

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: Staffin; **Second:** Chesley, Maware; **Third:** Gisborne; **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:** Auckland, Bonar Bridge; **Third:** Applecross, 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:** Aberdeen, Tarbert; **Fourth:** Barnoldswick, Ingwenya.

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

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

December: Third Sabbath: Bulawayo.

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God's Great Wonders

Moses was looking after his father-in-law's sheep when he came across a bush that was on fire. There seems to have been nothing unusual about that, but there was something altogether unusual about this particular bush: it was not being "consumed". So he said to himself: "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt" (Ex 3:3).

Why was the bush not consumed? The answer was that God was present in the bush, named first in this part of Scripture as "the Angel of the Lord", and then as God. He therefore was the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God. It was through His almighty power that the bush was not consumed. This was the One who in the fullness of time was to appear in human nature as the Saviour of the world. Never before and never since then has such an event taken place as at the burning bush. It marked the occasion when Moses was commissioned as the leader of the Children of Israel, to bring them out of their bondage in Egypt. It seemed an impossible task to deliver Israel from Pharaoh's power, who had what one assumes to have been a large army at his disposal. But Israel's deliverance had nothing to do with Moses' power; it was because the all-powerful Angel of the Lord went before them, and with them, that Israel were brought out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and on through the wilderness, and at last into their permanent home in Canaan.

Just as Moses went to examine the strange phenomena of the burning bush, so we are to consider certain other situations which seem totally impossible. But let us remember the Saviour's words: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). Let us consider two such situations when the seemingly impossible actually takes place.

The *first* is that, when the Lord has implanted the seed of grace in a sinful soul, *life in that soul will never be destroyed*. The burning bush was, without question, a great wonder, but the survival of grace in the soul is an even greater wonder. The wonder of the burning bush shows the power of God over nature, in the physical creation, but the other wonder – while it again clearly shows the great power of God – is to be also against all the opposition of a sinful world and the evil powers of hell.

There is (1) opposition within the soul. When the Holy Spirit begins to work, He begins to subdue sin, but that is a work which will not be complete until the soul is parted from the body at the moment of death. As Paul expresses it, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). Matthew Poole speaks of the “flesh” as “that carnal concupiscence [that fleshly desire for what is forbidden] which we derived from Adam”; it goes on striving against the effects of the Spirit’s work in the soul.

And the Spirit strives against the flesh and its sinful desires; the Third Person of the Trinity exercises a powerful restraint on the power of sin in the new-born soul, so that the effects of indwelling sin are less than what they would be if it was left to itself. The Holy Spirit, as a divine Person, has unlimited power; accordingly the Spirit weakens the power of sin in the soul, graciously subduing the wrong desires as He strengthens the desires for holiness and for what is good. It is solemn to think that *if* the Spirit did not continue to work in the regenerate soul – one to which He has imparted spiritual life – that soul would be overcome by the sin that remains. But that can never be; remaining sin *will* be subdued, not all at once but gradually, through the continuing, powerful working of the Spirit, until the soul is made perfectly holy – until sin is completely subdued, and the soul is made entirely fit to enter heaven, that place of total holiness.

There is also (2) opposition to grace in the soul from outside. There is the activity of Satan, as he goes about “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). We are to resist his temptations, but believers are weak, and temptation may result in sin, even serious sin. So the fact that, in spite of temptation, spiritual life survives in every child of God, is due to a greater than human power. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that the soul is strengthened to resist temptation and to recover from the effects of falling into sin. Here we have another great wonder that should make believers consider the power and graciousness of God and take encouragement from that power.

The *second* wonder is that *the Church continues to exist in a sinful world*. Here we note first that it has not been fatally weakened by the persecution it has had to face in various places, at various times, including today. Several Roman emperors in the early Christian centuries did their utmost to sweep the Church out of existence, but this singularly failed. The reason was that the Lord was, to a wonderful extent, adding to the Church so that it was preserved; indeed it may have emerged from these periods of persecution stronger than it was before.

More dangerous to the Church has been error springing up. Again and

again, false doctrines have emerged that wreaked havoc on the spiritual life and orthodoxy of the Church, but the Lord has raised up leaders who have opposed false doctrines. One obvious example was John Knox in Scotland, who not only opposed the errors and unscriptural practices of Rome, but powerfully proclaimed true doctrine and helped to confine the Scottish Church to the form of worship set before the Church in the Bible. Again we must emphasise that it was ultimately the work of God, rather than human effort that brought much spiritual blessing to the nation, as well as bringing about a Church that was truly Reformed. Yet we should also bear in mind that behind Knox there was John Calvin and other Reformers – Martin Luther in particular – whom God used in spite of his errors.

We live in an age when the Church is weak. We might fear that the Church will sink, through being swamped by the waves of error and unbelief from within and the waves of secularism and false religion from outside. Nothing can save the Church if it has to rely on human activity and power. But that is not the case. It was a wonder that the Church survived the age of the Apostles, in the face of the opposition of persecuting Jews in Jerusalem and in Gentile cities and the power of the heathen religion outside Israel. Yet the Church did become established, through the Holy Spirit accompanying the preaching of the Word of God, and there were organised congregations in many parts of Europe and elsewhere. And God has preserved His Church throughout the ages, by His power to convert sinners and to keep those whom He has converted from falling away.

We may notice too the great danger that the Church has experienced in recent centuries through the loosening of its hold on the teaching of Scripture about itself– that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that it is therefore absolutely without error. It is very much a foundational doctrine; if we cannot rely on the complete accuracy of the Bible, we cannot rely on any other doctrine taught there. But the Bible is God's revelation to mankind and, as God is true, what He has revealed is true. We may note that it was in the doctrinal turmoil, in particular, over Scripture, of the late nineteenth century that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland was formed, to preserve a witness to the truth.

What hope can we have for the future of the Church? We must believe that it was God Himself who preserved the Church through all the opposition and weakness it has experienced throughout the generations, since the Day of Pentecost. It is to Him we must look for its reviving. He is not only able to preserve it, remarkable though that is; He is able to make it grow till "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:9). And He *will* bring about that wonder. He has promised to do so.

Assimilation to 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.*

The objects embraced in God's work of grace are specially glorious in themselves and in the relation they bear to one another, and also in the works done in accomplishing God's grand purposes. To apprehend these objects is, accordingly, altogether beyond the reach of the carnal heart, which is so far from rightly estimating them that it is not possible for it to receive a right impression of their excellence. But what is impossible for the carnal heart is possible to the new nature which is communicated by the Holy Spirit in the day of His power. No sooner is that nature created than there dawns on the soul the light of the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. We have already considered: first, the nature of this knowledge; second, the effects it produces. The first effect we found is supreme love to the objects embraced. The second is communion with them, even with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

3. The third effect is assimilation to the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. To make it simpler to illustrate this point, I shall speak principally of assimilation to the Lord Christ. Indeed this includes assimilation to the Father, because Christ is the image of the invisible God; He said, "I and My Father are one". Moreover, the Lord Christ is constituted the Head of the Church, the First-born among many brethren; and it is the distinct purpose of God that His people should be *conformed* to the image of His Son.

(1.) The soul is *assimilated to Christ in wisdom*. The usual explanation of wisdom is that it consists in the practical application of true knowledge, or in the choice and use of the best ends to attain it. Now men in their natural state lack this attribute entirely. It is true that they heap up a mass of fine notions and they come up with unusual inventions. This they call knowledge; and the men that possess it they call wise. But what if in all this there is not one good end? It is little better than child's play, building card castles or writing in the sand. I know this will be regarded by some as excessively severe; and perhaps for my pains I may receive the names of ignorant, narrow-minded and bigoted. But we have before us the balances of Divine truth, and let us use them to weigh all the wisdom which men have accumulated and let us look at the result: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with

¹Taken with editing from *Days in Kirkfield*. Preached on 15 December, 1839, it is the fourth in a series of sermons on John 17:3 in Kirkfield Chapel, Glasgow, during a time of revival. The previous sermon, "Knowing God and Jesus Christ", was printed in January 2025.

God". In the world, everybody is obliged to own that many things are folly – involving a waste of time, talents and means.

But there are other things, which the world has agreed to call wisdom; there is learning, science and the arts; and how much those that excel in them are applauded and honoured! I do not wish to cast any reflection on anything that can be turned to good account but, in the judgement of God, in the light of eternity and in relation to man's best interests, all this is the merest folly. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

Nor is it possible for an individual to take one step in true wisdom, till he obtains the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; and till he is introduced into communion with the One in His love, and the Other in His grace. Till then, he cannot apprehend the first and the great end of all things – even the glory of the Three-One Jehovah, who has created all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created. Nor can he understand, far less can he approve of and promote, the system of means by which this end is especially to be promoted, even the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ.

