

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, Staffin; **Second:** Chesley, Gisborne, Maware; **Fourth:** Glasgow, Mbuma.

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

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

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

August: First Sabbath: Dingwall; **Second:** New Canaan, Somakantana; **Third:** Laide; **Fifth:** 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:** 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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God's Reaction to Human Rebellion

In Psalm 2 we read, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed” – that is, His Christ (v2). And how often rulers have taken counsel together against God and Christ in the course of history! The supreme fulfilment of these words in Psalm 2 took place when the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was crucified. Yet on the Day of Pentecost, Peter pointed out to those listening to his address that Jesus of Nazareth was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). Peter told them of their sin: they had taken Him, “and by wicked hands [had] crucified and slain” Him. Yet God was in control of all that was happening then; it took place according to His “counsel and foreknowledge”, His eternal purpose. The One who was suffering the most awful agonies in His human body and soul was in control of what was happening. It was according to the eternal purpose of Christ, who was enduring the most extreme weakness.

The Lord's enemies were trying to destroy Christ. But the Lord “laughed” (Ps 2:4); He acted in some way as human beings would act in view of the absurdity of a situation, as the next clause, “the Lord shall have them in derision”, indicates – *derision* implying a reaction to the absurdity of what others say or do. Here is the absurdity of human rulers taking counsel to rebel against God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God has appointed as supreme Ruler over all things in this world, and especially all the affairs of His Church. How absurd to think of destroying the Lord of glory and putting to an end His activities in this world!

W S Plumer, in commenting on Psalm 2:2, explains: “The reasons why wicked men oppose God and Christ are, first, they by nature have carnal minds, which are at enmity against God (Rom 8:7). Men naturally hate God and His Son. Being destitute of love to Him, and the mind having an active nature, enmity is inevitable. Then men soon find that the restraints of divine law thwart their selfish schemes and sinful purposes, and so they oppose the Bible because the Bible opposes them, and reject God's authority because it is contrary to them.”

J A Alexander remarks on God's *laughter*, in Psalm 2:4: beneath such bold figurative language, "there is hidden a profound truth, namely, that to all superior beings, and above all, to God Himself, there is something in sin not only odious but absurd, something which cannot possibly escape the contempt of higher, much less of the highest, intelligence". And W S Plumer, commenting on the same verse, refers to several other scriptures to bring out the absurdity of the creature seeking to shake off the authority of the infinite God, "who puts no trust in His servants, who charges His angels with folly, before whom the moon shineth not, and in His sight the stars are not pure, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balances. All nations are before Him as nothing, and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity. His sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers."

Men tried to destroy Jesus; yet the very idea was absurd. They were His creatures, though they wilfully rejected Him. But Peter went on to speak of Jesus' resurrection: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it". Their efforts to do away with Jesus were absurd. And at a later time, when they were persecuted, the Apostles particularly noticed the fulfilment of the words of Psalm 2 as they committed themselves to God in prayer: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together" (Acts 4:26,27). Yet Herod and Pilate were instruments in God's hand, as Peter pointed out. And the Apostles could take refuge in God as they came before Him. They were instruments in the hand of God to spread the gospel, the good news of what Jesus Christ had done to make possible the salvation of sinners.

In one degree or another, throughout history, rulers and other individuals, and society in general, have persecuted God's people and tried to weaken His Church and even to put it out of existence. The Roman Empire did so, under various emperors such as Nero. Let the strongest empire of ancient times focus all its energies on the suppression of the true religion, yet the Lord has them in derision. Yes, the Roman Empire was powerful, but if we compare its might with that of God, the Creator of all things, what we see – no matter how many legions of soldiers might be involved – is human weakness ranged against almighty power. Their policy was not only evil but foolish. While the Lord permitted many godly Christians to be thrown to the lions and devoured, He still had in derision the Roman authorities and those who are carrying out their wicked directions. For, while the Church of the

time was weakened by the loss of these sincere followers of Christ, their faithful witness was no doubt often blessed to those who watched.

But it could be said of those faithful men and women: "It shall be *well* with them that fear God" (Ecc 8:12). How great a blessing it was for them when their souls were brought into the presence of God and of the Lamb, in heaven. But how absurd to act against the weak followers of the all-powerful God! The persecutors may have survived in this world for many a year but, if they did not repent and believe sincerely in Christ, the One they were persecuting, through His followers, they were lost at last. Their sins would have sent them to endure eternally the fearful consequences of their rebellion against the One who rules over all things, for "it shall *not* be well with the wicked" (Ecc 8:13).

In our time, the Lord's enemies, with Satan at their head, are attempting to destroy the Christian Church and biblical morality, and thereby bring down the Lord and His Anointed. The Lord's enemies in the late nineteenth century were busy undermining the authority of God's Word. Again, no matter how far human beings went in their rebellion, the Lord laughed. He saw the absurdity of men with finite intelligence and knowledge – though they may be highly intelligent and knowledgeable in comparison with other human beings – coming to negative conclusions about the revelation that has come from the infinite mind of the eternal God. Every time even a single individual is brought to look to Christ as revealed in the gospel, it is an assertion by the Creator that He still has the right to rescue sinners from Satan's kingdom and to deliver them from being deceived by the false religions and the secularism of present-day society.

The purpose of the Lord's enemies, as Psalm 2 indicates, is to break asunder His bands, and those of His Anointed One, and to cast away Their cords – every method by which the all-powerful God may restrain them from sin. Their desire is to get away from, in particular, the authority of the Ten Commandments – indeed from all the demands to be found in God's Word. This desire is exemplified in the United Kingdom at present by efforts to pass legislation that would allow "assisted dying" (see p 25).

However long the Most High will allow the secular thinking of this generation to prevail, He will yet extend His kingdom to a far greater degree than He has ever done in the whole of the earth's history thus far. He will yet cause that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:9) – that is, completely. He will yet be trusted in, worshipped and obeyed to a vast extent, in all parts of the world. Whatever attempts will yet be made to throw off God's cords – in this generation or beyond – He sees the absurdity of them all. We too should see that absurdity, especially in the light of His future purposes to build up His Church.

Fellowship with God and Jesus Christ¹

A Sermon by Jonathan Ranken Anderson

John 17:3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*

Man fell by aspiring to a knowledge to which he could never attain; he can be recovered by the communication of a knowledge which he could never conceive. The objects of that knowledge are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Apart from a Divine revelation, men never could have discovered the mystery of God – of the Father and Christ. But the knowledge of these objects, even after they are revealed, lies equally beyond the range of men's natural faculties. As they are supernatural, they must be grasped by supernatural faith, and they must be contemplated in supernatural light.

The knowledge thus obtained is spiritual in its character, and holy in its nature. It comes from God in Christ, and it leads the soul back to Him; so in His light the soul may see light. In speaking of this knowledge in previous sermons, we found it to be very simple, clear, certain, discriminating, powerful, sweet and satisfying. We were to think of the effects it produces: *first*, it is accompanied with supreme love to the Father, the only true God, and to Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

I go on now to observe, in the *second* place, as another effect it produces, it leads to *fellowship* with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1. There is fellowship with the Father in **His love**. The knowledge or faith, of which we speak, involves an apprehension of the Father in that peculiar character which He sustains in His work of grace. He appears as the Fountain of the love from which flows every saving benefit. In this aspect the soul contemplates Him when it is admitted to communion with Him.

(1.) A believer has communion with God in the *glory* of His love. In what does its particular glory consist?

[1.] It is *eternal*. This invests it with an awful solemnity, and suggests a view which our feeble minds cannot at all understand. To think that, before He had formed the earth and the heavens, His people were the objects of His love; how wonderful! "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

[2.] It is *infinite*. We may attempt to conceive its cause, but we soon lose ourselves, for it lies in the absolute sovereignty of God's will. People cavil

¹Taken with editing from *Days in Kirkfield*. Preached on 1 December, 1839, it is the third in a series of sermons on John 17:3 in Kirkfield Chapel, Glasgow, during a time of revival. The previous sermon was entitled, "Knowing God and Jesus Christ".

at the sovereignty of God's love and, in the proud imagination of their hearts, think that He loves one and passes by another because of something in the creature, or done by him. But they do not know God, and so they have no right to talk of such matters. Let them first learn His character, and then they will speak from knowledge: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau".

The love of God is infinite in its *holiness*. Many find it easy to believe that God loves them. They mean that He will pass by their sins and take them to heaven. The very idea of holiness as infinite opposition to sin dashes all their ideas of God's love and robs them of all their confidence in it. They thus show that they know nothing of the glory of His love, for its glory consists especially in its holiness. This brings to view the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, in whom sin receives the heaviest condemnation. Yet thus "was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him".

