

THE  
**Free Presbyterian Magazine**  
 AND  
 MONTHLY RECORD

*(Issued by a Committee of the Free Presbyterian Synod.)*

*"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth."—Ps. ix. 4.*

**CONTENTS**

	page
It is Time to Seek the Lord ... ..	221
Induction of Rev. A. F. Mackay, M.A. ... ..	222
Sermon: Of the Decrees of God ... ..	223
Popery ... ..	231
Church Notes ... ..	235
Acknowledgment of Donations ... ..	235
Contents ... ..	237

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THE  
**Free Presbyterian Magazine**  
AND MONTHLY RECORD.

VOL. LI.

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No. 12.

**It is Time to Seek the Lord.\***

BRITAIN is in the toils. Over a large part of the country the wheels of industry have ceased to turn. Thousands upon thousands of men and women are idle. The goods so necessary for our export trade and for the home market are not being made. Commerce is paralysed because of the lack of electrical power. Transport has been cut to a bare minimum; millions of domestic users are without light and heat during a part of the day; this week's issue of our paper has been prepared to a large extent by the flickering light of candles. The population is having to endure hardships and austerities greater than those endured during the years of war. Shortages of water, bread, milk and coal are common in many of the bleaker and more isolated parts. And what has brought about this almost unprecedented breakdown in the nation's life? Let the Minister of Fuel and Power answer the question: "The exceptional weather conditions."

Leaving aside all political considerations and the matter of whether there are other factors in this amazing situation, we accept Mr. Shinwell's assurance. The country is in a desperate industrial plight "because of the exceptional weather conditions." This is the Lord's doing. Of that there can be no doubt. God is dealing in judgment with a stubborn, forgetful, pleasure-loving people. Neither Socialist planning nor Tory private enterprise can stand for a minute against God. The present situation cries aloud to everyone with ears to hear: "It is time to seek the Lord."

How different things were during the eventful days of the war. Time and again we were delivered "because of the weather." At Dunkirk a thousand little ships plied in the English Channel "on a sea like glass." It was an extraordinary storm in September, 1940, that smashed Hitler's imminent invasion and enabled the Royal Air Force to bomb the enemy barges. On December 29 of the same year a sudden blanket of fog over the enemy's air bases saved the City of London from being completely wiped out by fire. It was a sudden break in the weather that enabled the Libyan offensive to get so well away. "General Winter" saved Russia and brought the mighty German offensives to a standstill again and again. Three years ago, in February, 1944, whilst the last finishing touches were being put to the

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preparations for invasions of Europe by the allies the weather was "phenomenal"—warm, clear, sunny days that were in almost unbelievable contrast to the rigours of the last few weeks. Throughout the war years, in many a phase of warfare, events were controlled by the weather. Time and time again, in every theatre of war, God proved to us that wind, cloud, fog, rain and snow which He has "reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war," are far mightier than any man-made weapon. It was God who gave us the victory. And to-day God speaks solemnly to the heart of the nation. "He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?" "Fire and hail; snow and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling His word." Through these messengers of His, our God says to all who will hear: "It is time to seek the Lord."

This is not the first time God has spoken to us since victory was so wonderfully granted. In the official victory celebrations last Whitsuntide there was no recognition of God. All religious acknowledgment of Him was omitted. The glory that was His was given to our admittedly great leaders and admittedly gallant forces. But He was left out. And God spoke to Britain through the weather. There were promises of abundant harvests. Newspapers spoke glibly of food problems being solved by the greatest grain crops in all our history. Then came the rain and the wind. Wheat, oats and barley that promised so well were never garnered. Bread rationing became inevitable. God said to us then: "It is time to seek the Lord." And again He speaks through the weather, calling to our paralysed, bankrupt nation to repent and seek His forgiveness and power.

We appeal to the leaders in State and Church—call the people to penitence and prayer. We appeal to every godly minister in the land—call the people back to God. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled." "Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?"

It is time to seek the Lord.—*English Churchman*, London, 14th February, 1947.

### Induction of Rev. A. F. Mackay, M.A.\*

THE Northern Presbytery met within the Free Presbyterian Church, Inverness, on Wednesday evening, the 8th day of January, at 7 p.m., for the purpose of Inducting Rev. A. F. Mackay, M.A., Applecross, to the pastoral charge of Inverness Congregation, which had been vacant since 1938. The Call to Mr. Mackay was unanimous; and a large gathering of people assembled within the Church for the service. Many friends came from other Congregations.

