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COVER IMAGE: Youth conference attendees at Loch Ness (courtesy of Flora Roberts) – see page 13.

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Editorial

THE KING OF KINGS

The Scriptures are full of names and titles belonging to God. By these names and titles, as also by His works, God makes Himself known to us, revealing the glory of His Being and the salvation He has provided for our sinful race. We learn that there is one God, but that there are three persons in the Godhead, distinguished as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We understand that in the eternal purpose of the Trinity, the Son of God, who is eternally begotten of the Father, became man by the power of the Holy Spirit, that He might be the Mediator between God and men. The Mediator came into the world to redeem His people, and bring them to heaven.

The Son of God has many names and titles as the Mediator. Most memorably of all, He is Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour. A few names literally stand out, being printed in capitals in our Bible. One of them is found in the Book of Revelation. The apostle John sees heaven opened, and a figure seated on a white horse, judging and making war. He is wearing many crowns and has blazing eyes, and His garment is covered with blood. He is called "Faithful and True", and "The Word of God", but another name is emblazoned upon His clothing. It is: "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). It was Jesus that John saw, executing the judgement of God upon the nations, and this name teaches us some important things about our Saviour.

Divinity

Firstly, this name shows us the *divinity of Christ*. This is apparent from the fact that the same name is used in the Bible in reference to God. Paul writes to Timothy of "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." (1 Tim. 6:15,16) Sharing this name with God, Jesus Christ plainly *is* God, the Son of God, equal with the Father and the Spirit. He is the eternal King, worthy of all praise and esteem. All the works of God are Christ's works too, whether in creation or in providence.

Christ created the universe, and all its contents. This is evident when we compare the two Testaments. The Old Testament opens with the statement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". We note that God did this by His mighty word, as we see for example on the first day of creation: "God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:1,3). Then in the New Testament John's account of the Gospel opens as follows: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Concerning this Word, John says: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"; he also says that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1,3,14). So Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, is the eternal divine Word by whom the creation was spoken into being.

Christ preserves and governs the creation, in its every part. We read that God "made the worlds" by His Son, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person", and that His Son is also "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:2,3). Or to put it another way, "he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:17). These are divine works, involving infinite power and wisdom. Those who oppose the doctrine of Christ's true deity, whether they be adherents of other religions or followers of the pseudo-Christian cults, must either deny the inspiration of the Scriptures or twist their meaning. For them, and for those who dismiss religious belief altogether, the "mystery of godliness" is a mystery too great to receive, yet God was and is "manifest in the flesh" in Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 3:16).

Sovereignty

Secondly, this name expresses *the sovereignty of Christ*. A king has the right to rule his realm. God by necessity rules the whole realm of time and space. He declares, as no other king can, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool" (Isa. 66:1). Nebuchadnezzar

confessed that the most High "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. 4:35). Isaiah beheld the Lord on His throne, with the holy angels above it covering their faces and their feet, and was so awed by the divine majesty that he became like the queen of Sheba in the presence of king Solomon: there was no more spirit in him. He could only lament his personal unworthiness (Isa. 6:5). As we learn from the New Testament, it was *Christ* that Isaiah saw in his vision (John 12:41; 1:18).

As well as the essential kingdom which belongs to Him as God the Son, Christ has a special kingdom as the Mediator. In eternity He was appointed as the Head of an elect people, lovingly and graciously chosen in Him and making up His spiritual body. As their Redeemer-King, it was required of Him that He should take our nature, in order that He might take the sins of His people upon Himself and take them away. To save His people, this King willingly placed Himself under His own law, submitted to its penalty and suffered the divine wrath in their place. He acted in a kingly manner throughout, even at the end when He "bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30). One of the thieves crucified with Christ said to Him, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom", and the Saviour promised him that he would be with Him in paradise that day (Luke 23:42,43). That Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords means that there is no higher authority, and no greater power: Christ reigns supreme.

"In heaven we will realise just now much we owe to our precious Saviour."

Victory

Third, this name declares *Christ's victory*. In His voluntary humiliation, Christ was victorious for His people. As the captain of their salvation, He fought and defeated sin, Satan, death and hell for each one of them, and God has rewarded Him with a crown of glory and honour (Heb. 2:7). Christ's triumph was evident in His resurrection and ascension, and it is also seen in His session in the heavenly realm. He has been exalted as the Mediator to the right hand of God, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion". God has "put *all* things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over *all* things to the church" (Eph. 1:20-22). Christ orders everything for the good of His cause. "For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations." (Ps. 22:28)

Christ is victorious *in* His people. This is seen when they embrace Him in faith and love. But how will they come to Him, when they are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1)? They need the gospel, but what sort of gospel is it? Some seem to think – and even appear to teach – that Christ, begging sinners to let Him into their hearts, must wait until they choose to do so. This is far from the case. The King of kings does not vacate His throne when the gospel is preached. We are without strength and are ungodly (Rom. 5:6), but Christ sovereignly opens our hearts by His Spirit, so that we hear His voice and are subdued to Him. Then and only then are we able and willing to "kiss the Son", repenting of our sin and trusting in Him, that we might be spared from His wrath (Ps. 2:12). Where the word of *this* King is, there is certainly power (Ecc. 8:4).

The word of God shows us how Christ gets the victory in the world. The ends of the earth have been promised to Him (Ps. 2:8), and He is presently building His church (Matt. 16:18). All power has been given to Christ as the Mediator, both in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18), and He is using that power to bring about a day when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). Devoted subjects of the King of kings ought to be praying with every confidence for the extension of His kingdom, for nothing can prevent it, not even the fiercest opposition of the wickedest men. Though Herod and Pilate, the Jews and the Gentiles, were united against Christ, all they could accomplish was what God had already determined in His eternal counsel (Acts 4:27,28). Oh that the rulers of our world would take to heart what God has said: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:6)!

Glory

Finally, this name indicates *Christ's glory*. Christ entered into His glory after His sufferings (Luke 24:26), and He is entering into it still, such that with our physical eyes "*we see not yet* all things put under him" (Heb. 2:8). The Mediator is upon the throne, but He must reign "till he hath put all things under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). The Redeemer's glory will be further evident when He comes again at the end of time, to "judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Then *every* knee will bow at His name, and *every* tongue will confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:10,11).

In eternity there will be a marriage fit for the King of kings. Christ will present to Himself a glorious church, "holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). By virtue of Christ's loving sacrifice, every member of that church will be perfect, and will receive a crown of glory from the Lord (1 Pet. 5:4). Yet, like the four and twenty elders, we will cast our crowns before Christ's throne, saying, "*thou* art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power" (Rev. 4:10,11). In heaven we will realise just now much we owe to our precious Saviour. ■

DEVOTIONAL

ADORATION OF CHRIST

Rev. James Clark

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." (Psalm 73:25)

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." (Revelation 5:12)

Adoration of Christ is an aspect of worship. It characterises the whole of heaven and begins on earth among redeemed sinners. It is our duty but it is also devotion, and it is at the heart of true worship. It focuses and elevates our thoughts until they are supremely occupied with the Beloved who is worshipped. Our consciousness is filled with a sense of the greatness and glory of Christ, through whom we have access to the Father and enjoy the company of the Holy Spirit. Adoration involves our dependence upon and submission to Him who is greater than all.

To adore is to approach with admiration. It is the closing of the possession with the Owner thereof, in the security of belonging to Him forever. It is the one drawn making sensible contact with Christ, as the Magnet. Adoration is the soul engaged in contemplation, with holy and profound wonder, reverently placing itself at the Lord's disposal. It is the self-surrender of the soul in love to Christ, in the enjoyment of union and communion.

There are strong desires for this adoration in the believer while on earth, but they are not constant, as they are in heaven. But they are real desires, based on faith and love in exercise, as we see with Paul when he said, "That I may know him..." (Phil. 3:10). Adoration desires approach. It is the soul seeking "the Desire of all nations" (Hag. 2:7). We say with the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1).

