wayward is he that multitudes struggle against that will until the hour they die. Even the child of God finds it the most arduous of tasks to bring his mind into conformity with Jehovah's. Man must be made a new creature in Christ before that can be accomplished.

While all is harmony in heaven, all is discord on earth. While the Son of God made it His meat and drink to do His Father's will, man as perversely exalts his own will above his God's, until he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. In such a case, what should be his alternative? He should pray to God to be made willing in the day of His power, to be taught by the Spirit of all grace to "be still, and know that [God is] God", and submit with holy acquiescence in all that the Lord is pleased to send. To resist Him is to be wretched; to take His will for ours is to be blessed, for "good is the will of the Lord". And the man that truly loves his soul will pray for daily grace – as he prays for his daily bread – to bring down every high imagination, and submit the whole soul to what God gives, exclaiming, "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints".

But is there not a length and breadth of meaning in this petition which is often overlooked? We pray in words that the will of God may be done on earth. Now it may be His will to take away my best-loved enjoyment. It may be His sovereign pleasure to lay me on a sickbed, which shall become my deathbed. The child of my affections may be marked for death by Him whose

doings admit of no challenge. It may be His pleasure to make my tears flow so fast that a fellow mortal cannot dry them. All that may be *the will* of my covenant God; I therefore pray for all that, as often as I say, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven”. And yet how much I am surprised and startled when God answers my prayer and does according to His will! How I mourn and often murmur because He has been pleased to do according to His own holy mind! I would rather bring down His will to mine than lift mine up to His. In such a case, the inmost soul must feel the need of constraining grace to bring the mind into conformity with God’s.

And now my soul, is it thus with you? It is the nature of light to spread and gladden. It is the nature of rivers to run to the sea. As it is the nature of animals to breathe, so it is the desire, the prayer and the effort of a regenerated soul to do the will of its God. My soul, is it so with you? Is it your practice in sorrow to imitate Him who said, in His hour of agony, “Not My will, but Thine, be done”? To acquiesce in God’s holy will is heaven commenced; it is the proof of our kinship to Christ; for “whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother”. And greatly blessed are the people who are thus taught by God.

The Clock of Providence¹

C H Spurgeon

Manton: *There is a clock with which providence keeps time and pace, and God Himself sees it.*

Spurgeon: Everything happens with divine punctuality; Israel came out of Egypt on the selfsame night in which their redemption was appointed, and afterwards wandered in the wilderness till the hour had come when the iniquity of the Amorites was full. Our time is always come, for we are in selfish haste; but the Lord, when on earth, had His set times and knew how to wait for them. The great God is never before His time and never too late. We may well admire the punctuality of heaven.

Our trials come in due season, and go at the appointed moment. Our fretfulness will neither hasten nor delay the purpose of our God. We are in hot haste to set the world right and to order all affairs; the Lord has the leisure of conscious power and unerring wisdom, and it will be well for us to learn to wait. The clock will not strike till the hour; but when the instant

¹Taken with editing from *Flowers from a Puritan Garden* by C H Spurgeon. For this book, Spurgeon collected many graphic quotations from Thomas Manton on Psalm 119. He then added comments to each quotation.

comes we shall hear the bell. My soul, trust in God, and wait patiently when He says, “My time is not yet come”.

Eastern Europe Mission News

Rev Dmytro Levytskyi

This is an update on the situation in Ukraine, and the present circumstances of the Eastern Europe Mission. The sad condition of the Ukrainian nation is obvious because battles on the frontline have not stopped; we cannot see the end of it. One might ask why the Ukrainian people do not give up their claims to the territory of Donbas or Crimea just to stop a stream of deaths of Ukrainians. We fear that the invader will go on killing us until Ukrainians as an ethnic group, or Ukrainians as a political nation, will die out or dissolve into the vast sea of the Russian people.

It was a tragic scene when, at a memorial dinner, over 50 men and women from the same village were killed in an instant on October 5 by a Russian missile attack. It is also a sad fact that the world, as it might seem from here, has become tired of the war in Ukraine since so many nations have donated money and weapons to support the Ukrainian people, which has laid a heavy burden on the budgets of the donors. However, what would the world do if Putin overcame Ukraine?