The Rev. John Tallach, from the Church's Mission in South Africa, being a member of the Presbytery, was appointed to preach, and delivered

\*The above is the fuller account of Mr. Mackay's Induction promised in an earlier issue.  
—Editor.

a most appropriate sermon from, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God" (Romans i. 1).

The sermon being ended, the Rev. F. MacLeod, Dornoch, Clerk of the Court, read a brief narrative of the proceedings leading up to the Induction. Thereafter, Rev. W. Grant, Halkirk, Moderator, called upon the Rev. A. F. Mackay to stand, and put to him the questions appointed to be asked of ministers on their induction. Mr. Mackay, having returned satisfactory answers to the same, was requested to sign the Formula in presence of the Congregation. After engaging in prayer, the Moderator formally inducted and admitted the Rev. A. F. Mackay to the pastoral charge of Inverness Congregation in the name of the Presbytery and by authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. The Moderator having given him the right hand of fellowship, the other members of Presbytery also did so, including Rev. D. R. MacDonald, Harris, of the Outer Isles Presbytery, who had been associated with the Presbytery at the beginning of the Meeting.

The Rev. D. A. Macfarlane, M.A., Dingwall, now addressed the newly-inducted Pastor in suitable terms, and Rev. R. B. Sinclair, Wick, addressed the Congregation.

The Moderator concluded the service by giving out the last three verses of Psalm lxxii. to sing: "His name for ever shall endure," etc., and thereafter pronounced the Benediction.

The Congregation had an opportunity of shaking hands with their new Pastor as they left the Church. The Presbytery and lovers of the Cause of Christ throughout the Free Presbyterian Church wish for them and their Pastor, times of the Gospel with the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that Zion's children would be made joyful in their King and others made willing to come penitently and in faith to His blessed feet.—Finlay MacLeod, *Presbytery Clerk*.

## **Sermon: Of the Decrees of God.**

By THOMAS BOSTON.

"According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 11).

*(Continued from page 209.)*

IV. I now come to consider the properties of God's decrees. (1) They are eternal. God makes no decrees in time, but they are all from eternity. So the decree of election is said to have been "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). Yea, whatever He does in time, was decreed by Him, seeing it was known to Him before time (Acts xv. 18): "Known to God are all His works from the beginning." And this foreknowledge is founded on the decree. If the divine decrees were not eternal, God would not be most perfect, and unchangeable, but, like man, should take new counsels, and would be unable to tell everything that were to come to pass. (2) They are most wise, "according to the counsel of His will." God cannot properly deliberate or take counsel, as men do; for He sees all things

together and at once. And thus His decrees are made with perfect judgment, and laid in the depth of wisdom (Rom. xi. 33): "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" So that nothing is determined that could have been better determined.

(3) They are most free, according to the counsel of His own will, depending on no other, but all flowing from the mere pleasure of His own will (Rom. xi. 34): "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counsellor?" Whatsoever He decreeth to work without Himself, is from His free choice. So His decrees are all absolute, and there are none of them conditional. He has made no decrees suspended on any condition without Himself. Neither has He decreed anything because He saw it would come to pass or as that which would come to pass on such or such conditions; for then they should be no more according to the counsel of His will, but the creatures' will. For God's decrees being eternal, cannot depend upon a condition which is temporal. They are the determinate counsels of God, but a conditional decree determines nothing. Such conditional decrees are inconsistent with the infinite wisdom of God, and are in men the effects of weakness; and they are inconsistent with the independency of God, making them depend on the creature.

(4) They are unchangeable. They are the unalterable laws of heaven. God's decrees are constant; and He by no means alters His purpose, as men do (Ps. xxxiii. 11): "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." Hence they are compared to mountains of brass (Zech. vi. 1). As nothing can escape His first view, so nothing can be added to His knowledge. Hence Balaam said, "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. xxiii. 19). The degree of election is irreversible: "The foundation of God (says the apostle) standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His" (II. Tim. ii. 19).

(5) They are most holy and pure. For as the sun darts its beams upon a dunghill, and yet is in no way defiled by it; so God decrees the permission of sin, as above explained, yet is not the Author of sin. I. John i. 5: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." James i. 13, 17: "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

