

# The Free Presbyterian Magazine

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

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

**February: Second Sabbath:** Dingwall; **Third:** Stornoway; **Fourth:** North Uist, Zenka.

**March: First Sabbath:** Ullapool; **Second:** Ness, Portree, Tarbert; **Third:** Kyle of Lochalsh; **Fourth:** Barnoldswick, Gisborne, North Tolsta; **Fifth:** Ingwenya.

**April: Second Sabbath:** Leverburgh, Staffin; **Third:** Chesley, Laide; **Fourth:** Glasgow; Mbuma.

**May: First Sabbath:** Aberdeen, Grafton, London; **Second:** Achmore, New Canaan, Donsa, Scourie; **Third:** Edinburgh; **Fourth:** Chiedza.

**June: First Sabbath:** Auckland, Farr, Perth; **Second:** Nkayi, Shildaig; **Third:** Lochcarron, Uig; **Fourth:** Gairloch, **Fifth:** Bulawayo, Inverness.

**July: First Sabbath:** Beaully, Raasay; **Second:** Bonar, Staffin, Wellington; **Third:** Applecross; **Fourth:** Struan; Cameron.

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

**September: First Sabbath:** Breascleite, Chesley, Lame, Sydney, Ullapool; **Second:** Halkirk, Mnaka, Portree; **Third:** Tarbert; **Fourth:** Barnoldswick, Ingwenya, North Uist.

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**November: First Sabbath:** Raasay; **Second:** Glasgow; **Third:** Santa Fe (Texas); **Fourth:** Aberdeen; **Fifth:** Chiedza.

**December: First Sabbath:** Singapore; **Third:** Bulawayo, Tauranga.

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## Subdued by the Spirit

John Calvin was not a man who would readily draw attention to himself. When he gave some details of his early life in the preface to his *Commentary* on the Psalms, his purpose was to draw attention to God's activity. His father had intended him for the priesthood but, says Calvin, "God, by the secret guidance of His providence, at length gave a different direction to my course. At first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life."<sup>1</sup> As Calvin looked at the early years of his life, he focused, not on what he had done or said or thought, but on what God had done in subduing his mind.

This reminds us of man's universal need: to be subdued, so that he will accept from the heart his Creator's authority. Man is "like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12), requiring great skill to be applied if ever he is to be subdued. Man's problem is not necessarily a lack of knowledge; it is his refusal to receive the knowledge that is available to him. The people of Jeremiah's time were condemned for their reaction to what God had told them; "they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction" (17:23). There was a wilfulness in that refusal; it was the result of their fallen, sinful natures; they were rebels against God. So Paul expressed the matter: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14).

Only the heart subdued by divine power can receive these things; only the mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit can discern the truth. Apart from the Spirit, sinners will, in one degree or another, reject the Bible's testimony about sin. They may, in a general way, accept that they are sinners, but they will not submit to the fact "that it is an evil thing and bitter" to forsake the Lord – that not only will bitter consequences follow the commission of sin

<sup>1</sup>Calvin Translation Society edn, p xl.

but that all disobedience to God's commands is evil. It is only when the Holy Spirit comes with convicting power that sinners will submit to the authority of God speaking in His law. Only then will they accept that sin is something serious, something which calls for repentance on their part.

Thus Saul, the young Pharisee from Tarsus, must have been familiar with all the details of God's law, but he never discerned its spirituality until the Holy Spirit subdued his heart. Familiar though he was with the letter of God's commands, he considered himself blameless as he measured himself against them. And thus he would have remained had not the Spirit come to work in his soul when the risen Lord met him on his way to Damascus. But when Saul asked in true submission: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6), it was clear evidence that the Holy Spirit had subdued his self-righteous heart.

Not only did the future apostle submit to the authority of God's law; he submitted to Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, who had come into the world to save lost sinners like himself. His reason for going to Damascus was to arrest "any of this way" (Acts 9:2), any who had been subdued by divine power and were now following Jesus in the way of faith and new obedience. He was thus going on in rebellion against the One whom God had appointed as the Saviour. He was unable to discern in Jesus of Nazareth the fulfilment of all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures, which spoke of Him as the Messiah who was to come. But when the Holy Spirit subdued his heart and enlightened its darkness, he recognised Jesus as the One who was to come, by divine appointment, to redeem Israel. And the fact that he was now submitting to the One whom previously he had so much despised showed that his will had been renewed. He had experienced a day of divine power; his mind and heart had been subdued; and he was now willing to follow the Saviour wherever He would lead him.

The Saviour sent him particularly to evangelise the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). Yet not even the Apostle Paul had the capacity to accomplish any of these things; his work was to make known the truth concerning sin and salvation. But as he did so, the Holy Spirit frequently came with subduing power, so that many hearers had the eyes of their souls opened, and they turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. Paul was not able to continue preaching in Thessalonica for long, yet a significant number of sinners in that city turned to God from idols. This took place because, as Paul told them, "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess 1:5). But if the gospel proclaimed in Thessalonica had merely been the words of Paul

and Silas and Timothy, eloquent preachers though they no doubt were, no one's heart would have been subdued; all their hearers would have gone on in rebellion against their Creator.

Many have followed King Zedekiah in his rebellion against God's authority; he "stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel" (2 Chr 36:13). He had the great blessing of being able to listen to Jeremiah, yet he continued unsubdued. We may point to many factors which may have influenced Zedekiah to resist the messages God's prophet brought him. And we may point to many factors which aid, or hinder, the progress of the gospel today. Yet the one factor which guarantees the submission of a sinner to God's authority is the saving work of the Holy Spirit. However favourable other circumstances may be to the salvation of sinners, they will continue unsubdued if the Holy Spirit is withheld.

Under the preaching of various ministers, Paul included, the Spirit has been poured out on a vastly greater scale than is usual. Robert Philip tells of how the Spirit subdued a rebellious young man in Norwich under George Whitefield's preaching. The young man had gone out with some friends for a day's amusement. He "would have his fortune told by a gypsy they met. She predicted for him a good old age, and lots of children and grandchildren. He believed the prophecy and resolved to store his mind with such knowledge as would make young folks like an old man. 'Let me see', he said, 'what I can acquire first. O, here is the famous Methodist preacher, Whitefield; he is to preach tonight, they say. I will go and hear him.' From these strange motives, he really went to hear. The sermon was on John [the Baptist]'s appeal to the Sadducees and Pharisees to 'flee from the wrath to come'."

The young man recalled: "Whitefield described the Sadducean character, but that did not touch me. Then the Pharisaic; that shook me a little. At length he abruptly broke off, then burst into a flood of tears; then lifting up his hands, he cried with a loud voice, 'O my hearers, the wrath is to *come*; the *wrath* is to come!' These words sunk into my heart like lead in the waters. I wept. I went alone. These words followed me wherever I went. For days and weeks I could think of little else but the awful words: 'The wrath is to *come*; the *wrath* is to come!'" No more is told us except that this man later became a notable minister.<sup>2</sup>

We approach the end of another year during a period when little is to be seen of this subduing power. Yet let us not be discouraged. Rather let us pray that, in God's wonderful providence, the Holy Spirit would be so poured out in our generation that multitudes of hard-hearted sinners would be subdued and their minds brought to a teachable frame, just as Calvin was.

<sup>2</sup>*The Life and Times of George Whitefield*, Banner of Truth reprint, p 410.

# Christ Weeping over Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>

A Sermon by *George Burder*

Luke 19:41-42. *And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Jesus Christ had a tender heart. Compassion to the miserable was a leading feature of His character. At all times we observe this in His conduct towards the sorrowful. He was Himself “a man of sorrows” and He always had an ear to listen to the tale of woe, a heart to feel for the afflicted and a hand to afford them relief. But the display of His compassion, at the time referred to in the text, deserves particular attention; for what were His circumstances when He thus wept and spoke as He did? It was at the only time in His sojourning here upon earth that we behold Him enjoying any kind of triumph: He was approaching Jerusalem for the last time, when a vast multitude of people, perhaps more than a million, were in that great city to celebrate the feast of the Passover. Having heard that He was about to enter the metropolis in a more public manner than ever before, they were overjoyed with the thought of seeing Him, hearing Him, and beholding His miracles; so they went forth to meet Him in great multitudes.

