

GOOD NEWS

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What is Truth?

Pages 3-4

Motherhood: An Interview with Margaret McPhail

Pages 5-7

The Life and times of Archibald Johnston

Pages 12-14

CONTENTS



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

What is Truth? | Rev. Dr. Tim Donachie..... 3-4

PRACTICAL

An interview with Margaret McPhail..... 5-7

DOCTRINAL

The Marks of the Church | Dr. Jeffrey A. Stivason..... 8-10

DEVOTIONAL

Psalms 29 | Ian Gillies..... 11

CHURCH HISTORY

The Life & Times of Archibald Johnston | Dr. David Whitla..... 12-14

The Duty of Christ's Witnesses | Rev. W Anderson..... 15-16

NEWS

An Interview with Rev. Mark Loughridge..... 17-18

Congregational News..... 19-21

Global News..... 22-23

YOUTH

How do I deal with bullies? | Rev. Peter Loughridge..... 24

Children's Story & Wordsearch..... 25-26

Recommended Reading..... 27



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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

I hope you find the first Good News of 2022 to be useful. I would like to thank David Whitla for the final instalment of our Church History series – The Life and Times of Archibald Johnston of Wariston. We have learned a lot about Wariston through this series and have appreciated David's fair approach. We have also reached the end of our Vocation series. Margaret McPhail gives some encouragement to mothers, being herself both a mother and a grandmother. There would be almost unlimited options for keeping the series going with new vocations each time, but I hope that we have given you a flavour of diverse jobs yet a common theme of seeking to honour the Lord. "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Our new RP reprint is a chapter from an old work – Claims of the Divine Government applied to the British Constitution written by Rev William Anderson. A tribute to Anderson's importance is given in the following quotation from Rev Gordon Keddle, "But for the steadfast conviction of William Anderson and his colleagues, and those who adhered to them, the Covenanting Church would have passed into history long ago. Their ruggedly independent spirit, their readiness to be a small minority upholding unpopular positions and their attachment to the heritage of their covenanting forefathers, has kept their particular emphasis on the Headship of Christ over the nation before at least a goodly section of the Christian community in Scotland for over a century, when otherwise there might have been silence."

I am thankful for those who continue to supply articles to Good News, some of whom have been regular contributors for several years. Please take the time to read all the content. Most congregations get more magazines than they need and I would encourage you to give away any spare copies to those who might be interested in reading them. As Good News is also put up online it can be shared by email or social media too.

Every blessing,
Stephen



CONTEMPORARY ISSUE

REV. DR. TIM DONACHIE

What is Truth?

The question that Pontius Pilate asked the Lord Jesus Christ 'what is truth?' (Jn. 18:38) is a very relevant one to be asking in the current flexible moral climate of twenty-first century society. The old moral certainties have disappeared and the stable foundations on which society was built have not only been shaken but destroyed! It would have appeared to be a foolish question in past generations to have asked how many genders there were; it was obvious that there were only two, but now, there are people who claim that there are more than one hundred. A man can claim to be a woman even although it is plainly obvious that he is a man, and so claim the right to use female toilets and changing rooms. There is no such thing as absolute truth, only 'my truth' and 'your truth'.

This same foolishness has penetrated the whole of society, so it is not at all surprising that it is seen on display in the news media. The proliferation of social media outlets has meant that anybody with a computer, internet access and a web cam can set up a channel and broadcast whatever they want to the waiting world with little or no regulation. Although neither the concept nor the term 'fake news' is new, the term was first used in the 1890's, and the concept

of propagating misinformation goes back to ancient times, fake news has certainly become more evident in the past four or five years and is so prevalent that it is almost impossible to know where to go to find unbiased truth. Even the well-established and previously well-respected news outlets cannot claim always to present news that is not influenced by political dogma or current social mores.

It is not the purpose of this article to identify 'fake news' or to give help in being able to spot when news is fake, but it may be helpful to mention some of the main types of fake news. There is the downright deceitful that has the sole intention of harming another person's reputation, there is propaganda when false arguments are made in support of a particular political position, and then there is biased reporting when facts are twisted to either harm a political position or to give an unwarranted positive 'spin' to a story. A quick perusal of even the front pages of popular newspapers will demonstrate the different slants that are put on the same story according to the political leaning of the paper. Sadly, it is not just the media and the newspapers that are purveyors of 'fake news', or perhaps it would be better to use the terms misinformation or bias.

What is most worrying is the misinformation that is being fed to children and young people in schools and colleges. What were once upon a time accepted as undeniable facts are now not only being challenged but utterly denied. Books once considered helpful and beneficial for developing minds are now condemned as being harmful and discriminatory. Historical figures once revered and admired are now castigated as wicked and abusive. Race, which was once a simple matter of fact, is being used as a weapon against anybody who does not buy in to the radical progressive agenda.

It should not really surprise Bible believing people that there is so much falsehood and 'fakery' throughout society, for the Bible teaches that the 'whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one' (1 Jn. 5:19) and that wicked one is described as the 'father of lies' (Jn. 8:44). The question that has to be asked is 'how are Christians to deal with what can be a very unsettling environment?' Although Christians are not to opt out of the world, they are, after all to be 'salt and light', they are also not to be 'of the world' and must not accept whatever the world and its news organs promote. Many believers, nevertheless, want to keep up to date with what is happening in the world and so will use the news media to help them to do that, and therein lies the problem! Which news organs are they to rely on to give them the unbiased information they seek? It is sadly true that in the modern world, with the vast array of news outlets available in print, broadcasting or online, it is possible to find something for every taste and every view, so how is the Christian to navigate a course through the morass of misinformation, propaganda, half-truths and downright lies?