It is infinite in its *intensity*. God's people sometimes find it hard to believe that there is any love to them in Him, and poor burdened sinners think it is impossible He can love them. But a view of its sovereignty should quiet their apprehensions; to set any bounds to the objects of His love is to limit the Holy One of Israel. On the other hand, believers may be upset with a little of the love of God. But all that the spirits of the just made perfect have yet enjoyed of this love is as nothing compared with what is in God. He loves with the entire intensity of His heart; hence it is said: "He rests in His love". He can rest on nothing but what is infinite; therefore His love is infinite: "I know the thoughts that I think towards you".

[3.] It is *unchangeable*. To judge by the fears and feelings of His children, you would suppose that the love of God is as changeable as their minds. They are now persuaded of His love; in a few minutes they are in great doubt about it. How can God love such rebellious creatures? But this is to think that God is altogether as yourselves. The root of the evil is your self-righteousness, which leads you to look for the foundation of His love in you, not in Him. Let the soul be established in the truth that God loves because He loves, and the way is prepared for admitting that it is immutable. Were it not so, who could be saved? Sin is exceedingly strong, but all the sin that ever has been, or will be, cannot extinguish the flame of the love of God: "I am the Lord; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed".

These are a few hints about the glory of the Father's love. We say that the man, who possesses the knowledge that is eternal life, has fellowship with Him in these views. Being one with Christ, and interested in His righteousness, the Lord at times passes by and proclaims His name before him. To

change the figure, He puts him into the cleft of the rock and, as He passes by, He removes His hand and lets the soul see His back parts – no one can, in the present state, see His face and live. This manifestation of the glory of God’s love humbles, delights and satisfies the soul. Does anyone say, We know nothing of this experience? But do you know anything of the lack of it? To feel that is the next best thing to having it: “He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.”

(2.) A believer has communion with God in the *sweetness* of His love. To the carnal heart, nothing is more distasteful than the love of God. Let men form *their own* ideas of God and His love, and they will delight in them; but this is mere idolatry, the worship of the fancies of their own imaginations. But let the God of glory and His love be set before them as it is revealed, and they sink into sullen indifference, or are lifted up in rage and insolent contempt. The special glory of His love is its sovereignty and holiness, yet some people cannot tolerate these views of it. We may speak as long as we please on the love of God and not offend them; but when we speak of Him, in His love, taking this man and leaving that, giving this blessing and withholding that, they are almost ready to stone us.

The great enemy never disturbs those who preach or believe that God loves those who are sober, upright and industrious, and hates drunkards, revellers, and those given to all manner of wickedness. But let men preach that God loves sinners, even the chief, because of His own good pleasure, then Satan rages like a lion. The more clearly and powerfully these doctrines are proclaimed, the more furiously he roars. Never was the love of God brought so near to the demons as when the possessed were brought to Christ; but see the result: “What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?”

But what is wormwood and gall to the devil and his children is sweeter than honey to God’s people, who have the knowledge of which the text speaks. They know by bitter experience the truth of what I said; they too have carnal hearts and are often strongly against the love of God. It may be the grief and burden of many that what the preacher says on this subject does not engage their hearts but makes them worse. Happy are you if, through grace, you have been brought thus far: deliverance is not far away; it will come in its proper time. Then you will feel there is a sweetness in the love of God that passes understanding. And these attributes of it which are most offensive to the carnal heart, will be specially delightful to you. You will rejoice in its eternity, infinity and immutability – but most of all in its sovereignty and holiness. You will take up the psalmist’s call: “Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness”.

(3.) This knowledge leads to communion with the Father in the *power* of His love. Unregenerate men are entire strangers to this, though they may make a very plausible profession. They may speak of the love of God, how great it is, how precious; but ask them what effect it has on them, and they cannot tell. They live from day to day quite independent of it. They do not need it to fit them for their prayers; they can say them without it: they do not need it to conduct their business, to associate with their fellow men – not even to observe the ordinances of the house of God. Not so those who have the knowledge we speak of: they are utterly powerless without it.

They can sin well enough and ruin themselves without it, but they can do no good. They sometimes feel as if their whole nature was stirred up to resist this love, and they think sin so strong that nothing can subdue it. But let them have communion with God in the power of His love and their hearts of ice are at once melted. Their souls that were dead are quickened, and they that could do nothing can now do everything. Let the Spirit of grace reveal to their souls the glory and power of God's love, and their doubts vanish; faith is established; their affections are loosed and they return singing, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart".

2. There is communion **with the Lord Jesus Christ**, in His grace: "It pleased the Father" – in His love – "that in [Christ] should all fullness dwell". As the Father is the Fountain of love, in which love He plans all the good that sinners receive, so Christ is the Fountain of grace, as the medium through which His favour flows to lost men. To fit the soul for communion with the Lord Jesus Christ in his grace, a knowledge of Him as God-man is communicated in His work as the Saviour of sinners. Where this knowledge is, there is communion with Christ in His grace.

(1.) A believer has communion with Christ in the *riches* of His grace. I might speak of the communion the soul has with Christ in the special beauty that adorns His character, but this was spoken to already. So I speak now about His official grace. By grace, remember, is understood *unmerited favour*: this is applied sometimes to the favour, and sometimes to the effects it produces. In both views, Christ's grace is infinitely rich. He bears infinite favour to His people and bestows infinite favours on them.

[1.] There is *redeeming* grace. This is as old as the eternal covenant; there Christ represented the chosen seed and took upon Him their burdens and obligations. It was shown when He came forth "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law". It was wonderfully displayed in the work He performed in fulfilling all righteousness, and bearing the penalty due to sin, by which He completely satisfied the justice of God, laying a foundation on which God might be just, and yet justify the ungodly

who believe in Jesus: “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”.

[2.] There is *converting* grace. The redeemed are dead in sins, held captives by Satan, the willing slaves of the world. They have neither the inclination nor the power to turn to Christ, to receive the purchased redemption. They are like the Israelites, who continued in the bondage of Egypt till the Lord, remembering His covenant, visited them in a day of His power. He gives them a heart of flesh, convinces them of sin, shows them their misery, makes known His glory as a Saviour, renews their will, and enables and inclines them to receive Him in the gospel offer. Thus they are made one with Him by faith: “The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused”.

[3.] By *justifying* grace, believers are forgiven all trespasses, are accepted in God’s sight as righteous, and declared heirs of eternal life: “Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

[4.] *Sanctifying* grace: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”.

[5.] *Establishing, comforting and perfecting* grace: “My grace is sufficient for thee”. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

In Christ, there is grace for every situation. There is grace for kings, that they may rule in God’s fear: “By Me kings reign and princes decree justice;” there is grace for subjects, that they may obey: there is grace for masters, and grace for servants; for husbands and wives; for parents and children; for pastors and people; there is grace for the rich, that they may learn not to trust in uncertain riches; and grace for the poor, that they may be content with what they have; grace for the old, the middle-aged, the young: “Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not”; grace for prosperity and adversity; for health and sickness; for safety and danger; for life and death.

There is grace for every stage of the Christian life: there is milk for babes and strong meat for those of full age; grace for those in the light and those in darkness; for those that are at liberty and those that are in bondage; for those that are spiritually minded and those that are carnally minded. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.”

There is an immeasurable grace of every kind in Christ. The message, “But yet there is room”, was sent to those in the highways and hedges, and they were brought in. The Church has been receiving grace out of His full-

ness for hundreds of years; yet it is still impossible to exhaust His riches. He complained, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name", but not that we have asked too much. It is like the oil which was only stayed when no more vessels could be found; so the grace of Christ will flow as long as there is an empty sinner to receive it, and will be stayed only when the Church shall be complete, and the proud consigned to destruction: "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus".

(2.) The man that has this knowledge has communion with Christ in the *freeness* of His grace. This is the great stumbling block to the natural heart, the rock on which many split to their eternal destruction: they cannot take in the idea of absolutely free grace in Christ, and so they come with a price in their hand and are rejected. It is also very difficult for those who are truly awakened, deeply distressed about their souls. They say, How can Christ have anything to do with us who are so vile and unprofitable, who have no heart to receive Him? To sweep away all such ideas from the foundation on which they rest, we have to declare that the grace of Christ is absolutely free. It will not do to bring works of the law – to think that, because you never fell into gross sins, you may hope that Christ will be gracious to you – for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified".