Until he is brought into this salvation, he cannot hit on any good end, nor on any good means. Let him exert his ingenuity to the utmost; let him try to get his motives as pure as possible; let him labour with incessant vigilance on his plans and pursuits; still the sum of all his ideas, and all he does to put them into effect, is mere folly. There is not one particle of wisdom in him. You will say, This is a hard saying: who can bear it? You will ask, Do you mean to bring us all in guilty of being foolish? My friends, if you have not discovered this humbling truth, you are still foolish; for the first step to true wisdom is to discover your folly: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

That the people of God may acquire true wisdom, the Spirit of truth leads them to look into the glory of God's character, and they see that He is worthy to be the end of all things. The same heavenly guide instructs them in the mystery of the work of redemption, and they see in it the most admirable way to bring glory to God. So they approve of it, embrace it for themselves and desire, pray and labour that others may receive it. Yet in the pursuit and acquisition of true wisdom, they meet much opposition and many difficulties. The pride of their hearts rises against God's supremacy, and disputes His right to reign over all. In the same spirit, they rebel against His absolute sovereignty, and will not accept that He should do what He pleases in all things and with all creatures, and especially with themselves.

At other times, thick darkness encompasses their souls, and they cannot see the glory of God, so as to feel that He has a right to be sovereign, that

every knee should bow and every tongue confess to Him. In this darkness, Satan rushes upon them and sets their souls on fire with pride, rebellion and daring impiety. By these means, they are brought to learn a little of the folly that is bound up in their hearts; through these rough and bitter trials they are brought to possess a likeness to Christ in wisdom. He set His heart supremely on the glory of His name, and He sought to accomplish this end by the disposing of grace for the salvation of sinners: "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me"; "I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"; "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work".

Now if you would be like Christ in wisdom, you must be actuated by a similar spirit. It must pervade all your judgements about the Word, works and ways of God. In His Word, He has revealed His glory and how it is to be advanced. But to reject that Word, to alter it, to disbelieve it, to destroy it, is to set yourselves in opposition to God; and surely if He shines in infinite wisdom in the Word, you must appear in infinite folly in your opposition to it: the believer's "delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

In His works, especially His work of redemption, His wisdom appears conspicuously; for sin, Satan and the world are thereby covered with eternal infamy, and God is eternally honoured. In the cross of Christ, God is glorified, Satan overthrown, sin condemned, salvation purchased. To be blind to this mystery, to despise or oppose it, is a piece of mere folly: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God". In His ways of providence, and especially in His ways of grace, the wisdom of God appears.

At present I would call your attention to His ways in awakening souls from the sleep of sin and urging them to flee from the wrath to come and to lay hold of eternal life. It has pleased Him, once and again, to appear among us to accomplish this work, and what does wisdom require of us? To stand still and see the salvation of God; to adore His name because He is working; and to let Him take His own way of working. To sit in judgement on that work, and on the manner in which it is carried on and the consequences that are to flow from it, does not belong to you. And I warn the people of God, that, if they shall presume to open their mouths against it, they shall not be guiltless. I entreat you who do not know the Lord, though perhaps members of the church, to beware what you say: it is quite in character if the world scoffs and derides, but it ill becomes your profession, hollow and hypocritical though it may be, for you to join with them. How blessed a thing it would be if your

stout hearts were subdued, and you too were constrained to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?"

Be assured that the work of the Lord, in His grace and power, will not leave you as it found you. If you are not melted by it, you will be hardened; and the message that may next be sent to you will not be, Let them rend their hearts and turn to the Lord, but, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not". Some may say that the cries of the distressed disturb their mind and prevent them from hearing what is said. And why are you so anxious to hear the Word? Is it that you may realise the glory of Christ and have fellowship with Him? Now you are blind if you cannot see His glory in piercing with the arrows of conviction the stout-hearted and rebellious and in riding forth in His grace and power conquering and to conquer.

(2.) The knowledge which is eternal life, produces *an assimilation to Christ in righteousness*. This lies in an approval of, delight in, and conformity to, the law of God. I do not speak at present of righteousness as the ground of justification; that is *imputed to* the soul, not *wrought in* it. A believer is under it, one with Christ, not merely like Him. I speak of *inherent* righteousness, part of the moral image which the soul receives through the knowledge of Christ. There is no righteousness in men by nature; for the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. But where there is the knowledge of which we speak, and the communion that flows from it, a conformity with the will of God is produced.

Much opposition is offered by the flesh to this principle in believers; for the flesh is, in its very essence, contrary to God's will and therefore refuses to submit to it: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members". Let men not deceive themselves and suppose that this is their case merely because, when they would do what is evil, something within says, Do not do it; or when they would engage in duty, they feel reluctant – and yet these people are entirely without the image of Christ.

In the true people of God, the conflict is not between their lusts and their conscience, but between the flesh and the Spirit. A proof of this is found in the fact that, while carnal men have their inclinations to good and their inclinations to evil, without any reference to the will of God, the regenerate respect that will. Hence these carnal people that say, "When we would do good, evil is present with us," will stoutly deny that they have any inherent opposition to the will of God and raging rebellion against it. But it is the bitter conviction of all gracious souls that this disinclination of their hearts to good is against God Himself. Yet this very thing which Satan insinuates

as evidence that they are strangers to grace is, in fact, a decisive proof that they know the grace of God in truth. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man", was the language of the same apostle that cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The law of God extends to the motions of the heart, the words of the tongue and the actions of the life. Just in proportion to the light an individual has, he will be careful to have his character, in all these respects, cast into the mould of that light. But the more deeply it penetrates the heart, and the more widely it diffuses its influence over the conduct, the more will the rebellion and wickedness of nature appear. Thus those who are most humble, and most conformed to God's will, complain most bitterly of their disconformity: "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do".

(3.) This knowledge *produces an assimilation to Christ in His holiness*. This is the principle which gives the tone to the whole nature. While righteousness lies especially in a proper disposition of the will to the will of God, holiness consists in a suitable frame of the whole soul to God Himself. In other words, it consists in love to God: first, for what He is, and then for what He does. In looking at the nature and character of God, as revealed in the person and work of Christ, the principal attributes which attract the attention of the soul are His holiness and mercy – in the former, condemning sin, in the latter, saving sinners. And the man that does not have a view of God's glory in this light, is clearly in the dark on the subject.

But where there is a knowledge of God as holy, it will produce conformity to Him in holiness: "Be ye holy; for I am holy". Now some of you will be ready to exclaim, What is to become of us then? Instead of having love to God, our hearts seem to be full of the most active hostility to Him, or are so hard that they refuse to be moved by anything that is said about Him. Yet where there is no holiness, there can be no feeling of indifference to the glory of God; so your complaints may be evidences that you love Him. I dare say you will say that surely if you had any likeness to Christ, you would hate sin more than you do. But did you ever hear an unrenewed man complain that he did not hate sin enough? The very complaint argues dislike to sin, and a desire that the dislike was greater than it is. In other words, it argues the possession of true holiness, and the desire for more: "The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee".

In these particulars, the soul is assimilated to Christ, through the knowledge mentioned in the text. But as the knowledge is variable, the process of assimilation is variable. Let the people of God hence consider, that if they would grow more like Christ, they must by spiritual knowledge – that is, by faith

produced by the Spirit – get more and more acquainted with His moral excellence. Just as Moses, seeing God in the tabernacle, acquired a heavenly lustre, so believers become like Christ through seeing Him by faith: “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”.

(4.) They who possess this knowledge *serve God*. I hope you will carefully mark, not only the nature of these effects, but the order in which I mention them; for I have arranged them according to the place they occupy in experience. In this way, we may detect the ignorance and hypocrisy of many who make large professions of religion. They begin with external duties: they resolve to live better than before; they labour to keep out of flagrant sin and desire to do what is right. But they begin at the wrong end; they did not proceed like this in sinning: they did not outwardly depart from God and thus acquire deep depravity of heart; but they had deep depravity of heart and so departed from God.

The first proof a man gives of having the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, is a conviction that he is altogether wrong, that his heart is wicked, that his nature is corrupt. So he sees it is vain for him to set about duties, for even His prayers are an abomination to the Lord. He must get, as we have seen, by the Spirit, a new nature; and in that nature, get knowledge of God and, by this knowledge, be assimilated to Christ; and then he will serve God. The service of God includes the worship due to Him and the duties we owe to ourselves and our fellow men.

Now to some, it is no difficult matter to get through the worship of God, to order their conversation aright, and to render to every man his due. They cannot say that they depend upon the knowledge of God, so much as has been said. These are Romanists at heart: ignorance is the mother of their devotion; and the darker they are, the more devout they think they are, and the more steady and exemplary in their conduct. But the true people of God can do nothing without spiritual light: if their hearts are alienated from God, they have no security that their temper will be right, their conversation savoury, their conduct Christian. But let them have the knowledge of the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ; let their souls be assimilated to His image, then their worship is lively and spiritual, their tempers meek and patient, their conversation sweet and profitable, their actions excellent and solid. They “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”.