It must always be remembered that even the most venerable news outlet has its own agenda, be that political, social, or moral and it is necessary to understand what that agenda is before putting too much weight on its pronouncements. Perhaps believers should be more sceptical about the truth of what they see or hear and not simply accept as true what the newspaper or television news presenter tells them! It may be a good practice to compare the 'news' as reported by politically diverse organisations and so perhaps come to a better understanding of the reality of a particular situation or event.

Living in the western world where laws and social norms were once founded upon Biblical Law, it is difficult for Christian people to reconcile themselves to the complete abandonment of those values in modern society. Once upon a time it was assumed that the majority of people had a regard for the truth and that newspapers and broadcast media were in the business of presenting factual accounts

of national and world events, even although experience demonstrates that that was not always the case! With the collapse of Biblical morality throughout society, it has become increasingly difficult for Christian people to believe or to trust information that comes from a godless society. Both the broadcast and the print media reflect the society from which they come, and it is naïve to think that they would project a different view from the majority view of that society. Even so, it seems that the media in general does not just reflect the views that dominate in society but seeks to promote the particular political or moral view of the owners or the editors of the channels or newspapers. It is, perhaps not at all surprising that in surveys concerning the most and least trustworthy professions, journalists consistently come near the bottom!

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The fact of the matter for Christians is that 'here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come' (Heb. 13:14), and that fact should encourage believers to concentrate their minds more on what is permanent rather than that which is temporary and passing. Of course, Christians are to participate in their own society and to seek to bring the truth of the Word of God to bear on every aspect of that society, but they should endeavour not to be so immersed in secular society that their minds are taken over by what is reported by the news media. Believers are to have their minds filled with Christ and their thinking moulded by the Word of God which is objective and unvarnished truth. The critical faculties that God has given to men should be used to examine and evaluate what is heard and seen, and the mind that has been constantly subjected to the absolute truth of the Word of God will be in a better position to make sound judgements.



PRACTICAL

An interview with **Margaret McPhail**

(North Edinburgh RPC)

Vocation: Mother (and Grandmother)

What family do you have?

We have four children, two boys and two girls, and seven grandchildren.

Are your children all believers?

Yes.

That's great. Something to be thankful for. What do you think a mother's job is?

First and foremost, to bring your children up to know the Lord. There are many challenges - sheer hard work and caring for children's physical needs, and also this responsibility of bringing them up to know the Lord.

I became a Christian in my teens, as I saw Christ's love for me, as a sinner, and received Him as my Lord and Saviour. My mum and other Christians were praying earnestly for me. Never underestimate the power of prayer, and never give up praying for your loved one. So I felt then in my turn with my children it was so important to pray for them first and foremost, obviously to love them, and pray for them constantly. It made me, of course, realize how much I needed to rely on the Lord's strength. I think the more you go on in motherhood and grandmotherhood, the more you realize that you need wisdom and strength, beyond my own, which is only found in the Lord.

I sometimes feel that the work of mothering and housekeeping can feel repetitive and mundane, and maybe you want to be doing more to serve the Lord. Elisabeth Elliot, the widow of Jim Elliot, said that in her experience

she believed that the work of mothering and housekeeping was as much a service to Christ as her writing and speaking ministry because the work of tending and keeping was always part of God's plan for humanity. He put man in a garden to tend it, to keep it. I think, too, it's an encouragement that Jesus Himself said I'm among you like one who serves. Young mums can feel a bit overwhelmed at times, and Christian mums should find that encouraging.



Archie and Margaret McPhail

I was greatly blessed having a Christian husband. Together we could train our children by reading the Bible and praying together daily. Family worship was always central. We wanted to show the children how we prized the Word of God, the worship of God, and the Lord's Day. But above all, we love this wonderful person, the Lord and Saviour, and He was calling them to love and follow Him too. Psalm 145: 4 "One generation will praise your works to another and declare your mighty deeds." We found having praise playing often in the home helpful. Psalms, sometimes Scripture in song, or hymns that convey deep spiritual truth. "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." We always felt so blessed having the Word of God – the repetitiveness of it every day at home. It was

in our minds and memories, and so often through life that verse you need, that word you need, just comes to mind with strength and blessing because it's there.

You talked about how things can be overwhelming – how do you balance all the responsibilities?

One thing I always noticed was when you went into a day when you've got so much to do, it's so easy to miss out on your own quiet time with the Lord. It was so noticeable to me when I took even just five minutes to sit at Jesus' feet, I just felt the day went better. Archie was preaching on Sunday night here in North Edinburgh on Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning of Him, and Martha was harassed with all the work to be done. But it's not that Jesus didn't appreciate what Martha was doing, but it just was so important to sit as Mary was doing. He said that was the one thing really needful. Then afterwards, Mary did that wonderful thing of anointing His feet. We sit at Jesus' feet first and then we can do works of service.



What do you think are the joys of motherhood?

Well, certainly, when you have your children. My first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, and you know all sorts of questions come in. Will I be able to have children? So, in a way, that made me appreciate when I did have children. Having the joy of having these precious little lives given to you to love, and to nourish, and to cherish. To see them growing up, not rebelling against what we were saying, not complaining about going to church. And I know not all are fortunate like that, and it's not that we were better or wiser parents. There is no greater joy than to see your children come to faith in the Lord. And in their early teens, each of them in turn, came to a personal relationship with the Lord, and have followed him all their days from then.