This love for Christ reflects the love between the three Persons of the Trinity, who delight in one another. Such adoration of Christ can only bring joy to the believer, whose heart and eyes have been opened by the Spirit to view God's "unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). Augustine well said that we cannot rest until we rest in Christ – all else is restlessness, discontent, deficiency.

Adoration of Christ means the end of self-love, and the beginning of self-denial. Christ is "the life which I now live" (Gal. 2:20). After his conversion Paul could no longer separate life and living from Christ, as he did previously. For the believer, Christ is "the gladness of my joy" (Ps. 43:4 mg.). This is the experience of adoration. It is the prelude and foretaste on earth of the life of grace which flows into glory, in its "ocean fulness", as Samuel Rutherford said.

John Donne, the famous preacher at St Paul's in London in the 1620s, has this to say about heaven, where there is "fulness of joy" (Ps. 16:11): "The first thing that the seeing of God shall produce in us is joy. The measure of our seeing of God is the measure of joy. See Him here in His blessings and you shall joy in these blessings here, and when you come to 'see Him as He is', then you shall have this joy in fulness, of which God in His grace gives us such an earnest here. This binds to us that inheritance hereafter, which His Son our Saviour Christ Jesus hath purchased for us, with the inestimable price of His incorruptible blood."

"Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (Psalm 4:7)

"And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." (John 20:28) ■

"If God should take us up to heaven itself, and there are many glorious things and privileges to be had there: rest, felicity, joy, the best company of all the angels, and the spirits of men made perfect; we profess that our souls in the midst of the enjoyment of all these, if looking about us we should not spy out Christ and the glory of the Father, we should cry out, Oh, but where is Christ? we see not him yet; we should be at a loss for want of him. 'Seek those things which are above' (Col. 3:1), and so we profess to do, but how? Because Christ is there, to whom our hearts run: 'Where Christ', says he, 'sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high'. It is he who draws our hearts upwards to the things above. And if he would continue (as now to our faith) being 'hid in God', when we come thither, we should be damped; but if 'he appear once, who is our life', our hearts would live, and we should appear in glory with him. All the things there would not content our souls were he not there."
– Thomas Goodwin (from *Works*, Vol. 7)

TRUST IN THE LORD

R.M. McCheyne

(The first part of a sermon preached to the Presbytery of Dundee in 1836. It has been lightly edited.)

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart" (Proverbs 3:5)

When an awakened soul is brought to God to believe on Jesus, he enjoys for the first time that calm and blessed state of mind which the Bible calls *peace in believing*. The sorrows of death were compassing him, and the pains of hell getting hold on him; but now he can say: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul". It is not to be wondered at, that when this heaven upon earth is first realized in the once anxious bosom, the young believer should often imagine that heaven is already gained, and that he has bid farewell to sin and sorrow for evermore. But, alas! it may need but the passing away of one little day to convince him that heaven is not yet gained, that though the Red Sea may be passed, yet there is a wide howling wilderness to pass through, and many an enemy to be overcome, before the soul can enter into the land of which it is said, that "the people are all righteous".

Temptation

The first breath of temptation from without, or the first rise of corruption from within, awakens new and strange anxieties within the believing bosom. He had just put on the breastplate of the Redeemer's righteousness, but these noxious vapours tarnish and bedim its burnished steel. Alas! he cries, what good will it do me to be rid of all accusations from past sins, if I am not secure from raising up new accusers in the days to come? What good will the forgiveness of past sins do me, if, every step of my life, I am to fall into new sin?

The young believer in this state of mind is just like a traveller in the midst of a dangerous wood. He has been brought into a place of perfect security for the present. He can hear the cry of the wolves behind him without the least alarm, for he is brought into a fortress, a strong tower, where he is safe; but when he thinks of his further journey, when he remembers that he is still in the midst of the wood, and still far from home, alas! he knows not how to move; he knows not which path will lead him right, and which will lead him wrong. When the lost sheep was found by the good shepherd, it was safe in that moment, as safe as if it were already in the fold; and yet it was doubtless in great perplexity how to get back again; it had wandered so far over the mountains, and down into the valleys, and across the brooks, and through the thorny brakes, that it was impossible the bewildered sheep could find its way back; and therefore it is said that the good shepherd laid it on his shoulder rejoicing.

Anxieties

And just so it is with the soul that is found by Christ. Washed in his blood, he may feel as secure and as much at peace as if he were already in heaven; but when he looks to the thousand entanglements in the midst of which he has wandered, the evil habits, the evil companions that lay snares for him on every hand, alas! he is forced to cry: How shall I walk in such a world as this? I thought I was saved; but, alas! I am only saved to be lost again. So real and so painful is this state of mind, that some young believers have actually wished to die that they might be rid of these tormenting anxieties. But there is a far more excellent way pointed out in the words before us: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart".

"What good will the forgiveness of past sins do me, if, every step of my life, I am to fall into new sin?"

This is a word in season to the bewildered believer; and "a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"

Consider what this grace is that is here recommended: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart".

Remedy

When the Philippian jailer cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" the simple answer was: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". His great anxiety was to escape from under the wrath of the God of the earthquake; and, therefore, they simply pointed to the bleeding Lamb of God. He looks to Jesus doing

all that we should have done, and suffering all that we should have suffered; and while he looks, his anxiety is healed, and a sweet heavenly peace springs up within, the peace of believing. But the inquirer who is spoken to in the text is one who already enjoys the peace of a justified man, but wants to know how he may enjoy the peace of a sanctified man. A new anxiety hath sprung up within his bosom, as to how he shall order his steps in the world; and unless this anxiety also can be healed, it is to be feared his joy in believing will be sadly interrupted.

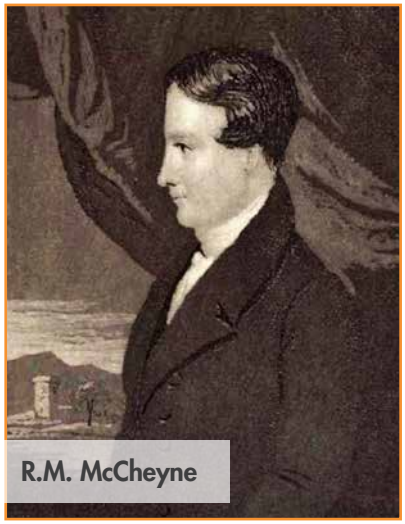
How seasonable then, is the word which points at once to the remedy! and how amazing is the simplicity of the Gospel method of salvation, when the soul is directed just to look again to Jesus: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart". When you came to us weary and heavy laden with guilt, we pointed you to Jesus; for he is the Lord our righteousness. When you come to us again, groaning under the power of indwelling sin, we point you again to Jesus; for he is the Lord our strength. It is the true mark of a false and ignorant physician of bodies, when to every sufferer, whatever be the disease, he applies the same remedy. But it is a true mark of a good and faithful physician of souls, when, to every sick and perishing soul, in every stage of the disease, he brings the one, the only remedy, the only balm in Gilead.

Purity

Christ was anointed not only to bind up the broken-hearted, but also to proclaim liberty to the captives; so that, if it be good and wise to direct the poor broken-hearted sinner, who has no way of justifying himself, to Jesus, as his righteousness, it must be just as good and wise to direct the poor believer, groaning under the bondage of corruption, having no way to sanctify himself, to look to Jesus as his wisdom, his sanctification, his redemption. Thou hast once looked unto Jesus as thy covenant head, bearing all wrath, fulfilling all righteousness in thy stead, and that gave thee peace; well, look again to the same Jesus as thy covenant head, obtaining by his merits gifts for men, even the promise of the Father, to shed down on all his members; and let that also give thee peace.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart". Thou hast looked to Jesus on the cross, and that gave thee peace of conscience; look to him now upon the throne, and that will give thee purity of heart. I know of but one way in which a branch can be made a leafy, healthy, fruit-bearing branch; and that is by being grafted into the vine, and abiding there. And just so I know of but one way in which a believer can be made a holy, happy, fruitful child of God; and that is by believing in Jesus, abiding in him, walking in him, being rooted and built up in him.