In serving God on such principles and in such a manner, a man encounters many difficulties, and every step seems to be taken in the face of the enemy. When he would draw near to God, he finds a strong reluctance to it, a disposition to put it off, a desire to hurry over it. His temper is apt to become

quick or ruffled; he may lose his balance and perhaps break out into a violent passion. His tongue is an unruly member; it is active when it should be still and is silent when it should speak. When faced with doing any duty in its proper time, from right motives and in a suitable manner, he is ready to exclaim, I cannot serve God. But the more he is pressed with difficulties, the more he will prize Christ and that completeness which a believer has in Him.

(5.) Another effect of this knowledge is the enjoyment of God. We may here detect the vain pretensions of many to possess true faith in Christ; they toil incessantly at duties aiming merely to quiet their consciences and escape eternal perdition, but never once think seriously of enjoying God. When you deal closely with them, you find they do not expect or desire this in the present world; it is enough for them to get it in heaven. But all this goes to show that you who are thus described are yet in your sins, aliens from God, ignorant of Christ, children of the wicked one and heirs of condemnation. If you had one particle of true knowledge of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, you would feel that to enjoy God in Christ is necessary to your comfort and happiness here. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

The children of God are often sorely tried in this matter. They lose the light of God's truth in their souls, and with it the conscious enjoyment of their only portion. But what is the consequence? They are sad, restless and uncomfortable; and the longer He whom their souls love is absent, the worse they are. The enemy may prevail to lull them, for a time, into a kind of carnal security and indifference, when they seem careless about enjoying God: "I would thou wert cold or hot". But the Lord uses means to shake them out of this state, and awakens them to see how desolate their hearts are in His absence. The people of the world wonder what is the matter with them: they have every temporal comfort; they have access to the means of grace; their outward conduct is exemplary; and yet they are distressed.

But these others do not know Him whom the hearts of God's people love; and they ask, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Nor can all the means comfort them which may be used, till the Lord returns to their souls in His glory. Just so a dutiful wife, who mourns on account of the absence of her husband and longs for his return, is more distressed when she sees he is not in the conveyance by which she expects him to come, so every ordinance embitters the grief of a true believer, if it comes to him without the Father and His Son Jesus Christ: "O that I knew where I might find Him!"

(6.) The last effect of this knowledge I will mention is to *glorify the Father and His Son Jesus Christ*. If, by our last remark, we left carnal men behind us, we more effectually do so by this observation. Hypocrites and men of the

world may get a kind of entertainment in Divine ordinances: they may be pleased when they hear the Word preached; pleased when they get through their dry, dead prayers; pleased when they hear themselves or others talk about Divine things; and pleased to read religious books, to subscribe to religious societies, and to go about Sabbath schools, prayer meetings and revival work. But speak to them of doing all this to God's glory, and they are crestfallen. Question them closely in the matter and, amidst their high-flown pretensions, they manifest extreme ignorance.

Marks of someone aiming at God's glory 1. *A sense of great ignorance* about it, and insensibility to it. I dare say many of the Lord's people have been saying to themselves, This view cuts us off. We know something of the enjoyment of God, if not by the possessing it, at least by the lack of it; but as to the honour of His name, we fear we know nothing about it. Now if you lacked this mark, we would be very jealous of any other you would produce; for it is a standing law of Christ's house, that as there is no grace of the Spirit but is opposed by a lust of the flesh, so there is no possession of the grace without experiencing the lust. Therefore if you knew nothing by experience of dishonouring God, it is plain you can know nothing of honouring Him.

2. *A conviction of having to do with God in Christ.* We find out the hypocrisy of many by their being concerned what others think and say of them. If a minister dares to utter a harsh word and call them by their true name, they are quite offended. Now, it is vain for such people to talk about the glory of God in Christ; they do not know what it means. The children of God do not care what men or ministers say of them; and well do they know and feel that it is impossible for the tongue of any mortal to call them worse than they are. They feel that, in all things, it is with God they have to do; and if He is not satisfied, they are unhappy; if He is satisfied, they are content: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgement: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified, but He that judgeth me is the Lord."

3. *To be shut up to the grace of Christ for glorifying God.*

4. *To be dependent on the fellowship of the Spirit.*

Application. (1.) Let us notice the value of this knowledge, which produces such effects. (2.) Let us remember our absolute need of it. (3.) Where is it to be found? "The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. . . . Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears." The law says, It is not in me; men say, It is not in us. It is in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Come to Him as ignorant, so that you may be taught by His Word and Spirit. Come to Him as foolish, so that you may be made wise unto salvation.

Aspects of the Ruling Eldership¹

4. Changes in Scotland Since the Reformation

R J Dickie

5. Changes affecting the Scottish ruling elder since the Reformation. In this final section of the paper, I will look at changes affecting the Scottish ruling elder since the Reformation, including some of the discussions and controversies which have arisen in the Scottish Churches. I have already alluded to some of these in this paper.

Qualifications of ruling elders. The Free Presbyterian Church's *Manual of Practice* is now more specific in some respects than the two Books of Discipline and the Westminster documents. A ruling elder must be in full communion with the congregation, a minimum age of 21, and "they must possess more or less of all the qualifications described in the New Testament, as needful for persons exercising spiritual oversight in the Church, whether such persons be designated in our translation by the term 'bishop' or by the term 'elder'". They must be "tender and circumspect in their walk, punctual in their attendance upon ordinances, and strict in their observation of the Lord's day, and in regularly keeping up the worship of God in their families". They must be "men of good life and godly conversation, without blame and all suspicion, careful for their flock, wise, and, above all things, fearing God".²

Election of elders. The election process has changed immensely. Initially after the Reformation, names were proposed by the existing eldership for annual election or re-election.³ Annual election remains the norm in Dutch and French-speaking Presbyterian churches. Lifelong appointment to the eldership came in with the *Second Book of Discipline*, but election by all male members (rather than their acquiescence with sessional appointments) is of later origin. Voting by female members originated in the Burgher branch of the Erskines' Associate Presbytery in 1747. In 1843, the Free Church conceded to women the right to vote, but did not insist on allowing

¹The final part of a paper given at last year's Theological Conference. Last month's section discussed changes affecting the Scottish ruling elder from the time of Knox till the Westminster Assembly.

²*A Manual of the Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland* (np, 1999), p 11.

³*The First Book of Discipline*: "The electioun of Elderis and Deaconis aught to be used everie yeare once, (whiche we judge to be most convenient the first day of August;) least that by long continuance of suche officiaris, men presume upoun the libertie of the Church. It hurtis not that one man be reteaned in office mo yearis than one, so that he be appointed yearlie, by common and fre electioun; provideit alwayes, that the Deaconis, thesauraris [treasurers], be not compelled to receave the office againe for the space of three yearis."

it.⁴ The conservative Dutch churches continue to refuse women's involvement in appointing elders or ministers, and predictably this was one of the issues on which there was a collapse of moves to fuse the Free Presbyterian Church with a Dutch and a Dutch-American Church in the 1930s.⁵

Ordination of elders. The ordination or admission of elders usually takes place on Sabbath, in the presence of the congregation, at the close of one of the diets of public worship. The elected men must answer certain questions satisfactorily, and they then sign the formula in presence of the congregation. Unlike the situation for a teaching elder – a minister – there is no imposition of hands, but, after offering up the ordination prayer, the Moderator formally admits them as members of the Kirk Session and to the spiritual rule of the congregation. Thereafter, he gives to them the right hand of fellowship, in which he is followed by all the other members of Session present.⁶ In the past, the elders – and indeed communicants on admission – had to sign the National Covenant.⁷ In passing, laying on of hands did eventually feature among some of the Secession churches and their lineal descendants in the nineteenth-century United Presbyterian Church.

Duties of elders. I will just touch on this briefly as the subject of elders' duties is extensive. Discipline was *the* function of the Session prescribed in the *First Book of Discipline*.⁸ Discipline included not only suspension from communion but also monetary fines and public rebuke at the stool of repent-

⁴*Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, Tuesday 24th October 1843*: "Report on Election of Office-Bearers", pp 136-144. It is interesting to note that "conservative" members of the Assembly were divided on the issue: James Begg (Edinburgh) spoke in support of women being allowed to vote, whereas James Gibson (Glasgow) and Ross-shire ministers David Carment (Rosskeen) and John Macalister (Nigg) opposed. Not only had all Presbyterian Churches given the right to women to vote in church, they were also to the fore in achieving suffrage in secular politics as well. See: Eun Soo Choi, "The religious dimension of the women's suffrage movement: the role of the Scottish Presbyterian churches, 1867-1918" (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1996).