At the same time, it is our task to continue preaching the gospel and doing mission work – both of which we do, but not as much as before the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, last year. Several people are writing letters asking us for literature. We send literature to every place from which genuine requests come.

However, not as many people are attending public worship as there used to be. We ourselves as a congregation have six adults and two children. I was invited to visit the state registration office recently in order to prove that our congregation is still in operation. Usually, this type of identity verification is done by the bank every year in the fourth quarter of the year.

The usual flow of daily life has slowed down dramatically. Men are under tight state control. When they are moving somewhere for several days, all who are eligible for military service have to report to an army unit before going.

The cold season is approaching, and we are getting ready for it. We buy wood and coal because, since the start of the invasion, natural gas has become too expensive. Also we have to stock up on food and other goods for winter. We had five goats, but we had to get rid of them since it became too expensive

to keep them. At present we only have hens, which keep us supplied with eggs. In all of this we must say that the Most High is gracious to us in providing food and preserving our lives while under missile attack. Without the support of the Church, our survival would be in question. However, many of the Ukrainian people are in the same circumstances but they are trying to manage their survival without God's blessing, blindly following their idolatrous religion.

Our task in these circumstances is to preach the gospel of Christ to the people who live around us. In spite of difficulties and by the grace of God, the Odessa congregation is still operating as a congregation, as well as a mission station. May the Lord give the increase to our work! "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor 3:7).

The Wrong Priest¹

William Wileman

The incident occurred in a London restaurant and, on the occasion referred to, the men at one of the tables were talking about religion. The argument grew so lively that it became impossible for those at the nearest tables not to hear it. As it proceeded, the interest of the listeners became intense. The argument was chiefly as to whether salvation was by works or by grace, and whether a person could be assured of his salvation in this life. One of the disputants firmly insisted that salvation is by grace, through faith; not of ourselves, but the gift of God. Another, a Roman Catholic, contended that no man can know he is saved until he dies, and, as a final argument, he exclaimed, "Well, all I can say is this: I have placed myself in the hands of my priest, and he is responsible for my salvation".

At this point a man rose from his table and said, "Gentlemen, I believe I am well known in the Law Courts and in this room. I could not help hearing the argument at your table, and I feel bound to say that our Roman Catholic friend is perfectly logical in what he has said. I also have placed myself in the hands of my Priest, and he is responsible for my salvation. The mistake our friend has made is that he has chosen the wrong priest. My Priest is the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith I have committed myself into His hands, and I am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." The effect of this, from a well-known King's Counsel, was marvellous. Perfect silence reigned as he spoke, and I believe that some men there heard the gos-

¹Reprinted with editing from *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* for April 1926.

pel for the first time, thus preached in a restaurant by an exponent of the law.

Reader, who is your priest? Be not deluded to think that any fellow mortal who may call himself a “priest” has any right to come between God and your soul. Beware also of placing any trust in anything you have done, your character or your prayers. Salvation is entirely by grace, and faith is the hand that receives it as a free gift from God. All the fitness He desires is that you feel your need of Him, and this He graciously bestows. I wish I could make it plain to you that Jesus Christ is the “one only Priest”. But if my poor words fail, listen to the words of God: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”.

Book Review

Jonathan Ranken Anderson, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists, by Roy Middleton, published by the James Bourne Society, hardback, 125 pages, £13.50, obtainable from the F P Bookroom.