This more than usual curiosity was excited by a miracle which He had recently performed; He had raised His friend Lazarus from the dead, at a little town not far from Jerusalem. There were many respectable witnesses to the fact; it was noised about the country, and great multitudes had been induced to believe on Him as it said in John 12: “By reason of Him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus. On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.” And, as you see in verse 37 of this chapter, “when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen”.

The acclamations of the multitude did not, however, elate Him; “He knew what was in man” and He foresaw that many of the multitude who were now crying, “Hosanna”, would as loudly cry, “Crucify Him, crucify Him”. Let us also beware of placing much confidence upon human applause, for a very

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted, with slight editing, from the preacher’s *Village Sermons*, vol 3. Burder (1752-1832) was an Independent minister in England, whose final charge was in London.

little matter will turn the scale of public opinion, and the warm friend of today may be the bitter enemy of tomorrow.

Other thoughts occupied the holy, benevolent mind of Jesus. From a small distance, He had a view of this great city – great in extent, population and magnificence; great especially on account of the sumptuous temple that had been erected there. And, although the Saviour had already suffered many hardships from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and well knew that He should suffer still more in a few days, yet such was His divine benevolence and compassion that He wept bitterly at the foresight of those unparalleled calamities which He knew would, in a few years, befall that guilty city. Thus He says, “The days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee” (verse 43).

All this actually came to pass. The Romans who besieged Jerusalem thought it necessary to build a wall, extending for nearly five miles, entirely around the city to prevent its inhabitants from escaping. By reducing them to famine, and by other means, they brought upon them irretrievable ruin, so that, in the course of time, more than a million Jews were put to death, 11 000 of whom were crucified. They only stopped crucifying them because no more wood could be procured to make crosses, while many of those who were not put to death were sold at a penny a man.

Our Lord foresaw all this and He wept. But He doubtless looked further than to the destruction of Jerusalem; He looked forward to the eternal state of the multitude. Probably by far the greatest part of this multitude died in their sins. And He also looked to the future consequences of the destruction and consequent dispersion of the nation; He foresaw what would befall the race of Judah for 1800 years – during this time by far the greater part have died in ignorance and sin. Well might He, who foresaw all this, weep! He wept amidst His own meek triumphs, far more concerned for others than for Himself. And notwithstanding the foresight of His own approaching sufferings, He afterwards said to some of the women who lamented His fate: “Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children”.

Now the case of Jerusalem speaks aloud to *us*:

1. There are things which belong to our peace.
2. There is a limited period of time in which we may learn these things.
3. It is a matter of deep lamentation when these things are neglected and are hidden for ever from men’s eyes.

**1. There are things which belong to our peace.** There are some things which it is absolutely necessary for us to know, in order to our eternal peace: “If thou hadst known . . . the things which belong unto thy peace”.

“That the soul be without knowledge,” said the wisest of mankind, “is not good”; indeed, “it is eternal life to know” God and His Son Jesus Christ. What things must needs be known? They are the things of the gospel, “the things of God”, “the things of the Spirit of God” – so they are denominated in Scripture. These were the things that Christ and His apostles had set before the Jews, and these are the things which the great God now sets before us, especially the things which relate to the salvation of our souls by Jesus Christ. It is necessary to know the doctrine of the gospel, the power of the gospel and the practice of the gospel.

But to mention a very few particulars. It is necessary that we should know our real state and condition as sinners – as apostate, depraved, polluted and helpless creatures. Great is the value of self-knowledge, especially in religion. To know ourselves aright we must know that we are, “by nature, the children of wrath”, for “they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”. We must be convinced of our actual guilt and that we are under the curse of the broken law, for “it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”. We must so know these things that our “mouth may be stopped” and we must become confessedly guilty before God. We must know that “the wages of sin is death”; we must not plead for sin, as many do, for “the end of these things is death”. We must know our own helplessness – our inability, by anything within our own power, to relieve ourselves – for we have destroyed ourselves, and our help is found in God alone.

We must understand this doctrine of Scripture as applied to ourselves; and we must be sincerely and habitually concerned to be delivered from this state. This must be the grand desire of our souls – the one thing needful – so as to induce us to cry from the heart: “God be merciful to me a sinner”. It is necessary to our true and spiritual peace that our natural and carnal peace should be disturbed, that the security we feel through ignorance should be terminated, for “when a strong man armed keepeth his palace, [and] his goods are in peace,” we do not seek the salvation that is from above; but when this peace is disturbed, we are glad to seek peace from another quarter.

Besides this, we must have an acquaintance with the gospel of Christ as what affords us the only, but all-sufficient, remedy – we must be acquainted with the gospel in order to know the way of peace with God and safety for the soul; and this is abundantly revealed in the gospel. Christ alone is our peace-maker, He has “made peace by the blood of His cross”. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” – Jesus having been “made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we [who believe] might be made the righteousness of God in Him”. And, as Paul tells us at the

beginning of Romans 5, it is by being justified through faith, that we come into a state of peace with God and “we have access” – free admission into a permanent state of full acceptance with God, as persons acquitted of every charge and brought into a condition of safety and honour, so that we may “rejoice in hope of the glory of God”. These are some of the things that belong to your peace, things that must be known.

**2. There is a limited period of time in which we may learn these things.** Our Lord says, “If thou hadst known . . . in this thy day”. The Jews had their day, their time of visitation, for “at sundry times, and in divers manners,” God spoke unto them “by the prophets”; and latterly, He spoke unto them “by His Son” from heaven. “If thou hadst known,” says the Lord, even thou, Jerusalem, O highly favoured place – distinguished as it was above all the cities upon the earth. And may this not be applied to our case as a nation singularly favoured of God, with the means of religious light and information? May it not be said to many a person here present: “If thou hadst known . . .”? May it not be said to those who have had a religious education – who have had opportunities, from their childhood, to become acquainted with the things that belong to their peace – “If thou hadst known?” Surely, to such, these things should be known – at least, “now, after so long a time”. Now, if not before; at least, now!

The Jews had long enjoyed the means of grace; but the season of visitation was then drawing to a close – after about 40 years there would be a complete end. They had treated the gospel with contempt and, as our Lord declared, they should go their way and should seek Him, but they should not find Him. But we may apply the term *day* to specially favourable seasons: “If thou hadst known . . . in this thy day”.

In the first place, *life* generally may be called a day; indeed it is but a day; a short day, a winter’s day, but it ought to be a working day. “Are there not twelve hours in the day”, in which men should work? How is it then that some continue “all the day idle”, when this is the great business of life, the one thing needful! Job most emphatically said, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and, to depart from evil, is understanding,” and Solomon, at the close of his book of Ecclesiastes, having solemnly and repeatedly declared the vanity of the world, wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” – this is the great concern: the interest, business and life of man.

I may say likewise that *youth* is the time in which it is specially proper to attend to the things which belong to our peace. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” What can be more reasonable and proper than that the first and chief of all objects should have the first and chief regard? And

doubtless the time of youth is the most suitable and friendly for this purpose. There are infirmities and hindrances which befall the aged, who are constrained to say of their latter days, "There is no pleasure in them". Young people, consider, I beseech you, these words of Christ as addressed to you: If thou hadst known these important things, even in this thy day – the day of youth and health and activity.

Further, let me observe that the *Sabbath* is a favourable and very proper time for attending to these great concerns. On this holy day, people do not have the same excuses as on other days. There is no pressure from those worldly affairs which must be given attention on other days; but the things that belong to our peace are, if I may so say, the order of the day, and nothing ought to interfere with them – especially when they are presented to our minds by the preaching of the gospel. They are then brought, as it were, before our eyes, so that, as the scripture speaks, we need not say, Who shall ascend into heaven to bring them down? or, Who shall dive into the deep to fetch them up? But "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach".

Let the hearer of the gospel know that the kingdom of God is brought near unto him. God, angels, and devils too, observe what attention we pay to the heavenly message and what effects are produced by it. Angels gladly carry the news of good impressions; and when sinners are converted, angels gladden heaven with the tidings. And if they could weep (as the Lord of angels did), it would be at the madness of sinful men disregarding the proposals of salvation. This time of hearing is an important time, more important than many apprehend. To many it may seem a matter of indifference whether they hear the word seriously and attentively, or suffer their imagination to rove; but certain it is that, by every sermon a man hears, he is taking a step nearer to heaven or to hell; he is either receiving a benefit to his soul or he is hardening his heart.