⁵Robert J Dickie, "The attempt to unite Scottish, Dutch, and American denominations: The trilateral relationship between the Free Presbyterian Church, the Gereformeerde Gemeenten, and the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the 1930s", in *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, vol 11 (2021), pp 221-265; see pp 256-257.

⁶*A Manual of the Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, pp 15-16.

⁷Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, Yale University Press, 2002, p 23.

⁸*First Book of Discipline*: "The Elderis being elected, must be admonisheit of thair office, which is to assist the Minister in all publict effares of the Churche; to wit, in judgeing and decernyng causes; in geving of admonitioun to the licentious lever [liver]; in having of respect to the manneris and conversatioun of all men within thair charge; for by the gravitie of the Seniouris [elders] aught the licht and unbridillit [unbridled] life of the licentious be corrected and bridillit."

ance, often repeated for several successive Sabbaths. When prescribed by the Session, the disciplined person returned home after the service, still clothed in sackcloth “from the kirk to their own house”, to ensure that all households could see the guilty party.⁹ Discipline in sackcloth ended around the middle of the eighteenth century,¹⁰ and fines ended in 1837.¹¹ Incarceration of offenders also took place,¹² and there was often great blurring of the roles of civil magistrates and session members, particularly when elders held the relevant civic office.¹³ Another duty laid on elders was to go through the district checking on those who stayed at home at the time of services. This was labour-intensive and deprived the elders of attendance at church. This practice persisted into the eighteenth century.

Duties in connection with communion included issuing tokens through the district in the days and weeks preceding communion¹⁴ – not in church as we have it. Eligibility for receiving a token was decided by the elders inspecting the communion roll, aided by their knowledge of the individuals. It is of interest that in no fundamental document of any of the Reformed Churches is participation in distribution of the elements included among the functions of elders. As administering the sacrament is a ministerial function, not a sessional function, it was held to be legitimate for deacons or other male members to aid in distributing the elements.¹⁵ The duties of elders, as defined in the middle of the eighteenth century, also included district visitation of the sick, superintending religious instruction of the sick, poor relief and education.

Involvement in deacons’ work has been a disputed point in the Scottish Church. The office of deacon was considered separate from that of an elder, but historically deacons sat with elders on sessions (but without a vote). For various reasons, the office of deacon almost became defunct by the nineteenth century. It was revived by Thomas Chalmers in 1846, and he appears

⁹Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, pp 145-146.

¹⁰George D Henderson, *Scottish Ruling Elder*, p 139.

¹¹“In 1837 the General Assembly put an end to such practices, forbidding the raising of money for the poor from people under discipline” (George D Henderson, *Scottish Ruling Elder*, p 243).

¹²The punishment was known as “warding” (Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, pp 11 etc).

¹³George D Henderson, *Scottish Ruling Elder*, pp 111-115.

¹⁴Walter Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations Concerning the Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1773, Book ii, title 4, §13, p 102.

¹⁵17th-century and 18th-century examples are recorded in George D Henderson, *Scottish Ruling Elder*, pp 62-63; Robert Forbes, *Digest of Rules and Procedures in the Inferior Courts of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1869), p 5; Walter Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations*, Book iv, title 8, §3.

to have invented the term “Deacons’ Court”.¹⁶ In the Disruption Free Church it was deemed competent for elders to be employed as deacons, as the greater office involves the less, but this was to be done only in the absence of a competent number of deacons.¹⁷

Time will not allow me to discuss quite a number of issues such as the questions around representative elders. Some of the issues around representation were of particular concern in the nineteenth century and some remain today.¹⁸ I have also left out a full discussion of elders in relation to public exhortation or reading sermons. This affected the Free Presbyterian Church in the case of Peter Chisholm, a divinity student. This is covered in detail in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, volumes 17 and 18.¹⁹

In volume 17, Rev J R Mackay’s contribution was reported: “It was well known that Episcopalians held to the doctrine of a three-fold office within their Church, that is to say, they made the offices of a bishop, of a presbyter (or priest), and of a deacon to be three distinct offices.

“Presbyterians, on the other hand, professed to find in the New Testament a two-fold office only, to wit, that of the elder and the deacon. According to Presbyterians, an elder, or a presbyter or a bishop, meant one and the same office-bearer in the New Testament. But they found that to the eldership belonged two departments, a higher and a lower, that of the preaching elder, or minister, and that of the ruling elder, or elder. But these departments were not regarded as airtight compartments without community of function, as might be the case under Episcopacy. To a certain extent they might take part in identical duties. The preaching elder had his own share in Church government as well as in preaching the Word. The ruling elder was not allowed to administer the sacraments of Baptism and of the Lord’s Supper, but he [Mr Mackay] submitted that it was in accordance with the New Testament and with the best thought of the Reformed Church of Scotland to say that – at

¹⁶Thomas Chalmers proposed reviving the office as a temporary expedient – Thomas Chalmers, *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*, 3 vols, Glasgow, 1821-1826). Eventually it was proposed that the diaconate should be reinstated – John Lorimer, *The Diaconship* (Edinburgh, 1842). Subsequently the Free Church elected and ordained deacons to serve on Deacons’ Courts, whose duty was the administration of congregational finances – *Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1847), p 26.

¹⁷Robert Forbes, *Digest of Rules and Procedures*, p 5.

¹⁸Iain F Maciver, “The Evangelical Party and the Eldership in General Assemblies”, in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, vol xx, part 1, pp 1-13.

¹⁹“Meeting of Synod”, *FPM*, vol 17 (December 1912), pp 288-291; “The Southern Presbytery and the Student Case”, *FPM*, vol 18 (May 1913), pp 26-33; *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1893-1933)*, pp 152-155.

least in cases like their own, where it was impossible for the regular ministry to supply the people with the means of grace – the ruling elder might and ought to break the bread of life to congregations otherwise unprovided for, that is, expound the Word of God among them.”

The issue of elders publicly exhorting from Scripture was also a further insoluble issue in discussions around fusion with the Dutch and Dutch-American churches in the 1930s.²⁰

Perhaps the best discussion of the eldership was by James Guthrie of Stirling, who later suffered martyrdom. His *Treatise of Ruling Elders and Deacons* was composed in 1652 at the desire of the General Assembly. It was published posthumously in 1699 and is currently in print.²¹ In that book Guthrie drew heavily on the *Second Book of Discipline*.

Conclusion. Although the precise duties of the Elder have changed with the times, his general responsibility remains what it has always been, to assist the minister in the supervision of the spiritual life of the parish.²²

David Brainerd¹

11. Pressing on in Weakness

On a Sabbath in late November 1745, Brainerd preached twice, on Zachaeus, to the native Americans at Crossweeksung. He emphasised that salvation comes to the sinner when he becomes a son of Abraham – a true believer – and the Word of God “seemed to be attended with divine power to the hearts of the hearers”. Many were much moved by the truths of the Bible; some had previous convictions revived; and one or two were newly awakened to a sense of their need as sinners. These impressions, Brainerd believed, “appeared to be the genuine effect of God’s Word brought home to their hearts by the power and influence of the divine Spirit”.²

Two days later, Brainerd preached again, and he compared the effects to

²⁰Robert J Dickie, “The attempt to unite Scottish, Dutch, and American denominations . . .”, in *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, vol 11, pp 221-265; see p 258.

²¹James Guthrie, *Ruling Elders and Deacons* (Reformation Press, 2017).

²²George D Henderson, *Church and Ministry*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1951, p 185.

¹A further part of a longer version of a paper given at the 2024 Theological Conference. Last month’s article followed Brainerd in his continuing labours, especially in Crossweeksung in New Jersey, through both success and disappointment.

²Jonathan Edwards, editor, *The Diary and Journal of David Brainerd*, Banner of Truth Trust, 2023 edition, p 308. Page references in brackets, in the body of the text, are to this edition of the *Diary and Journal*.

“the gentle but steady showers that effectively water the earth without violently beating upon the surface”. Later that week, Brainerd asked a woman who was sobbing: “What do you now want?” She told him: “O, to be with Christ! I do not know how to stay” (presumably she meant that she did not know how to stay on in this world). One old man, recently awakened, “was now brought under a deep and pressing concern for his soul”; he was earnestly asking, “How may I find Jesus Christ?” (p 309).

Towards the end of December, Brainerd thought it would be good to start catechising his people; he believed that they now had “a considerable degree of knowledge in the principles of Christianity”. He asked them questions similar to those in *The Shorter Catechism*. He listened to their answers and then gave them further instruction. He discovered that their knowledge of doctrine was even better than he had expected. When he came to speak of “the blessedness of those who have so great and glorious a God . . . for their everlasting friend and portion”, many were considerably moved. This was especially so when he tried “to persuade them to be reconciled to God, through His dear Son, and thus to secure an interest in His everlasting favour” (p 312).