Jonathan Ranken Anderson was a noted minister, first in the Church of Scotland and, following the Disruption of 1843, in the Free Church. He began his ministry in 1834, in Kirkfield church, in the Gorbals district of Glasgow. God visited the congregation with revival in 1839, in common with many other districts in Scotland. Mr Middleton states, “It was manifest that Anderson’s sermons preached during the revival were composed with a special unction from above, given by the Lord for the awakening of poor sinners. There was a copious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, multitudes were pricked to the heart and some were constrained to cry out under soul trouble with an audible voice. There was good evidence that many were brought under a work of conviction which issued in their salvation.”²

Within five years of the Disruption, Anderson had become deeply disillusioned with the Free Church, believing that it was in “grave spiritual decline”, though he clearly went too far in this. His attacks on fellow ministers led to a case of discipline against him, which resulted in him being declared to be “no longer a minister or member of this church”. Anderson, however, continued to hold services for his supporters until his death in early 1859, and they went on meeting after his death.

What was the connection between Anderson and the Free Presbyterian

²The second in a series of addresses given in Glasgow by Scottish ministers in 1840 was by Anderson. In the opinion of this reviewer, his lecture is possibly the best of them all. The book was reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1984, with the title, *The Revival of Religion*, but is no longer in print.

Church? It lay in Anderson's congregation being received into the Free Presbyterian Church in 1895. However, less than three years later, the majority of the congregation resumed their independent position. This led to an excellent letter from Rev Donald Macfarlane to one of Anderson's sons, who was a leading figure in the congregation; it is reproduced in this book as Appendix 2. (There are several other appendices, including one which reproduces one of Anderson's "John Knox Tracts", on the words, "Be clothed with humility" (1 Pet 5:5).)

And what was the connection between Anderson and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists? It is to be traced back to a review, by J C Philpot, editor of *The Gospel Standard* magazine, of some of Anderson's publications. This was largely favourable, except for a few points such as Anderson's use of the free offer of the gospel. This review led, decades later, to H B Pitt, a Strict Baptist deacon, publishing some books of Anderson's material, particularly his sermons. Pitt edited them to a greater or lesser extent, and Appendix 6 gives information on the extent to which editing took place.

The book under review has led on from a lecture on the subject. It is thorough and is written in an interesting way.

Protestant View

Who Is Antichrist?¹

What is Antichrist, and who is Antichrist? The Apostle John tells you: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come" (1 Jn 4:3). But shall Antichrist deny Christ to have come in the flesh in so many terms? No. He shall not deny the incarnation of Christ, for he shall sit in the temple of God.

How then shall Antichrist deny Christ to have come in the flesh? He shall set up such a worship as was in place before Christ came in the flesh.

As in the time of the Old Testament, before Christ came in the flesh, there was an outward, glorious and pompous worship; so shall Antichrist have.

As in the time of the Old Testament, before Christ came in the flesh, there was a temple, a great cathedral; so shall Antichrist have.

As in the time of the Old Testament, before Christ came in the flesh, there was a high priest and priests and Levites; so shall Antichrist have.

¹This is an extract, with editing, from *The Works of William Bridge*, vol 3. Though Bridge does not explicitly say so, he is clearly pointing to Rome for the answer to the question posed in the sub-title of this piece.

As in the time of the Old Testament, before Christ came in the flesh, there were copes and ephods and linen coats; so shall Antichrist have.

As in the time of the Old Testament, before Christ came in the flesh, there were candles and tapers and music in the temple; so shall Antichrist have.

As in the time of the Old Testament, before Christ came in the flesh, there were altars; so shall Antichrist have.

And as in the time of the Old Testament, before Christ came in the flesh, there were sacrifices; so shall Antichrist have his unbloody sacrifices.

As then they turned to a covenant of works, so shall antichrist also do.

Thus, the more legal, and of an Old Testament stamp, your worship is, the more antichristian it is. Now is it not a dangerous thing to have antichristian worship for our worship in these gospel days?

William Bridge

Notes and Comments

The Lord God Omnipotent Reigns

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos 3:6) “The Lord hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov 16:4). Therefore everything that transpires in this world must be seen to be ordained (directly or indirectly) for the glory of God and the advance of His Kingdom. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). It is in this context that we must understand the following.