May not these words be emphatically addressed to the *aged*, "at least in this your day". Verily it may be said to aged people: Now, or never; hear the Word of God lest you should die in your sins.

**3. It is a matter of deep lamentation when these things are neglected and are hidden for ever from men's eyes.** When our Lord thought of it He wept; He wept when He uttered these words, "If thou hadst known, even thou . . . but now they are hid from thine eyes". The calamities of the Jews, which He clearly foresaw, were extremely great; they were unparalleled in the history of nations. The world, with all its troubles, never saw the like before, and never may again; the discord, the malice, the famine, the disease, the self-murders, the burning of houses and falling of buildings, the death of

multitudes – all contributed to form that sum of unspeakable calamity which our Lord foresaw, and the prospect of which made Him weep.

But fearful as this destruction was, the misery of damned souls in hell will be far greater; yea, the sufferings of each individual soul will, at some future period, have become greater than the sum total of all the sufferings endured by the hundreds of thousands who perished in Jerusalem! O think of eternity; think of thousands and thousands of years past, and thousands and thousands more to be added to their number; yea, millions of ages – as many millions of ages as there have been drops of rain from the beginning of the Creation, as many millions of ages as there have been leaves upon all the trees or grains of sand upon the seashore. And supposing all these ages to have come and to be past, yet eternal ages more are to succeed. The capacious mind of Him who was Himself from eternity could not but weep when He contemplated these distant objects, and surely our hearts must be as hard as stones if we can think of them without feeling compassion both for ourselves and for others.

But when may it be said that these things are hidden from men's eyes? In the first place, when the means of grace are removed. The Lord threatened the church of Ephesus, when she left her first love, that the candlestick (or lamp) should be removed out of its place; the lamp signified the ministry of the gospel in the church. When the Lord removes the preaching of His gospel from a particular place, in town or country, it is an awful event. How often has it happened in such cases that a faithful minister has been succeeded by a poor blind guide!

Thus it also frequently happens, in the course of human affairs, that people have been removed from places where they heard the gospel faithfully preached to situations where it was not to be heard. There are many servants who hear the Word because they live in pious families, but by and by they move and either attend no place of worship at all or, if they do, hear nothing but error. Then, alas, these things are hidden from their eyes. There are many who have no love for the gospel and make no scruple of removing, for the sake of convenience, to situations where they cannot hear the gospel preached, and then these things by their own negligence are hidden from their eyes. And, in large congregations, perhaps every Sabbath some people are hearing the truth for the last time; even though they may live for many more years, they may hear the gospel no more. It is an awful thought to ministers, and ought to be so to all their hearers.

Again, these things may be said to be hidden from men's eyes when their heart becomes hard and insensitive, and this is no uncommon thing. "Take heed," said the Apostle of the Gentiles, "any of you be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin". Many hearers of the Word become sermon-proof. They

have heard the solemn truths of Scripture so frequently, and to so little purpose, that at length these truths make no impression on them at all. We rarely hear of the conversion of people at an advanced period of life who have long heard the gospel in vain. Yet this is not impossible, for nothing is “too hard for the Lord”. Habits of sin harden dreadfully. When conscience has long remonstrated in vain, it ceases to remonstrate. And an offended God, whose patience is wearied out, may justly say of the confirmed sinner, as to Ephraim of old: “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone!”

Above all, it may be truly said, and with awful emphasis, that these things are hidden from men’s eyes when life closes before the great business of life is finished, or even begun. And O how soon, and sometimes how suddenly, does life close! For what is it but “a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away”. How many instances are there of persons being suddenly removed – some sitting at the table, others walking in the streets, and others lying on their beds after retiring to rest in their usual health! And what security do you or I have that this will not be the case with us? And even if we do not die suddenly, how often is the body visited with such distracting pains as entirely to prevent any serious thoughts! How often does fever almost totally incapacitate the mind for reflection! Restlessness, attention to medicine, to sleep, and so on, so occupy the mind that, after all, death comes at an unexpected moment. And when death closes the scene, these things are hidden for ever from our eyes.

Upon such occasions, no doubt, pious relations weep, as Christ wept on this occasion. And how bitter must be such sorrow: O my wife, my husband, my child, had you but known the things that belonged to your peace; but I fear that now they are hidden for ever from your eyes. This is the bitterness of sorrow – the very “gall of bitterness”. But when a relation or a friend dies “in the Lord”, we feel immediate consolation, assured that our loss is his eternal gain; I am mourning but he is rejoicing. If, on the contrary, there is reason to fear the worst, ministers too must bitterly lament: We have all the day long stretched out our hands to a gainsaying people. “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

But, if others lament this catastrophe, how must the lost soul itself lament it! This will be the very emphasis of suffering in the eternal world. O fool that I was, how did I spend my time? What was I doing all the days of my life? How did I come to neglect my Bible? How could I shut my ears to the calls of ministers and friends? What wretched trifling it was wholly to neglect the business of life and to occupy my time with amusements! Many a soul will say, O had I spent my time in reading my Bible and in prayer – instead of spending it in vain conversation and amusements and on dress –

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I might have avoided this misery; but now these things are hidden from my eyes.

**Conclusion.** As it is necessary for these things to be known, let no one plead for ignorance, or foolishly pretend that they know enough already. This is the language of many, but it is a sure proof that as yet they know nothing as they ought. If there are things that belong to our peace and they must be known, do we apply our hearts to wisdom? Do we know them – especially our state by nature and the means of salvation by Jesus Christ? Is there a limited time in which they must be known? O then seize the golden opportunity. Why should men not be as wise for eternity as for time, for their souls as for their bodies? In the management of human affairs, we seek to make good use of the proper season. The husbandman does this, the tradesman, the merchant – all have their proper seasons and, if they are wise men, they attend to business at those proper seasons. O let us do so in those things that belong to our peace; let us not neglect the Bible or the means of grace or prayer. We now have another Sabbath evening to spend; let us spend it profitably; let not these golden hours be lost in folly but, while it is called today, let us hear the voice of the Son of God and live.

Finally, let those rejoice and be thankful who have attended to these things so that the great affair is settled, the great business of life is accomplished! O give praise to God for His goodness. Upon such an occasion, Christ rejoiced and said, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” Let us praise God for His special, distinguishing grace and give Him glory, now and for evermore.

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## The Dying Thief (1)<sup>1</sup>

*James Buchanan*

**T**he crucifixion of the Lord Jesus strikingly illustrates both the depth of His abasement and the certainty of His reward. To enhance the shame of His death, He was crucified between two thieves, for He was numbered with transgressors. He was placed on the same level, in the public view, with men whose lives had been forfeited by their crimes; He was subjected, in His last moments, to the painful sight of their sufferings.

<sup>1</sup>Taken, with editing, from Buchanan’s valuable *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*. This is the second of his “illustrative cases” of conversion, based on Luke 23:32-43. The first was the Philippian Jailor, already published in these pages.

But one of the thieves was suddenly converted, which demonstrated the certainty of Christ's reward, made it manifest that the joy which was set before Him – for which He endured the cross, despising the shame – would indeed be His. In the lowest depths of His humiliation – in the darkest hour of the power of darkness, when Satan's policy seemed to be crowned with success – this immortal soul was snatched as a brand from the burning and given to Christ as a pledge of His triumph, and the firstfruits of a glorious harvest.

While others mocked Him and His chosen disciples stood aloof, the dying thief relented; his conscience awoke; his heart was touched. Amidst the ridicule and the blasphemies of that awful hour, one solitary voice was heard from the cross beside Him calling Him "Lord" and speaking of His "kingdom" in tones of faith, penitence and prayer. How must that voice have gladdened the Saviour's heart and imparted to Him, in the midst of His bitterest agony, a foretaste of the "joy that was set before Him"! Here was a proof of the efficacy of His death, the faithfulness of God's covenant promise, and the certainty of His reward. If, even now on the cross, before His work was finished, this stricken spirit fled to Him for refuge and was quickened into spiritual life in the very hour of death, was it not a sure pledge and earnest that He would yet bring many sons and daughters to glory – that, having been exalted by God's right hand to the throne, He would receive the promise of the Father and shed forth the Spirit from on high?