The next day was a Sabbath and the missionary preached on the rich young ruler, from Matthew 9. He believed that the sermon was blessed to some souls. Among that day’s congregation were some Indians who had recently come to Crossweeksung. They had previously lived among Quakers and had imbibed some of their errors, especially this: “That if men will but live soberly and honestly, according to the dictates of their own consciences (or, the light within [a Quaker expression]), there is then no danger or doubt of their salvation”. He found such people much more difficult “to deal with than those who are wholly under pagan darkness, who make no pretences to knowledge in Christianity at all, nor have any self-righteous foundation to stand upon. However, they all, except one, appeared now convinced that this sober, honest life, of itself, was not sufficient to salvation, since Christ Himself had declared it so in the case of the young man” that Brainerd had just preached on. He noted that they “seemed in some measure concerned to obtain that change of heart, the necessity of which I had been labouring to show them”.

He writes about a woman who had not till that day “obtained any settled comfort, though I had abundant reason to think she had passed [through] a saving change some days before. She now appeared in a heavenly frame of mind, composed and delighted with the divine will. When I came to discourse particularly with her and to inquire of her how she got relief and deliverance from the spiritual distresses she had lately been under, she answered in broken

English,³ ‘I tried and tried to save myself, till at last my strength was all gone, and I could not go any further. Then at last I was forced to let Jesus Christ alone to send me to hell if He pleased.’ Brainerd asked, “But you were not willing to go to hell, were you?” She replied, “I could not help it. My heart would be wicked for all what I could do. I could not make it good (meaning she saw it was right she should go to hell because her heart was wicked, and [it] would be so after all she could do to mend it)” (p 313).

Brainerd asked how she found deliverance. She told him: “By and by my heart was exceeding glad. My heart was glad that Jesus Christ would do with me what He pleased. Then I saw my heart would be glad although Christ should send me to hell. I did not care where He put me. I should love Him for all”⁴ (p 313-4). It was not easy to convince her otherwise. Brainerd explains, “The truth evidently was: her will was so swallowed up in the divine will that she could not frame [conceive of] any hell in her imagination that would be dreadful or undesirable, provided it was but the will of God to send her to it”.

That evening he resumed catechising. He considered the question, “How shall I know whether God has chosen me to eternal life?” He did so by pressing them to come to Christ, and so to make their election sure. Some who had previously obtained comfort were now refreshed to find love to God in themselves, “which was an evidence”, Brainerd commented, “of His electing love to them”.

Christmas Days had been an occasion previously for the Indians to drink and “revel” with some of the whites in these parts. To avoid such temptations, Brainerd gathered the people together and spoke to them from the parable of the barren fig tree. He noted, “The power of God appeared in the assembly,” and some who had never before, to any extent, felt that power were now brought to a concern for their souls – a concern which “seemed not superficial, but deep and heart-affecting. O how ready did they now appear universally to embrace and comply with everything they heard and were convinced was duty! God was in the midst of us of a truth, bowing and melting stubborn hearts” (p 314).

The next evening, a woman over 80 came to see Brainerd; she seems to have been suffering from dementia, and he thought that it was impossible for anyone “to instil into her mind any notions of divine things, not so much as to give her any doctrinal instruction, because she seemed incapable of being taught”. Someone led her by the hand into the house. “She was in extreme anguish”, and the missionary asked her what was wrong. She answered “that

³Quoted here as expressed by Brainerd in “proper English”.

⁴“That is,” Brainerd explains, ‘do what He will do with me’.”

her heart was distressed and she feared she should never find Christ". She told him too that she had heard him preach many times, but never knew anything about it, that she never "felt it in her heart" till the previous Sabbath. Then, she said, it was "as if a needle had been thrust into my heart". Since then she had no rest day or night.

One evening, she had been in a house where several Indians were speaking about Christ, and "their talk pricked my heart" (p 315), so that she felt as if she was dreaming, yet she was confident that she was not dreaming. At that time, "she saw two paths", Brainerd reported; "one appeared very broad and crooked and that turned to the left hand. The other appeared straight and very narrow; and that went up the hill to the right hand. She travelled, she said, for some time up the narrow right-hand path till at length something seemed to obstruct her journey. . . . She then remembered what she had heard me say about 'striving to enter in at the strait gate' (although she took little notice of it at the time)" (pp 315-6). In her own words, she then "came back again" and was extremely upset, thinking she had now "turned back and forsaken Christ, and that there was therefore no hope of mercy for her".

Brainerd was very conscious of the "dangerous tendency" of trances and the imagination in religion, "when sought after and depended upon". He was afraid that what the woman experienced might have been from Satan. But he decided, before saying anything by way of warning people against being influenced by trances, to ask the woman some questions. He asked her about man's original condition and about her own heart now. He was very surprised how well she answered. He was sure that a woman in her mental condition could not have learned so much unless she had been "remarkably enlightened by a divine influence". He then proclaimed the gospel to her "and the ability of Christ 'to save to the uttermost all (old as well as young) that come' to Him. At first she seemed to give a warm welcome to what Brainerd said; then she said, "Aye, but I cannot come; my wicked heart will not come to Christ; I do not know how to come (p 316). Brainerd was very hopeful about her spiritual condition, especially because she was "so solicitous to obtain an interest in Christ, that her heart (as she expresses it) prays day and night)".

Brainerd went on to state, "I have looked upon it as one of the glories of this work of grace among the Indians, and a special evidence of its being from a divine influence, that there has, till now, been no appearance of such things, no visionary notions, trances and imaginations intermixed with those rational convictions of sin and solid consolation that numbers have been made the subjects of. And might I have had my desire, there had been no appearance of anything of this nature at all" (p 317).

On the last Sabbath of 1745, Brainerd preached from the first five verses

of John 3. He believed that the sermon was accompanied with power, not only to the Indians, but also to some of the white people present; he spoke of “the extraordinary earnestness” of the attention they gave to what was said. After the service, the missionary went home, expecting to preach again after a short break. Instead, one after another came in, “with tears in their eyes”, wanting “to know what they should do to be saved”. He adds, “Those whom I had reason to think [were] in a Christless state were almost universally seized with concern for their souls. It was an amazing season of *power* among them, and [it] seemed as if God had bowed the heavens and come down. So astonishingly prevalent was the operation upon old as well as young that it seemed as if none would be left in a secure [careless about their danger] and natural state, but that God was now about to convert all the world”. Of course, that did not happen, but clearly the missionary was given a fresh sense of what God is able to do when the Holy Spirit is poured out on sinners of any kind, in any part of the world.

Brainerd commented on the power of God’s work at that time: some were “rejoicing that God had not taken away the powerful influence of His blessed Spirit”; some were “refreshed to see so many striving to enter in at the strait gate” and were “animated with such concern for them that they wanted ‘to push them forward’, as some of them expressed it” (p 318). There was no second service that Sabbath, as Brainerd had to spend so much time speaking to individuals. From 11:30 am, when the first service began, till after 7 pm, he had scarcely half an hour’s rest from speaking.

A few weeks later, Brainerd noted the obligation never to be weary in well-doing. Yet his health was poor; he was feeling depressed and lonely; and the people were continually coming to him for help; so that he felt exhausted and unable to attend to anything else, often for several days on end. But he did press on – in spite of his weakness and ill-health – for the short time that God was pleased to give him strength enough to continue his work. Within two years he passed into a better world where there is no weariness or illness – or sin.

Valuing the Gospel Ministry

Rev Caleb Hembd

A minister was once speaking to some students for the ministry about the responsibilities of their high calling. One of his comments was especially sobering. The exact words were forgotten, but they left an unforgettable impression. They were along these lines: “One part of your work will be to prove

why the gospel ministry is still necessary". In other words, they would live in an age when many people, though convinced of the truth of Christianity, would act as if the ministry was no longer necessary. They might acknowledge that a local ministry is a blessing, but something they can do without. Their actions would show that they valued other things more highly than being under a ministry.

His observation, sadly, has been repeatedly confirmed. Never has the Word of God been so easily accessible. Never before could people so easily obtain such an abundance of sound literature, lectures and sermons. Anyone living in the West, with internet access, can enjoy all these resources. Clearly, no generation has had such an abundance of spiritual riches. Yet quite possibly, no generation has ever been so tempted to think that being under a ministry is now unnecessary.

Tragically, the unprecedented abundance of sound resources has been accompanied with an alarming scarcity of faithful ministers. Pastorless congregations are all too common in our own Church. It is therefore a time to be much on our knees, pleading that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into His harvest (Mt 9:38).