(6) Lastly, they are effectual; that is, whatsoever God decrees comes to pass infallibly (Isa. xlv. 10): "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." He cannot fall short of what He has determined. Yet the liberty of second causes is not hereby taken away; for the decree offers no violence to the creature's will; as appears from the unforced actings of Joseph's brethren, Pharaoh, the Jews that crucified Christ. Nor does it take away the contingency of second causes, either in themselves or as to us, as appears by the lot cast into the lap. Nay, they are thereby established, because He has efficaciously foreordained that such effects shall follow on such causes. Before proceeding to the application of this doctrine, it may not be improper to answer some objections which are brought against the doctrines of the divine decrees. It is objected by some, that if all things that come to pass in time be appointed of God

by an irreversible decree, then this seems to make God the Author of sin, as if He had ordained that horrid and hateful evil to come into the world, which is so dishonourable to Himself, and so destructive to the children of men. In answer to this, you must know, (1) That all sinful actions fall under the divine decree. Though sin itself flows from transgressing the law, yet the futuration of it is from the decree of God. No such thing could ever have been in the world, if it had not been determined by the eternal counsel of Heaven for a holy and just end. This is plainly asserted by the apostle Peter, with respect to the greatest villainy that was ever committed on the earth, the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ at the hands of sinful men (Acts ii. 23) forecited. And the Church gives this account of it (Acts iv. 27, 28): "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand, and thy counsel determined to be done." There was never such an atrocious crime or higher act of wickedness committed, than the murdering of the Lord of glory. And yet it appears from these texts of Scripture, that, in this bloody and horrid scene, wicked men did no more than God's hand and counsel determined before to be done. (2) That the decree of God is properly distinguished into that which is effective, and that which is permissive.

1. His effective decree respects all the good that comes to pass, whether it be moral or natural goodness. All the actions and motions of the creatures have a natural goodness in them; and even sinful actions considered abstractly from any irregularity, obliquity, or deformity cleaving to them, have a natural goodness in them so far as they are actions they have a goodness of being considered purely and simply as actions. Now, God has decreed to effect all these, yea, even sinful actions considered purely as natural. For He is the first and universal cause of all things, the fountain and original of all good. And it is said in respect to the oppressions of the church by wicked men (Ps. cxv. 3): "Our God is in the heavens; He has done whatsoever He pleased."

2. His permissive decree doth only respect the irregularity and pravity that is in sinful actions. God decreed to permit the same, or He determined it to be, Himself permitting it. Hence it is said (Acts xiv. 16): "In times past He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." And God doth nothing in time, but what He did from eternity decree to do. So that the futuration of sin is from the decree of God. God determined that it should be. He did not decree to have any efficiency in sin, considered as such; but He willed that it should be done, Himself permitting it. The counsel of God did not determine to do it, but that it should be done.

3. God decreed the permission of sin for great and glorious ends. It is true, sin in its own nature has no tendency to any good end. If it end in any good, it is from the over-ruling providence of God, and that infinite divine skill that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness. Now, the great and glorious end for which God decreed the after-being of sin, is His own glory; and the ends subordinate thereunto are not a few. Particularly, God has decreed the futuration of sin. (1) That He might have occasion to glorifying His infinite wisdom, love and grace in the

redemption, and salvation of a company of lost sinners through the death and sufferings of His own dear Son. (2) That his patience and long sufferings in bearing with and forbearing sinners, might be magnified, admired and adored. (3) That He might be honoured and glorified by the faith and repentance of His people, and there walking humbly with Him. (4) That His justice might be illustriously displayed and glorified in the eternal damnation of reprobate sinners for their own sins and abominations, sin being the cause of their damnation, though not of their reprobation. Thus God decreed the futurity of sin for these holy and wise ends, that He might glorify His wisdom in bringing good out of so great an evil, and a greater good than the evil He decreed to permit.

4. The decree of God about the permission of sin doth not infringe the liberty of man's will. For sin doth not follow the decree by a necessity of co-action or compulsion, which indeed would destroy human liberty; but by a necessity of infallibility, which is very consistent with it. It is sufficient unto human liberty, or the freedom of man's will, that a man act without all constraint, and out of choice. Now, this is not taken away by the decree. Men sin as freely as if there were no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there were no liberty. And men sin, not to fulfil God's decree, which is hid from them, but to serve and gratify their vile lusts and corrupt affections.

Object 2. If God had determined the precise number of every man's days by an unalterable decree, then the use of means for the preservation of our health and lives is altogether unnecessary; for nothing can frustrate the divine decree. We shall live as long as God has appointed us, whether we use any means or not. And therefore when we are hungry we need not eat or drink; and when we are sick, we need not take physic, or use any medicines. In answer to this, you must know, that as God has decreed the means that are proper for attaining that end; so that these two must not be separated. Though God has decreed how long we shall live, yet seeing it is His ordinary way to work by means, and He has commanded and enjoined the use of them to men, therefore it is still our duty to use lawful means for preserving our life and health, and to wait on God in the due use of them, referring the event to His wise determination. In Paul's dangerous voyage to Rome, an angel of the Lord assured him that God had given him all that sailed with him in the ship; and Paul assured them from the Lord that there should be no loss of any of their lives; yet when some were about to flee out of the ship, he said to the centurion who had the command: "Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved" (Acts xxvii. 31). And he exhorted them to take some meat after their long abstinence, telling them that it was for their health.