At 6:30 am on October 7, an estimated 2200 rockets were fired from Gaza toward south and central Israel, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, by the Hamas militants – according to the Israel Defense Forces. Hamas claims at least 5000 rockets were fired, all landing in south and central Israel. These rocket attacks were followed by onslaughts made by more than 2000 men who entered Israeli territory through breaches in the barrier surrounding the Gaza Strip. The invasion led to horrific atrocities being committed against Israeli civilians of all ages, the terrible details of which need not be repeated.

The Middle East is not the only place where our fellow men suffer great anguish and pain. Other nations too are ravaged by war, civil unrest, earthquakes and similar distressing occurrences. Russia is still fighting with Ukraine; many thousands on both sides have been killed in this terrible conflict, and millions of Ukrainians are now refugees. Earnest prayers should especially be made for the Free Presbyterian congregation and its minister in Odessa, that the cause of God and truth there may prosper under the good hand of the King and Head of the Church, notwithstanding the great difficul-

ties and dangers they continue to face. Likewise, our prayers and supplications should go up for our Church's friends and contacts in Israel and others in Israel and Gaza, that many may, amid all the sadness and distress encountered there, cast themselves upon God's mercy and thus know His gracious presence and help during these most trying times.

Almighty God is the Creator and Lord of all. He is constantly, continuously and intimately acquainted with everything: all that is in the past, all that is in the present, and all that shall be in the future. He has perfect knowledge and understanding of all things. His omniscient eye beholds all the details of each of the lives of the billions of our fellow beings living in the many distinct parts of the world, including those living in "the dark places of the earth [that] are full of the habitations of cruelty" (Ps 74:20). Nothing is hidden from Him: His eye sees all, and with God, there are no "ambiguities", no "mistakes", no "surprises", no "accidents", no "misunderstandings" and no "misrepresentations".

The Lord is also continuously active in the whole of His created universe. The world is the stage on which His divine operations are displayed. Every city, town and village in every land (including those in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine and Russia) share in the solemn display of His infinite power and glory as he makes known the unfolding of His eternal decrees, second by second, among all the peoples of the world. He is the infinite Majesty of heaven: His will is ever perfect, ever holy, ever righteous and ever good!

Like Ezekiel in his prophecy, we are to see in the unfolding of Divine providence the intricacies of wheels revolving within wheels, as the eternal and unchanging decrees of God are manifested in time, not haphazardly, not randomly, nor chaotically, but always orderly, ever wisely measured, and specifically targeted, in total accord with the perfections of His divine mind and will, though most often quite incomprehensible, and contrary to the mind and ways of men.

The world is a world of sin, under the curse and wrath of God. Therefore we should not be surprised when God's judgements are increasingly meted out. Indeed, we should be wholly astonished that we do not see more of the venting of His wrath and anger upon the highly provocative wickedness of our day in our land and overseas. He who poured forth fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah is the One who, in our day, is still a consuming fire. He is pleased to make known His detestation of all sin and unbelief by sending the thunderbolts of His divine anger as reminders of His righteous anger on all who wilfully and persistently despise Him and His gospel of grace and mercy.

There will always be things we cannot understand, things we cannot

fathom. Man is finite; God alone is infinite. We are ever to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of our infinite God, believing and trusting in Him as the One who alone is (in the well-chosen words of *The Shorter Catechism*) “infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth”.

May our earnest prayer in the sad day in which we live be that the time may soon come when Israel will be gathered to behold by faith the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they as a people have so bitterly rejected for the last two thousand years, and when, for the blessing of all nations and peoples, throughout the world (including the people of Gaza), “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14)! DPR

Abortion

The organisation Right to Life UK reports that, since the 1968 Abortion Act was introduced, approximately 10.3 million infants have been murdered in the womb in England, Scotland and Wales. This is more than the total current populations of Scotland (5.46m) and Wales (3.16m) combined. A baby is aborted every two and a half minutes; 26 babies every hour. These appalling statistics speak for themselves.

Abortion has become a commonly accepted way of dealing with unwanted pregnancies (with the morning-after pill and other pills for terminating a pregnancy at home made freely available). It now seems to be regarded as the fall-back method of contraception, to the extent that some politicians are now discussing de-criminalising abortion altogether, which would make it legal even up to the day of birth. The rationale seems to be that, since the vast majority of abortions are carried out very early in pregnancy, it is only a small minority who would avail themselves of the facility of such a late termination, and why should this be withheld? How barbaric! The mother would benefit from the usual medical care, but the child would be regarded as disposable.