**1. The state of his mind before conversion.** Nothing is recorded that would lead us to suppose that he had thought seriously of religion or acquired any knowledge of the gospel until he was brought to Calvary. He is described as a malefactor, and more specifically as a thief or robber – a desperate character, fearing neither God nor man – whose crimes exposed him to the highest penalties of the law. And his own confession admits that the sentence under which he suffered was just: "We receive the due reward of our deeds". By comparing the parallel passages in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, it would seem that he had joined with the other malefactor in reviling the Saviour. In the one it is said: "The thieves also which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth"; and in the other: "They that were crucified with Him reviled Him".

But immediately before his conversion, and preparatory to it, a change seems to have been wrought in his mind. It consisted in deep conviction of sin and a sense of his own demerit on account of it. For when one of the malefactors railed on Jesus, "the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." The whole process was accomplished so suddenly that it is difficult to say if this remarkable confes-

sion preceded his cordial reception of the truth by any perceptible interval.

While his conscience might, by his crimes, have been seared as with a hot iron, his confession implies that he was now deeply impressed with a sense of sin. It was not the mere “sorrow of the world [which] worketh death” but godly sorrow working genuine repentance. Although the condemnation of which he speaks might be the sentence of temporal death, pronounced and executed by his fellow men, yet his language shows that he saw that he was not only guilty before men, but also before God, the supreme Lawgiver and the final Judge.

As a resident at Jerusalem, or at least in Judea, the seat of true religion, he had probably enjoyed some of the advantages of early religious instruction and had been taught some elementary truths of Scripture. He speaks of God, the only living and true God, although he had spent his life violating His law. The thought of God as a Lawgiver and Judge was now vividly before his mind; the conception of God’s character, combined with the inherent power of conscience – which is never altogether extinguished in the most depraved – produced that conviction of sin which is accompanied with fear of God and a judgement to come. So long as God can be kept out of view, there may be a secret consciousness of guilt, without any sense of danger or alarm; hence the question to his hardened fellow-sufferer: “Dost not thou fear God?” But as soon as God was present to the mind, conscience intuitively connected guilt with danger, and awakened a fear of the wrath to come; conscience pointed to God as a Judge and an avenger.

Here, as in every other case where a work of grace has begun in the heart, conviction of sin was accompanied with such a sense of demerit as led to the acknowledgment that punishment was *justly deserved*. This is not always implied in the mere terrors of an awakened conscience, and it would be altogether repudiated by a conscience still asleep. The thief who railed at Jesus might not be able to deny his guilt. And, merely because he could not escape punishment, he might not resist public justice. But had he been asked to acknowledge that he justly merited the bitter death he was called to endure, he would probably have denied that he was sufficiently guilty to deserve such a punishment and have complained of the severity of his case. He seems to have had no fear of God, the supreme Judge, or the retributions of the eternal world. Even at that solemn hour, in spite of his own sufferings, he could join in the insults and blasphemies which were poured out on the Saviour.

But even had his conscience been so awakened as to make him afraid of God and eternity, he might still have been destitute of that deep sense of the evil nature of sin which led his fellow-sufferer to acknowledge that he was receiving the due reward of his deeds. A convinced sinner may tremble, as

Felix did when he heard of temperance and righteousness and judgement to come; and he may be conscious of a deep horror when he hears of the worm that shall never die, and the fire that cannot be quenched; yet the omniscient God, who can analyse the confused emotions of a sinner's heart, might not discern there one element of genuine contrition. On the contrary, God might find the dread of hell combined in that heart with an invincible spirit of opposition to His authority, an undying reluctance to condemn his own sin and an unyielding determination to deny the rightness of its penalty. When therefore the poor thief was so far convinced of his sin as to be impressed with a sense of his demerit and of God's justice, we see the beginning of a change which is the most hopeful symptom of his ultimate conversion.

**2. The means which brought about his conversion.** While the thief had become a convinced sinner, he was not yet converted, but his conversion immediately followed. It was complete and sudden, wrought in a short space of time. Yet it amounted to an entire revolution in all his views and habits, insomuch that he became a new man. Born again on the cross, he passed into heaven. Now what was there in his circumstances that could account for so great a change?

If we put ourselves in his place; if we joined the procession with the meek Sufferer as He slowly walked along with the thieves; if we heard the words of warning and consolation which He spoke to the daughters of Jerusalem; if we stood beside Him on the hill when the cross was firmly planted in the ground, if we saw the "Man of sorrows" nailed to the accursed tree; if we looked on His kindly countenance and listened to His words; if we beheld the sudden darkening of the sky and the rending of the rocks; then, with *our* knowledge of the personal dignity of the Sufferer, the purpose of His death, and the fulness of gospel truth embodied in His cross, it would not be difficult for us to conceive how such a scene might convert any sinner to God.

A spiritual view of the scene on Calvary is indeed the chief means of every conversion; the cross of Christ is to every instructed disciple the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. Thus every believer may say with the Apostle: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". Looking back to that scene with the eye of faith, the Christian derives from it his sublimest views of the truth; he delights to contemplate what the poor thief was privileged to witness. As often as he reviews those events, he is filled with awe and admiration, with gratitude and joy.

But it was quite possible that the scene at Calvary might not impart any spiritual impression to an unenlightened mind. It is clear that the thief came to Calvary in great ignorance and guilt and yet was suddenly brought out of darkness into marvellous light. Depraved and guilty as he had been, he had

a conscience and was brought to some notion, however obscure, of God as Lawgiver, Governor and Judge. He was a man – a wretched, degraded man – but still a man, and therefore capable of conversion. Partly from the light of nature, which is never altogether extinguished, and partly from being brought up in a country where the knowledge of the true God was established, he had learned some elementary truths, such as the being and providence of God, the difference between right and wrong, and the guilt and sure punishment of sin.

All this was sufficient to awaken remorse and dread but could not effect his conversion; real conversion to God depends on knowing and believing the truth as it is in Jesus. How then was this malefactor converted, and where did he find the truth which alone makes wise unto salvation? A heart that has been awakened to earnest inquiry, by the Spirit of God, will find nourishment in the crumbs which fall from the Master's table. In the case before us, there was no full disclosure of doctrine, no systematic instruction. Yet his eye was opened to observe, his ear to hear and his heart to receive the truth as it was incidentally presented during his progress from Pilate's hall to Calvary. There are three sources from which he derived those simple lessons which sufficed for his conversion:

(1.) *The testimony of Christ's friends*; not only the testimony of Pilate, who declared that he had found "in Him no fault", but that of others who bore witness to His spotless character, "who also bewailed and lamented Him" (Luke 23:27). The innocence of Christ was thus impressed on the malefactor's mind and is prominent in his confession: "We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss".

(2.) *The meek majesty of the suffering Saviour*, the words He uttered, breathing a spirit so different from that of this world – these seem to have deepened the impression of His innocence and worth. Christ's words to the daughters of Jerusalem, so solemn, yet so tender; and still more, the prayer for His murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". The one exhibited a prophet's faithfulness, the other a Saviour's love, and both breathed a spirit of submission to God's will; they intimated the guilt of sin, the certainty of future judgement and the necessity of forgiveness. These few words, uttered in such circumstances, might give the thief such a view of Christ as would impress him with the conviction that He was no common sufferer and that His was no ordinary death. They would constrain him to believe that He was none other than the Son of God and the Saviour of men – the Son of God, for He calls Him Father; and the Saviour of men, for He prayed for the forgiveness of His murderers.

(3.) The thief was not left to ponder the scene without a commentary, and

that commentary was *furnished by the Saviour's enemies* – first of all, in the sneers and blasphemies which they uttered; and second, in the inscription which was put on the cross They did not mean it, but they gave such a testimony to the Saviour as sufficed for the conversion of His fellow-sufferer. “The rulers”, we read, “derided him, saying, He saved others.” Yes, He saved others; He had healed the sick and given eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf and life to the dead. And that testimony to Christ’s miraculous power sank deep into the heart of the dying man beside Him.

But of whom did His very enemies give witness that “He saved others?” What did He profess to be? This also the dying thief learned from their lips: “Let Him save Himself, if He be *the Christ, the chosen of God*”; “If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself”. And they put a superscription over Him: “This is *the King of the Jews*”. These words conveyed to the malefactor’s mind what Christ professed to be, and they combined with what he had seen and heard – with the testimony to His miraculous powers, now confirmed by the supernatural darkness of the sky and the rending of the rocks; with what he had witnessed of Jesus’ godlike bearing, full of grace and truth; and with the words which had fallen from His lips. They carried to the thief’s heart the conviction that the One beside him was indeed the Son of God, the Messiah who had been promised to the fathers – that, although suspended on the cross, He was indeed *the King*; and if a king, then He had a kingdom. Immediately the prayer of faith broke from his lips: “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom”.