From which it plainly appears, that as God decreed to save their lives, so He had decreed to save them in the due use of ordinary means; so that they were to use the means for the preservation of their life and health. And when Hezekiah was recovered from a mortal disease, and received a promise from God that he should have fifteen years added to his days, and the promise was confirmed by a sign, the miraculous going back of the sun, he did not neglect or cast off the use of means: but, as was prescribed by the prophet, he applied a bunch of dried figs to his sore, and used still his ordinary diet. Therefore, it is gross ignorance and

madness in men to reason so against God's decrees. The Lord, by unchangeable counsel and purpose, hath decreed to set down all things, and how they shall come to pass; and, therefore, it is a wrong way of arguing for people to say, if God has determined how long I shall live, then I shall not die sooner, though I never eat or drink.

Object 3. If God hath determined the eternal state and condition of men, whether they shall be happy or miserable for ever, then it is in vain to repent or believe, or use any means for their own safety. For if God hath elected them for salvation, they shall certainly be saved, whether they shall use any means or not; and if they are not elected to everlasting life, all they can possibly do will be of no purpose at all, for they shall never be saved by it.

For answer to this, you must know:—

(1) That God's decree of election is a great secret, which we ought not to pry into. It is simply for men to know whether they are elected or not, before they believe. Indeed, if a man were certain that he is not elected to eternal life, it would be another case; but as it is not certain that thou art not elected, you have no means to know either the one or the other, certainly, till you get saving faith. Till then the Lord reserves it in His own breast, as a secret we are not to pry into. For it is said (Deut. xxix. 29): "Secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we may do all the things of His law." Here the Lord shews what belongs to Him and what belongs to us, and that we should mind our duty, and not busy and perplex ourselves about impertinencies. Whether men be elected or not elected, is a secret that God never discloses to an unbeliever; but that we should believe on Christ is no secret. This is a duty clearly revealed and enjoyed by the gospel.

(2) It is our duty to look to God's command, and not to His decrees; to our duty, and not to His purposes. The decrees of God are a vast ocean, into which many possibly curiously pried to their own horror and despair; but few or none have ever pried into them to their own profit and satisfaction. Our election is not written in particular in the Word of God; but our duty is plainly set down there. If men conscientiously perform their duty, this is the way to come to the knowledge of their election. Men, therefore, should not question whether they be elected or not, but first believe on Christ, and endeavour diligently to work out their own salvation; and if their works be good, and their obedience true, thereby they will come to a certain knowledge that they were elected to everlasting life.

(3) As God elects to the end, so He elects also to the means. Now, faith and obedience are the means and the way to salvation and, therefore, if you be elected to salvation, you are also elected to faith and obedience. See what is said to this purpose (II. Thes. ii. 13): "God hath chosen you to salvation"; there is the end; "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"; there is the means which lead to that end. Both are decreed by God. If, therefore, you heartily and sincerely believe and obey, then your election to salvation stands firm and sure. Nay, further,



the Scriptures make election to salvation to be terminated as well in obedience as salvation. So (I. Pet. i. 2): "Elect (says the apostle) unto obedience, through sanctification of the Spirit." In the former place it was, "elect to salvation through sanctification"; but here it is, "elect to obedience through sanctification"; to denote unto us, that none are elected unto salvation but those that are elected unto obedience. And, therefore, it is unreasonable, yea, it is contradictory to say: "If I am elected, I shall be saved whether I believe and obey or not"; for none are elected to salvation but through faith and obedience.