We know that babes in the womb respond to music or loud noises and their mothers’ moods, suck their thumbs, and are damaged by their mother’s smoking, drinking or drug taking. Little lives, fully dependent on the protection of the womb, and yet deemed disposable! The thought of putting any unborn child to death, especially late term, is distressing enough without elucidating the methods used.

The Lord told Ezekiel to cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, including: “Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto Me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured.” (Ezek 16:20). “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb

is His reward” (Ps 127:3). By destroying the child in the womb, we despise God, His Word, His heritage, and His children. *FRD*

Comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS

A new comet has appeared and is expected to be visible with the naked eye next September (although apparently such things are difficult to predict). Naked-eye comets are not common, although there was one in September of this year. The new comet is unusual in that its orbit is such that this is its first-ever visit to the sun, and will be its only visit unless its orbit gets perturbed. How an object can be on such an orbit round the sun is a mystery to non-Creationists, although the astronomers do their best to cover up their ignorance.

It is to such comets that Jude was alluding when he spoke of certain false Christians or false teachers as “wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (verse 13). Alas that many in Britain are on the same kind of orbit – they are near the Light now but will soon be heading into eternal darkness if they do not repent. *DWBS*

Church Information

Mr Alistair N MacRae

Mr MacRae passed away on October 28. He had been for many years an elder in Inverness and previously in Dundee. We express our sympathy with his family.

Voluntary Bible Knowledge Teacher at John Tallach High School

John Tallach High School in Zimbabwe is looking for a voluntary teacher to teach Bible Knowledge at the school. The aspiring candidate would ideally be a Free Presbyterian in good standing, or someone who is in full sympathy with the Reformed doctrine, worship and practice of the Church. To meet visa requirements, this is a completely voluntary position without remuneration. A full job description is available on request. The person will have to be approved by the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee. This vacancy is to be filled with immediate effect.

For further details, please contact Rev J Bruce Jardine, Clerk of the Committee at northharris.fpc@btopenworld.com.

College and Library Fund

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

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

2023

Volume 128

Editor:
Rev Kenneth D Macleod

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

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

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FREE PRESBYTERIAN PLACES OF WORSHIP