It will not do to appeal to your earnestness in seeking Him, for that has enough sin in it to condemn you: it will not do to trust to the tears you have shed, for your tears need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb: it will not do to speak of your willingness to receive Him, for any willingness you have is of the flesh, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. If you are determined to speak of qualifications for the grace of Christ, they speak only of your sin, your blindness of mind, your hardness of heart, your unbelief, your carnality, your wickedness. But the grace of Christ is so free that qualifications are out of the question, alien to its very nature: "If it be of works, then is it no more of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace". The truth is that the ground of the grace of Christ lies in the free love of the Father: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters".

Men need grace if they are to receive it. The grace of Christ is offered without money and without price, but it is the grace of faith that receives this. If you were to give a beggar a little money, and at the same time give him the inclination and power to receive it, you would have some illustration of our subject. Yet it would be very faint; for those on whom the grace of Christ is bestowed not only lack the inclination to receive it, but have a strong aversion to it. Now what becomes of your objections and difficulties? You may tell me of your sinfulness and corruption, but it is no reason why Christ should bestow His grace on you; neither is it a reason why He should with-

hold it. By nature, you will never see anything in you that is a ground of hope; but what you do not see in yourselves, you may see in Christ: for in Him there is both the grace, and the foundation on which He bestows it: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief".

(3.) The man that has the knowledge, that is eternal life, has communion with Christ in the *power* of His grace. But you will say, The grace of Christ is rich and free, yet I cannot come to Him. But He can come to you. And this is in every case the way in which He dispenses His grace. You are ever ready to think that, if ever Christ comes to those who cannot come to Him, it is rarely. But this is a mistake: never did a soul give one longing look to Christ but as a result of His first giving His grace to that soul. Peter did not look to Christ and mourn till Christ looked on him and melted his heart. Paul says, "By the grace of God, I am what I am" – by grace, I have a sense of need, a desire to have it, a concern for the lack of it. Now, should you not do like the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda? There he lay, and Christ came to him. So you are to lie at the pool of ordinances till Christ comes to you, and then you will know the power of His grace: "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

This is a very imperfect sketch of the grace of Christ, in which the soul has communion with Him. For He is pleased to reveal Himself in His glory to the soul and causes the soul to grasp the revelation. He says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it". He gives life to dead Lazarus, who leaves the grave at His call. He gives liberty to the prisoners; and they come forth at His call: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me".

Communion with the Father and His Son is the effect of the knowledge the text speaks of. He who totally lacks that knowledge must be a stranger to God's love and the grace of Christ; the wrath of God abides on him; he is in a totally graceless state. To some it may appear a small matter, but there is a kind of knowledge which is abominable in God's sight and unprofitable to you, and that is the knowledge which you get without the Spirit of God and the experience of the truth. You may heap up to yourselves all that ministers, sermons and books can give you, and yet be left without the love of God and the grace of Christ. And to be left without them is to be poor indeed.

But those who have the knowledge we speak of do not always enjoy communion with the Father in His love, and with Christ in His grace. They may be deserted; they may appear to be forgotten; they may be sorely tried; they may question if they ever had any communion. But "at evening time it shall be light"; a strengthening of faith, an increase of knowledge, leads to renewal of fellowship: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto

you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”.

Application. (1.) We are here furnished with a test of our religious knowledge. Many among us profess to have some knowledge of God and His Son: they surely are not altogether ignorant of this. Now I have to ask, Does your knowledge ever lead to communion with the Father and His Son? Does it lead you to feel your lack of this and urge you to desire it and seek it? I am pretty sure that the consciences of many whisper that they do not know what I mean by communion with God. Some people say they have this knowledge but have no prayer in the closet or in the family. Some say their prayers, and there the matter ends; but they cannot tell if they have communion with God.

We tell you plainly that those in this condition do not have a particle of true knowledge. The only difference between you and the most ignorant heathen is that you have a mass of outward knowledge to condemn you, which he does not have. All knowledge in religion that does not come from God, and lead to God, will be swept away. There are those among us who admit the truth of all I say, and so are ready to mourn over their sad state; for they have been taught to make no account of knowledge that does not lead to communion with the Father and His Son. It is grace that can bring you to this; be thankful for what you have, and to you that have shall be given and you shall have abundance. Let God’s people learn to treat as so much rubbish that knowledge which terminates in self, or the Word, and not in God.

(2.) Sinners are called to build their hopes on solid ground: it is on the love of God and the grace of Christ. In Adam, and by their own sin, men are ruined, and you will never see in yourselves anything but causes of perdition; if you see anything else, it is a delusion that will one day burst to your dismay. But turn to the revelation of grace: if infinitely glorious, unspeakably sweet and irresistibly powerful love, and rich, free and weighty grace, can save, then hope in God. I know you will be ready to say you are guilty and vile, but what has that to do with God’s love, which flows from His own sovereign will? Your sin cannot change His pleasure. And what is it to the grace of Christ? Your sins cannot exhaust or defy it. Come then and draw water out of the well of salvation; for it is ever free and satisfying.

(3.) We see our absolute need of the Spirit of grace. To some it may appear strange that I have not mentioned communion with the Holy Ghost; but this has pervaded the whole of my discourse; for I showed you there can be no knowledge without Him; it is an effect of the knowledge communicated and maintained by Him; the soul has communion with the Father and His Son. He is therefore the Agent that works all in all. Now let me call on you that have the Spirit of Christ to seek to have Him more abundantly.

Fearing God or Continuing Wicked¹

Charles Bridges

Ecclesiastes 8:12,13. *Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet surely I know that it shall be well unto them that fear God, which fear before Him; but it shall not be well with the wicked; neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God.*

The sinner's heart is so fully set to do evil that he may do it a hundred times, never so often. Instead of the thunderbolt of vengeance, his days may be prolonged. He may even grow bolder than ever in sin. He may be exalted in outward prosperity, while the children of God are crushed in affliction. The sanctuary expounds the difficulty and solves the apparent contradiction. The end shows all to be infallibly right, the ground of the difficulty wholly taken away. At the great day, there will be a clear discerning between the righteous and the wicked – between him that feareth, and him that feareth not – before God (Mal 3:18).

The two classes – mark emphatically, *only two* – are before us. They are known by the influence or the lack of that divine quality – a holy, filial *fear* of offending God, fearing before him, before His face, as their present God – the witness of all their doings – always in His sight. With those that thus fear before Him, it shall be well. It may often seem to be ill with the godly, and well with the sinner. We see Joseph in the pit (Gen 37:24), Job in the ashes (2:8), Lazarus at the rich man's gate (Lk 16:20,21). We may see Haman in power (Est 3:1), the foolish in prosperity (Ps 73:3). But the statement on both sides stands firm.

Indeed “many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Ps 34:19), but “Thou hast given [them] the heritage of those that fear Thy name” (Ps 61:5). How rich that heritage must be, where every loss turns to our gain, and is overruled for our real and eternal good. This heritage is no other than the Lord Himself (Ps 16:5, see also Ps 73:1-20). Thus it is well with them now. And how will it be with them at death? To find it the gate to life. How in eternity? To be at home and for ever “with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8, 1 Th 4:17) – to “behold” (Ps 17:15, Jn 17:24), yes, even to share (Mt 25:21,23) His glory unclouded, everlasting (Jn 17:22, Rev 3:21).

But what is the record of the *wicked*? Here we must include a large variety of character – those who seem to limp, to occupy a neutral position between the two – not only the ungodly and profane, not only the negative body who

¹An edited extract from Bridges' *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*.

live only for the barren purpose of doing no harm, but the useful member of society, decorous and upright, the lovely and the conscientious. For it is an awful and sad truth that all these shades of character are stamped with ungodliness in the sight of God, because they lack the steady, commanding, practical principle – the fear of God.² It may seem to be well with him in the esteem of his fellow men, and in the testimony of his blinded conscience; but, lacking the one principle that connects him with God, it shall not be well; it shall be very ill with him so long as he remains in his natural condition. Even in his greatest prosperity, he goes in and out under the curse of God.

He has no other prospect than, with horror, to quit the world, which has cheated and ruined him for ever (Job 18:18, Prov 14:32.) Or if he has “no bands in his death”, the more overwhelmed he will be at last in eternal despair – in unanticipated woe. All this comes in the natural course of events. Nothing is easier than to ruin ourselves for ever. Only sit still and do nothing, and we perish in our own slumber. We are cast out as “wicked”, because we are “slothful servants” (Mt 25:26-30). Only “neglect [the] so great salvation” (Heb 2:3), and it becomes to us “the savour of death unto death”.