Within the church, a communion exists among those who are united to Christ by his Spirit and by faith. Our *Confession of Faith* says that the saints have fellowship with Christ "in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory", and "communion in each other's gifts and graces" (26:1). This communion is "to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus" (26:2).



R.M. McCheyne

Strength

And observe it is said: "Trust in the Lord *with all thine heart*". When you believe in Jesus for righteousness, you must cast away all your own claims for pardon; your own righteousness must be filthy rags in your eyes; you must come empty, that you may go away full of Jesus. And just so, when you trust in Jesus for strength, you must cast away all your natural notions of your own strength; you must feel that your own resolutions, vows, and promises, are as useless to stem the current of your passions, as so many straws would be in stemming the mightiest waterfall. You must feel that your own firmness and manliness of disposition, which has so long been the praise of your friends and the boast of your own mind, are as powerless, before the breath of temptation, as a broken reed before the hurricane. You must feel that you wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with spirits of gigantic power, in whose mighty grasp you are feeble as a child; then, and then only, will you come with all your heart to trust in the Lord your strength.

When the believer is weakest, then is he strongest. The child that knows most its utter feebleness, entrusts itself most completely into the mother's arms. The young eagle that knows, by many a fall, its own inability to fly, yields itself to be carried on the mother's mighty wing. When it is weak, then it is strong; and just so the believer, when he has found out, by repeated falls, his own utter feebleness, clings with simplest faith, to the arm of the Saviour – leans on his Beloved, coming up out of the wilderness, and hears with joy the word: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness". ■

TRUE AND FALSE FAITH

Rev. Trevor Kirkland

Are we real Christians? We do not mean *perfect* Christians, for they do not exist in this world. Rather we mean *genuine* Christians – those who by the grace of God believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of their souls (Heb. 10:39). We shall consider some mistaken views of faith and then true faith.

Faith without Repentance

There are two errors which undermine the scriptural idea of faith by separating it from repentance.

Rome's error: penance instead of repentance

The doctrine of 'penance' is connected with a mistranslation by the Vulgate, the fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible by Jerome. In Acts 2:38, Peter calls upon the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost to "repent", but the Vulgate has him urging them to "do penance". Penance is one of the five extra 'sacraments' of the Roman Catholic Church, and involves religious observances being imposed upon a person by a priest in order that the person may be absolved from his sins. Martin Luther's German New Testament of 1522 had "repent", as did William Tyndale's English New Testament of 1526. Rome's reaction to the Reformation teaching on faith was to insist upon the rendering in the Vulgate Bible, and subsequent Roman Catholic versions maintained the "do penance" translation.

In his Ninety-Five Theses, Luther stated that our Lord's command to repent in Matthew 4:17 "cannot be properly understood as referring to the sacrament of penance". Jerome gave a misleading impression of the Greek original, and the entire priestly and sacramental system of Rome effectively rests upon a lie.

Evangelicalism's error: bare faith without repentance

Within contemporary Evangelicalism there has been a departure from the Biblical and Reformation understanding of true, saving faith. Evangelicals have unwittingly placed all the focus upon faith, to the virtual exclusion of repentance. Easy believing has become the norm, with various post-conversion experiences added in an attempt to bolster this shallow faith.

One form of this teaching maintains that, once a person is born again and his sins are forgiven, he no longer has any need for repentance. In a misguided effort to exalt the saving grace of God, obedience and repentance are virtually done away with.

Faith as mere Assent

There is a deficient view of faith which is known as 'Sandemanianism'. It originated with a Scot named John Glas (1695-1773), whose teachings were spread by his son-in-law, Robert Sandeman (1718-71). The Sandemanian idea was that if faith includes anything beyond intellectual assent to the truths of Christianity, it becomes a work of human merit. In their reading of Romans 4:5, justification by faith had to do with God instilling into the mind the belief that God gave his Son for sinners; it had nothing to do with the will or the affections. Thus Sandeman spoke of "bare faith".

What the Sandemanians wanted to do was to protect the Reformation's insistence upon 'faith alone'. What they failed to grasp was that saving faith is more than mere assent to the truth.

True Faith defined

The Westminster Standards, drawing upon the teaching of Scripture, set out the complete view of saving faith.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, in dealing with the doctrine of justification, states that faith is a "*receiving* and *resting* on Christ and his righteousness" (WCF 11:2). These words obviously mean more than mere assent to the truth that Christ is the sinner's righteousness before God.

The *Larger Catechism* reinforces this when it explains justifying faith to be a saving grace wrought in the heart of a sinner. By the grace of faith the sinner, "being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, *not only assenteth* to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness" (LC 72).

According to the Confession, a Christian believes the Bible to be true, "yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises", yet the principal acts of saving faith are "accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life" (WCF 14:2). This faith involves understanding, assent and trust, corresponding to the mind, will and affections. So Paul could say: "I *know* whom I have believed, and am *persuaded* that he is able to keep that which I have *committed* unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). This is true Christianity, and what separates the child of God from the nominal believer. ■

THE PALM TREE

J.W. Bardsley

(James Wareing Bardsley [1836-1926] was an evangelical clergyman in the Church of England. This piece is taken from his book 'Many Mansions, and other Sermons', published in 1910, and has been edited.)

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree" (Psalm 92:12)

The great thought of the Psalmist in Psalm 92 is to express his joy in the clear conviction of God's righteous government of the world, manifested in the final overthrow of the wicked and the triumph of the righteous.

I have singled out the palm tree as my subject because I believe there is not in the Word of God a more striking type of the Christian life. To the sanctified imagination, creation is instinct with Divine teaching. In spring, the seed sown – some falling among thorns and some by the wayside, some on the rocky ground and some in the good soil – has its lessons of warning and instruction. In the summer, the new-mown grass speaks to us of the brevity of life. "All flesh is as grass" (1 Pet. 1:24). The golden sheaves of autumn remind us of the harvest at the end of the world; whilst the purity of winter's snow tells us that, although our sins may be as scarlet, yet that we may, through pardoning grace and justifying righteousness, be as white as snow.

The tall, stately palm, with its dark, pillar-like shaft, and its capital of feathery fronds, is one of the most graceful objects in nature. Whilst this tree is associated, speaking generally, with that part of the world which was the cradle of the human race, it is especially connected with the land of Palestine.

The palm tree often flourishes in the desert. We are told by travellers that on the northern borders of the Great Desert, under the Atlas Mountains, groves of palms are the great feature of the arid region. The heat is so intense that even the natives can scarcely endure the scorching blast when the wind blows from the south; and yet here, as we have observed, the palm flourishes. What is the explanation? Beneath the sand is moisture. The palm tree rises from the sterile surface, but its taproot drinks in the water from beneath.

These palms of the desert seem to be striking emblems of many Christian lives. All men are equally dependent upon the aid of the Holy Spirit, but how different are the influences which surround the children of God! Some are planted, not as the palms in the Plain of Jericho, nor as willows by the water-courses, but rather as palms in the sterile desert. When we think of a man like Lot in Sodom, or of Joseph in Egypt, of Obadiah in the court of Ahab, of Daniel in Babylon, of saints in Caesar's household, we ask, How could they live a life of holiness in such a moral desert? They were in the world and not of it! How can this thing be? Faith's penetrating root reached the fountain of living water. Their life was "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

The palm tree grows as long as it lives. Physically we are like the oak, the elm, and other such trees. We grow to maturity, and then imperceptibly we begin to decay. It is a law of our nature, but God never intended that it should be thus with our inner life, with the growth of grace in the soul. If we are truly children of God, we shall be like the palm. We shall grow till we die. We shall "go from strength to strength", until every one appears before God in Zion (Ps. 84:7).

The palm tree gives a grateful shade. The Christian ought to extend a genial, a sanctified, and a heavenly influence. If we think of a palm grove as a picture of Christianity, we observe what beneficent institutions have grown beneath its shadow.