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## Robert Bruce on the Lord’s Supper<sup>1</sup>

### 1. His Life and His Preaching

*Rev D Campbell*

**I**ntroduction. Paul told the Corinthians that what he had received of the Lord he delivered to them: “That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks He brake it and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor 11:23-25). These words give us the doctrine and practice of the Lord’s Supper for the Christian Church “until He come”. Yet, when abused by men, what was designed to bind believers to one another has become a cause of great conflict.

<sup>1</sup>The first part of a paper delivered at the Theological Conference in 2007.

Robert Bruce's five sermons on the Lord's Supper, originally published in 1589, represent one of the first, and perhaps one of the most comprehensive, statements of the Protestant doctrine on this subject. In his *Scottish Theology*, Principal Macleod states that these sermons "have been looked upon as being as accurate and clear an exhibition of the Reformed teaching in regard to the sacraments as any of the Reformed theologians of Scotland ever produced".<sup>2</sup> We intend to look first at Robert Bruce and his preaching, then more closely at the five *Sermons on the Sacrament*. We will then consider four areas in which Bruce presents a peculiarly-Calvinistic sacramental theology. We will conclude with some remarks on Bruce's contribution to the sacramental heritage of Scotland and some practical lessons which we hope will be found relevant to the present day.

### **1. Robert Bruce and his preaching.**

(1) *His life*. Robert Bruce was the second son of a notable Scottish laird, Alexander Bruce of Airth in Stirlingshire. He was directly descended from the king of Scotland whose name he shares. He was born in 1559 and became "one of the very ablest men, one of the greatest leaders, and one of the most successful preachers of his time".<sup>3</sup> With good prospects of rising to a high position, he was educated for the legal profession. The Lord however purposed otherwise. A notable incident in Airth Castle on 31 August 1581 is recorded in his personal account of God's dealings with him. Having resisted the call to the ministry for upward of 10 years, he was brought to see all his sins pass before him and he would, he says, "have been willing to be cast into a cauldron of melted lead to have had my soul relieved". Putting his hand to the plough, he would never look back.

He was possibly under the preaching of John Knox when in St Andrews for his early education in 1571 and he became a friend of James Melville on his return to the Divinity College there in 1582. James Melville and his uncle Andrew Melville were his instructors. In 1587, while a probationer and under call to St Andrews, Andrew Melville took him to the General Assembly in Edinburgh with a view to his being called there. In 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada, while still a probationer and not yet 30, he was appointed Moderator of a special Assembly of the Church.

He became minister of St Giles church under unusual circumstances. The General Assembly had approved his call but he was unwilling to decide on it, though preaching regularly in St Giles. Later in 1588 the minister presiding at the Lord's Supper left the concluding table to Bruce and, on the insistence of the elders, he was constrained to serve the table. His address was attended

<sup>2</sup>John Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, Banner of Truth / Knox Press reprint, p 56.

<sup>3</sup>William G Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, Banner of Truth reprint, p 77.

with unusual power and he was thereafter recognised as minister by all, although there had been no service of ordination.<sup>4</sup> He was Moderator of Assembly again in the notable year 1592.

His faithfulness to Presbyterianism and his frank condemnation of the sins of the king and his nobles brought him into disfavour. In 1600, when he refused to express public thanks, in the terms that the king required, for the failure of the so-called Gowrie Conspiracy, he was deprived of his pulpit and banished to Inverness. This banishment was used of the Lord for much spiritual good in the north and in other places where Bruce preached during these wilderness years. Large crowds gathered to hear him and communion season gatherings can be traced to this period, and to his ministry in particular. He died in 1631 with perhaps several thousand seals to his long and troubled ministry. Several accounts have been written of the life of Robert Bruce where fuller details can be found.

(2) *His preaching.* Commenting on Bruce's Edinburgh ministry, Robert Fleming says, "He shined as a great light through the whole land, the power and efficacy of the Spirit most sensibly accompanying the word that he preached. He was a terror to evil doers, and the authority of God did so appear in him and in his carriage [bearing], with such a majesty in his countenance as forced fear and respect from the greatest in the land."<sup>5</sup> Another contemporary, John Livingstone, wrote of him that "no man in his time spake with such evidence and power of the Spirit; no man had so many seals of conversion, yea many of his hearers thought that no man since the apostles spoke with such power".<sup>6</sup> His sermons are characterised by plainness and application. His public prayers were short but were, it was said, like bolts shot up to heaven. His sermons, says Thomas M'Crie, reversing the figure, "were like a bolt shot from heaven".

In his *Life of Melville*, M'Crie compares Bruce and his fellow Edinburgh minister, Principal Robert Rollock. They made the first contribution to Scripture commentary and to published sermons in Scotland. Bruce, says M'Crie, was "of stronger mind than Rollock. His sermons, particularly those on the sacraments, are more elaborately composed, more doctrinal and argumentative, more calculated to lead 'on to perfection' those who are already grounded in the principles of religion, and whose spiritual senses are 'exercised to discern between good and evil'." "He possessed", M'Crie goes on, "the

<sup>4</sup>For a useful summary of these events see Laidlaw's edition of the *Sermons on the Sacrament*, pp xiv-xvii, and Wodrow's *Life of Robert Bruce*, pp 11-16, in *Sermons by the Rev Robert Bruce with Collections for His Life*, edited by William Cunningham, 1843.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Wodrow's *Life of Robert Bruce*, p 143.

<sup>6</sup>Wodrow's *Life of Robert Bruce*, p 143.

faculty of making himself understood on the most intricate subjects, and his sermons discover the same unction which recommended those of his pious colleague.” He was, he concludes “solemn, impressive and commanding”.

While his sermons give ample evidence of extensive and careful preparation, it has been said of Robert Bruce that he devoted most of his preparation time to immersing himself in the spirit of his message.<sup>7</sup> One anecdote from John Livingstone will suffice to complete the picture of Robert Bruce and his preaching: “When he preached at Larbert, he used, after the first sermon, when he had taken some little refreshment, to retire to a chamber in a house near the kirk. I heard that one day, some noblemen being there, and they having far to ride home after the afternoon sermon, desired the bellman to go hearken at the door if there were any appearance of his coming. The bellman returned and said: ‘I think he shall not come out the day at all, for I hear him always saying to another that he will not nor cannot go unless that other go with him, and I do not hear the other answer him a word at all’. The foolish bellman understood not that he was dealing with God.”<sup>8</sup>

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## Good Tidings of Great Joy<sup>1</sup>

*W K Tweedie*

Luke 2:10. *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

**A** message worthy of an angel’s voice! A Saviour born – Omnipotence and helplessness combined, the Infinite and the finite in one, hope dawning on the despairing, happiness guaranteed to the wretched, peace with God made sure, the clouds and thick darkness which sin threw around Him cleared away, and the soul privileged once more to rejoice in the light of Jehovah’s countenance. Behold the substance of the heavenly message!

And these good tidings of great joy are “to all people”. The desire of all nations has arrived. He has taken on Him the seed of Abraham. The day-star may now arise in men’s hearts; and in every kindred and nation and tribe and tongue, they may begin the anthem which is to be sung by the redeemed, world without end.

But are these good tidings for me? Yes, unless I refuse to receive them. May my soul listen to the heavenly message? It forsakes its own mercies if it refuses to welcome it. Would it not be presumption in me to seize upon the

<sup>7</sup>D C MacNicol, *Robert Bruce*, Banner of Truth reprint, p 51.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, pp 82,83.

<sup>1</sup>Taken, slightly edited, from *Glad Tidings*, “daily meditations for Christian disciples”.

children's bread? The presumption lies in refusing what the Father offers. Hold out then the empty hand of faith; stretch forth the withered arm; freely take what God so freely offers. And in taking it rejoice with a portion of the joy which is unspeakable.