(4) Men do not pry into the decrees of God in other things, but do what they know to be incumbent upon them as their duty. And certainly it is as unreasonable here. When you are dangerously sick, and the physician tells you that unless you take such and such medicines, your case is desperate; you do not use to reason thus: "Then if God hath decreed my recovery, I will certainly be restored to my health, whether I will take that course of physic or not." But you presently fall in with the advice given you and make use of the means prescribed for your health. And will you not do so here? You are dangerously sick and mortally wounded with sin, and God commands you to flee to Christ, the only physician that can cure you, and cast yourselves upon Him, and you shall certainly be saved. But O, says the sinner, if I knew that God had decreed my salvation, I would venture to Christ; but till once I know this, I must not believe. O how unreasonable is unbelief! The devil's suggestions make poor creatures act as if they were entirely distracted and out of their wits. This is just as if an Israelite stung with the fiery serpents should have said: "If I knew that the Lord had decreed my cure, I would look upon the brazen serpent, and if He hath decreed it, I will certainly recover whether I will look to it or not." If all the stung Israelites had been thus resolved, it is likely they had all perished, or this is as if one pursued by the avenger of blood, should have set himself down in the way of the city of refuge, where he should have been flying for his life, and said: "If God hath decreed my escape, then I will be safe whether I run to the city of refuge or not; but if He hath not decreed it, then it is in vain for me to go thither"! Now, would not men consider this a wilful casting away of his life, with a careless neglect of that provision which God hath made to save it? Was it not sufficient that a way was made for his escape, and a way feasible enough, the city of refuge always open? Thus the arms of Christ are always open to receive and embrace poor humbled perishing sinners fleeing to Him for help. And will men destroy themselves by suffering Satan to entangle them with a needless, impertinent, and unreasonable scruple? In other cases, if there be no way but one, and any encouraging probability to draw men into it, they run into it without delay, not perplexing and discouraging themselves with the decrees of God. Now, this is thy case, O sinner. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other by whom you can be saved. Flee to Him then as for your life; and let not Satan hinder thee, by diverting thee to impossibilities and impertinencies. Comply with the call and offer of the gospel. This is present and pertinent duty, and trouble not thyself about the secrets of God.

I conclude all with a few references.

1. Has God decreed all things that shall come to pass? There is nothing that falls out by chance, nor are we to ascribe what we meet with either to good or ill luck and fortune. There are many events in the world which men look upon as mere accidents, yet all these come by the counsel and appointment of Heaven. Solomon tells us (Prov. xvi. 33) that, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing is of the Lord." However casual and fortuitous things may be with respect to us, yet they are all determined and directed by the Lord. When that a man drew a bow at a venture (I. Kings xxii. 34), it was merely accidental with respect to him, yet it was God that guided the motion of the arrow so as to smite the king of Israel rather than any other man. Nothing then comes to pass, however casual and uncertain it may seem to be, but what was decreed by God.

2. Hence we see God's certain knowledge of all things that happen that happen in the world, seeing His knowledge is founded on His decree. As He can see all things possible in the glass of His own power, so He can see all things to come in the glass of His own will; of His effecting will; if He hath decreed to produce them, and of His permitting will, if He hath decreed to suffer them. Hence His declaration of things to come is founded on His appointing them (Is. xlv. 7): "Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming and shall come, let them shew unto them." He foreknows the most necessary things according to the course of nature, because He decreed that such effects should proceed from and necessarily follow such and such causes; and He knows all future contingents, all things which shall out by chance, and the most free actions of rational creatures, because He decreed that such things should come to pass, contingently or freely, according to the nature of second causes. So that what is casual or contingent with respect to us, is certain and necessary in regard to God.

3. Whoever be the instrument of any good to us, of whatever sort, we must look above them, and eye the hand and counsel of God in it, which is the first spring, and be duly thankful to God for it. And whatever evil or crosses or afflictions befall us, we must look above the instruments of it to God. Affliction doth not rise out of the dust or come to men by chance. But it is the Lord that sends them, and we should own and reverence His hand in it. So did David in the day of his extreme distress. II. Sam. xvi. 11: "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." We should be patient under whatever distress befalls us, considering that God is our party. Job ii. 10: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

4. This would be a happy means to still our quarrelings at adverse dispensations. Hence David says: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." See here the evil of murmuring and complaining

at our lot in the world. How apt ye are to quarrel with God, as if He were in the wrong when His dealings with you are not according to your desires and wishes ! You demand a reason and call God to account, why am I thus ? and why so much afflicted and distressed ? why so long afflicted ? and why such an affliction rather than another ? why am I so poor and another so rich ? Thus your hearts rise up against God. But you should remember that this is to defame the counsel of infinite wisdom, as if God had not ordered your affairs wisely enough in His eternal counsel. We find the Lord reproving Job for this (chap. xl. verse 2) : " Shall he that contendeth with the Lord instruct Him ? " Why ye murmur and repine under cross and afflictive dispensations ; this is a presuming to instruct God how to deal with you, and to reprove Him as if He were in the wrong. Yea, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it as if you had more wisdom and justice to dispose of your lot, and to carve out your own portion in the world. This is upon the matter the language of such a disposition : " Had I been on God's counsel, I had ordered this matter better ; things had not been me as now they are. " O presume not to correct the infinite wisdom of God, seeing He has decreed all things most wisely and judiciously.