The palm tree's main feature is its upward growth. The idols of the Gentiles are compared to it. "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not" (Jer. 10:5). The affections of a righteous man are set on things above, and not on things below. They are ever moving heavenward, where Christ is. He is ever desiring more intimate communion with Jesus, ever breathing after heavenly joys, ever seeking a greater conformity to his Master, till he comes, "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

The palm tree has ever been the emblem of joy and victory. Palm branches were used by the Greeks and Romans to celebrate their triumphs. So the saint on earth is victorious over sin and Satan and the world. He is more than conqueror "through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37), and ere long he will join that "great multitude" which no man can number, made up "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues", standing "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. 7:9). ■

WORLDLINESS

Rev. Calum Smith

The world in which we live is not as it was when God created it. As a result of Adam's sin the world is in the grip of the devil, who is described in Scripture as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). He is so called because he leads the world's rebellion against God. Before the fall, every area of man's life revolved around God, which is what the Bible means by giving glory to God. When Adam was created it was in his heart to please God, and when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world it was with the purpose of pleasing God the Father in all that he did. Christ was able to say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Man in the World

Ever since the fall, man no longer lives to please God, but to please himself. In the First Epistle of John, we read that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). The world into which we are born is under the rule of the devil. We are held firmly in the grasp of and completely under the dominion of the one who takes us captive "at his will" (2 Tim. 2:26).

This is what the apostle means when he says that the world lies in wickedness. To 'lie' in wickedness means to be 'stretched out', as if one were dead. This is of course true. We were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), having no strength to deliver ourselves. As a fallen creature, man is in complete bondage to the world, the flesh and the devil.

The Christian in the World

The Lord's people have been delivered from their bondage to sin by the power of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. They have been enabled to look to Christ as their Saviour and he brings them out of the world. In his high-priestly prayer before his crucifixion, Christ said with regard to his disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). There ought to be a clear and unmistakeable distinction between the people of God and the rest of men, even while they are in this world. We refer again to Christ's intercession for his disciples: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (v.15).

We need to be kept in our affections from loving the world and the things that are in the world, because, as John tells us, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). John is saying that these two loves are incompatible, such that whichever one you have, it distances you from the other. The theologian John Murray says, "worldliness is a departing from God"; it is to have everything revolve around oneself.

The Things of the World

Worldliness very often involves things which, although not wrong in themselves, become wrong because they absorb our time and our interest. This inevitably leads to a distancing of ourselves from God. How one in whom the Lord has wrought a saving change can be involved in competitive sport, whether professional or amateur, in the music or entertainment industry, and in that kind of environment and atmosphere, is unthinkable. It is something that a sincere believer could not tolerate for long, if at all. It can be difficult enough being a Christian in the workplace today, but we have an obligation to work, assuming we are able to do so. That is completely different from going to places we do not have to go to.

How can a person in whom this saving change has occurred be found at music festivals, at the cinema and on the dance floor, when this is so clearly dishonouring to Christ? When professing Christians take part in things which give the ungodly pleasure, it conveys the impression that Christ has failed to give them what he has promised in his word to give them, and so they are returning to the things of the world to make up for it. It also encourages other Christians to follow their bad example and gives the world a false sense of security, that if professing Christians are doing these things, then it must be fine for them to do them also.

The Friendship of the World

The apostle James says that "the friendship of the

world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). This friendship involves having the same opinions and ambitions as the world. The worldly man aims to have his good times right here and right now. The Christian on the other hand is prepared to wait. He sees this world as something that is passing away (1 John 2:17), and he is looking ahead for what is still to come. That is what Moses did. As he grew up in Pharaoh's palace, he had before him all the riches of Egypt and the honour of being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Yet he refused it all. He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season (Heb. 11:24,25).

Furthermore, this friendship with the world includes a 'talkativeness' which is not healthy. There is a familiarity with the world and the worldly that is harmful to the soul. To enjoy a close association with the world, one must be aware of its present doings. Who is the latest 'star' on the music scene? What are the big names in entertainment? Who is making the headlines in sport? It is a matter of *our affections*. Do we really want to be adding to the popularity of these vain individuals – and to their bank balances?

'Talkative' in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was very friendly with 'Faithful' to begin with, asking him if he could join him on his way to heaven. As they walked together, Faithful discovered that Talkative had a lot to say about almost anything. However, when Faithful asked him what his views were on "sin and grace", Talkative took offence, and they parted company. Although they appeared to be on good terms for a time, it turned out that they were not really friends at all. We are either friends of Christ or of the world: we cannot be both.

The Influence of the World

Charles Spurgeon said, "The reason that the Church has so little influence on the world is because the world has so much influence on the Church". How true that is. We have become so compromised by the world and its hostility to the Gospel of God's redeeming grace, that the world is dictating how we should live, and even how we should worship. It seems that, rather than the Word of God directing us how we should live, everything has to be adjusted so as to suit every lifestyle, fashion and interest of this world.

Bunyan's Pilgrim had to endure something similar when he arrived at 'Vanity Fair'. Vanity Fair is a type of this world, and as Christian drew near to it, the people noticed that he was different from them. He dressed like a Christian and he spoke like a Christian. Rather than blend in with the world, Christian was seen to be what he professed to be. He was an "epistle of Christ", and was "known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2,3). He suffered for it too, for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Christian had to go through Vanity Fair to get to heaven, but he took no part in their frivolities when they encouraged him to do so. People may think they can 'dip in' to the world from time to time, and still keep up a consistent Christian life, but "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Biblical Examples of Worldliness

We know from the New Testament that Lot was a true believer, for we are told that "just Lot...vexed his righteous soul" with the unlawful deeds of the wicked (2 Pet. 2:7,8). However, in the Book of Genesis we read how Lot and his uncle Abraham could no longer share the same land due to the size of their flocks and herds. Abraham gave Lot the choice of where he would like to live, and "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where". What was wrong with that? The problem was that the plain was right next to sinful Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 13:10-13). Sadly, what mattered most to Lot was that the land was good for grazing his animals. He made his choice in the interests of worldly gain, but it was a bad decision for the wellbeing of his soul, as well as for his wife and family.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, he referred to Demas, a man who laboured with him in the Gospel (Col. 4:14). However, when Paul wrote to Timothy towards the end of his life, he had solemn news regarding his former companion: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). Demas had altogether abandoned the work of the Lord, because this world attracted him more than the Lord and the world to come.

One who Turned her Back on the World

A good example of a genuine work of grace in the soul is Ruth, the Moabitess. She turned her back on the land of her birth, with its false gods and heathen ways, parting from her family. She left it all behind to follow the Lord through good and evil report, saying with the conviction of a new creature in Christ Jesus, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God". She told her mother-in-law Naomi, not just that she was going to stay with her in Bethlehem, but that she was going to die there also (Ruth 1:16,17).

That is the kind of resolve we need today: people making up their minds to serve Christ, with no intention of returning to their worldly ways. How can this be done? Let us heed the words of Paul: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) ■

YOUTH FOCUS

A COMING CHANGE (2)

Rev. Jonathan Mattull

(The final part of this article, which is urging us to live in the light of the coming eternity.)

Esau

Consider a young person to whom God gave great advantages: Esau. He was born to Isaac, the son of Abraham, and so he was placed within the covenant and had access to all the privileges God offers to his people. Additionally, being the firstborn son, he had the Old Testament privilege of the birthright. This was a right of inheritance, and to it were attached many spiritual encouragements and promises. Yet we find Esau selling this privilege for "one morsel of meat" (Heb. 12:16). Granted, he was famished at the time (Gen. 25:29). Perhaps he had been hunting or involved in some heavy manual labour. He was so hungry that he thought to himself, "I am at the point to die" (v.32).