How do the challenges of motherhood change as your children grow?

Archie was called to the ministry after ten years teaching, the oldest was seven, and the youngest was just a baby. That put quite a lot of strain on us all in that he was giving up his teaching career and financial security and spending the next three years training for the ministry. With four little children that was quite a challenge, but we found that as we leaned on the Lord that He was faithful to His promises. His faithfulness will be your shield and buckler. And He carried us through these three, at times, trying years. Then when they were ages 3-10, we had the challenge of moving from the suburbs of Glasgow to the remote north west of Scotland to Sutherland. So while it was exciting, it was challenging as a mother concerned about the children who had to leave their school where they were happy, their friends, and the extended family who were just a couple of hours drive away at most. We were going where we knew nobody at all, no family or anything, five hours journey from where we had always been. As a Christian mother I prayed much about the situation and felt the Lord assuring me this was His will for us, and that we would be there as long as He had a purpose for us there. He graciously answered prayers and the children adjusted to this new situation well. Looking back, we've often said we would not have missed those years for anything because of the blessings we received, friendships we made, the wonderful people He brought into our lives. The children settled and enjoyed the freedom of country life. Our church family were wise, kindly, mostly elderly people, who took them to their hearts.

There may be people reading who have had miscarriages themselves. It's one of those topics that doesn't get talked about much. Christians sometimes find it hard to know what to say. What advice would you give?

Well, I think one thing not to say is "plenty time, you have plenty time. You can have plenty more children." You're grieving that child. I was 12 weeks on. Everything seemed to be fine, so it was quite devastating. Don't treat it as if it wasn't a real bereavement.

This was all within six months of getting married, and Archie's dad also passed away within that time. So we were really feeling pretty low. Just turning to the Word of God was so, so helpful and wonderful. And my readings were in Ezekiel, I hadn't ever even noticed this verse, but it just spoke such peace and comfort into my heart. It was from Ezekiel 36 verse 11. "I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings." And I couldn't wait to tell Archie. And the amazing thing was that the Lord had already given that verse to Archie before coming to visit me that day. And neither of us had ever

really noticed that verse before. Turning to the Lord, you still can grieve. I remember being quite emotional for weeks afterwards; you'd see a mother with a baby and it would just come fresh to you, your loss, and there were tears. It's good to mourn because it's not just swept under the carpet like it was nothing.

But I would say standing on the promises of God, all through life, that's what's brought me through. I mean we're not special or particularly wise or anything like that. But our Lord is, and as we lean on Him, and stand on His promises, plead them, and as we see Him fulfilling them that increases faith, brings us on hopefully growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour.

What do you see the role of a grandmother as being?

Often you hear the expression, being a grandparent is just wonderful – you can enjoy them, and then hand them back! It's a great joy. We have seven grandchildren, and our daily prayer for them too is above all else they would love and follow the Lord and serve Him in their generation.

We are so blessed that they are all being brought up to know the Lord, to go to church, to Sunday school, daily Bible reading and prayer at home. When you love them so much, I just cannot imagine what Christian grandparents go through, if their children have turned away from the Lord and don't go to church. How can they teach their children to follow the Lord? We were spared that.

It's not that we are complacent and just think all will be well because it was with our children. We're very well aware of the need of daily prayer for them, and bringing them before the Lord, pleading covenant promises too. I remember when our own were little and we were concerned that above all they would know the Lord. Two things I remember. How I would plead promises like Psalm 103: "And to those who do fear, God's mercy never ends, to their children's children still, His righteousness extends." Also Isaiah 54: "All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be the peace of your children." So just go on pleading these covenant blessings, and one generation passing on to another. We were so privileged. God has been so gracious. And now another generation, and we just have this burden to pray that they in their time will be a generation who follow the Lord, because the joy of being in that family, the family of God, is surely the ultimate joy. All the griefs and other things they'll fade, but joy of the Lord, joy in the Lord will last forever. And that's what we would love for all people, through faith in the Lord Jesus, to be in that family.

It's the family of a God and Father who loves us perfectly. We are not perfect, far from it! Despite our sins and failings God is at work in his amazing grace. Keep that at the forefront as you perhaps struggle. It's not by might, and it's not by power, but it's by my Spirit, says the Lord. Depend on the Lord and His Spirit and His grace.

What counsel do you have for anyone who has a tug-of-war in their family between Christian and non-Christian spouses raising children or for Christian grandparents who have unbelieving children that don't raise their children in the faith?

We know parents who have come to faith later in life, and therefore their children are not following the Lord. We find often that's their biggest burden. Just as we've talked about keep pleading the promises with the Lord - that's the first and foremost thing, pray for them.

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Try to show the positives of your faith, what it means to you, how wonderful it is, what a difference it's made in your life, how it's the best thing. Rather than perhaps nagging them or being negative about the way they're living (although obviously counselling if need be). Above all the changing of hearts is the Lord's work. If someone has become a Christian, they can plead covenant promises to the Lord, "I'll be a God to you and to your children after you." They've got a lot of encouragement there to keep praying and not give up. Sometimes it might even be after they leave this world that their children are saved. So, keep hopeful. Keep praying, keep loving.

Do you have any further advice for mothers today?

Just enjoy your children. I think sometimes, looking back, I was perhaps overly concerned about getting the physical needs met. I think I spent too much time on that sort of thing. Relax a bit more and just have more fun with them.

THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH



DR JEFFREY A. STIVASON

(Grace RPC, Gibsonia, PA, and
Professor of New Testament at RPTS)

This is number six of a series of articles commissioned by the RP Global Alliance – rpglobalalliance.org

During the Reformation of the sixteenth century both Protestants and Roman Catholics affirmed the attributes of the church articulated so well in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Church was one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Each, the Protestants and the Romanists, claimed to be in sole possession of the list. But this produced an obvious question. If both laid claim to the attributes, then how could a decision be made as to which is the true church? The Protestants answered that question by introducing what has come to be known as the marks of the church.¹

The Marks of the Church & Unity

The Protestant church listed three notes or marks that would provide visible shape to the attributes. The first

mark is the faithful preaching and hearing of God's word. It is not surprising that Protestants would place such a premium upon the consistent and faithful exposition of God's word. However, the word was not preached in a vacuum. It was meant to be heard. Thus, the one hundred and sixtieth question of the Westminster Larger Catechism asked "What is required of those that hear the Word preached?" Preaching and hearing go hand in glove.

The second mark is the rightful administration of the sacraments. This mark distinguished Protestants from Rome but it did more than that. Protestants have always valued the word and they considered the signs and seals of the covenant to be visible words, which must always be accompanied by the spoken word but are nonetheless God given. The third mark was the proper exercise of church discipline. These last two marks brought a sense of elasticity to them. For example, the nature of the Lord's Supper varied from the Lutherans to the Zwinglians

to the Calvinists. However, what did not vary was their understanding of the Supper's efficacy. It was God who conveyed His grace and it was not communicated ex opera operato or from the work performed.²

Nevertheless, unity was a real issue among Protestants. While it may have been true that there was agreement on the efficacy of the sacraments there was surely radical disagreement as to their nature. The Marburg Colloquy, an important debate on the Lord's Supper held in Marburg, Germany, on October 1–4, 1529, between the Reformers of Germany and Switzerland is evidence enough. This debate attempted to bring the German and Swiss branches of the Reformation together. The sticking point was the nature of the Lord's Supper. Though the story of Luther carving *Hoc est corpus meum* (This is my body) into the table with a knife may be apocryphal Luther's statement to Zwingli about having a different spirit was not.

Now, I don't think that if Reformed brothers sat down to discuss the nature of the supper or the content of congregational singing or some other matter upon which we differ that anyone would pull out a knife and begin carving Latin phrases into the table! But there are differences even among the closest of brethren. So, how can we deal with these divisions? This series of RP Global Alliance articles has been an attempt to do just that. But before we can talk unity we must talk theology.

The Progressive & Constructive Nature of Systematic Theology ³

Benjamin B. Warfield made a distinction between the existence and perfection of the Church that is helpful for our current discussion on church unity. To grasp this distinction, we need to begin with Warfield's general but vital claim that "All that is essential to the foundation of unity must be found in the Church of every age – the very existence of the Church provides it."⁴ This, of course, means that there is nothing that is actually new in terms of what God has revealed concerning His Church. As Warfield says, "[The] Scriptures form the only sufficing source of theology."⁵

However, this does not mean that everything in Scripture has been mapped out, schematized, and systematized from the beginning. Take for instance the organization of the Apostolic Church as an example. With regard to it Warfield writes, "The absence of such an organization is obvious on the face of the New Testament record, nor do its pages contain any clear promise of or prominent provision for it for the future."⁶ Warfield's point is clear

enough; the Apostolic Church had no organization beyond its local government.

But contrary to first impressions, Warfield is not saying that there is no promise or provision for a future ecclesiastical organization beyond the local government. Rather, he is saying that no "clear" promise or "prominent" provision exists for the future, which is a far cry from saying that no promise or provision exist. Thus, the obvious point is that an extensive systematic theology is not a corollary to the bare existence of the Church. However, equally true for Warfield is that the existence of the Church does not mean the absence of all the propositional revelation required to construct a fuller ecclesiology (doctrine of the church) within a robust theological system. In fact, fuller theological development is expected from the Church. Or to put it in another way, a robust systematic theology is a corollary to the Church's perfection. Surely, this point is obvious if, in fact, the Church truly is God's instrument for the preservation and propagation of the truth and is therefore the pillar and ground of the truth.

"IN OTHER WORDS, EVEN FROM THE BEGINNING, THE CHURCH'S FORMULATION OF ECCLESIOLOGY, NOT TO MENTION OTHER THEOLOGICAL POINTS, WAS LIKE A SEED. IT WAS INTENDED TO GROW AND MATURE. "

This theological growth and development of which Warfield has in mind is brought forcefully into focus when he argues for the Church's eventual and inevitable perfection. For example, according to Warfield, visible ecclesiastical unity is not dependent upon the existence of the church so much as it is on its perfection.⁷ In other words, even from the beginning, the Church's formulation of ecclesiology, not to mention other theological points, was like a seed. It was intended to grow and mature. Therefore, its unity, a fruit of the Church's theological maturation, depended on the perfection that was inherent in its DNA, a code which could be found in Scripture.