We must ask, however: When did the Lord command His disciples to pray for more labourers? It was "when He saw the multitudes" (Mt 9:36). Why were people gathering in such large numbers? Because they had no Bible? No. "Unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2). Was it because they had been deprived of a place of public worship for so long? No, they had been worshipping in local synagogues for hundreds of years. Why then were they gathering in such large numbers? Because they desired to hear the live preaching of the Word.

Then we must ask a second question. Where were they gathering to hear the preaching of the Word? Was it only when Christ and others preached very close to their homes, so they could attend with ease? Was it only in places where the living conditions were very pleasant? No, we find that multitudes went into the wilderness to hear John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus (Mk 1:3-5,45).

David Dickson, commenting on Matthew 9:37, says, "People made willing to hear the gospel are like a field ready to be cut down. . . . Sometimes the people are more in number and more willing to hear than there are able and willing ministers to teach." A sign of a great harvest, therefore, is when people desire so strongly to hear the preaching of the Word that they will make many sacrifices and endure many inconveniences to be under it regularly.

The point is not that we should only pray for more labourers when we see

more people attending our congregations. We must always pray for more labourers. But prayer should always be accompanied with self-examination. We may be praying for more ministers, but do we value the ones that we have? Suppose we are thinking about leaving a congregation that has a minister and moving to a place that has no gospel ministry. We must ask ourselves, What are our motives for doing so? Is it mainly because of a better-paying job and better schools and universities? Or is it because we will be closer to family and friends, and because the new location is a more pleasant place to live?

In a word, are we valuing the things of this world more than the preaching of the Word – “the principal means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation?” (*Shorter Catechism*, Q 89). Being near family and like-minded friends is a great blessing, but has God chosen family and friends to be the principal means of our salvation? (See Rom 10:13-17). More to the point: can we expect the Lord to send us a minister in our new location, when we have left a ministry because of the inconveniences of living in the old one?

This is not to say that it is always wrong to leave a place that has a sound ministry and go to a place that has no ministry. In Acts 8:1, we read of many disciples fleeing from persecution in Jerusalem, where the Apostles remained. They therefore left the richly blessed ministry of Peter and others. Yet Scripture speaks favourably of them in verse 4: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word”. Other factors in our providence may also constrain us to leave a ministry and go to a pastorless congregation, such as caring for aged parents.

Nor should we think that people must move to another place when their congregation becomes pastorless. It may well be their duty to remain and pray that the Lord would send them another minister. Elders especially may feel inclined to remain and serve the flock. The main thing is to have a clear conscience that our motives, desires and actions show that we rightly value a ministry. Then we can pray with more boldness that the Lord would send forth labourers into His harvest.

Another temptation may prey upon the minds of gospel hearers from time to time: “Why should I remain here in this place under the ministry, when I am getting little or no blessing under it?”

Two answers come to mind. First, we must examine ourselves as to whether we are attending upon the Word with diligence, preparation and prayer. Do we pray before, during and after hearing the Word? Do we make an effort to understand it and apply it to ourselves? Is the seed of the Word finding good ground, or is it being choked with the cares of this

life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in?

Second, even if the Holy Spirit works effectually through the ministry only on rare occasions, those times are infinitely precious! If the Spirit should accompany the preaching of the gospel only once, the saved sinner will be blessing God to all eternity that he was brought under such a ministry. The man at the pool of Bethesda remained there for 38 years, in hopes of obtaining a cure (Jn 5:5). Surely we should have the same persistence in seeking a cure for our souls, by diligently attending upon the preaching of the Word.

Ministers may feel reluctant to emphasise the necessity of the gospel ministry, because they may appear as if they are asserting their own importance. But a solemn prospect forbids them to be silent. Christ not only knows all things (Jn 21:17), He also knows all things that could have happened. He says that if the same mighty works which He had done in Chorazin and Bethsaida “had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Mt 11:21-23). Therefore He also knows who would have repented if they had been under a gospel ministry. In light of this fact, let us seriously consider a final question: on the judgement day, will we discover that if we had remained under a faithful ministry, we would have repented and obtained eternal life? Or if we are parents, will we find out that our children would have repented, had we kept them under a sound ministry?

We conclude with a quotation from Scripture, leaving the reader to connect it to what has been written: “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer 3:13,14).

A Little Leak¹

John Flavel

Observation. The smallest leak, if not timely discovered and stopped, is enough to sink the greatest ship. Therefore seamen often check how much water is in the hold. If they find it fresh and increasing, they ply the pump, and at once set the carpenters to search for it and stop it. And till it is found they cannot be quiet.

Application. What such a leak is to a ship, so is the smallest sin neglected to the soul; it is enough to ruin it eternally. For as the greatest sin discovered, lamented and mourned over by a believer, cannot ruin him; so the least sin indulged, covered and connived at, will certainly prove the destruction of the

¹Taken with editing from “Navigation Spiritualised”, in Flavel’s *Works*, vol 5.

sinner. No sin, though never so small, is tolerated by the pure and perfect law of God (Ps 119:96). The command is exceeding broad; not as if it gave men latitude to walk as they please, but it is broad – that is, extending itself to all our words, thoughts, actions and affections; laying a law upon them all; conniving at no evil in any man (1 Pet 2:1).

And as the Word gives no allowance for the least sin, so the very nature of sincerity and uprightness is to set the heart against every way of wickedness (Ps 139:23,24), and especially against that sin which was its darling in the days of his vanity (Ps 18:23). True hatred is of the whole kind; he that hates sin as sin, as every upright soul does, hates all sins as well as some.

Again, the soul that has had a saving sight of Jesus Christ, and a true discovery of the evil of sin, in the mirror both of the law and the gospel, can account no sin small. He knows the demerit of the smallest sin is God's eternal wrath, and knows that not the least sin can be forgiven without the shedding and application of the blood of Christ (Heb 9:22), which blood is of infinite value and price (1 Pet 1:19).

To conclude, God's people know that little sins as well as great sins are dangerous, deadly and destructive in their own nature; a little poison will destroy a man. A man would think that Adam's sin was no great matter, yet what dreadful work it made! It was not as a single bullet, that would kill Adam himself only, but as a chain-shot,² which cut off all his poor, miserable posterity. Indeed no sin can be little, because the One against whom it is committed is so great. Because of this it has a kind of infinity in itself, and the price paid to redeem from it is so great.

Reflection. The smallest sin is not only damning in its own nature, but will certainly prove the ruin of the soul that hides and covers it. Then let my spirit accomplish a diligent search. Look to it, O my soul, that you indulge no sin; set these considerations as so many flaming swords in the way of your carnal delights and lusts. Let me never say of any sin as Lot did of Zoar, "It is a little one", spare it. Shall I spare that which cost the blood of Jesus Christ? The Lord would not spare Him, when He made "His soul an offering for sin" (Rom 8:32, Is 53:10). Neither will He spare me, if I defend and hide sin (Deut 29:20). If my heart was right, and my conversation sound, that lust, whatever it may be, that I so much favour, would especially be abhorred and hated (Is 2:20, 30:22).

Whatever my convictions and reformations have been, yet if there is but one sin retained and delighted in, this keeps up the devil's interest in my soul. And though he may seem to depart for a time, he will return at last with seven worse spirits; and this is the sin that will open the door to him, and

²Two canon balls chained together to bring down, for example, a mast of an enemy ship.

deliver up my soul (Mt 12:43,44). Lord, let me make thorough work of it; let me cut it off and pluck it out, though it is as a right hand or an eye. Shall I come so near the kingdom of God, yet stick at a small matter and lose all for lack of one thing? Believers should pray, Lord, let me shed the blood of the dearest lust for His sake that shed His dearest blood for me!

Thoughts on the Wrath of God¹

Thomas Watson

1. For information. (1) God is justified in condemning sinners at the last day. They deserve wrath, and it is no injustice to give them that which they deserve. If an evildoer deserves death, the judge does him no wrong in condemning him.

(2) See what a great evil sin is, which exposes a person to God's wrath for ever. You may know the lion by his paw, and you may know what an evil sin is by the wrath and curse it brings. When you see a man drawn upon a hurdle to execution, you conclude he is guilty of some capital crime that brings such a punishment; so when a man lies under the torrid zone of God's wrath and roars out in flames, you must say, How horrid an evil sin is! They who now see no evil in swearing or Sabbath-breaking will see it looks black in the mirror of hell-torments.