Esau's life was on the line. Either he would eat, or he would die. Such trials reveal what we prize most. The Bible records Esau as saying: "what profit shall this birthright do to me?" (v.32). He valued his physical well-being above his birthright, selling the latter to his brother Jacob in exchange for food: "he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright" (v.34). Later Esau realised his error. "For ye know how that afterward, when [Esau] would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." (Heb. 12:17) Doubtless Esau's conscience rose up and troubled him, bringing him to sorrow. With great diligence and desire, he considered ways of regaining the inheritance and the blessing. His perspective had changed – but it was too late.

How many born into the covenant follow the same path! Esau was circumcised and raised in a family that had access to God's word. He had the privilege of God's promise to his grandfather, father and *himself*. Yet he came to despise these things. What of those who for many friends, large sums of money, or multiple weekends of pleasure, despise their birthright and forsake the God who has covenanted with them? Perhaps while their enjoyments remain, they think themselves wise and happy. But the change will come one day.

The Gospel Promise

Young people, know that the world desires you, and Satan desires you. The world will smile upon you if you forsake the teaching of the Scriptures. By contrast, if you were to take Christ as yours and walk in him, it is guaranteed that you will face difficulties. You may lose out on certain jobs because of sinful demands they would make upon you. You may be mocked by those who deride God's word and his holy worship. Their perspective despises God's privileges, counting them as boring, lifeless, taxing and bitter. Yet, remember this: the world's perspective *will change*.

All who die outside of Christ will know the experience of the rich man in Christ's account (Luke 16:23). The Bible tells us how unbelievers will respond when Christ returns. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:15-17) In the light of this solemn truth, consider that the Lord has called you. He has covenanted with you, offering unto you forgiveness, life and *himself*. All that a sinner needs is freely offered to you in that gospel promise heard by you countless times.

Salvation is found in Christ alone (Acts 4:12). Unto those who believe on Jesus, he is made "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Instead of keeping you ignorant of this rich treasury, God has placed you in a home and in a church where Christ is made known. He stands before you as he did in his earthly ministry, declaring: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:28,29)

Look in Faith

Jesus continues to tell his disciples today: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:24,25) Do not despise the privilege God has given you. Let it not be said of you that you "despised your birthright". Rather, look in faith unto this God and own him as your God. God gives you his Son, take him. He gives you instruction, receive it. He offers you himself, have him. Though it is by faith now, soon enough that will change, and your faith will be made sight – a glorious sight that will never change.

CHURCH NEWS

Dores Youth Conference *(Mrs Flora Roberts)*

On Saturday 1st September more than 30 young people from around Scotland met at Dores Free Church (Continuing) for a conference on the topic of 'Resisting Temptation', with Rev. Greg MacDonald (Cross) as the speaker. In the morning he addressed the subject of 'Noticing and Avoiding Temptation', and in the afternoon 'Resistance and Victory in Temptation'.

Mr MacDonald's talks were followed by group discussions where people considered a number of questions and jotted down their thoughts; these were shared in a plenary discussion led by Rev. James MacInnes (Lochalsh & Strath). It was made clear that, above all, a new heart and changed nature are essential in resisting temptation and cultivating better desires. One of the questions covered the role of the Ten Commandments, and many attendees found it illuminating to see how the commandments could be used to resist temptation in every area of life. The final question was, "What is God's promise to you?" and many encouraging texts were found, including "grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16), "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7), and, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

The organisers are very grateful to all who encouraged youngsters to attend, and for those who remembered the conference in prayer. We are thankful to the Lord for journeying mercies and good weather, which meant that after a delicious lunch we were able to enjoy a walk along the shore of Loch Ness. God willing, the next youth conference will take place on 23rd March 2019.

The two addresses from this year's conference can be found online at:

bible-sermons.org.uk/audio-sermons/4232
bible-sermons.org.uk/audio-sermons/4233 ■

School in Theology *(Rev. James Haram)*

The 66th Free Church School in Theology, which is supported by the FC(C), met in Carronvale House, Larbert, from 3rd to 6th September. Numbers were slightly up on the previous year. There was warm fellowship among brethren from various churches in the UK and Ireland. Each day began with a prayer meeting and ended with worship. In one session Mr Philip Hopkins from the Trinitarian Bible Society spoke on the preparation of the new TBS Spanish Bible. Another session featured helpful book reviews. Once again Mr Colin Campbell of the Evangelical Bookshop, Belfast, provided an excellent book table. This year's papers included the following:

(1) *Synod of Dort – Causes and Consequences* (Rev. Trevor Kirkland, Ballyclare & Doagh). Mr Kirkland noted how the Dutch theologian James Arminius had repudiated the teaching of the *Belgic Confession of Faith* (1561) regarding predestination, the Fall, depravity, election and perseverance. In 1610 his followers drew up a protest framed in five Articles. The Calvinists replied and a controversy raged, with a Synod eventually being called to decide the issue. The Synod answered the five Articles with five Canons, known afterwards as the Canons of Dort, crystallising what it means to be a Calvinist. An official Dutch translation of the Bible was agreed upon, which bore fruit in the *Statenvertaling* ('States' Bible') of 1637. The Synod set forth what true reformed preaching is, judging Arminianism to be unbiblical and illegitimate in any Reformed pulpit. Finally the Synod affirmed the abiding validity of the fourth commandment. Dort preserved the Reformation, which is something truly to celebrate.

A discussion at the School in Theology

(2) *The Work of Christ in Colossians 1:12-20* (Rev. William Macleod, Knightswood). Mr Macleod explained deliverance from the kingdom of darkness and the meaning of redemption through the blood. He spoke of the Person of the Redeemer as the image or icon of God, the firstborn of every creature and the Creator of all, the firstborn from the dead and the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, who reconciled all things in heaven and earth to Himself.

(3) *Individual Leading Personal Types of Christ* (Rev. Craig Dennison, Gardenstown Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster). Mr Dennison spoke of how we are commanded to find Christ in all of Scripture. Studying individuals who foreshadow Christ, or 'types' as they are known, teaches us to recognise Christ in the Old Testament. The three main views on Old Testament types are that individuals are only types of Christ when: 1) the New Testament confirms them to be

types; 2) they held a mediatorial office; 3) they had a clear covenantal or messianic link with Christ, the 'Antitype'. Scripture guides us in recognising a genuine type, which would have been identifiable to the Old Testament Church.

(4) *Missionary Enquiry to Israel 1839 and Consequences* (Rev. John W. Keddie, retired). Mr Keddie dealt with the historic 'Mission of Enquiry to the Jews' appointed by the Church of Scotland in 1839. He gave an account of the background to the trip, which was undertaken by four intrepid ministers. Their varied and sometimes hazardous experiences in travelling through Europe to Egypt, through the Holy Land and then back through central Europe, were described with some detail. It is a gripping story of faith and compassion. The deputation sought to identify possible locations for mission work and this led to the establishment of Jewish missions in Europe and the Middle East which were greatly blessed of the Lord.

(5) *Simplicity/Impassibility of God* (Rev. Henry J.T. Woods, Kilmorack & Strathglass). Mr Woods said that it is vital to remember that God is not a 'subject' to be studied, but a Being to be adored. He pointed to the second chapter of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and its declaration that God is "without body, parts, or passions". The first statement refers to the fact that God is a pure Spirit, the second to the oneness and simplicity of God, and the third would be the focus of his paper. Our passions mean that we are affected from within and without, having feelings and desires which change. The question is, Does God have similar passions? Mr Woods provided biblical arguments for God's *impassibility*. He said that what is outlined in the opening quotation from the Confession of Faith is a statement of orthodox Theism. There have always been those who opposed it, but they were considered heretical; now there are challenges to this teaching within the evangelical and reformed camp. Some of the reasons are: 1) bad church history; 2) bad theology; 3) bad philosophy; 4) bad hermeneutics; 5) bad logic. Mr Woods said it was sad to see how readily men who have promised to uphold Classical Theism are playing fast and loose with their vows.