5. There is no reason for people to excuse their sins and falls, from the doctrine of the divine decrees. Wicked men, when they commit some villainy or atrocious crime are apt to plead thus for their excuse : " Who can help ? God would have it so ; it was appointed for me before I was born, so that I could not avoid it. " This is a horrid abuse of the divine decrees, as if they did constrain men to sin ; whereas the decree is an imminent act of God, and so can have no influence, physical or moral, upon the wills of men, but leaves them to the liberty and free choice of their own hearts ; and what sin do they do most freely of choice ? It is a horrid and detestable wickedness to cast the blame of your sin upon God's decree. This is to charge your villainy upon Him, as if He were the author of it. It is a great folly to cast your sin upon Satan who tempted you, or upon your neighbour who provoked you ; but it is a far greater sin, nay, horrid blasphemy, to cast it upon God Himself. A greater affront than this cannot be offered to the infinite holiness of God.

6. Lastly, let the people of God comfort themselves in all cases by this doctrine of the divine decrees ; and, amidst whatever befalls them, rest quietly and submissively in the bosom of God, considering whatever comes or can come to pass, proceeds from the decree of their gracious friend and reconciled Father, who knows what is best for them, and will make all things work together for their good. O what a sweet and pleasant life ye would have under the heaviest pressure of affliction, and what heavenly serenity and tranquility of mind you would enjoy, would you cheerfully acquiesce in the good will and pleasure of God, and embrace every dispensation, how sharp soever it may be, because it is determined and appointed for you by the eternal counsel of His will.—*Boston Works, Vol. I.*

## Popery.

By Rev. JAMES MACLEOD, Greenock.

THE vast majority of the people of this nation and other nations maintain that the unity of the Roman Catholic Church is so perfect that there is nothing to equal it in the whole world—churches, states, political, or ecclesiastical, that the unity and harmony of the See of Rome is an example for all to follow, admire, and emulate! That is the general opinion as expressed by learned statesmen, scholars, as well as the ordinary common people.

That is far from the true state of the Roman See. The unity and external harmony of Rome is entirely on the surface. It is not a reality. We know that the majority of people have neither the time, opportunity, and privilege to search into the past history nor present history of the Papacy. The ordinary Roman Catholic dare not do it; and the learned Papist is well advised to keep as far away from the past and present history of the See of Rome as possible. That is his or her wisdom especially if they earn their bread writing on such subjects as religion, history, Reformation, Luther, Knox, Queen Elizabeth, Free Masons, Jews, Communists, Protestants, etc. But there were learned and honest Roman Catholic historians in the past who did not hesitate to write about the Papacy, Popes, and Councils. The sequence will demonstrate that fact beyond doubt. We hope to write a series of articles to shew and prove from the past, as well as the present history of the Papacy that it is not a united body at all, but a schismatic conglomeration of sects, parties, cliques and divisions. The unity of Romanism is clearly stated in the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, v. 19: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like;" that is the papacy in all ages, and in our age. It is in the above sense that they are united, as Satan and the fallen angels are united! There is no unity, love or mercy in the Papistical religion from the roots upwards. Indeed, in many respects, according to the Scriptures, "a mystery." How this awful system is kept together, operates, designs, plans, and yet underneath there is no adhesion. On the outside it appears all unity, communion and life, and inside the body, awful hatred, malice, confusion, lies, deceit, murder, immorality, filth of all kinds!

The most of people are either indifferent whether popery, communism, or Deism will govern their lives. One must give credit to Mr. Churchill that he is a clever and an intelligent man. If not a learned man, that he is above many; and yet he would recklessly say, that in his opinion, "that the Vatican was the cradle of Christianity."

If Mr. Churchill is so utterly ignorant of the history of the Church as all that; what must be the ignorance of the average man! No man that ever read the history of the Church from the early centuries of the Christian era could use such irresponsible language in a public audience without exposing himself to the utmost ridicule. Mr. Lloyd George made a similar reckless statement in 1913 in the House of Commons, discussing the Irish Home Rule, that the Protestants murdered forty thousand of the Roman

Catholics! Edward Carson corrected this deliberate falsehood the following afternoon—see *Hansard*. Lloyd George did it for a political purpose, and we believe Churchill did it for the same reason, but behold the end of Lloyd George! What will be the end of Churchill? Any person who will take the side of popery, let him be high or low, and continue and persist in supporting it shall come to grief. Popery is the greatest “mystery of iniquity” that ever disgraced the creation and the most offensive blasphemy that ever insulted the God of heaven! We will make constant use of the writings of that redoubtable historian, Rev. Samuel Edgar, D.D., and refer to the authorities he so frequently quotes, mostly Roman Catholic historians.