So, the Church must hammer out its theology in order to attain what Warfield called absoluteness and so be presented to the Bridegroom without spot or blemish, in other words, perfect.⁸ According to Warfield, reaching for this absoluteness is the goal and aim of theology. In his 1896 article, “The Idea of Systematic Theology” he writes,

“The task of thoroughly exploring the pages of revelation, soundly gathering from them their treasures of theological teaching and carefully fitting these into their due places in a system whereby they may be preserved from misunderstanding, perversion, and misuse, and given a new power to convince the understanding, move the heart, and quicken the will, becomes thus a holy duty to our own and our brothers’ souls as well as an eager pleasure of our intellectual nature”.⁹

Thus, the way in which we systematize the truth handed down to us by biblical exegesis is not a matter of indifference.¹⁰ On the contrary, Warfield contends, “if we misconceive it in its parts or in its relations, not only do our views of truth become confused and erroneous, but also our religious life becomes dwarfed or contorted.”¹¹ Thus, the theologian is reaching beyond existence to perfection knowing that he will only attain such a state in glory and yet it is his holy duty to make theological progress that the Church might mature from seed to blossom.

“THUS, THE THEOLOGIAN IS REACHING BEYOND EXISTENCE TO PERFECTION KNOWING THAT HE WILL ONLY ATTAIN SUCH A STATE IN GLORY AND YET IT IS HIS HOLY DUTY TO MAKE THEOLOGICAL PROGRESS THAT THE CHURCH MIGHT MATURE FROM SEED TO BLOSSOM.”

The Denominational Question

For Warfield, one important implication of the systematic theological expression of truth was the existence of denominations. In fact, Warfield contends, not that differing denominations arise from being sinfully separate

but from duty.¹² What is more, Warfield saw the trend in his own day toward a (mere) visible unity as disobedience to the Lord’s prayer in John 17. In other words, mere visible unity is a sign “of the decay of doctrinal consciousness, not to say of vital religion” in the Church.¹³ For Warfield, despite sounding paradoxical, separate denominations in pursuit of the expression of truth systematically stated could more fully express the unity for which Christ prayed than being “forced into the bonds of galling external unification.”¹⁴ For Warfield, nothing threatened unity like doctrinal minimalism and theological reduction in ecclesiastical situations is always the effect of mere visible expressions of unity.

But this also means that we must act like spiritual adults. We must listen to one another without wrath, bitterness or anger. We must listen in love. We must be willing to change and hold fast with grace and brotherly affection when Scripture warrants. Warfield might urge us to be faithful theologians and gracious churchman. And we should listen.

Footnotes

¹ A good resource on the marks of the Church is Dr. Barry York’s book, *Hitting the Marks* (Crown & Covenant, 2018).

² An excellent book dealing with this matter is Benjamin B. Warfield’s, *The Plan of Salvation* (Simpson, 1989).

³ For a fuller treatment of Warfield and Church unity see my, “Benjamin B. Warfield and True Church Unity,” *The Westminster Theological Journal*, 79:2 (Fall 2017).

⁴ Benjamin B. Warfield, “True Church Unity: What it is,” *The Homiletic Review*, 20.6 (December 1890): 488.

⁵ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology*, vol. 9, of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 9.63.

⁶ Warfield, “True Church Unity: What It Is,” 484.

⁷ Warfield, “Truth Church Unity: What It Is,” 489.

⁸ Benjamin B. Warfield, “Christian Unity and Church Union; Some Preliminary Principles,” *The Presbyterian Banner*, (vol. 91) June 1904/1905: 7.

⁹ Warfield, *Works*, 9.79-80

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.80.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Warfield, “Church Unity and Church Union; Some Primary Principles,” 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*



DEVOTIONAL

PSALM 29

Ian Gillies, Glasgow RPC

Looking back on 2021, three ‘v’s’ come to mind: viruses, variants, and vaccines. As the pandemic has unfolded, this trio has come to occupy a central place in the life of our nation and nations throughout the world. Yet, in reflecting upon the past year, there is another ‘v’ which has had as dominant an impact as any: voices.

Every day we hear the voices of this world reporting and debating on the matters before us. We ourselves have likely joined this humdrum of discussion in one way or another. It is fair to say that through radios, televisions, mobile phones, and computer screens, the voices of men and women are being heard loud and clear in our land day by day. But this begs the question, what of the voice of God?

In Psalm 29, great emphasis is placed on God’s voice. This psalm of David can be separated into three sections. The opening two verses and the closing two verses serve like bookends to the seven verses in the middle. Notably, in this middle section, David mentions “the voice of the Lord” as many as seven times. He does so as He speaks to the majesty of God which is the main thrust of the whole psalm. We are called in the opening section to “Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name” (v. 2). David then describes how God’s voice shows forth His glory: “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty” (v. 4).

The Spirit-inspired David floods the psalm with imagery to emphasize the point at hand. He describes God’s powerful voice “breaking the cedars”, “shaking the wilderness”, and “stripping the forests bare” (vv. 5, 8-9). Just as the Lord brought the creation into being by the Word of His power so too He has sovereign power over it. His power is such

that He not only speaks, He “thunders” (v. 3). But why then does His voice currently seem so quiet while the voices of men seem so loud?

David reminds us in the closing section of the psalm that our Lord “sits as King forever” (v. 10). And just as the Lord is continually reigning, so too He is continually speaking. Not only is He speaking through His creation and providence, but also through His Word. “The voice of His Word” (Ps. 103:20) is indeed majestic and powerful, “sharper than a two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). If tempted to doubt its power, consider the salvation of souls. As the Word of the Lord thunders into the heart of the unbeliever, by the power of the Spirit it brings forth the fruit of repentance and faith. In sanctification too the Word works with such power, not only through rebukes and warnings but also profound comforts and encouragements.