(6) *What is Driving Identity Ethics?* (Rev Dr Kevin Bidwell, Sheffield Presbyterian Church). Mr Bidwell observed how the notion of identity seems to dominate every sphere of British society, and that sadly it tends to be restricted to sexual orientation. He gave a threefold account of man's identity: 1) before the fall, as made in the "image of God"; 2) after the fall; 3) through the gospel. He rejected the notion that there can be any status or identity in this world in the sight of God, other than being male or female (Gen. 1:26-28). The movement which promotes same-sex attraction, without labelling this as sin, was rejected also. He encouraged teaching on the believer's identity "in Christ" and testified how in preparing his paper he understood afresh that his identity is in Christ and not in the congregation where he serves, nor in his denomination, nor in his successes and failures in life. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

The above lectures may be found on the Partick FCC SermonAudio website. Lord willing the 67th School in Theology is to take place on 2nd to 5th of September 2019 at the same venue. ■

Burma (Myanmar)

(Elizabeth Kendal, Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin)

In September the China-backed United Wa State Army (UWSA, an ethnic rebel army in Burma's north-east) detained hundreds of Christians, including more than 40 ethnic Wa Bible students. It also closed 52 churches, demolished at least three and removed Christian symbols from the Wa region. Radio Free Asia reports around 100 ethnic Wa Christians were released on 5 October after they signed a document saying that they would pray only at home and not in churches. According to Rev Dr Lazarus, general secretary of the Lahu Baptist Convention, seven ethnic Wa pastors who refused to sign remain in UWSA custody. The ethnic Wa Bible students have been forcibly conscripted into the UWSA. The UWSA continues to hold more than 130 ethnic Lahu Christians, including 92 pastors who are undergoing interrogation to determine whether they are humanitarian workers or 'extremists' (evangelists). The persecution – which has a distinctly Chinese flavour – is aimed at bringing all religious activity under UWSA control and eliminating foreign missionaries. Pray for the Church in Burma. ■

Quote

"Satan is wise by long experience; and the flesh, and carnal reason, and the world are wise too. But blessed be our God that makes every poor ignorant servant of his wiser than all these. But how? The word must ever be in your hands, and the meditation of it in your hearts. It must be always with you; and you must keep it with you daily. For that will make you to know not only what is amiss, but to get ground against corruption, and whatever else may hinder your peace with God and with yourselves." ■

Thomas Hooker

Leave a Legacy

Please prayerfully consider the ongoing work of the gospel by leaving a legacy to the Church. A helpful information leaflet is available on request. Ask your local treasurer for a copy or email:

generaltreasurer@fccontinuing.org

COMMENT

THE ASHERS RULING

Supreme Court supports freedom of conscience

On 9 May 2014, Gareth Lee entered Ashers bakeshop in Belfast, which is owned and run by the McArthur family, and placed an order for a cake with a specially designed logo and message supporting 'gay marriage'. To avoid embarrassing the customer his order was initially accepted, but after discussion the owners, who are Christians, decided to return the money to Mr Lee, with an explanation as to why they could not fulfil his order.

On 26 June, Ashers received a letter from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), telling them they had broken the law and should compensate Mr Lee. On 26 October 2014, the ECNI put Ashers officially 'on notice' of impending court action. In March 2015 the case was argued in Belfast County Court and on 19 May 2015 Judge Brownlie found against Ashers (who were supported by the Christian Institute), ruling that they had broken the law on sexual, religious and political grounds.

Ashers appealed the verdict and in February 2016 the case was heard before three judges in the Court of Appeal in Belfast. There was a last minute intervention by John Larkin, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, but the Court dismissed his argument and ruled against Ashers. In May 2017 Ashers appealed the verdict and in May 2018 the case was heard by the Supreme Court sitting in Belfast. On 10 October the Court ruled in favour of Ashers. The five judges were unanimous and their ruling is a masterpiece of legal reasoning.

The Supreme Court accepted Ashers' argument that their issue was not with the customer but with his message, and therefore Ashers was not guilty of sexual, religious or political discrimination. They determined that had the Appeal Court listened to the Attorney General, they would have ruled in the way the Supreme Court has ruled. They expressed concern that the ECNI may have created the impression that it is not interested in helping people of faith when they are in difficulty.

There is a remarkable aspect to this case. Had Ashers won in the lower courts, it would have had no legal implications beyond the Province. The matter having ended up in the Supreme Court however, the result is a ruling which is authoritative for the whole UK. We see God's wonderful ways – how what began with a mere cake has eventually brought clarity to the law and ensured that a measure of freedom of conscience continues within our country. We cannot but give praise to Him for His wisdom and kindness. ■

WHAT ARE CHURCH BUILDINGS FOR?

Church of England missing the point

In a video message to the National Cathedrals Conference held in Manchester Cathedral in September, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby spoke on the use of such buildings. According to the *Telegraph* website, Welby said: "Cathedrals are fun.... There's just so many things you can do in a cathedral." He went on: "You must have fun in cathedrals. God has given them as places of celebration and joy and good news."

Welby is clearly excited by cathedrals. While he did not specify the 'fun' which people are supposed to have in these buildings, he made reference to a Halloween service held in Liverpool Cathedral some years ago, during which one of the clergy was wheeled into the building in a coffin in a 're-interpretation' of the gospel. Welby claimed that people were "profoundly touched" by this event, but did not explain what that meant exactly. The point appears to be that 'fun' is the great reason, even the divine reason, why cathedrals exist. Adopting this approach results in soaring attendances, much as happened recently at Salisbury Cathedral, which hosted an artistic installation featuring 3000 origami doves, and at Peterborough Cathedral, which is displaying British astronaut Tim Peake's Soyuz capsule.

Another speaker at the Conference, Dr John Inge, Bishop of Worcester, said that in the medieval period much of what is now termed secular activity would have taken place in churches and cathedrals, but now it happens in halls and community centres. He claimed that a piety crept in, particularly during the Victorian era, which excluded everything but public worship. Consequently church buildings stand like mausoleums, except when they open for worship.

In the same month June Rogers, Chancellor of the Diocese of Gloucester, hit out at heritage groups which resist the modernisation of church buildings, when she ruled that Mariners' Church, a Grade II listed building, could install a kitchen, new lighting system, sound system and monitors, and remove pews, to help it accommodate a growing congregation. Local objectors had claimed that such changes were not in keeping with the church environment, but Rogers warned of the danger of traditional buildings becoming unused shells.

Welby wants fun and Rogers modern facilities, while Inge criticises Victorian piety. They are missing the point. What we really need, irrespective of the building used for it, is reverent, God-centred worship, and plain, Christ-exalting preaching. Such things will only return when we have Bible-believing ministers once more. ■

HOW WE GOT OUR SCOTTISH PSALTER

Rev. William & Mrs Isobel Scott

(In our April issue Mr and Mrs Scott gave us brief histories of some of the tunes we commonly use in our psalm-singing. In this further article they provide us with an account of the Scottish Psalter itself. Those seeking further information will find a very helpful history in 'Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody' by Millar Patrick [1868-1951].)

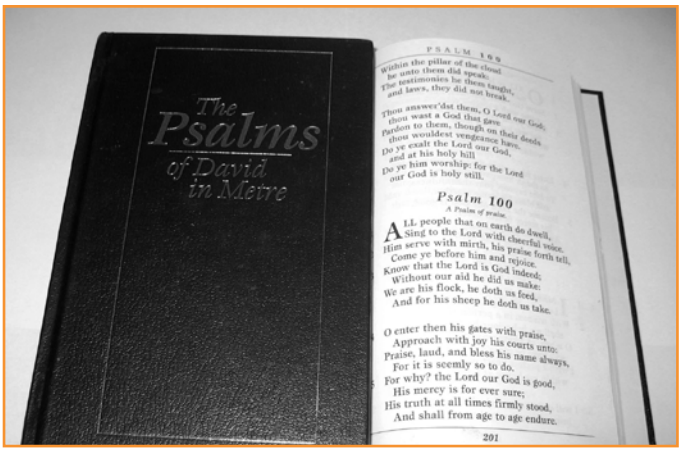
The Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible is widely acclaimed and loved because of its faithfulness to the original tongues. It is very interesting to see how diligent, meticulous and thorough the Scots were when it came to producing a trustworthy metrical version of the Psalms. Down through the years, God's people have sung the 1650 Scottish Metrical Psalms when in trouble, and found comfort and strength in doing so. We sing them in times of rejoicing and in times of mourning. How did this version come about?