(3) See here handwriting on the wall; that which may check a sinner's mirth. He is now brisk and frolicsome, he chants to the sound of the viol, and invents instruments of music (Amos 6:5); he drinks "stolen waters" and says, They are sweet, but let him remember that the wrath and curse of God hang over him, which will shortly fall on him if he does not repent. Dionysius thought, as he sat at a table, that he saw a naked sword hang over his head; but the sword of God's justice hangs over a sinner and, when the slender thread of life is cut asunder, it falls on him. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth . . . but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement" (Ecc 11:9). For a drop of pleasure you must drink a sea of wrath. Your pleasure cannot be so sweet as wrath is bitter. The delights of the flesh cannot countervail the horror of conscience. Better be without the devil's honey than be stung with the wrath of God. The Garden of *Eden*, which signifies pleasure, had a flaming sword placed at the east end of it (Gen 3:24). The garden of carnal and sinful delight is surrounded with the flaming sword of God's wrath.

¹Taken with editing from *The Ten Commandments*. Here Watson applies what he has said in answering the *Shorter Catechism* question, "What does every sin deserve?"

2. For reproof. The stupidity of sinners is reproved who are no more affected with the curse and wrath of God which is due to them. “None considereth in his heart” (Is 44:19). If they were in debt and the serjeant was about to arrest them, they would be affected with that; but though the fierce wrath of God is ready to arrest them, they do not remember it. Though a beast has no shame, he has fear: he is afraid of fire. But sinners are worse than brutish, for they fear not the fire of hell till they are in it. Most have their consciences asleep or seared, but when they shall see the vials of God’s wrath dropping, they will cry out as the rich man, “I am tormented in this flame!” (Lk 16:24).

3. For exhortation. (1) Let us adore God’s patience, who has not brought this wrath and curse upon us all this while. We have deserved wrath, yet God has not given what we deserve. We may all subscribe to Psalm 103:8: “The Lord is slow to anger”; and to verse 10: “He hath not . . . rewarded us according to our iniquities”. God has deferred His wrath and given us time to repent (Rev 2:21). He is not like a hasty creditor, who requires the debt and gives no time for payment; He shoots by way of warning, that He may not shoot by way of killing. “The Lord . . . is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish” (2 Pet 3:9). God adjourns the assizes to see if sinners will turn; He keeps off the storm of His wrath; but if men will not be warned, let them know that long forbearance is not forgiveness.

(2) Let us labour to prevent the wrath we have deserved. How careful men are to prevent poverty or disgrace! O labour to prevent God’s eternal wrath – that it may not only be deferred, but removed.

What shall we do to escape the wrath to come?

[1] By getting an interest in Jesus Christ. Christ is the only screen to stand between us and the wrath of God; He felt God’s wrath so that they who believe in Him should never feel it. “Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Th 1:10). Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace was a type of God’s wrath, and that furnace did not singe the garments of the three children, nor had “the smell of fire passed on them” (Dan 3:27). Jesus Christ went into the furnace of His Father’s wrath; and the smell of the fire of hell shall never pass upon those that believe in Him.

[2] If we would prevent the wrath of God, let us take heed of those sins which will provoke it. Someone had a saying, “I had rather leap into a furnace of fire, than willingly commit a sin against God”. There are several fiery sins we must take heed of, which will provoke the fire of God’s wrath. There is the fire of rash anger. Some who profess religion cannot bridle their tongue; they care not what they say in their anger; they will even curse their passions. James says, “The tongue . . . is set on fire of hell” (3:6). Take heed of a

“fiery tongue”, lest it bring you to fiery torment. The rich man begged a drop of water to cool his tongue. Cyprian, an ancient church father, says he had offended most in his tongue, and now that was most set on fire.

Take heed of the fire of malice. Malice is a malignant humour, whereby we wish evil to others; it is a vermin that lives on blood; it studies revenge. Caligula, a Roman Emperor, had a chest where he kept deadly poisons for those against whom he had malice. The fire of malice brings men to the fiery furnace of God’s wrath. Take heed of the sin of uncleanness. “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb 13:4). Such as burn in uncleanness are in great danger of burning one day in hell. Let one fire put out another; let the fire of God’s wrath put out the fire of lust.

(3) To you who have a well-grounded hope that you shall not feel this wrath, which you have deserved, let me exhort you to be very thankful to God, who has given His Son to save you from this tremendous wrath. Jesus has delivered you from wrath to come. The Lamb of God was scorched in the fire of God’s wrath for you. Christ felt the wrath which he did not deserve, that you might escape the wrath which you have deserved. Pliny, an ancient Roman author, observes that there is nothing better to quench fire than blood. Christ’s blood has quenched the fire of God’s wrath for you.

“Upon me be thy curse”, said Rebekah to Jacob (Gen 27:13). So Christ said to God’s justice: On Me be the curse, that My elect may inherit the blessing.

Be patient under all the afflictions that you endure. Affliction is sharp, but it is not wrath; it is not hell. Who would not willingly drink in the cup of affliction if he knows he shall never drink in the cup of damnation? Who would not be willing to bear the wrath of man that knows he shall never feel the wrath of God?

Christian, though you may feel the rod, you shall never feel the axe. Augustine once said, “Strike, Lord, where Thou wilt, if sin is pardoned”. So say, Afflict me, Lord, as Thou wilt in this life, seeing I shall escape the wrath to come.

Book Review

The Basics of Christian Doctrine, by James MacGregor, published by Ettrick Press, hardback, 290 pages, £11.00, obtainable from the F P Bookroom.

The author was James MacGregor (1830-1894), who was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and professor of Systematic Theology at New College, Edinburgh (1848-1881). His book comes with a helpful biographical introduction by Rev John W Keddie, who provides a clear historical context

for the Professor's work. This book was first published in 1861, and in its present form is attractively presented with print easy to read.

It reminds one of Louis Berkhof's *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*. Although Berkhof's book is shorter, MacGregor's is more attractively, evangelically written. As an example of the style and substance of this book, the following quote from Professor MacGregor on the Fourth Commandment, concerning the Lord's Day, a day much neglected, is a good illustration. "All other six [days] ought to be devoted to holy working, so this one ought to be devoted, wholly and solely, by us and ours, to a holy and blessed resting (Is 58:13-14). The rest of God, creative and redemptive, consists in the contemplation and preservation of His finished work (Gen 1:31, 2:1-3; Is 53:11). So the rest of man, created and redeemed, should consist in the refreshing contemplation of Jehovah the Creator and Redeemer, in the glory of His nature and grace" (pp 89-90).

However, MacGregor ought to have indicated that the days of creation were 24-hour periods and not left it as an open question (p 78). Perhaps this demonstrates the pressure good men were under from the rise in Darwinism that was occurring around them. Genesis notes "the evening and the morning" through the creation week, and the Hebrew word for *day* is the same in the account of creation and in the Fourth Commandment.

MacGregor not only gives a clear statement of Biblical truth, but also gives gospel encouragement to follow on to know the Lord. Writing on prayer and praise (p 229), he commends the life of prayer in the following terms, "Prayer, as an expression of dependence on God, is the duty of all people as rational creatures. The unconverted may often send up cries for help, expressing, like the young lions, the anguish of their want and woe. But true prayer can be uttered only out of a Christian heart. It is the work of the Holy Spirit (Zec 12:10; Rom 8:26). It consists in the utterance of real desires in harmony with God's will (Rom 8:27), and in confident dependence upon His will and His power to bestow what we ask (Mt 7:7-8). . . .

"This prayer, the cry of faith, is a stated exercise of the Christian life; it begins with the beginning of the new life in the soul (Acts 9:11), and never ceases to be uttered till the end of life on earth (1 Th 5:17; Lk 18:1), and the beginning of that blissful glory, in which want and woe are for ever at an end – 'farewell praying and fighting, and welcome heaven and singing'."

C H Spurgeon speaks of the sea being white with the sails of those that have gone before us. James MacGregor's book is calculated to draw us spiritually towards that haven which God's people desire to see (Ps 107).

The final chapter dwells solemnly on "The Last Things" of death and judgement, and the reader who wants to be ready for the coming of Christ

(Rev 22:20) is left with the following gospel advice, “Obey the gospel call to faith and repentance, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, turn from sin to that Saviour God. Enter by the Spirit’s grace on the new life, with its works of faith and labours of love. ‘Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing’” (Mt 24:46). (Rev) *J R Tallach*

Protestant View

Rome and Scripture

One of the most gross corruptions of the Church of Rome is her addition to the Bible in the form of the Apocrypha, which is not inspired Scripture and therefore has no Divine authority. A very solemn curse is pronounced in the last chapter of inspired Scripture upon those who would dare to add to God’s Word: “I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev 22:18).

The books which comprise the Apocrypha, such as Judith, Tobit, 1 and 2 Maccabees, never appeared in the Jewish canon of Old Testament Scripture and were not accepted by the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles as part of the Word of God. Christ demonstrated how all the parts of the Old Testament spoke of Himself, referring to these parts as “the law of Moses”, “the prophets” and “the psalms” (Lk 24:44). By this He showed that the three parts of the Old Testament – historical, prophetic and wisdom writings – alone are to be accepted as inspired Scripture. By the “canon of Scripture” is meant the 66 books which were given by Divine inspiration and are the Word of God and, as such, are recognised by the Church and people of God to be uniquely authoritative for doctrine and manner of life.