Take the sum and substance of the matter: the child of God at his worst, it shall be well with him; the servant of sin at his best, it shall not be well with him. Each lives for the present life under the blessing or curse of God. Each will reap the full harvest of their principles throughout eternity. Balance the whole, and who can for a moment doubt on which side lies the *well*, on which side the *ill*? The ill of the godly – whatever that may be – is but for a moment, and his well is for eternity. The contrast is dark beyond expression. The ungodly grasps at happiness and embraces vanity. He cannot prolong his days at will. Their shadow – in contrast with the true substance – passes away without good. And all his portion is dark despair – the cutting rebuke ringing in his ears: “Son, remember!” (Lk 16:25).

And observe how decided the verdict is: Surely I know. This is no bare conjecture or probability. No truth in the Bible is more demonstrative. The firm conviction of it is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, enabling us to rest confidently on the Word. The promise of both worlds is assured to godliness (1 Tim 4:8). The experience of all the God-fearing confirms the testimony. Ask Louis de Marolle – the French confessor in his filthy dungeon – enduring all that man could heap upon him to crush his confidence. Doubt might sometimes rise up in the God-fearing, like the locusts eating up the pleasant green things (Ex 10:15). But on the main point he was ready. It is – and it shall be – well.

²See Ps 36:1, and Paul’s climax in Rom 3:18.

Polycarp's witness was, "I have served my Master for 86 years, and He has never wronged me". How could He after all have turned His back on Polycarp, who had never turned away from Him? "I have fought a good fight", is the voice of a yet nobler witness. "Henceforth . . . a crown" (2 Tim 4:7,8). But not less decided is the judgement: "I know that it shall not be well". The blessing and the curse stand upon the same firm rock – the Word of God, not one jot or tittle of which has ever fallen to the ground. What then is my present state? Living for heaven – or for hell? May the stamp upon me be, "a brand plucked out of the fire" – a sinner saved by grace!"

David Brainerd¹

2. Preparation for Missionary Work

Brainerd used to meet for prayer with some of the students who had obtained a blessing; as close friends they would speak freely among themselves. One day, after a tutor by the name of Whittelsey had prayed with the students, one of his friends asked Brainerd what he thought of the tutor. Brainerd's answer was: "He has no more grace than this chair". The remark was clearly most unwise. Jonathan Edwards, who edited Brainerd's diary, points out that Brainerd was "not only young in years, but very young in religion and experience" and that he "had the unhappiness to have a tincture of that intemperate, indiscreet zeal which was at that time too prevalent".² Brainerd was overheard from outside the room where the remark was made, and the matter was reported to the rector of the College. The upshot was that Brainerd was expelled from Yale in 1742 and was never allowed to finish his degree. But he continued his studies under the supervision of a minister, with a view to becoming a minister himself.

In April 1742 Brainerd wrote, "Some time past, I had much pleasure in the prospect of the heathen being brought home to Christ and desired that the Lord would employ me in that work; but now my soul more frequently desires to die, to be with Christ. . . . In the evening, was refreshed in prayer with the hopes of the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world" (p 33).

Later in the same month, Brainerd wrote, "This day I am 24 years of age. O how much mercy have I received the year past. How often has God caused

¹A further part of a longer version of a paper given at last year's Theological Conference. Last month's instalment covered Brainerd's early life, including his conversion.

²Jonathan Edwards, editor, *The Diary and Journal of David Brainerd*, Banner of Truth Trust 2023 edition, p 30. Page references in brackets, in the body of the text are to this edition of the *Diary and Journal*.

His goodness to pass before me! And how poorly have I answered the vows I made this time twelvemonth, to be wholly the Lord's, to be for ever devoted to His service! The Lord help me to live more to His glory for the time to come. This has been a sweet, a happy day to me; blessed be God. I think my soul was never so drawn out in intercession for others as it has been this night. Had a most fervent wrestle with the Lord tonight for my enemies; and I hardly ever so longed to live to God, and to be altogether devoted to Him; I wanted to wear out my life in His service, and for His glory" (p 37). And this wish was granted.

Shortly afterwards he expressed a longing "to join the angelic hosts in praises, wholly free from imperfection. All I want is to be more holy, more like my dear Lord. O for sanctification!" (p 38). At the beginning of May, he wrote, "Spent the day in fasting and prayer. God gave me much power of wrestling for His cause and kingdom; and it was a happy day to my soul" (p 41).

On the first day of June, Brainerd acknowledges "much of the presence of God in family prayer" and also "some comfort in secret". I was greatly refreshed from the Word of God this morning, which appeared exceeding sweet to me. . . . O that the kingdom of the dear Saviour may come with power, and the healing waters of the sanctuary spread far and wide for the healing of the nations!" (p 43) – another petition, as we so often find, for the spread of the gospel and God's blessing on it. That day he came to Ripton, where he was studying, and mentions his physical weakness, which continued into the next day. Indeed, though he worked so hard and travelled so much, he was never completely well. Edwards sums up the diary entries for three successive days soon afterwards: Brainerd "complains of desertion and want of fervency in religion; yet his diary shows that every day his heart was engaged in religion, as his *great* and, as it were, his *only* business" (p 44).

Brainerd notes on 1 July 1742 that he "had some sweetness in prayer that morning" and exceeding sweetness at night, "and desired nothing so ardently as that God should do with me just as He pleased" (p 47) – remarkable submission to the sovereignty of God. At the end of that month, Brainerd was examined by an Association as to his learning and his experiences in religion. The examination was clearly successful because they then licensed him to preach the gospel of Christ. The next day he rode to a place called Southbury, where he preached from 1 Peter 4:8: "And above all things have fervent charity . . . ". He noted that he had much of the comforting presence of God in the service. "I seemed to have power with God in prayer," he wrote, "and power to get hold of the hearts of the people in preaching" (p 49).

Of a Sabbath in the middle of October he noted, "Had a considerable sense

of my helplessness and inability; saw that I must be dependent on God for all I want; and especially when I went to the place of public worship, I found I could not speak a word for God without His special help and assistance. I went into the assembly trembling, as I frequently do, under a sense of my insufficiency to do anything in the cause of God as I ought to do. But it pleased God to afford me much assistance, and there seemed to be a considerable effect on the hearers. In the evening I felt a disposition to praise God for His goodness to me, that He had enabled me in some measure to be faithful. . . . I scarce ever preach without being first visited with inward conflicts and sore trials. Blessed be the Lord for these trials and distresses, as they are blessed for my humbling” (pp 56,57).

Towards the end of that month, thinking of taking a service that Tuesday evening, he wrote, “It seemed to me, I deserve rather to be driven out of the place than to have anybody treat me with any kindness, or come to hear me preach”. He felt very depressed, but in the event, as he noted, “God afforded me some life and power, both in prayer and sermon; and was pleased to . . . show me that He could enable me to preach. O the wonderful goodness of God to so vile a sinner!” (p 58).

On November 19 he received a letter from Ebenezer Pemberton, a New York minister. He wished Brainerd to come quickly to New York and discuss “the Indian affairs in those parts and to meet certain gentlemen who had been entrusted with those affairs” (p 60). Those affairs related to Brainerd’s appointment as a missionary to the American Indians, and the “certain gentlemen” were in correspondence with the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), who were anxious to promote missionary work among the Indians. Brainerd at once felt the weight of such a responsibility; so he went to pray with two or three Christian friends and found that time of prayer to be “sweet”. He felt able to leave himself and all his concerns with God.

A few days later, Brainerd was in New York. He wrote, “Felt still much concerned about the importance of my business; put up many earnest requests to God for His help and direction; enjoyed but little time alone with God; but my soul longed after Him”. The following day, a small group of men examined Brainerd about his Christian experiences, his knowledge of theology and some of the other studies that he had undertaken with a view to “gospelising the heathen”. He felt himself “the worst wretch that ever lived”; he was afraid that they were sadly deceived in him, and exclaimed, “How miserably would they be disappointed if they knew my inside!” (p 61). And in that depressed condition, he had to go to preach to a sizeable congregation that included “some grave and learned ministers”.

On a Sabbath morning shortly afterwards Brainerd felt that he had little or no power either to pray or preach; yet he acknowledged, "It pleased God to assist me in prayer and sermon" (p 63), especially in prayer. He noted, "I have reason to think that my religion is become more spiritual by means of my late inward conflicts"; and he expressed the desire: "May I always be willing that God should use His own methods with me!" (p 64). During much of the next month, "he was for the most part extremely dejected and distressed". Edwards comments that he "was very much under the power of melancholy" (p 66), or clinical depression, which seems to have affected him for much of his later life. One day he says, "My spiritual conflicts today were unspeakably dreadful"; yet he was learning "the absolute dependence of a creature on God the Creator for every crumb of happiness it enjoys" (p 67).