Amidst the cacophony of men and women’s voices in our day, the question should not be whether the Lord is speaking but whether we are hearing. Psalm 29 calls us to worship God “in the beauty of holiness” (v. 2). Within that, the psalm calls us to hear His voice, not least through His Word, privately and corporately. Indeed, as preachers called of God faithfully proclaim His Word, the voice of Christ is heard (Rom. 10:14). Let us pray this will be increasingly so in Scotland, and other lands as well, bearing the fruit of not only many hearers but many “doers of the Word” (Jas. 1:22).

The all-powerful voice of God needs to be heard in this new year, not the weak voices of the world. For as the voice of our majestic King is heard and applied, He will “give strength to His people” and “bless His people with peace” (v. 11). And, best of all, He will be glorified.

CHURCH HISTORY



PART 3

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF **Archibald Johnston of Wariston (1611-63)**

Dr. David Whitla (Professor of Church History, RPTS)

This article concludes our study of the Covenanter statesman, Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston. In the first article we considered his spiritual formation, which was marked by 'Crisis' (1611-37). This was followed in the next article with Wariston's dramatic rise to public prominence, characterized by 'Covenanting' (1637-41) and 'Confederation' (1641-51). We conclude with an account of the final decade following the evaporation of his vision of covenanted uniformity, which were years of 'Compromise' (1662-60) and 'Compunction' (1660-63).

4. Compromise (1652-60)

Under Cromwell's occupation of England, the Scottish church faced new religious threats. The English sought to eradicate all ecclesiastical uniformity between the three kingdoms according to the terms of the Covenants, and instead impose a policy of religious toleration. Wariston spent much of the decade furiously writing tracts and letters against these threats. As the prolocutor for the General Assembly in the previous decade, Wariston had been responsible for censoring theological literature that had been flooding into Scotland; becoming an extremely well-read polemicist for the Kirk against a rising tide of English Congregationalism which threatened the Presbyterian hegemony.

Meanwhile, schism over the 'Public Resolutions' (which had restored enemies of the Covenanter cause to public office during the Scots' abortive courtship of Charles II) continued throughout the decade, with former clerical allies bitterly divided into Resolutioner and Protester parties.

Wariston became the arch-Protester: his intellectual gifts and energies were poured into stoking the fires of debate and division, rather than assuaging them. He wrote and published several papers questioning the validity of the Resolutioner assemblies, including *The Nullity of the Pretended Assembly at St Andrews and Dundee* (1652). He also penned the first draft of the better-known *Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland* (1653), which is usually attributed to James Guthrie. Wariston was soon accused by prominent Resolutioners as 'the cause of all the distance and division,' and 'the ruiner of the Kirk of Scotland.'

In an effort to reunite the feuding parties of the Kirk, Cromwell summoned representatives from both sides to a series of meetings in London, chaired by John Owen. James Sharp (the notorious future Archbishop of St Andrews) debated for the Resolutioner party against Wariston before Cromwell, who was most impressed by Wariston's arguments and ability. Here was a man whose gifts might be put to good use in his executive.

Thus, after a period of considerable pressure from the Lord Protector and much prayer and soul-searching, Wariston shocked his friends by accepting government office in Cromwell's Protectorate in 1656. He accepted several roles: a commissioner of justice for Scotland, Lord Clerk Register (keeper of the national records), and he was the only Scot to sit in Cromwell's reconstructed House of Lords in London. These actions by Wariston led him to be seen as a betrayer of the Covenant by former colleagues; his disappointed friend James Guthrie even

calling him somewhat sarcastically, 'our Independent.' How can we explain this compromise on the part of the normally unpragmatic arch-Covenanter Wariston?

Several reasons for his collaboration may be considered. First, there was a growing spiritual affinity between the Presbyterian Wariston and the English Independent Puritans. Wariston was building close spiritual friendships with men like Owen and Cromwell and had a growing appreciation for their shared Puritan piety. Second, Wariston struggled with personal insecurities. He was deeply hated by the Scottish public – his position of leadership during the wars had led many to hold him personally responsible for national military losses during the conflicts. Third, Wariston was under considerable personal economic stress. There is good evidence that he had not been especially responsible with his domestic finances, and the wars had left him with many outstanding debts. Fourth, and closely connected with his financial stress were familial woes. Wariston was close to poverty, with thirteen children to feed, and an eldest son showing signs of insanity. Ever sensitive to the leadings of providence, he read this unexpected opportunity to return to public life as an open door to alleviate private losses. Yet while he enjoyed considerable political prestige in this period, he came to bitterly regret this move at the end of his life, when Cromwell died, and Charles II was restored to the throne.

But ironically, it was during this decade of tragic, deepening rifts in the Kirk and of compromise with Cromwell that Wariston arguably made his greatest theological contribution, one which would impact the church for centuries to come. As the new political masters of Scotland, Cromwell's agents did all they could to eradicate the memory of the Covenants, but Wariston's former emphasis on covenanting did not vanish altogether; rather, it was redirected. He intensified his youthful practice of personal covenanting; writing out his own personal covenant with God in a similar manner to the many legal documents he had prepared, and signing it as his personal testimony. He went on to encourage each of his family members to do likewise, and before long, was actively promoting this practice among his fellow Protesters, writing a (now lost) paper on Soul Covenanting with God. It is probably not an exaggeration to credit Wariston as a major catalyst for this practice of personal covenanting going mainstream in Scottish Presbyterianism and beyond. This is largely due to his persuading a close ministerial friend to prepare a treatise on the subject. The minister was William Guthrie of Fenwick, and the book was *The Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ*. The work was published in many languages and has stayed in print almost