We shall begin with the Popes, and the great schisms of that “united church” of the Vatican! The English Church, as well as the Roman Catholic Church claim “Apostolic Succession.” Their claims are both without a shred of evidence. The English, in more recent times, admit that on historical grounds the myth of “Apostolic Succession” cannot be supported on evidential facts. The Vatican adheres to the myth more than ever. Some Protestant, as well as Roman Catholic historians, speak about Popes of the second, third, and fourth centuries, which is not correct, and cannot be substantiated by evidence, that no Bishop of the Christian Church claimed to be the “Universal Bishop” before the year 606 of the Christian era. The Emperor Phocas, by assassination of the royal family, seizes the throne, and for political reasons, confers the dignity of “Universal Bishop” on the Bishop of Rome. Did Phocas revoke this political recognition of the Roman Bishop is a question historians are not agreed upon.

Popery was a gradual growth from the middle of the first century to the middle of the fifth century. In the days of the Great Constantine, beginning about the early part of the fourth century, or about 315, when the Emperor cast off the yoke of paganism and made public profession of the Christian religion. It was after the declensions that followed that glorious period that Satan stirred up the corruptions of men to assume the place of gods, as there used to be in the pagan world before the advent of the Christian era. We shall deal meantime with the great schism.

The first question which confronts the Protestant is—Was Peter in Rome, and if so, at what date, and who says that he was, and what proof, what are the extant records of his visit, stay and position? The Papists maintain that Peter was Bishop of Rome, the first Bishop of that See. The Protestant is at once confronted with the question—Is a bishop, archbishop or cardinal an office above that of an apostle? If not, how could one of the apostles be bishop, and who would make a bishop of him? As one probes into the rumour that Peter was ever in Rome the deeper the mystery becomes, and the more impossible it is to conceive the silence of Paul and others of the visit and bishopric of Peter in the city of Rome! As Edgar says: “The pontifical succession is attended with more difficulty than the quadrature of the circle of the longitude at sea. . . . But the papal succession mocks investigation, eludes research, and bids proud defiance to all inquiry.” That is true about the papal system all through. Its history and movements are shrouded in darkness. The Jesuits of to-day work so secretly that even the reigning Pope may not know exactly where they are operating,

or what their plans and schemes are in U.S.A., Britain, France, or even Russia, as out and out communists. It is a mystery! The Holy Ghost calls it the "mystery of iniquity." He may be a most humble Protestant pastor, very evangelical, kind, a good father, and gradually but persistently begin to attack the Bible, the facts of history, applaud the ancient customs of the Fathers, seek to change the worship, the pulpit to face the east, and introduce his Romish gesticulations bit by bit, and before he finishes his antics, a whole generation of men and women ruined for ever. He comes in as a lamb, goes out as a lion! That has happened in the Protestant Church soon after the dawn of the glorious Reformation. It is estimated that there are over five thousand Jesuits in Britain at the present time, and five scores of them would be dangerous to any nation let alone five thousand! The folk who feel secure and content have never followed up their history and may mock at those who realise their danger, but the Jesuit may be working on a scheme which will mean the death of thousands of their sons and daughters. That he was behind the bombing of London, etc., is as sure as the sun rose in the east from the creation of the world. But, to return to Peter, the first Roman "Pope," Edgar says: "A single hint on this subject is not afforded by Peter himself, nor by his inspired companions, Luke, James, Jude, Paul and John. Peter, in his epistolary productions, mentions nothing of his Roman residency, episcopacy or supremacy. Paul wrote a letter to the Romans, and from the Roman city addressed the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Timothy and Philemon. . . . No man, except Luke, stood with Paul at his first answer or at the near approach of dissolution." In derision, Edgar says: "His apostolic holiness could not have been in his own diocese, and should have persecuted for non-residence. His infallibility, perhaps, like some of his successors, had made an excursion, for amusement, to Avignon. . . . The omission is continued by the Apostolic men, Clemens, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp. Not one of all these designs to mention a matter of such stupendous importance to Christendom." The "myth" deepens as we proceed to examine the records, and the "mystery of iniquity" passes out of sight into the catacombs of Roman Catholic antiquity!