Scotland

- Aberdeen:** 2 Alford Place, AB10 1YD, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Tues, 7.15 pm. Rev D W B Somerset BSc DPhil, 18 Carlton Place, Aberdeen, AB15 4BQ; tel: 01224 645250.
- Bracadale Duirinish-Strath: Struan:** Sabbath 12 noon. **Glendale and Vatten:** Sabbath 6pm, alternately. Thurs 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; Wed 7.30 pm. **Beaully (Balblair):** Sabbath 6.30 pm, Thurs 7.30 pm. Rev A W MacColl MA PhD, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, IV15 9JB; tel: 01349 866546.
- Dornoch:** Sabbath 11.30 am. **Bonar:** Sabbath 6 pm. Wed 7.30 pm (alternately in Dornoch and Bonar). **Laigr:** Church and Manse; Sabbath 3.30 pm as intimated. Rev J A Morrison BA, 2 Cherry Grove, Bonar Bridge, IV24 3ER. Tel: 01863 766157.
- Edinburgh:** 63 Gilmore Place, EH3 9NU, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Thurs 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 as intimated). Contact Mr M J Schouten; tel: 01463 221776.
- Fort William:** Monzie Square, Sabbath 11 am, 5 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**, Thurs 7.30 pm. Manse tel: 01445 712118. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.
- Glasgow:** St Jude's Church, 137 Woodlands Road, G3 6LE; Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wed 7.30 pm. Rev R MacLeod BA, 4 Laurel Park Close, Glasgow, G13 4ND; tel: 0141 954 3759.
- Greenock:** Sabbath 2.30 pm, held in Free Church of Scotland hall, 14 Jamaica Street, PA15 1XX. Contact Rev R MacLeod; tel: 0141 954 3759.
- Halkirk:** Bridge Street; Sabbath 11.30 am, 5.30 pm, second, fourth and fifth Sabbaths of month; Thurs 7 pm. Rev W A Weale, F P Manse, Bridge Street, KW12 6YG; tel: 01847 831758. **Thurso:** Duncan Street; Sabbath 3 pm; **Strathy:** 6 pm, first and third Sabbaths of month.
- Harris (North): Tarbert:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm. **Tarbert and Stockinish:** Wed 7 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; Wed 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; Wed 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, Tues 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; Wed 7.30 pm. Rev D A Ross. F P Manse, Laide, IV22 2NB; tel: 01445 731340.
- Lochcarron:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wed 7 pm. Manse.
- Lochinver:** Church. No F P services at present.
- Ness:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wed 7 pm. Manse tel: 01851 810228. Contact Rev K M Watkins; tel: 01859 520271.
- North Tolsta:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thurs 7.30 pm. Manse tel: 01851 890325. Contact Rev J R Tallach; tel: 01851 702501.
- North Uist:** Bayhead; Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thurs 7.30 pm. 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; Wed 7.30 pm. Rev A B MacLean, 5 Main Road, Luncarty, PH1 3EP; tel: 01738 828762.
- Portree:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6.30 pm; Wed 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 12 noon; **Applecross:** Sabbath 6pm. Tues 7 pm (alternately in Shieldaig and Applecross, as intimated). Shieldaig manse tel: 01520 755259, Applecross manse tel: 01520 744411. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.
- Staffin:** Sabbath 12 noon, 5 pm; Tues 7.30 pm. Manse: Clachan, Staffin, IV51 9H. Contact Rev J B Jardine; tel: 01859 502253.
- Stornoway:** Matheson Road, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Thurs 7.30 pm. **Achmore:** Sabbath 12 noon; Tues 7 pm. Rev J R Tallach MB ChB, 2 Fleming Place, Stornoway, HS1 2NH; tel: 01851 702501.
- Uig (Lewis) Miavaig:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wed 12 noon. Manse tel: 01851 672251. Contact Rev K M Watkins; tel: 01859 520271.
- Ullapool:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wed 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; Wed 7.30 pm.; **South Manchester:** Sabbath 6.00 pm, in Upper Room (second floor), 11 Wilmslow Road, Cheadle SK8 1DW; (entrance is from the car park at the back of the building); Wed 8 pm, alternately in Sandbach and Gatley. Contact Mr R Middleton, 2 Emerald Drive, Sandbach, CW11 4ND; tel: 01270 761673.
- Broadstairs:** Sabbath 11 am, 5 pm at Portland Centre, Hopeville Ave, St Peter's; Tues 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 10.30 am, 5.30 pm; Wednesday 7.15 pm. Manse. Contact Mr Hugh Campbell; tel: 01923 442497.

Canada

Chesley, Ontario: Church and Manse, 40 Fourth Street SW. Sabbath 11 am, 7.30 pm; Wednesday 8 pm. Contact: Mr David Kuiper; tel: 519 363 0367. Manse tel: 519 363 2502.

USA

Santa Fe, Texas: Church and Manse, 4031 Jackson St 77517. Sabbath 10.30 am, 5 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Contact Mr Joseph Smith; tel: 409 927 1564.

Australia

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

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

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 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, 5 Goldsmith St, Elgin, Gisborne 4010; tel: 06 863 3140; mobile: 022 409 1336.

Tauranga: For services, contact Rev J D Smith; tel: 09 282 4195.

Singapore

Singapore: 33 Ubi Avenue 3, Vertex Tower A, #05-60, Singapore 408868: Sabbath: 9.30 am and 5.30 pm; Wednesday: 7.30 pm. Contact: Mr Bernard Yong, tel: (65) 9639 3040, e-mail: byong1@singnet.com.sg.

Ukraine

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

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

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