Origin of a Believer's Union to Christ¹

1. It Flows from Christ's Love

Peter MacBride

1 The believer's union to Christ flows from His own love. I speak here of the love of Christ, not exclusive of the love of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, but inclusive of them; I speak of it here as specially coming under our notice and deserving it. I have already noticed that Jesus Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. Here I only further observe that Jesus Christ thus loved every one of His people. His love was not a general thing, a kind of general, indefinite benevolence, but special and definite. Hence the words of Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who *loved me*, and gave Himself *for me*" (Gal 2:20).

He does not say, Who loved the Church in general but, "Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*". Thus Christ set His heart on, in particular, every one of the elect from all eternity. His love was thus definite, and in His love He undertook for every one in particular. He was willing, in His love, to give Himself for them. In His love, He interposed to do whatever was necessary to save each one of the people He loved. He knew the state of every one of these persons; but, notwithstanding, He did give Himself. His love led Him to undertake for them in eternity, and give Himself for them in time.

¹The first part of a chapter of "The New Creature", in MacBride's *Remains*. "The New Creature" is a series of sermons on: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). MacBride (1797-1846) was a minister in Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute, latterly in the Free Church.

This love of Christ will not be satisfied till they are brought to Him and actually put in possession of all that His generous heart prompted Him to do for them. He follows them in His love. It does not cool or change from day to day, and thus is, so to speak, restless till this is done. In short, the heart of Christ is knit to these individuals. He follows them and cannot be at rest till they are brought to perfect rest in Him in the heavenly world. How wonderful indeed the love of Christ is; how true it is, that it passes knowledge! What a wonder it is that it constrains them to live unto Him! What a wonder that it so constrained Paul, as we read in the previous context?

This wondrous love is the primary source of this union. "I have loved thee," it is said, "with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." It is this that led Him to purchase salvation for them and now leads Him to bestow it on them. It is this that makes Him think of them, as it were, and remember them, while they forget Him. It is this that makes Him follow them, while they depart from Him. It is this that makes Him never leave them till they are made willing, in the day of His power, to come to Him, to go with Him and follow Him.

1. This truth encourages poor sinners to come to Christ and expect salvation from Him. In His love, He bestows this salvation, and this love is wholly from Him. Do you ask, What encouragement is here for me? I answer, It is encouraging, inasmuch as you see this blessing is free. You have nothing to commend yourself to Him – nothing whereby you can hope to prevail with Him to look on you. Well, you see He does it wholly in His love, His own mercy and love. And does this not encourage you who have no money to expect salvation from Him in His own love? It is also encouraging, seeing it shows He acts in spite of all the unworthiness of sinners. He loved them, even when they were dead in trespasses and sins, when they were in their blood; and in His love brings them to Himself.

Though you are in this state vile and, as it were, in your own blood; though you are altogether vile in yourself and polluting to all around you; yet you may hope for salvation from this compassionate, gracious Saviour. He loved sinners and gave Himself for them, and now, in His love, He draws them to Himself, notwithstanding their guilt, notwithstanding their sin, notwithstanding all the unbelief of their hearts, notwithstanding all the impenitence and hardness that is in them, although they are naturally the dens, as it were, of Satan, and he rules in them. Yet Christ, in His love, unites them, even them, to Himself. May you not then, O poor, vile and helpless sinner, hope for deliverance from such a Saviour as this? Lift up your eyes; it is with this loving, compassionate Saviour you have to do.

Though you have no ground of encouragement in yourself, though no one

can encourage you, surely you may hope, in all your vileness, for salvation from such a Saviour as this. If He required motives to do this from those whom He saved, then indeed you might look around you in despair. But seeing He does it of Himself, in His own love, surely I may say, Here is encouragement. In how many instances He did so! See this emblematically shown in the case of the poor man possessed by the legion of devils (Mk 5:1-20). See this also in the case of Paul (Acts 9:1-20). See this still farther manifested in the case of Manasseh (2 Chr 33:1-13). See this again in the case of the woman who was a sinner and yet found mercy (Lk 7:36-50).

Indeed this may be seen in every case. He sought them all in His love, as represented in the parable of the lost sheep. Thus this doctrine is full of encouragement to seek salvation, and to look for it from Him. O sinner, will you apply for deliverance? Do you not need it? Do you feel your need? Then see here encouragement to apply to Christ. I beseech you now to embrace it; go to Him and seek that He would save you, that He would deliver you for His own name's sake. Take encouragement wholly from Him to do this. Do not hesitate or delay any longer, but seek the Lord now. O sinner, if you will not yet care for your soul, if you will not lay to heart your needs, be sure your sin will find you out; be sure also that your trampling under foot the Son of God, and despising His compassion and love, will be specially awful to you.

2. It may also be seen here what all the people of God, who are in union to Christ, are indebted to for this. It is, first of all, to the love of Christ, and to God in Him. It was not for their own merit, nor for their own endeavours, nor for the labour or merit of others. They should surely acknowledge this. Paul did so. "By the grace of God," he says, "I am what I am." He is loud, as it were, in confessing his obligations to the riches of the love and compassion of Christ. (See Gal 2:20, 1 Tim 1:12, Tts 3:4-7.) Henceforth the thought of this love constrained him, till he acted, in the opinion of many, as if he had lost his reason because of his zeal for the Lord. Now all should see to whom they are indebted, if they enjoy this union at all. Do you enjoy this union to Christ? Then see it is wholly owing to His love you were brought to this. It was not because of your merit or your labour.

Remember then your obligation to Him. See that you fully confess your obligation to Him. See you show this, as Paul did, by living to Him "who died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again". Take heed of self-righteousness; beware of its insidious workings, lest you should think you were at first brought by anything of your own, to Christ or to any of the fruits of this union that you afterwards enjoyed. Even the people of God are not secure from this; hence the many exhortations about this. Moses of old exhorted the

children of Israel against this; he called them to beware lest they should think they were chosen, or brought to the happy state they enjoyed, from any merits of their own. Against this Paul also exhorts in his Epistles. Indeed we are exhorted against it in the whole Word of God. See then that you who are the people of God, who have this union, remember it is wholly from the love of Christ you are brought to this. And while you give Him the glory, take courage from it to look to Him unto eternal life.

3. From this it may also be seen that union to Christ is a sure evidence of His love, seeing it is in love He brings anyone to this; so if anyone is brought to it, they have evidence of His love to them. The love of Christ is indeed a secret thing; it is hid from public gaze, but it is not wholly concealed. On the contrary, it is surely made known by infallible evidence. First of all, it is manifested in this very union we are speaking of. They who are united to Christ, and who have good evidence of this, do not need to wait for further evidence before they conclude their interest in the love of Christ and of God. No, they have infallible evidence of it in this union itself. Nothing will prove it without this; but this is sufficient.

I do not say there are no other things which prove this; indeed all that follows this union is a proof of it; all is connected with it. Hence Peter says, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure", intimating that all evidence of election, and so of this love, is connected essentially with this very calling, and so with this very union. So this is an evidence of the love of Christ. Have you been brought to this? Is your heart united to Christ? From being cold or unfeeling, do you, as it were, follow after Him in your heart? Do your thoughts follow Him? Do your desires follow Him? Does your heart cleave to Him and truly desire to break away from every bondage to cleave to Him as your Saviour? Then here you have indeed evidence of the love of Christ.

If the fire of love to Him is indeed kindled in your heart, it is from heaven. It has come down from the fire of the love of Christ, from the very heart of Christ, which is such a vehement flame that it has kindled all the hearts that have loved Him in this world. And it has kept them all alive amid the drowning, extinguishing waters of this world and of the heart, and it keeps alive the flame of love in every heart in heaven to all eternity. If you have a spark of this, a true spark of it, then you have evidence of the love of Christ, of the wondrous fire that is vehemently burning in Him, which many waters could not drown, and which was truly stronger than death. And remember that, as He has kindled it, so He can keep that spark alive, and blaze the smoking flax, even into a pure and unfading flame.

4. You see here that if we would have experimental knowledge of the love

of Christ and God, and fellowship with the blessed Saviour in His love, we must be united to Him. It cannot be attained otherwise. It is not merely by meditating on this that it is to be enjoyed. It would indeed be well if we would meditate thus on the love of Christ. Surely there is nothing more worthy of our thoughts; yet it is not by mere meditation that this is to be enjoyed. It is by experience, by the experience of this union, and of the union of hearts between Christ and the believer, that it is thus produced. The believer that is joined to the Lord has fellowship with Christ in His love, in the enjoyment of this union and its fruits and consequences.