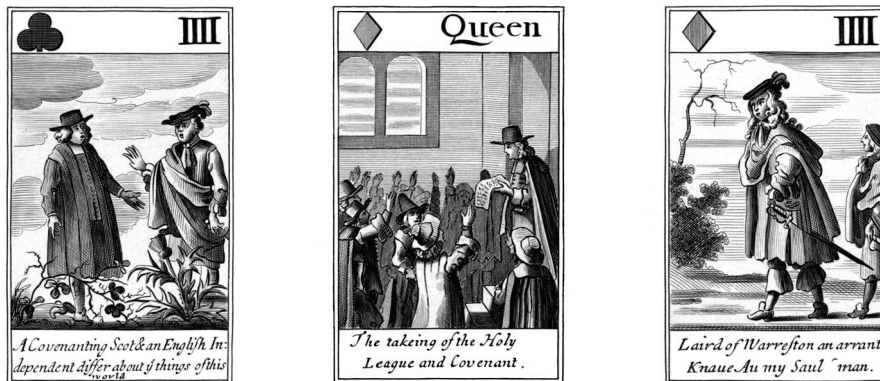
constantly ever since. John Owen famously remarked that there was more divinity in this one volume than in all of his own works put together. As this remark from Owen suggests, the personal Covenanting ideal resonated deeply even with the Independents, who took up the practice as individuals and as gathered congregations both in England and New England.

By way of application, our forefathers learned to walk between two extremes: The 'tyranny of Episcopacy' and the 'tyranny of conscience.' The former lesson was learned by the pre-Covenant generation who faced the Laudian liturgical impositions in Christ's worship, and from the Covenanters of the Post-Restoration Killing Times who endured even worse. The latter lesson was learned by the Covenanters in the Cromwellian era. As Covenanters living in the modern West, we face both pressures. There is increasing governmental intrusion into ecclesiastical affairs, but at the same time our pluralist society has generated a religious sphere which has much more in common with the age of Cromwell. Religious 'toleration' has triumphed, we are awash with independent churches and sects, and perhaps even more challenging, we are tempted to imbibe an Independent mindset in the churches, where individual conscience trumps the church's corporate confession.

5. Compunction (1660-63)

The last three years of Wariston's life are a sad tale of compunction – that is, deep regret and soul-searching. When Charles II was restored to power in 1660, despite his promise of clemency towards tender consciences, he had personal scores to settle. Among them were the political and spiritual leadership of the Scottish Covenanters who had compelled him to swear the Covenants as a condition to recover his crown, back in 1651. Of these men, Samuel Rutherford died before he could heed his summons to trial, the Marquis of Argyll was beheaded, and James Guthrie hanged. All had been Wariston's close friends and colleagues in the Covenanter cause.

Wariston, however, managed to escape to the continent, where he lived as a fugitive for three years in the Netherlands, Germany, and eventually France, where he went into hiding in the village of Lintot near Rouen. Charles had spies searching for Wariston, and it is recorded that he survived at least one assassination attempt by poisoning, followed by the draining of 60 ounces of blood by the king's physician, posing as a friend. These events left him in a state of considerable physical weakness and mental derangement. Finally, his wife was identified by the king's agents, who secretly followed her to their lodgings, where Wariston was seized while at prayer. He was extradited



Satirical playing cards from the time

from France, and spent a year in the Tower of London, before being sent for his show-trial in Edinburgh.

Wariston's trial was by all accounts a pathetic sight: he sobbed and begged for his life, all the while having apparently lost his memory. Even the hardest of judges were visibly moved. Nevertheless, he was quickly found guilty of treason, and sentenced to death. Remarkably, his senses returned in the days prior to his execution, and he managed to compose a remarkable final testimony, which he read from the scaffold:

I am pressed in conscience to leave here at my death, my true and honest testimony, in the sight of God and man, unto and for the National Covenant, the Solemn League and Covenant ... I do here submit and commit my soul and body, wife and children, and their children's children, from generation to generation, for ever, with all others our Lord's friends and followers, and all his doing, suffering, witnessing, and sympathizing ones, in the present and subsequent generations, unto the Lord's choicest mercies, graces, favours ... in earth, and in heaven, in time and eternity: all which suits I leave before the throne, and upon the Father's merciful [heart], and the Son's mediating merits, and the Holy Spirit's compassionating groans, for now and for evermore. Amen.

Wariston was hanged, beheaded, and his head was affixed next to Guthrie's skull on the Netherbow Port.

Conclusion:

Wariston's story is worth telling, but worth telling honestly! Our tendency can be to leap to the defence of one of our own forefathers and rescue his reputation from the aspersions of the secular historical establishment. But as we have considered the contours of his life and career, we need to remember that however much in sympathy we may be with the Covenants he lived and died for, we should also be free from hagiography. The task of a Christian

historian is certainly to tell a good story, but it is also to deal honestly with the sources to provide an accurate assessment of the past. As Christian historians, we ought not propose the unattainable examples of 'Covenanting saints,' but paint realistic portraits of sinners saved by grace – 'men of like passions' (James 5:17) – whom Christ was pleased to use to build His Church in difficult times despite their many faults.

Church history in general, and Christian biography in particular, are among the most useful and under-appreciated tools the church possesses for the edification of the saints. Quite apart from the approachability and readability of the genre (we all like stories!), the student of Church history gains a contextualized understanding of a lengthy period of church history, learning from the common Christian experience of brothers and sisters across the ages.