Since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, the Church of Rome not only assumes the right to declare literature which is clearly uninspired to be part of God’s Word but also pronounces her own anathema upon those who do not believe the Apocrypha to be canonical, simply because Rome has pronounced it to be so. The false Romanist teaching that the Church gives Scripture its authority lies behind this wicked pronouncement. This derives partly from a wrong interpretation of 1 Tim 3:15, where Paul states that the Church is the “pillar and ground of the truth”. But the proper view is that the Church derives its authority from Scripture alone and not vice versa. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth in the sense that she holds the truth up for men to read for themselves.

The reason the Council of Trent declared the Apocrypha to be canonical

Scripture was in order to justify certain corrupt Romanist practices, especially praying for the dead. In accepting non-inspired writings as Scripture, Rome's position has the inevitable effect of lowering the true Scriptures from the place of supreme reverence which they ought to have in the minds of men. In this sense, Rome also takes away from Scripture as well as adds to it by her spurious canon and therefore brings the awful curse of Revelation 22: 18,19 upon those who adhere to her false doctrines. AWM

Notes and Comments

Euthanasia and Abortion Update

Euthanasia. The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill will allow people in England and Wales who are deemed to be terminally ill, and with less than six months to live, to receive help to kill themselves. On Friday, June 20, the House of Commons voted to continue to the next stage of this Bill by 314 to 291, a majority of 23, compared to the majority of 55 at the first vote last year. This Private Member's Bill has now been examined at Committee Stage and Report Stage, but few amendments to strengthen safeguards were accepted, while other safeguards were stripped away. MPs rejected amendments to protect those struggling with mental illness, financial pressure, or concerns about being a burden.

The legislation is now being considered by the House of Lords where it has been unanimously agreed to set up a special Select Committee to hear evidence from experts before the Bill goes any further. The Select Committee was required to report back by November 7, at which point Peers were to begin debating amendments to the Bill in a Committee of the Whole House. With the Bill's numerous flaws and unanswered questions, this stage could last for months.

Currently in Scotland, MSPs are considering Liam McArthur's assisted suicide Bill. The proposal has sparked fierce opposition from politicians, medical experts, commentators and religious groups. It was debated and voted on on 13 May, with MSPs voting 70 to 56 in favour of progressing the legislation to the next stage, where it will be examined further. Numerous MSPs highlighted the flaws in the legislation and explained how damaging it could be to society – particularly for the most vulnerable.

Sad to say, in March 2025, the Isle of Man's Parliament passed a Bill to legalise assisted suicide. The Private Member's Bill will allow terminally ill residents to be given lethal drugs to end their own lives. After receiving Royal Assent, the Bill could come into effect as early as 2027.

Abortion. Voice for Justice, a Christian pro-life organisation, reported in October 2025 that “this year marks the 58th anniversary of the Abortion Act. Back in 1967, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill was marketed as a restrictive emergency measure – an act of compassion to help women who would otherwise be driven to seek backstreet abortion. David Steel, who introduced the Bill, said, ‘We want to stamp out the backstreet abortions, but it is not the intention of the promoters of the Bill to leave a wide-open door for abortion on request’. His breezy assurance has, from the beginning, proved misplaced. Within the first year of the Act’s passing, there were 27 200 abortions. Two years later, that figure had risen to 58 632, with numbers rising every year since. The figures for 2024 have yet to be released, but it is estimated there were more than 300 000, a massive surge from previous years, helped by the easy availability of pills by post.

We now have another piece of legislation passing through parliament which seeks to ease the way for abortions up to the day of birth. Labour MP, Tonia Antoniazzi, tabled an amendment as part of the Crime and Policing Bill which would remove women from the criminal law for acting in relation to their own pregnancy – that is, women would no longer face criminal investigation, arrest or prosecution for terminating their own pregnancy at any stage of gestation. The amendment does not change the 24-week time limit under the Abortion Act 1967 for most abortions, or the requirement for two doctors’ approval from abortion within the legal framework. Nor does it exempt medical professionals, or persons assisting a woman, from criminal liability if they breach the laws governing provision of abortion. In other words: the woman is removed from criminal liability for her own act, but others may still be criminally liable if they act outside the legal framework. It is a targeted amendment removing criminal sanctions for women, rather than rewriting the whole regulatory structure. The amendment would dis-apply sections of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929 in respect of a woman acting in relation to her own pregnancy.

On 17 June 2025 the House of Commons voted in favour of the amendment by 379 votes to 137. It still needs to complete its legislative journey (through the House of Lords and receiving Royal Assent) before becoming law.

Conservative shadow health minister Dr Caroline Johnson put forward another amendment, aimed at stopping pills-by-post abortions by requiring a pregnant woman to have an in-person consultation before being prescribed medication to terminate her pregnancy. This amendment was defeated, with 379 MPs voting against and 117 voting for.

The Royal College of Gynaecologists’ President, Professor Ranee Thakar

welcomed the decision to accept the Antoniazzi amendment and reject Dr Johnson's as "a victory for women and for their essential reproductive rights". However, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) said it was "horrified" by the vote. The organisation's public policy manager, Alitheia Williams, said, "If this clause becomes law, a woman who aborts her baby at any point in pregnancy, even moments before birth, would not be committing a criminal offence . . . Now, even the very limited protection afforded by the law is being stripped away."

A number of other amendments have been tabled, including one to oppose the decriminalisation clause outright. The Bill is currently awaiting its committee stage, where these amendments will be debated. The Government anticipates 12 days of committee stage, with the abortion clause listed for the last day of debate, expected to be Thursday, 22 January 2026.

Our nation is responsible for the wholesale slaughter of an estimated 11 million unborn infants since 1963 in the name of "women and their essential reproductive rights". It is grotesque and shameful, an abomination in the sight of God who says, "Thou shalt not kill". And now we are proposing to add to our sin against the Sixth Commandment by looking to terminate life at the other end of life's journey to eternity. Surely as the apostle says, "After thy hardness and impenitent heart [thou] treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God" (Rom 2:5). FRD

Blindness over Islam

The Islamisation of Britain is progressing rapidly and, if present trends continue, Britain is in danger of becoming an Islamic country in a few generations. This was the judgement on apostate Christianity in North Africa (7th century), Egypt (7th-13th centuries), and Asia Minor, or modern Turkey (7th-11th centuries), and these lands continue under the heel of Islam to this day. Most of Europe was spared at that time, and for centuries afterwards, but many European countries are now on the path to succumbing.

Our rulers in Britain are suffering from a wilful or judicial blindness regarding Islam, and they are shutting their eyes to its spread and to its real nature. Those that will not have Christ to reign over them (Lk 19:14) will be given up to others as a prey: "And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about" (Jdg 2:14). DWBS

We note the sad passing away of Lucio Strata on November 23. He had been an elder in the London congregation since 2009. We send our sympathy to his family.

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.
- Duirinish and Bracadale:** **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 Achary Road, Dingwall, IV15 9JB; tel: 01349 866546.
- Dornoch:** Sabbath 11.30 am. **Bonar:** Sabbath 6 pm. Wed 7.30 pm (alternately in Dornoch and Bonar). 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 A 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; **Strathly:** 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.
- Kinlochervie:** 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 I D MacDonald; tel: 01478 612110.
- Laide** (Ross-shire): Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wed 7.30 pm as intimated. Manse tel: 01445 731340. Contact: Rev A W MacColl; tel: 01349 866546.
- Lochcarron:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wed 7 pm. Manse. Contact: Rev I D MacDonald; tel: 01478 612110.
- 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; Wed 11 am; or as intimated. Manse: 5 Main Road, Luncarty, PH1 3EP. 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 I D MacDonald; tel: 01478 612110.
- Staffin:** Sabbath 12 noon, 5 pm; Tues 7 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 or as intimated. Manse: Quay Street, IV26 2UE; tel: 01854 612449. Contact: Rev I D MacDonald; tel: 01478 612110.

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 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev G G Hutton BA PhD, 3 Martin Crescent, Junction Hill, NSW 2460; tel: (02) 6644 6174; e-mail: grifton@internode.on.net.

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

New Zealand

Auckland: 45 Church Street, Otahuhu. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev J D Smith, 9 Pedlar Place, Conifer Grove, Auckland; tel: 022 092 2136.

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: 022 092 2136.

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: Odessa: F P Mission Station, 3 Saimona Litmana Street, 65047. Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Thursday 6 pm. Rev D Levytskyi; tel: 00 38 067 457 02 18; e-mail: dlevytskyy@gmail.com.

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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