Now it is by this experience, by the feeling, as it were, of this union of hearts, of the love of Christ drawing the soul to Him by His own excellences, that we come to the knowledge of the love of Christ, and what it is to be thus loved. This love, the Church says, “is better than wine”. “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Thy love is better than wine.” This is what Paul experienced so much. But this is in some measure known by all converts; yet as to the fullness of it that might be enjoyed, how much is required? (As to this, see Eph 3:13-21.)

Thus this union flows from the love of Christ. This is the primary source of it. It is to be sought in redeeming love. I have been led to dwell on this much longer than I intended, but certainly not longer than the importance of the thing itself merits. Who can unfold, in all its fullness, the subject here touched on? It passes knowledge.

Zimbabwe Mission Update

January 2025

Rev J B Jardine

M*aternity Ward at Mbumba Hospital.* The new maternity ward, paid for by donations from our friends in Holland, is complete and will be opened shortly. The ward will have four delivery beds, two Caesarean beds, 24 ante-natal and post-natal beds, three incubators, four toilet areas and three shower areas. The larger ward replaces a smaller facility that was overcrowded and without adequate washing facilities.

Mr Keith Mpata, Divinity Student. Mr Mpata was successful in obtaining his UK Visa in September and was able to begin his second-year studies with Rev A MacColl in Dingwall. He is expected to return to Zimbabwe towards the end of February 2025, DV. It is our prayerful desire that he might be richly blessed in his studies.

Food Shortage. The failed harvest of 2023-24 and a similar prospect for the 2024-25 harvest continues to be a cause for concern. The official designation given to the present situation is that of a “food crisis”. This means that there is a lack of food, causing malnutrition, and that families are having to deplete essential livelihood assets such as their cattle to get by. This is stage 3 of a five-stage scale with stage 5 being classed as “catastrophe / famine”. If the harvest fails in this coming year, then the situation will only grow worse. If the harvest is successful, things will still not improve on the ground until at least April or May 2025. The areas in which our Mission work is based are among those affected, and deaths associated with malnutrition have been reported in these areas.

With the help of our Dutch friends on the Mbumba Zending Committee we have endeavoured to meet the needs of our own people and the school children under our care in Zimbabwe. The Mbumba Zending Committee has already donated towards our relief efforts, and assured us of their willingness to give more if required. A total of about £43 400 has been sent out in the past year to assist in general or congregational food relief, including £16 800 from the Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund and £9495 left over from our appeal in 2019, both of which reflect contributions from our people, directly and through congregations.

The actual amounts of money needed and the way that it is used are managed by a committee of Mission staff based in Zimbabwe itself. They have sought to meet immediate needs in the provision of foodstuffs, as well as providing seed and fertiliser for future planting. There is also a programme in our five Primary Schools, where pupils are given a regular meal during the school day. Much prayer is required in view of the need for suitable conditions for a good harvest in early 2025.

Bible Distribution and Translation Work. The Zimbabwe Presbytery has received 6000 Ndebele Bibles for distribution in the coming months. The Publications Committee of the Presbytery has now translated the book of sermons by the Rev Donald Macfarlane on the love of God into both Ndebele and Shona.

Thembeiso Former Residents Trust. According to the annual Thembeiso Development Plan for 2020, the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee agreed to the setting up of a Thembeiso Former Residents Trust (TFRT) to support those in the process of leaving, or who have already left, the care and oversight of the Thembeiso Home. The main areas of support would provide: (a) measured financial assistance (in terms of amount and duration) for educational fees, clothing, travel, housing (either renting or assistance with construction); (b) help with getting to and from church services; (c) regular

social contact; (d) home visits; (e) opportunities to visit former “family” members at Thembiso, and take part in reunions and day trips.

As regular contact with Thembiso former residents is maintained year by year, and relationships are strengthened and renewed, the value of the TFRT is evident. The level of input required to support such young people becomes more obvious when their mental, emotional and moral resilience is tested in the life experiences they meet after they leave Thembiso. The majority of those that the TFRT stay connected with are showing a desire to stay connected with one another and with the Trust members, especially face-to-face contact, something which is to be encouraged.

It is hoped that in 2025, the Lord willing, the work of the Thembiso Trust will continue to be effective and increase in usefulness among those for whom it has been set up. Members of the TFRT are conscious that it is only Divine power that can break the bands of iron which bind our young people in the kingdom of darkness. The prayers of the readers of this *Magazine* are craved, for the Most High to prosper His Word in their souls, to His glory.

Book Review

Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress, by C H Spurgeon, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 221 pages, £7.50, obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

In the construction of Solomon's temple two men, Bezaleel and Aholiab were “filled with the spirit of God” (Ex 31:3) and thus were equipped for the onerous work in hand. We have in the book under review, two men, John Bunyan, the tinker of Bedford, and C H Spurgeon, minister of the gospel, moved by the same spirit in their work for the Lord. Both were pilgrims and well-acquainted with the difficulties and rewards of the journey of faith and well-equipped to be like Great Heart, in Bunyan's work, to guide others to the Celestial City.

Spurgeon is not so much in awe of Bunyan that he refrains from criticism, as the following quotation shows: “John Bunyan put the getting rid of the burden too far from the commencement of the pilgrimage. . . . We must not say to the sinner: ‘Now sinner, if thou wilt be saved, go to the baptismal pool; go to the Wicket Gate; go to the church; do this or that’. No, the cross should be right in front of the Wicket Gate; and we should say to the sinner; ‘Throw thyself down there, and thou art safe; but thou art not safe till thou canst cast off thy burden, and lie at the foot of the cross, and find peace in Jesus” (p 13).

Spurgeon himself, as a sinner saved by grace, spends some time in chapter 6 on “Christian at the Cross”. The burden which had troubled Christian was the burden of his sin. Bunyan writes, “Now I saw in my dream that the highway, up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Up this way therefore did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty because of the load on his back. He ran thus until he came to a place somewhat ascending, and on that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom, a sepulchre” (p 59). Again: “So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in and I saw it no more” (p 60).

Spurgeon stresses the need of repentance as well as the joy of salvation; “A dry-eyed repentance is no repentance. They who turn unto the Lord aright, mourn for sin and are in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. It is from the cross that both repentance and faith arise. We do not bring these graces to the cross” (p 62). The Pilgrim’s tears of repentance and three leaps of joy blend in well together and illustrate Spurgeon’s own conversion experience. “I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present, ‘I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood.’”

Another picture Spurgeon draws is of the “Enchanted Ground”. Both Christian and Hopeful, his fellow pilgrim, felt drowsy and Hopeful wanted to lie down and sleep. He said, “Let us lie down here and take one nap.

“*Christian*. ‘By no means, said the other; lest, sleeping, we never awake more.’

“*Hopeful*. ‘Why, my brother? Sleep is sweet to the labouring man; we may be refreshed if we take a nap.’

“*Christian*. ‘Do you not remember that one of the Shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground? He meant by that, that we should beware of sleeping; “therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Th 5:6)’” (p 156).

Spurgeon comments that he saw much of the malign effects of the Enchanted Ground in the churches of his own day. He notes that where there is this soul sleep, there is a state of spiritual insensibility [unconsciousness]. In that state, If I “talk to you of perishing multitudes . . . you hear it as an old, old, tale” (p 158). This ground also induces a state of inaction. “It is not merely that the pulpit is a sentinel box with the sentinel fast asleep, but the pews are affected too. . . . Where is the spirit of prayer, where the life of

devotion?” (p 159). Spurgeon notes that the most likely times to succumb to sleep are when temporal circumstances are comfortable and our nest is well-feathered; and also when we are near our journey’s end. He quotes Bunyan: “For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary, and when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey’s end” (p 163). Beware the Enchanted Ground.

In the last picture Spurgeon takes from *Pictures from Pilgrim’s Progress*, Bunyan writes of Christiana passing over the river: “But glorious it was to see how the upper region was filled with horses and chariots, with trumpeters and pipers, with singers and players on stringed instruments, as they went up, and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city” (p 207). Mr Steadfast, who accompanied Christiana to the brink of the river, said, “The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold, yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the convoy that waits for me on the other side, lie as a glowing coal on my heart. . . . Now, methinks, I stand easy, my foot is fixed upon that on which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood, while Israel went over this Jordan” (p 207).