Francis Rous (1579-1659), in his preface to the 1646 edition of his own versification of the Psalms, said: "it is very suitable to charity, that those who have skill should condescend to them that have none, and not by that skill hinder edification of the unskillful". This comment is relevant to the 1564 Scottish Psalter, which was widely considered to be too much "above the heads" of ordinary people. The result was that by the time the 1650 version was published, psalm-singing in Scotland was at a low ebb. It is noteworthy that the 1650 version was published without music.

King James's Psalter

King James VI (1566-1625), being proud of his own gifts and accomplishments, thought he could be the one to provide the Church with a new version of the Psalms. Indeed, at the General Assembly in Burntisland in 1601, the king drew admiration from everyone by the way he quoted verses from the 1564 Psalter, showing the faults in the metre and the discrepancies from the text. During his lifetime, James's ambitions to produce a Scottish Psalter were balked, and by the time of his death his efforts to improve upon the existing Psalter had reached no further than the thirty-first Psalm. An edition bearing the king's name, commonly referred to as the 'Menstrie Psalms', was published in 1631, but the reaction was negative; a revision published in 1636 did not fare any better.

Charles I (1600-1649), who succeeded his father James as king, had little empathy or sympathy with the Scots, but wanted to continue what James had set his mind on doing, so that this work would be a perpetual memorial to his beloved father. Despite royal commands that no other psalm versions were to be used within the kingdom, this did not happen. The National Covenant was signed in February 1638, and in November of that year the General Assembly in Glasgow swept away the whole ecclesiastical edifice which had been reared by James and Charles. The new prayer book which Charles had ordered to be used in Scotland in 1637, which was almost identical to the English Book of Common Prayer, and James's Psalter which was bound up with it, were completely done away with. In 1649 Charles was beheaded at the Palace of Whitehall in Westminster.



Francis Rous and the Westminster Assembly

At this time others who were working on versifications of the psalms were waiting in the wings. One of these was Francis Rous, a prominent Puritan and member of the House of Commons at the Westminster Parliament. Rous had many supporters and his influence in the Commons was great. When it was obvious that King James's version was not going to be accepted in either England or Scotland, Rous arranged things so that his own metrical version might be sanctioned before anybody else could proffer one. Despite the fact that many considered that Rous's work had not been done well enough, the printing of it was allowed to proceed.

In 1643 the Westminster Assembly of Divines began its meetings. The Assembly was instructed by both the English and Scottish Parliaments to devise ways and means of bringing about uniformity in church doctrine, discipline, organization and worship throughout the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland. By an order of 20 November 1643, the Commons recommended Rous's psalms to the consideration of the Westminster Assembly, to advise whether or not it would be profitable to the Church that they should be issued, with an injunction that they should be used throughout the land. The Assembly refused to be rushed,

and agreed on a revision of Rous's work, to bring it closer to the original Hebrew. Each of three committees was asked to examine fifty of the psalms, and conferred with Rous himself.

The General Assembly

Among the commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, the ones who had been sent by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland were the most difficult to satisfy. They were strongly in favour of uniformity, and realised that a common psalter would make a major contribution to that end, but they were cautious in their attitude. They asked for Rous's version, with the revisions of the Westminster Assembly, to be sent in instalments to the General Assembly for its consideration. They wrote: "We earnestly entreat you to mind seriouslie the review of them, what words or lines you think ought to be amended...that the Psalter might at this time be put in such a frame that we need not be troubled hereafter with any new translation thereof."

The work of the General Assembly was mostly done by committees of the Church. The relevant minutes are lost, but obviously the opportunity given to participate in this work was fully taken. The Scottish recommendations were sent to the Westminster Assembly and favourably received, almost all of them being followed. The House of Commons approved the amended version on 14 November 1645. On 25 November, the Westminster version of the Psalter was approved in Scotland. The alteration from Rous's original was so drastic that Rous ceased to maintain any claim on the authorship.

The struggles over the Psalter were not yet at an end, however. The version recommended by the Westminster Assembly had to be passed by both Houses of Parliament, and there were members, particularly in the House of Lords, who thought there should be liberty for churches to use other metrical versions. A version of the Psalms by another Puritan, William Barton (1598-1678), was preferred by the London ministers, on the ground that they were more poetical. Barton first published his version anonymously in 1644, and then with additions and alterations, and by order of the Westminster Parliament, in 1645. Delay followed delay. The Lords never approved the Westminster version, and the Commons refused to countenance the Barton version. The Commons then took independent action and ordered that the Westminster version be printed, and "no other version sung in all churches and chapels in the Kingdom of England, Dominion of Wales and Toune of Berwick-upon-Tweed".

There is no evidence that the Westminster version displaced the old versions in use south of the border; it probably had too much of a Scottish character to it for that. Neither did it have an unqualified welcome in Scotland, where the General Assembly wanted it to undergo further revision, meaning that the final version would be even further away from Rous's original. There were six revisions before the final version was reached. Those assigned to the task were told to: (1) observe what was necessary to change, and set down an alternative; (2) make use of the work of other sources; (3) make use as necessary recommendations sent in from presbyteries. They drew upon ten other versions, in addition to the old Scottish one and the new one from Westminster.

More intense consideration and revision followed that work. In November 1649, the Commission of Assembly met and spent five of its diets on still further revision. On 23 November they concluded their work. A deliverance approving this thoroughly-revised version was pronounced, appointing it to be printed for public use, "Hereby authorizing the same to be the only Paraphrase of the Psalmes of David to be sung in the Kirk of Scotland".

The Committee of Estates

On 8 January the Committee of Estates, the civil authority in Scotland, approved and authorised the new Psalter. And so finally this great version came into use on 1 May 1650, bearing the title: *The Psalmes of David in Meeter: Newly translated, and diligently compared with the original Text and former Translations: More plaine, smooth and agreeable to the text, than any heretofore*.

Some of the psalms in the Scottish Metrical Version are in versions done earlier by Whittingham, Craig and Wither. Very little is left of Rous's efforts. For example, in Psalm 1, only two lines in the whole psalm are as Rous wrote them. As many as 516 lines were translated and versified by King James, and 269 lines came from the Bay Psalter of 1640 (later called the New England Version of the Psalms). These are just a few examples to show the pedigree of the 1650 Psalter.

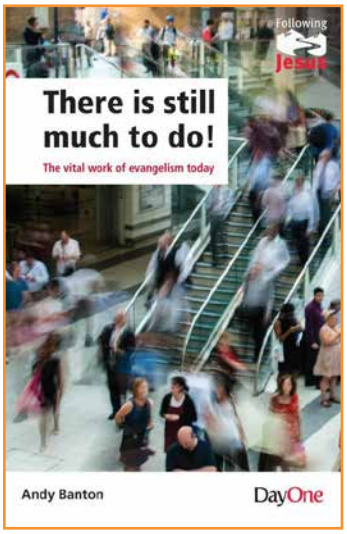
This enduring Psalter, still in use today, was the result of prolonged and painstaking work and has the stamp of Scottish carefulness and piety about it. Dr John Ker, in a volume published after his death and entitled *The Psalms in History and Biography*, says:

"No version has ever been made which adheres so closely to the Scripture. It proceeds on the principle of giving every thought in the original and nothing more; and in this it has succeeded to an extent which is marvellous, and which can be realized only by one who has tested it through careful comparison...The thought stands out clear, distinct, forceful, not wrapt up in wordy paraphrases...or liquefied into weak sentimentalisms.... This too may be said, that these portions which the heart feels that it needs in its sorrowful hours, over which it leans and pores in its deep musings, or from the summits of which it mounts as on eagles' wings in its moments of joy, have a tenderness, a quaint beauty, a majesty in their form, peculiar to that age of the English language in which they were framed."