Does the sun shine freely on our homes? Do the breezes of heaven play without restraint around us. And does the fevered brow rejoice to feel their play? Is the dew gladdening to the tender plant? Is a mother's voice sweet to the child of her heart? Is the sight of his native land welcome to the exile and the outcast? Or is its language a source of joy in a distant land? Surely not less joyous are the glad tidings which the angel brought from heaven when welcomed by the heart of man! These tidings embody all that even Jehovah could convey in the language of earth – pardon, peace, immortality, holiness, glory, God. These are the portion of the man that trembles at God's Word. And when all these are involved in one “unspeakable gift”, who should not open the heart to welcome it?

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## A Depth of Tender Sympathy<sup>1</sup>

*J C Ryle*

**W**e learn what a depth of tender sympathy there is in Christ's heart towards His people. We read that, when our Lord saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping with her, “He groaned in the spirit and was troubled”. We read even more than this. He gave outward expression to His feelings: He “wept”. He knew perfectly well that the sorrow of the family of Bethany would soon be turned into joy, and that Lazarus in a few minutes would be restored to his sisters. But though He knew all this, He “wept”.

This weeping of Christ is deeply instructive. It shows us that it is not sinful to sorrow. Weeping and mourning are sadly trying to flesh and blood, and make us feel the weakness of our mortal nature. But they are not in themselves wrong. Even the Son of God wept. It shows us that deep feeling is not a thing of which we need be ashamed. To be cold and stoical and unmoved in the sight of sorrow is no sign of grace. There is nothing unworthy of a child of God in tears. Even the Son of God could weep. It shows us, above all, that the Saviour in whom believers trust is a most tender Saviour. He is one who can be touched with sympathy for our infirmities. When we turn to Him in the hour of trouble and pour out our hearts before Him, He knows what we go through and can pity. He is One who never changes. Though He

<sup>1</sup>An extract, slightly edited, from *Expository Thoughts on John*, vol 2. Ryle is here commenting on John 11:30-37.

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now sits at God's right hand in heaven, His heart is still the same as it was upon earth. We have an Advocate with the Father who, when He was on earth, could weep.

Let us remember these things in daily life, and never be ashamed of walking in our Master's footsteps. Let us strive to be men and women of a tender heart and a sympathising spirit. Let us never be ashamed to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice. Well would it be for the Church and the world if there were more Christians of this stamp and character! The Church would be far more beautiful and the world would be far more happy.

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## Book Review

***John Rogers, Sealed with Blood***, by Tim Shenton, published by Day One Publications, paperback, 144 pages, £7.00, obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

This is "the story of the first Protestant martyr of Mary Tudor's reign", and an instructive story it is. Born in the early years of the sixteenth century, Rogers entered the priesthood and, after a few years, was transferred to Antwerp, where there was a colony of English merchants. There he was to become a friend of William Tyndale, the pivotal figure in the translation of the Bible into English. And, we are told, "Rogers grew in his knowledge of the gospel of God to such an extent that he gradually cast off the 'heavy yoke of Popery', perceiving it to be impure and idolatrous".

Following Tyndale's death at the stake, Rogers took over his work and by 1537 a complete English translation of the Scriptures, known as Matthew's Bible, was available. For this edition Rogers prepared marginal notes, "for the consolation of those who are not yet exercised and instructed in the holy Scripture. In the which are many hard places, as well of the Old as of the New Testament expounded, gathered together, concorded and compared one with another, so that the prudent reader (by the Spirit of God) may carry away pure and clear understanding. Whereby every man (as he is bound) may be made ready, strong, and garnished to answer to all them that ask him a reason of his faith."

After spending time in exile in Germany, Rogers returned to England during the reign of Edward VI and became a minister in London. We are told that he "was not a man to remain silent when he saw abuses taking place either in the Church or in the civil government, but condemned them in that bold and uncompromising manner that he afterwards displayed in his examinations just before his death".

In contrast with many other prominent Protestants, Rogers took no part in the opposition, on Edward's death in 1553, to the elevation to the English throne of the King's sister Mary, who was to become notorious as a fanatical persecutor. However, by preaching at Paul's Cross (in the churchyard of St Paul's Cathedral) Roger became a marked man. In contrast with Nicholas Ridley, the reforming Bishop of London, he avoided any reference to Mary. In his first sermon, Rogers confined himself to an exposition of Scripture. But in his second he warned forcefully against "all pestilent Popery, idolatry and superstition" and boldly attacked the sins of prominent individuals. He was brought before the Privy Council, where he defended himself successfully. However, he was soon placed under house arrest and in late January 1554 he found himself in the "horribly loathsome" Newgate prison. One major factor in the persecution he faced was his work on Matthew's Bible. But "blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake", and we need have no doubt that Rogers is accordingly perfectly blessed in heaven.

All three of Rogers' official interrogations took place before a panel headed by Stephen Gardiner, the hardline Bishop of Worcester. At the first of these, Gardiner demanded that Rogers return to the "catholic Church". The prisoner responded on the basis that this term was, properly, a description of the universal Church: "I never did nor will dissent from the catholic Church". When Gardiner insisted that the Pope was supreme head of that Church, Rogers replied: "I know no other head, but Christ, of His catholic Church; nor will I acknowledge the Bishop of Rome to have any more authority than any other bishop has by the Word of God, and by the doctrine of the old and pure catholic Church 400 years after Christ". Rogers had much difficulty in making himself heard, but one thing he made perfectly clear – that he took the Scriptures as the foundation of all his beliefs.

After returning to his cell in Newgate, he wrote an account of what transpired before the panel. He added his desire for "the hearty and unfeigned help of the prayers of all Christ's true members . . . of the true unfeigned catholic Church, that the Lord God of all consolation will now be my comfort, aid, strength, buckler and shield; as also of all my brethren who are in the same case and distress, that I and they may despise all manner of threats and cruelty, and even the bitter burning fire and the dreadful dart of death, and stick like true soldiers to our dear and loving captain Christ, the only Redeemer and Saviour, and also the only true head of the catholic Church, that does all in us".

At the end of his third interrogation, Rogers was sentenced to death by burning. He responded: "I stand before God and you . . . and take Him to witness that I never wittingly or willingly taught any false doctrine; and

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therefore have I a good conscience before God and before all good men. I am not afraid, but I shall come before a Judge that is righteous . . . and I do not doubt but that I shall be found there a true member of the true catholic Church of Christ and everlastingly saved.” The cruel sentence was duly carried out on 4 February 1555; Rogers was the first of around 300 men and women to suffer in this way under Queen Mary.

This book is a well-written account of a godly man who, for his biblical, Protestant convictions, was willing to die a painful death. The German Reformer Melancthon described him as a “learned man . . . gifted with great ability which he sets off with a noble character”. To read of such men as Rogers should make us value our privileges – in particular, the great advantage of having the Scriptures in our own language. Throughout the book, the historical background is helpfully sketched in; indeed this book is well worth reading as an introduction to the Reformation period in England.

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## Notes and Comments

### Perilous Times

There is much to exercise our minds as we prepare for the Day of Humiliation and Prayer appointed by the Synod for 10 December 2008. It ought not to be merely an annual routine, but if it is to be otherwise we must feel our own personal involvement in the sin of Church and nation, as Daniel did although so far removed spiritually and geographically from degenerate and destroyed Jerusalem: “praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God” (Dan 9:20).

It would be well to ponder Paul’s description of the perilous times to be expected during the last days: “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Tim 3:1-5). The particularly difficult times for the Church which are to occur periodically throughout the days of the gospel dispensation (Heb 1:2) are not described by the Apostle in terms of disasters, natural or unnatural, but in terms of moral degeneracy and spiritual powerlessness and hypocrisy. Too often even the Lord’s people are more affected by temporal difficulties than by the dangers of a morally and spiritually deprived environment.

The root of all these moral evils is that men are lovers of their own selves, lovers of pleasures rather than of God. Even those who, like this writer, have no knowledge of the intricacies of the operations of banks and stock exchanges can recognise that the prevalence of the greedy and gambling spirit of a self-loving and ungodly generation largely contributed to the current financial crisis. That this spirit prevails is seen even in the number of charities which now endeavour to secure contributions by enrolling donors' names in raffles and offering attractive prizes, as though people must be induced by self-interest to help those in need.