Altogether an illuminating commentary on a Christian classic.

(Rev) J R Tallach

Assisted Suicide – a Biblical Perspective

Rev I D MacDonald¹

The recent vote in the House of Commons in favour of legalising assisted suicide marks a further black step in the descent of our nation into the chasm of atheistic darkness. Rapidly, we are taking on the marks of the generation of God’s wrath prior to the flood when, “the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen 6:11). Regardless of the plausible arguments and peaceful pictures of those who favoured the introduction of assisted suicide, the fact remains that, in light of God’s Word, it is nothing less than legalised murder. Suicide itself is, of course, self-murder, and is to be met with the cry of Paul to the desperate Philippian Jailor, “Do thyself no harm”. This is an echo of the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”, in as much as it requires all lawful endeavours to preserve, and forbids the taking of, our own life.

The situation with assisted suicide is more complex because it involves two parties: the person requesting that their life be terminated and the person assisting the accomplishing of that desire. Put bluntly, the person assisting by overseeing the administration of a fatal drug is guilty of murder, and the

¹Mr MacDonald wrote the article as Convener of the Religion and Morals Committee.

person requesting the termination of their own life is guilty of self-murder. There are therefore two murderers involved in every assisted suicide.

Scripture makes this position clear in one instance at least. King Saul had sunk to a desperately low condition spiritually when he had the awful cry in his soul, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams" (1 Sam 28:15). Despairing of help from God he had turned to the occult, by consulting the witch at Endor. In this frame of mind, King Saul went out to battle against the Philistines and was "sore wounded of the archers" (1 Sam 31:3). It is probable, though not necessarily certain, that the wound was mortal.

Saul's response was to seek an "assisted suicide". He requested his armour-bearer to draw his sword and to thrust him through to hasten the end of his life. His motive in so doing was the fear of what may have come upon him between the time of his being wounded and his death, especially in the form of torture at the hands of the Philistines: "Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me" (1 Sam 31:4). His armour-bearer, rightly, shrank from this act of murder: "But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid". Foiled in his effort at an assisted suicide, Saul then "took a sword, and fell upon it" (1 Sam 31:4), committing suicide himself, and so plunged his soul into the blackness of darkness for ever.

Three days later, a young Amalekite man came to King David to tell him that he had encountered the wounded King Saul, and that he had requested him to assist in his suicide, saying, "Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me" (2 Sam 1:9). According to the Amalekite, he fell in with this request and took Saul's life, saying in apparent justification of his action that he was "sure that he could not live after that he was fallen" (2 Sam 1:10). Now it is by no means clear whether this account was true, or whether it was a mere fabrication to ingratiate himself with King David and to gain a reward.

Regardless, the way in which David dealt with him, taking him at his word, was to reprove him for the sin of murder: "And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" (2 Sam 1:14). David then exercised his royal authority in calling for instant capital punishment to be meted out upon him so that he was executed there and then. David's final words to him were, "Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed" (2 Sam 1:16).

From Saul's perspective, the fear of future suffering, and the certainty of

death thereafter did not justify his desire for an assisted suicide. His duty was to take all lawful means to preserve his own life, and at the most to have left the matter in the hands of the Lord, as did the deeply depressed Elijah when he prayed to his Creator, “Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers” (1 Ki 19:4). From the perspective of the Amalekite who claimed to have slain him at his request, he was guilty of murder in the eyes of God, and had the guilt of Saul’s blood upon his head. His plea that he was certain King Saul was sure to die anyway, in no way altered the case to lessen the breach of the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”.

It has been well observed that the force of legalised assisted suicide is to make doctors, who ought to be preservers of life, to be murderers. It may be remarked that the path to assisted suicide was cleared by the gradual desensitising of society and sections of the medical profession to the murder of unborn infants in the womb. We leave the other more practical concerns about assisted suicide to others who are better able to voice them. The fundamental principle involved in the matter is, “Thou shalt not kill”, and no Christian in the medical profession can have anything to do with assisted suicide.

What poor dejected, suicidal sinners need, whether dying or not, is the stern voice of the law mingled with the sweet tones of gospel love in the words, “Do thyself no harm: for we are all here”. The Philippian Jailor was stopped in the very act of suicide by this exhortation and, having been brought under concern of soul, was found crying out, “What must I do to be saved?” Before long we find that the Lord had opened his heart under Paul’s preaching, and his former sorrow and fear vanished when very soon “he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house”. What the dying need is not premature death, but life eternal through believing in Jesus Christ so that they might be saved.

Protestant View

New English Cardinal

The Pope has appointed Timothy Radcliffe, an English Dominican friar aged 79, as a new English Cardinal. Like the Pope, Mr Radcliffe favours the acceptance of LGBT conduct in the Roman Catholic Church, although his comments on the subject show the usual “yea and nay” attitude so common in Romanism. The Scriptures, by contrast, declare plainly that homosexual desires and inclinations are evil, in the same way that adulterous desires and inclinations are evil. Where they exist, they are to be mortified and crucified rather than defended. They have no lawful outlet. Those who defend sin are

not the friends of sinners, though they often pretend to be, but the true friends of sinners are those who warn them to repent. *DWBS*

Notes and Comments

Resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury

On 12 November 2024, after 11 years in office, Justin Welby, of Canterbury, resigned amid criticism over his handling of abuse allegations and safeguarding policy. On January 6 he will formally hand over his duties to the second most senior cleric in the Church of England, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, who will act as caretaker until a new appointment is made, which, we understand, is unlikely to be before the summer.

Archbishop Welby faced criticism in an extremely critical report by Keith Makin, a social services director, over how the Church – and the Archbishop personally – handled abuse allegations against John Smyth QC, a Christian barrister and former acquaintance of the Archbishop. Smyth, born in Canada, was actively involved in Evangelical holiday camps run with funding from the Iwerne Trust. The camps were initially aimed at boys from public schools and promoted conservative, Evangelical theology. This enabled some attendees to go on to become leaders in the Church of England (John Stott, Justin Welby, David Sheppard and Alpha course founder, Nicky Gumbel).

In 1982, an internal Iwerne Trust report recorded that Smyth had performed sadistic beatings on schoolboys and young men associated with the camps and with a Christian group at Winchester College. (These were administered for perceived failings in the boys; for example, 400 strokes were given for showing pride.) In 1984 Smyth moved to Zimbabwe, where he continued to run children's camps and perpetrate abuse. The UK police were not informed of the 1982 report until 2013, and it became public in 2017. Smyth died while under investigation and was not charged. The independent Makin Review, published in 2024, concluded that he had subjected more than 100 boys and young men to “traumatic physical, sexual and psychological and spiritual attacks” over a period of four decades.

It is reported that Welby was informed of an allegation against Smyth in 2013, a short time after he became archbishop. He followed Church protocol, and sought assurances from senior colleagues that the matter was being properly investigated. From then on, however, there appears to have been a failure to follow up. The Makin report criticised Welby and senior colleagues for an “absence of any further questioning and follow-up” to ensure the matter was being robustly pursued, accusing them of a “distinct lack of curiosity”.

After the publication of the report, Welby apologised but said he would not resign because he had no knowledge of the abuse allegations prior to 2013. However, pressure on his position built over the following days, especially over the Church's continuing struggle to create a robust safeguarding system, and he resigned.

It is appalling to think of abuse of children being perpetrated in the name of "Evangelical Christianity". Those who turned a blind eye, who did not want to bring a "respected" man or the Church into disrepute, are also to blame. The Church of England, nowadays preoccupied with same-sex marriage, same-sex blessings and women clerics, failed to identify, report and prevent the abuse of children in its midst.

We can only mourn the state of the national church, (not forgetting our own faults and failings) and pray that He who "turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein" would in mercy turn "the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings" (Ps 107:33-35). FDR

A New Blasphemy Law to Protect Muslims and Islam?

According to the following excerpts (mainly taken from recent editions of *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Spectator* and *Unherd*), the UK government proposes to enshrine a definition of Islamophobia in law. It intends to use the definition proposed by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness". This definition is not only controversial and dangerous for our civil and religious liberties; it is grossly provoking to Almighty God. Yet, most (not all) of the political parties in the UK, including all in the Scottish Parliament, are backing it!