BOOK REVIEWS

(Books for review should be sent to: Rev. Alasdair J. Macleod, 25c Swordale, Point, Isle of Lewis, HS2 0BP)

There is still much to do! The vital work of evangelism today
Andy Banton, Day One Publications, pbk, 304pp, £10.00



This is a wonderful book! One can hardly imagine a volume packed with a more relevant message for the church today. Essentially it is, "Reach out or die!" Mr Banton has been a street preacher for over twenty years and in that time has gathered enough wisdom to give us detailed marching orders for our Church. There is no precedent in Scripture for confining our preaching within four walls, so a rapid rethink of our strategy is called for. If the people no longer come in to us, we must go out to them. How can we do it? Read on!

Chapter 2 has the title, 'Embracing the Message'. The right message to take with us contains two vital themes: Love and Sin. Any neglect of the one or the other will produce only failure. Of course these themes must be presented with skill, fire and earnestness. Not that we rely on anything in ourselves, but we go out with God's authority. And why should we do this? Because this is the way to get sinners to Heaven!

In Chapter 8, entitled 'What knowledge we need', Mr Banton says, "Know yourself". He claims we must all be soul-winners. "God has no dumb children", says J. C. Ryle, but we will have nothing to say if we are not following a holy walk with the Lord. One open-air convert was persuaded as much by the earnestness as by the words the preacher used. Thomas Watson said, "Does Christ appear for us before Heaven and we are ashamed to appear for Him before men?"

I was impressed with the author's warnings: (1) getting enquirers to "say the sinner's prayer" can deceive immortal souls that they are saved; (2) being soft on evolution, which denies a six-day creation, is falsifying the gospel; (3) using drama is no substitute for proclaiming the truth of God, sin, salvation and judgement.

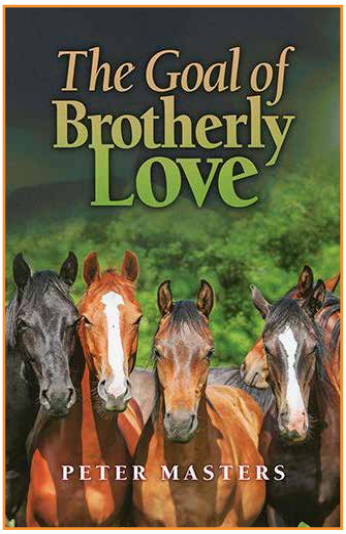
The devil will often play on our fears. Mr Banton had a battle to overcome his fear of going out alone, but that was the day he met a distressed soul seeking help. If divers were willing to risk their lives in the flooded tunnels of Thailand, then will we not make the "most strenuous efforts" to win souls (cf. Richard Dobson, p.255)?

Many of us are depressed these days at the advances of Satan's kingdom all around us. Here is the remedy: obey the command to go. There is no happiness to compare with seeing a soul entering the Kingdom of God, according to the promise, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. 126:5).

Where are we to begin? Buy this book and ask the Lord to show you where you can make a start. May Scotland know and may Heaven know that we are the Church that has preached the gospel in the open-air in every town in the land, Acts 8:4!

Rev. David S. Fraser

The Goal of Brotherly Love
Peter Masters, Sword & Trowel, booklet, 26pp, £0.50



This is a superb booklet (a revised version of a 1994 original) on what the author calls *philadelphia* love (see Heb. 13:1). Mr Masters has packed an enormous amount of material into a very brief essay. We are informed as to what God expects of His people in brotherly love and why it is essential to an obedient, holy life.

This love is also well defined for us, but in a very challenging manner. The Christian is left without excuse in that this instinct is given to us at regeneration. There is a strong emphasis on the primary direction of *philadelphia* love – it is toward the brethren. However the exercise of this love is to discriminate, lest it be abused. So the author shows how this works with, for example, an erring brother (pp.8-9).

There is a section on incentives to brotherly love taken from Gospel texts, as well as from the Epistles. There is a very helpful and challenging section on the hindrances to loving other believers. Mr Masters concludes with a 15-point summary for promoting *philadelphia* love.

This is an excellent booklet and a *must-read* for every Christian.

Rev. Iain Smith

COMMUNION DATES

Communions are held on the following Sabbaths. Visitors should contact local ministers for times of the main services and the preparatory and thanksgiving services. Contact details may be found on the Church website.

November
4 Arran, Edinburgh–St Columba's, Kilmorack & Strathglass
11 Aberdeen, Tarbat
18 Brora, Glasgow–Shettleston
25 Kiltearn

December
2 Columbia

January
13 St Louis
20 Greenville
27 Atlanta

CONGREGATIONAL REMITTANCES

	CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2018	ORDINARY REMITTANCES		
		Sept 2018	Total to Sept 2018	Total to Sept 2017
	£	£	£	£
Presbytery of Inverness				
Aberdeen	0	1,500	13,500	13,500
Duthil-Dores	12,349	1,796	18,611	18,384
Inverness	0	2,000	26,037	27,986
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,450	15,994	15,416
Poolewe & Aultbea	0	917	9,417	7,855
Total Inverness Presbytery	**12,349**	**7,663**	**83,559**	**83,141**
Northern Presbytery				
Assynt & Scourie	450	0	853	2,140
Brora	0	0	10,666	12,527
Kiltearn	53	0	4,979	7,896
Tarbat	0	0	13,871	20,706
Total Northern Presbytery	**503**	**0**	**30,369**	**43,268**
Southern Presbytery				
Arran	390	321	6,585	6,270
Ayr	0	0	6,585	9,303
Dumfries	0	100	850	600
Edinburgh	15,447	0	14,626	17,249
Glasgow - Knightswood	50	2,500	21,506	21,637
Glasgow - Partick	7,645	1,100	15,200	14,800
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	2,000	22,568	15,641
Rothesay	0	1,000	4,163	4,130
Total Southern Presbytery	**23,532**	**7,021**	**92,083**	**89,628**
Outer Hebrides Presbytery				
Cross	0	1,519	17,534	17,940
Harris - Leverburgh	0	1,350	13,450	12,525
Knock & Point	0	1,500	15,739	15,510
North Uist & Grimsay	4,048	1,050	10,615	11,139
Scalpay	0	1,800	18,354	19,196
Stornoway	3,720	6,194	71,773	80,830
Total Outer Hebrides Presbytery	**7,767**	**13,413**	**147,463**	**157,140**
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron				
Bracadale & Duirinish (Waternish)	5,172	1,500	13,350	16,200
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	0	1,300	11,639	11,277
Lochalsh & Strath	430	2,650	19,195	20,454
Portree	271	1,500	18,857	19,061
Snizort	425	1,500	16,896	22,841
Total Skye & Lochcarron Presbytery	**6,298**	**8,450**	**79,937**	**89,834**
Smiths Falls	0	0	1,000	1,000
Total From Congregations	**50,448**	**36,547**	**434,411**	**464,012**
Other Donations	0	1,365	23,994	34,208
Legacy	33,831	0	0	0
TOTAL	**84,279**	**37,912**	**458,405**	**498,220**
Included in the above: Tax	**2,866**	**0**	**65,375**	**71,016**
Recovered on Gift Aid Declarations	**81,413**	**37,912**	**393,030**	**427,203**

Gifts and Donations - Donations and gifts for the Church should be sent to the Financial Administrator:

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Free Church (Continuing) Manse, Loch Mor, Struan, Isle of Skye IV56 8FB
financialadministrator@fccontinuing.org

Cheques / postal orders should be made payable to "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)".

General Treasurer
Mr Murray Mackay
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(mobile) 07793 535227

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) is a recognised Scottish Charity (SC 030976).

2018 School in Theology at Larbert
(courtesy of Rev. Andrew Allan)

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

1 Timothy 5:17

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)