The same denial of God and concern for the gratification of sinful self accounts for the vulgarity which passes as humour with a large segment of the population, as highlighted in recent controversy over a BBC programme which many thought overshot the mark – not so much on account of its immoral content but because it invaded the privacy of an elderly man and his granddaughter. That buffoons who are strangers to genuine humour and make their livelihood by smut are among the highest earners in the media tells its own tale.

All the evils mentioned by Paul are in the hearts of sinners always and everywhere, but in societies influenced by God's law and gospel they are generally restrained. Times are perilous when these restraints are largely withdrawn and comparatively free rein is given to the corruption of the human heart. A form of godliness may remain in such societies, but the power of godliness is denied whether the form is that of false or true religion. The poor believer may fear having only a form and being destitute of the reality and power. But those who have the form, and deny the power, either deny that there is such a thing as power in godliness or else their lives contradict their profession – which shows that there is no power behind their form. While there is little enough religion today, we have to fear that much of what exists is of this nature.

John Owen affirms that one of the dangers of such times is that we are apt to have light thoughts of great sins and to countenance ourselves in lesser evils, seeing the greater abominations of other men. The spirit of the age can almost imperceptibly affect the Church of God and result in increasing conformity to the world, which in turn helps confirm the world in its ungodliness. Such times make it more difficult for parents to bring up their children in the way in which they should go. Paul's inspired counsel is to take note of these dangers and to turn away from them. He does not mean us to adopt a superior and self-righteous attitude or to fail to make the gospel known even to the worst of sinners. But he does mean that we should not countenance any profession such people make, that we should seek grace not to be found among

them ourselves and that we should beware of being so affected by the spirit of the age that we compromise in our own lives with evil and error.

We have great need of people like those of the children of Issachar “that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chr 12:32). *HMC*

### **Human Rights and the Death Penalty**

On October 28 two more convicted murderers were executed in Japan, making 15 executions so far this year. Various websites draw attention to harsh and unjust aspects of the procedure, perhaps one of the worst being that the convicts may be kept for years in virtual solitary confinement, and then suddenly executed with only a few hours’ warning. Without the softening influence of Christianity, all justice is liable to descend into barbarity.

Many in the West, however, object not only to the details of the procedure, but also to the principle that murderers should be executed at all. The “human rights” organisation Amnesty International is particularly vociferous, calling upon Japan to abandon the death penalty and declaring the death penalty to be “the ultimate denial of human rights”.

The biblical approach to “human rights” is by way of “duties”. Abraham had a right to use the burying ground that he had purchased because others had a duty to respect his ownership. Their duty came from God’s law “Thou shalt not steal”. Ultimately it was the duty of love: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”. Such a duty comes from the nature of God, who “is love” (1 Jn 4:16). The modern secular approach is to draw up a list “human rights”, at the whim of the compilers of the list, and then to derive other people’s duties from the list. Such an approach is a convenient way of perverting morality. If some have a “right” to engage in homosexuality, then others have a “duty” to tolerate them in silence. In this way, the biblical duty, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev 19:17), gets turned on its head. Even where the asserted rights and duties are of a more biblical nature, the secular approach has the disadvantage that it appeals to human selfishness, throwing the emphasis on oneself and one’s rights, and away from one’s neighbour and one’s duty towards him.

In the case of the death penalty, the magistrates have a duty to execute murderers (Gen 9:5, Num 35:30-1, Rom 13:4). The family of the victim, therefore, have a right that the murderer should be executed, and so too does the whole nation, which otherwise suffers the indignation of God (Num 35:33). The murderer has no right to live; and indeed, strictly speaking, he has a right that justice should be executed against himself, which may help

to bring him to repentance. When murderers and impenitent magistrates are reviling one another in hell, the murderers will point to the injury that the magistrates have done to them in sparing their lives and hardening them in sin. The greatest duty that we owe to our neighbour is to do what we can for the salvation of his soul, and in reality the ultimate denial of human rights is to withhold from one's neighbour a duty that was owed him and which might have saved his soul.

DWBS

### Why December 25?

Under this heading, an article in the American magazine, *Christian History*, began: "For the Church's first three centuries, Christmas wasn't in December – or on the calendar at all". "Birthdays", the writer went on to note, "were for pagan gods".

While various churchmen had put forward dates for the Saviour's death that were scattered throughout the calendar, "the eventual choice of December 25, made perhaps as early as 273, reflects . . . the Church's identification of God's Son with the celestial sun. December 25 already hosted two other related festivals: *natalis solis invicti* (the Roman "birth of the unconquered sun"), and the birthday of Mithras, the Iranian "Sun of Righteousness", whose worship was popular with Roman soldiers. The winter solstice, another celebration of the sun, fell just a few days earlier. Seeing that pagans were already exalting deities with some parallels to the true deity, Church leaders decided to commandeer the date and introduce a new festival."

"The pagan origins of the Christmas date," the writer admits, "as well as pagan origins for many Christmas customs (gift-giving and merrymaking from Roman Saturnalia; greenery, lights, and charity from the Roman New Year; Yule logs and various foods from Teutonic feasts), have always fuelled arguments against the holiday." Yet she is not prepared to follow through the obvious conclusion from the evidence she presents: we should clearly have nothing to do with such a manifestly-heathen festival. Besides there is absolutely no suggestion in the Word of God that we are to commemorate the birth of the Saviour.

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## Protestant View

### Vatican Secrecy

In October the BBC reported that the Vatican, surprisingly, had released previously-unpublished details of an assassination attempt on the then pope, Karol Wojtyła, in 1982 in Portugal. At that time, in response to press

enquiries, the Vatican formally denied that there had been an attack, which was carried out by a mentally-unbalanced Spanish priest; he was arrested immediately and later imprisoned. Even when, the day after the assassination attempt, Portuguese television broadcast footage of the attack, the Vatican adhered to its denial, in line with its notorious secrecy about papal health.

BBC correspondent David Willey has commented: “Basically the Vatican exercises strict control over news on practically everything that goes on inside the tiny city state”, and, “damage control, rather than public information, still seem to be the watchwords at the premises in the Via della Conciliazione just next to Saint Peter’s Square, which houses the Vatican Press Office”.

Not a surprising conclusion! Rome has ever been skilful in covering especially its sins, and also its political intrigues. But the uncovering from time to time of its sins (as in the shocking revelations about abusing priests) and its intrigues (as in the book, *Hitler’s Pope*, discussed in the following piece) are forerunners of the final unveiling. “For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc 12:14). NMR

### **Hitler’s Pope – Defended and Condemned**

Cardinal Bertone, the Secretary of State at the Vatican, claimed recently that descriptions of Pius XII as “Hitler’s Pope” were “outrageous”. He was echoing the present pope, Joseph Ratzinger, who asserted in September that his wartime predecessor “spared no effort” in trying to save Jews from extermination by Nazi Germany.

Ratzinger and Bertone were responding again to the claims made by the Roman Catholic writer John Cornwell, in his book *Hitler’s Pope*, published in 1999, that the wartime pope, Eugenio Pacelli, betrayed the Jews of Europe in his pursuit of an absolutist papacy. The controversy has surfaced again because the Vatican continues with its intention to canonise Pacelli; on the other hand Jewish leaders have requested the present Pope to defer canonising him until the Vatican has opened the sealed archives of his papacy to scholars.

Cornwell’s original purpose in writing the book was to defend Pacelli, but “the material I had gathered,” he said, “amounted not to an exoneration but to an indictment”. His book presents irrefutable evidence that Pacelli failed to speak out against the “Final Solution” (Nazi Germany’s systematic genocide against European Jewry during World War II).

As Arthur Noble comments, “Pius XII’s apologists have come up with various explanations: he was timid, indecisive; he feared the consequences

of alienating Hitler; he thought German defeat would lead to a communist Europe; it is even alleged in some quarters that Pacelli did not have clear information about the Holocaust. By exhaustive research, Cornwell shows that none of these defences will hold.”

Cornwell’s painstaking research also confirms that when Pacelli, in an attempt to centralise and strengthen papal power, signed the Reich Concordat with Hitler in 1933, he weakened the Roman Catholic Church in Germany (it was opposed to Hitler), and thus helped Hitler to greater power and to facilitate his plan to exterminate the Jews. Such confirmation, particularly by a Roman Catholic writer, of Pacelli’s complicity in the Holocaust and other wartime atrocities, calls us anew to continue in prayer for the utter destruction the whole pernicious papal system. “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered” (Ps 68:1). *NMR*

## Church Information

### College and Library Fund

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

*William Campbell*, General Treasurer

## Acknowledgement of Donations

**The General Treasurer** acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

*College & Library Fund:* A Friend, Newcastle, Ps 51:1,2, £40; Is 55:6,7, £40.