Edgar says: "The fiction of Peters' visit to the metropolis of the world began to obtain credit about the end of the second century. Irenaeus, trusting to the prattlement of Papias, or to common report, recorded the tradition, and was afterwards followed by others." The historian, Eusebius, considered the tradition without evidence to support it. He introduces it as something reported, but not certain. . . . It was a mere hearsay. "Bede, the British analyst, is conjecturing from the writings of others, what was said without proof. Bede, v. 4." The fact of the matter is that there is not a shred of authentic evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. Irenaeus is the first to mention it one hundred and fifty years after Peter was supposed to be "Bishop" of Rome. The Roman historians, Baronius, Binnius, and Labbe, and all that followed them, to this day are positively certain (without the least evidence) that Peter founded the Vatican in the city of Rome! The Apostles had no stated charges, like bishops or pastors, which indeed was a result of the apostolic mission, and then how could Peter differ from the other apostles that got the same kind of

commission as all the rest did from the Lord Himself? We see that even good men may be the mouth-piece of Satan sometimes in spreading false reports. Irenaeus was a good man, but so imperfect that he began to spread a false report that Peter was in Rome—just on hearsay report! What mischief a good man may be instrumental in doing; and the good old Bede followed the stories of the old monks, men as a rule that had very little respects to truth. On all the available evidence extant, the only conclusion one can come to is that Peter was never in Rome, as Paul, Luke, John, Clemens, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp are all silent on Peter's visit to the city of Rome! But the clearest evidence will not silence a person who has become mentally delirious. He or she will continue to rave till death silences the muttering of the dying patient! That is the way with the Roman priests, popes and historians. Death alone will silence them from muttering their false stories about the Apostle Peter and his Roman See!

It is a dream, a myth and a Roman Catholic made-up invention which cannot be proved from history. The Apostles also founded and organised the churches in the various places and nations that they visited, settled pastors over the congregations that they founded and officers to carry on the functions required for the good government of the house of God. The Pope Peters, the holy fathers, archbishops, cardinals, bishops, archdeacons, etc., etc., came on the scene long after Paul, Peter, John, James, Timothy, Titus, Luke, Clemens and Polycarp had passed on to be for ever with the Lord. It was the gradual development of the "mystery of iniquity" which Paul and John warns the church against—it was to be after the manner Satan works, as he entered into the garden in the form of a serpent!

"Peter was surely an apostle, yes, who should dare deny it, but that he became after arriving in Rome a bishop, and Irenaeus heard it one hundred and fifty years after Peter passed into heaven to be with Christ for ever." There is no record in the Scripture or in history that Peter ever saw Rome. We, therefore, conclude that it is utterly false to say that he was in Rome. Historians are not really agreed who was the first bishop in Rome. The Roman Catholic historians affirm that a man Linus was the first bishop. No real evidence for that either! "Peter and Paul," says Irenaeus, "having founded the Roman Church, committed its episcopacy to Linus." Irenaeus was quoting from hearsay reports. He had no records to prove his story! Let us hear Dr. Edgar on this question: "But the whole accounts of this event are as discordant as they are silly. The partisans of this opinion differ in the time of the Apostolic Pontiff's arrival and stay in the Roman capital. Jerome, Eusebius, Binius, Orosius, Labbeus, Spondanus, Onuphrius, Naclerus, Petavius, Bede, Bruys, Baronius, and Valesius send Peter to Rome in the reign of Claudius. These, however, disagree in the year; the second, third, fourth, thirteenth and fourteenth years of the Emperor's reign being assigned by different authors for the era of this important event. Simon, says Jerome, having preached to the Jews of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, proceeded to Rome in the second year of Claudius and held the sacerdotal chair twenty-five years. Lactantius, Origen, Balusius and Pagius fix his arrival at the Roman metropolis to the reign of Nero. But these too differ as to the year. The length of Peter's episcopacy is also disputed. Twenty-three,

twenty-five, twenty-seven and twenty-nine years have been reckoned by various chronologers for its duration. This discordance of opinion is the natural consequence of deficiency of evidence. Contemporary historians, indeed, say no more of the Apostle Peter's journey to Rome than of Baron Munchausen's excursion to the moon!" We agree with the learned Dr. Edgar. It is a part of the same "mystery of iniquity," contradictory reports, confusion, groundless fables, and yet spreading like a disease which the skill of man could not stop.

(To be continued.)

### Church Notes.

*Communion.*—April: 1st Sabbath, Portnalong and Breasclete; 2nd Sabbath, Fort William; 3rd Sabbath, Greenock; 4th Sabbath, Glasgow; last Sabbath, Wick. May: 1st Sabbath, Kames and Oban; 2nd Sabbath, Seourie.

*Note.*—Any changes or additions to the above dates of Communion should be sent to the Editor.

*Notice to Conveners of Standing Committees.*—Conveners are requested to send to the Clerk of Synod their reports to reach him not later than 19th April.

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