On November 27, the Labour MP for Birmingham Hall Green and Moseley, Tahir Ali, asked Sir Keir Starmer during Prime Minister's Questions if he would "commit to introducing measures to prohibit the desecration of all religious texts and the prophets of the Abrahamic religions". He added that "November marks Islamophobia awareness month", observing that, "last year, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution condemning the desecration of religious texts, including the Quran". The Prime Minister replied that the Government is "committed to tackling all forms of hatred and division", including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Interestingly, in response to these comments, the National Secular Society said it is "deeply alarming that an MP is calling for the introduction of new blasphemy laws". They added: "MPs should uphold values which are found-

ational to our society – not seek to dismantle them”. They were not understanding, perhaps, the significance of what they were stating when it is compared with their relentless attempts to dismantle the great Christian values that are the very foundation of British society!

Stephen Daisley observed in *The Spectator*, “Anyone outraged by Labour MP Tahir Ali calling on the Government to introduce blasphemy laws has clearly not been paying attention, for there are already blasphemy laws in this country. All Ali wants to do is make them official. When he urges Sir Keir Starmer to prohibit the desecration of the Quran and other Abrahamic religious texts, as he did at Prime Minister’s Questions, he will be aware that people are already punished for desecrating the Muslim holy book, including children”.

Suella Braverman KC, a former Conservative Home Secretary, graphically states in an article in *The Daily Telegraph*: “Technically speaking, the criminal offence of blasphemy was abolished in Great Britain by the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act of 2008. Yet a growing number of incidents suggest that a shadow blasphemy law has crept into our national psyche, enforced not by statute but by a toxic cocktail of political correctness, identity politics, and institutional cowardice. This is not merely a misunderstanding of law and liberty; it is an existential threat to free speech and the fabric of British society.

“Eighteen months ago, Kettlethorpe High School in Wakefield became the stage for a surreal and troubling drama. An autistic boy accidentally scuffed a copy of the Quran. What should have been a simple matter of pastoral care spiralled into a public reckoning. The headteacher summoned the police. A meeting akin to a Sharia tribunal unfolded in a local mosque, where the boy’s mother was compelled to apologise to an all-male audience, her son’s actions deemed so serious that the police recorded a Non-Crime Hate Incident. Such Orwellian absurdity should belong to fiction, yet it is reality in 21st-century multicultural Britain.

“This is no isolated case . . . a pattern is clear. The Prime Minister, far from defending the British principle of robust and open debate, appears to tacitly endorse this trend. When asked in Parliament whether he would consider banning the desecration of religious texts, Sir Keir Starmer promised to tackle ‘Islamophobia in all its forms’. What does this mean? In practice, it sounds dangerously close to endorsing a blasphemy law, privileging Islam above other religions.

“Let’s be clear: Britain is a Christian country. Yet there is no law protecting Christianity from mockery or insult”. Whilst Suella Braverman acknowledges that Britain is a Christian country, she is not a Christian (she took her oath of allegiance as an MP on the Buddhist Dhammapada). She

does not accept the authority of Holy Scripture or that Christianity is the only true religion.

She continued, “Why is it acceptable to ridicule Hinduism but not Islam? Why are insults to Jewish symbols waved off, while a scuffed Quran becomes a police matter? How can Christians be arrested for silent prayer, while mobs cancel films deemed offensive to Muslims? Such double standards are untenable. They breed resentment, division, and ultimately the erosion of the liberties that define us.

“It is worth remembering that free speech does not come with a guarantee of comfort. It includes the right to question, critique, and yes, offend. . . .”

“Consider the child sexual abuse scandals in Rotherham and Rochdale. Authorities turned a blind eye for years, paralysed by fear of being accused of racism or Islamophobia. More recently, Sir William Shawcross’s review of the Prevent programme revealed that fears of appearing anti-Muslim stymied efforts to tackle Islamist extremism. These failures are not isolated incidents; they are symptoms of a broader cultural malaise.

“Our institutions, from the police to the press, are increasingly cowed by identity politics. They see criticism of Islam not as a legitimate part of public discourse but as a threat to social harmony. This is not just wrong; it is dangerous. Without the freedom to critique and question, society becomes brittle, unable to address its flaws or adapt to change.

“The challenge is not to suppress difficult conversations but to have them openly and honestly. We must be able to discuss radical imams, gender inequality, and cultural practices within Muslim communities, with the same vigour that we investigate historical sexual abuse in the Church of England. To do otherwise is not just hypocritical; it is harmful to the very people we claim to protect.”

The problem Suella Braverman refers to is far greater than the loss of free speech or a cultural malaise; it is the loss of truth, righteousness and godliness that man experienced when Adam rebelled against God. He and his posterity lost union and fellowship with God his Creator. We are where we are today because of the great evil of sin.

As Christians therefore, in these days of trouble, rebuke and blasphemy (see 2 Ki 19:3, Is 37:3), our responsibility and duty – as individuals, as families and as a Church – is far, far greater than that of others who have no spiritual understanding, no true allegiance and love to, or fear of, Almighty God. This is He whose glorious Name and blessed Being is so mocked, defiled and blasphemed. We need to heed the many commands of Holy Scripture and cry mightily to the God of heaven that He might turn our nation again to Himself in repentance and faith, beseeching Him to pour upon us

the Spirit of grace and supplications and turn us from all idolatry and sin to Himself, that multitudes of our peoples may, by His grace, flee to Christ the Saviour and know Him, fear Him and glorify Him in every area of life, as individuals, as families, as churches and as nations. DPR

Most Popular Boys' Name in England and Wales

In 2000, the ten most popular boys' names in England and Wales, in order of popularity, were Jack, Thomas, James, Joshua, Daniel, Harry, Joseph, Samuel, Matthew and Callum. Mohammed and its variants were at number 17. Mohammed and its variants are now easily top (over 7000 such boys born in 2023), and the ten mentioned before have disappeared (although Henry is at number 10). The second most popular boys' name is Noah on 4382 and the third is Oliver on 3556. The total number of boys born in 2023 was around 300 000.

The figures speak for themselves about the rapid rise of Islam in Britain, and what the future probably holds. Those that will not bow their necks to the "easy" yoke of Christ (Mt 11:30) may have to submit to Islam. A glance at the nations which are presently Islamic shows that it is not an easy yoke to bear, nor an easy one to cast off. DWBS

Church Information

Meetings of Presbytery (DV)

Northern: At Dingwall, on Tuesday, March 4, at 2 pm.

Southern: At Glasgow, on Tuesday, August 25, at 2 pm.

Western: At Lochcarron, on Tuesday, March 18, at 11 am.

Asia Pacific: At Grafton, on Thursday, January 16, at 10:30 am.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo, on Tuesday, March 11, at 11 am.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

General Fund: Anon, £500.

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: Providence Strict Baptist Chapel, Irthlingborough, for Zimbabwe Mission, £895; Anon, for Thembisio Childrens' Home, £1509.67; Anon, for Mbuma Mission Hospital, £16 000.

Sustentation Fund: Anon, £56 197.42.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Dingwall: Anon, Beaulay, £1000.

Dornoch: *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £40.

Fort William: Anon, £400.

Gairloch: Anon, £700 per WC.

Glasgow: *Bus Fund:* Anon, £40, £40. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £80, £60, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80, £80.

Portree: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £70.

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 Bridge:** Sabbath 6 pm. Wed 7.30 pm (alternately in Dornoch and Bonar). 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 I D MacDonald; tel: 01478 612110.

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 1RD; 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. First and third Sabbaths of month: **Thurso:** Duncan Street; 3 pm; **Strathy:** 6 pm.

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 B Jardine; tel: 01859 502253.

North Uist: Bayhead; Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thurs 7.30 pm. Manse tel: 01876 510233. Contact: Rev J B Jardine; tel: 01859 502253.

Perth: Pomarium, off Leonard Street. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wed 7.30 pm. Manse: 5 Main Road, Luncarty, PH11 3EP; tel: 01738 828762. Contact: Rev D Campbell; tel: 07790 068991.

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.

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, or as intimated locally. Manse: 2 Fleming Place, Stornoway, HS1 2NH; tel: 01851 702501. Contact: Rev J B Jardine; tel: 01859 502253.

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

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

Australia

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

Sydney, NSW: Corner of Oxford and Regent Streets, Riverstone. Sabbath 10.30 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev G B Macdonald BSc, 60 Hamilton St, Riverstone, NSW 2765; tel: (02) 9627 3408; e-mail: sydneyfpchurch@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 Levytskyi; tel: 00 38 048 785 19 24; e-mail: dlevytskyi@gmail.com; or contact Mr I Zadorozhnyi, P O Box 100, Odessa-91, 65091; e-mail: antipa@eurocom.od.ua.

Zimbabwe

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

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

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

New Canaan: Church. Rev T Mwedzi.

Zenka: Church.

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