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# The Free Presbyterian Magazine

**2008**

**Volume 113**

Editor:  
Rev Kenneth D Macleod

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

**Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland**



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- Bracadale:** **Struan:** Sabbath 12 noon; Wednesday 7 pm (fortnightly). Contact Rev J R Tallach, Raasay; tel: 01478 660216.
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- Dingwall:** Church, Hill Street: Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. **Beauly** (Balblair): Sabbath 6.30 pm, Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev Neil M Ross BA, Dingwall, 10 Achany Rd, IV15 9JB. Tel/Fax: 01349 864351, e-mail: nmross@ferintosh.co.uk.
- Dornoch:** Sabbath 11.30 am. **Bonar:** Sabbath 6 pm. Wednesday 7.30 pm (alternately in Dornoch and Bonar). Rev D J MacDonald MA, F P Manse, Evelix, Dornoch, Sutherland, IV25 3RD. Tel: 01862 811138. **Lairg:** Church and Manse; **Rogart:** Church; no F P services.
- Dundee:** Manse. No F P Church services.
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- Farr,** by Daviot: Sabbath 12 noon and 6 pm. Prayer meetings: Thursday 7.30 pm in **Farr**, **Stratherrick** or **Tomatin** as intimated. Contact Rev G G Hutton; tel: 01463 712872.
- Fort William:** Monzie Square, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm as intimated. Manse: 15 Perth Place, PH33 6UL. Tel: 01397 708553. Contact Mr D A McKinnon. Tel: 01397 702597.
- Gairloch** (Ross-shire): Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm. Prayer meeting in **Strath**, Thursday 7.30 pm. Rev A E W MacDonald MA, F P Manse, Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BS. Tel: 01445 712247.
- Glasgow:** St Jude's Church, 137 Woodlands Road, G3 6LE. Sabbath 11 am and 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev Roderick MacLeod BA, 4 Laurel Park Close, Glasgow, G13 1RD. Tel 0141 954 3759.
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- Raasay:** Sabbath 12 noon, 6 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev James R Tallach MB ChB, F P Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB. Tel: 01478 660216, fax: 01478 660358.
- Shieldaig:** Sabbath 11 am; **Applecross:** Sabbath 6pm. Tuesday 7 pm (alternately in Shieldaig and Applecross). Shieldaig manse tel: 01520 755259, Applecross manse tel: 01520 744207. Contact Rev D A Ross; tel: 01445 731340.
- Staffin:** Sabbath 12 noon, 5 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev W A Weale, F P Manse, Staffin, IV51 9JX. Tel: 01470 562243.
- Stornoway:** Matheson Road, Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Thursday 7.30 pm. **Sandwick:** Last Tuesday of month 7.15 pm. **Achmore:** Sabbath 12 noon; Tuesday 7 pm. Manse tel: 01851 702755.
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- Ullapool:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Manse: Quay Street, IV26 2UE. Tel: 01854 612449.

## England

- Barnoldswick:** Kelbrook Road, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Friday 7.30 pm; Wednesday 8 pm, alternately in Haslington and Gatley. **South Manchester:** Sabbath 6.00 pm, in Trinity Church, Massie Street, Cheadle (entry at rear of building). Contact Mr R Middleton, 4 Rhodes Close, Haslington, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5ZF. Tel: 01270 255024. Manse tel: 01282 851782.
- Broadstairs:** Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm at Portland Centre, Hopeville Ave, St Peter's; Tuesday 7 pm at Friends' Meeting House, St Peters Park Rd. Contact Dr T Martin; tel: 01843 866369.
- London:** Zoar Chapel, Varden St, E1. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7 pm. Rev J MacLeod MA, 6 Church Ave, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6BU. Tel: 0208 309 1623.

## Northern Ireland

- Larne:** Station Road, Sabbath 11.30 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 8 pm. Manse, 23 Upper Cairncastle Road, Larne BT40 2EF. Tel: 02828 274865. Contact: 02828 273294.

#### Canada

**Chesley**, Ontario: Church and Manse, 40 Fourth Street SW. Sabbath 10.30 am, 7 pm; Wednesday 8 pm. Contact Mr David Kuiper, Tel: 519 363 0367. Manse tel: 519 363 2502.

**Toronto**, Ontario: Church and Manse. No F P Church services at present.

**Vancouver**, British Columbia: Fifteenth Avenue and Fraser Street. For F P Church services contact Mr John MacLeod, 202-815 4th Avenue, New Westminster, V3M 1S8. Tel: 604-516-8648.

#### USA

**Santa Fe**, Texas: Church and Manse, 4031 Jackson St. Sabbath 10.30 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev L T Smith.

#### Australia

**Grafton**, NSW: 172 Fitzroy Street. Sabbath 11 am, 6.30 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. Rev E A Rayner BA, 23 Nairn Terrace, Junction Hill 2460 (mail to: PO Box 1171 Grafton, 2460). Tel: 02 6644 6044.

**Sydney**, NSW: Corner of Oxford and Regent Streets, Riverstone. Sabbath 10.30 am, 6 30 pm; Tuesday 7.30 pm. Information contact: Mr C MacKenzie, P O Box 5, Riverstone, NSW 2765. Tel: 02 4730 2797. E-mail: cal.01@optusnet.com.au.

#### New Zealand

**Auckland**: 45 Church Street, Otahuhu, Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. For further information contact Mr C van Kralingen, 3 Earls Court, Manurewa. Tel: 09 266 7618.

**Gisborne**: 463a Childers Road. Sabbath 11 am, 6 pm; Wednesday and Saturday 7.30 pm. Rev J A T van Dorp, 14 Thomson Street, Gisborne. Tel: 06 868 5809.

**Tauranga**: Girl Guide Hall, 17th Avenue, Sabbath 11 am, 7 pm. For information contact: Mr Dick Vermeulen, Tel: 075443677.

**Wellington**: 4 Rewa Terrace, Tawa. Sabbath 11 am, 4 pm; Wednesday 7.30 pm. For further information contact Mr N Hicklin, 117 Woodman Drive, Tawa, Wellington. Tel: 04 232 7308.

#### Israel

**Jerusalem**:. Rev J L Goldby, P O Box 68001, Arnona, Jerusalem 91680. Tel: 00972 2 6739058. For details of services please contact Mr Goldby.

#### Singapore

**Singapore**: Sabbath: 9.30am and 5.30pm; Wednesday: 7.45pm. Room: "Tanglin III" (Level 2), 60 Stevens Road, Singapore 257854. Contact: Mr Bernard Yong, 4 Chuan Place, Singapore 554822. Tel: (65) 6383 4466, fax: 6383 4477, e-mail: byong1@singnet.com.sg.

#### Ukraine

**Odessa**: Contact Mr I Zadorozhnyi, P O Box 100, Odessa-91, 65091; e-mail: antipa@eurocom.od.ua; or Mr D Levitskiyy; tel: 00380 482326685; e-mail: dmlev@eurocom.od.ua.

#### Zimbabwe

**Bulawayo**: Lobengula Township, PO Magwegwe, Bulawayo. Rev S Khumalo, F P Manse, Stand No 56004, Mazwi Road, Lobengula, PO Magwegwe, Bulawayo. Tel: 00263 9407131.

**Ingwenya**: Church and Secondary School. Rev A B MacLean. Postal Address: Ingwenya Mission, Private Bag T5445, Bulawayo. John Tallach School tel: 00263 85343.

**Mbumba**: Church and Hospital: Postal Address: Mbumba Mission Hospital, Private Bag T5406, Bulawayo. Hospital tel: 00263 898291.

**New Canaan**: Church: Rev Z Mazvabo. Postal Address: Private Bag 615, Zvishavane. Tel 00263 512196.

**Zenka**: Church. Rev M Mloyi. Postal Address: Private Bag T5398, Bulawayo. Cell phone: 0026311 765032.

#### Kenya

**Sengera**: Rev K M Watkins, PO Box 3403, Kisii; e-mail: watkinskenya@access350.co.ke. Tel: 00254 733 731002.

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