Specifically, Wariston shows how our own branch of the church has borne a particular testimony to the Kingly office of Christ. As Wariston said at the Westminster Assembly, 'In former times Christ hath gotten testimonies to his prophecy and priesthood, now he looks to it for his kingdom ... Christ is born for a crown, and now are all born to this end: to give testimony to this.'

All of Church history is a record of Christ's kingly power, not just the tiny corner of Covenanter history that we perhaps enjoy so much! But 400 years on, as Reformed Presbyterians, we continue to proclaim Christ in all three of his offices, and in particular, to give a testimony to how his kingly office should be applied to the time and place in which we live. Wariston's applications of this truth in his generation might not always be exactly what would be appropriate for our age, nor ours for his. And yet the same Christ reigns in both generations, and so let us pray that by His Spirit He would direct us how to discerningly follow in the footsteps of our Covenanting forefathers, as servants of the King, who is also the Lord of History.



The Duty of Christ's Witnesses to be Separate

Chapter 3 of Claims of the Divine Government Applied to the British Constitution

REV. WILLIAM ANDERSON, LOANHEAD RPC

Prepared and Published by the direction of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Scotland (1843)

Let us consider the necessity laid upon Christ's faithful witnesses to guard against being partakers of the national guilt. When we contemplate in the light of God's holy word the moral evils of the British government in its constitution and administration, and when we consider the national guilt thereby contracted, on account of which our land becomes exposed to God's righteous judgments, it is incumbent on us seriously to inquire what is the duty of Christians in regard to these things—and specially to inquire what is our own duty as members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as successors of the persecuted Covenanters—acknowledging as we do the supreme authority of the blessed Redeemer and the perpetual obligation of our national vows, and adhering as we do to the scriptural cause and testimony for which our forefathers laid down their lives, and which they have transmitted to us as a sacred legacy, bequeathed to us at the expense of their blood.

Is there no possibility of maintaining a consistent testimony for the honour of our Redeemer and the glory of his crown, and of keeping ourselves free from those iniquities of the land by which his authority is insulted, and his crown despised? Does the fact of dwelling on the soil where God has given them their being, bind up all the inhabitants in the national society, in such a manner that they cannot avoid being partakers of the national guilt? Surely this cannot for a moment be maintained. Those who, as witnesses for God, hold forth a faithful protest against all the prevailing corruptions—who keep themselves separate—and who touch not the unclean thing, shall be graciously distinguished when the judgments of God are abroad in

the earth. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9). In the day of reckoning, when the messengers of wrath are sent forth, each with his destroying weapon in his hand, to punish for the iniquities of the land, the Lord will give command to "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezek. 9:4).

In reference to Babylon the great, this is the command of God; "Come out of her, my people, that ye not be partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Rev. 18:4, 5). In the case of corrupt churches, it is the duty of the followers of the Lamb, in obedience to this command, to come out of them and to be separate. On this ground we protest against the Church of Rome, and hold ourselves bound to have no connection with her abominations. We protest against the Prelatic Churches of England and Ireland, which have embodied in their constitution many of the corruptions of Rome—which have made no provision whatever for the scriptural exercise of discipline—and which own a mere mortal as supreme head of the church. We protest against the Church of Scotland, which was set up by an Erastian settlement at the time of the Revolution—which has abandoned to a large extent the scriptural platform of the Covenanted Reformation—and which has tamely submitted to the iniquitous law of patronage, and other encroachments of anti-christian power, by which she has been grievously corrupted, her members deprived from generation to generation of that liberty with which Christ has made his people free, and ungodly ministers thrust in,

to the dishonour of religion and the ruin of immortal souls.

And are we not still more bound to protest against “the throne of iniquity” (Psalm 94:20), which, in reference to these very churches, has established mischief by a law—which has legally sanctioned all the evils of Popery—which has incorporated with itself as an essential part of the civil constitution all the corruptions of Prelacy—and which has wreathed around the neck of the Church of Scotland the yoke by which she is held in bondage, and by which at the present time she is so grievously afflicted? If we protest against the churches which are supported and corrupted by the state, and if love to the Redeemer constrains us to be separate from them—can we be free from guilt if we join with the national society itself which has enslaved and corrupted these churches; and which, moreover, has incurred the responsibility of supporting and countenancing the idolatrous systems of Popery and Hinduism? Can we become a constituent part of a political association which we know to be deliberately and habitually guilty of all these things, and yet deceive ourselves with the imagination that we have no share in the guilt? If we can do this, then on the same principle we might become members of the Church of Rome, and deceive ourselves with the vain imagination that we would be in no way partakers of her sins, and that we might expect complete exemption from her plagues.

It is important to remember that when the principles, and constitution, and habitual practice of any society, whether civil or religious, are distinctly known and avowed; in such a case the simple fact of membership (even although no direct profession, or oath, or engagement, should be required) implies an approbation and support of the essential principles, and constitution, and practice of the society; and if the essential principles or habitual practice be immoral, every member is involved in all the guilt and responsibility of upholding them. If, therefore, we unite with churches whose established laws or prevailing practice in any department (whatever excellencies they may otherwise contain) are opposed to the will of God, we are partakers of their sins, and may expect to be sharers in their plagues. And in like manner, we cannot be guiltless if we unite in the national compact with governments, whose established laws or prevailing practice in any department (whatever excellencies they may in other respects possess) are in direct opposition to the authority of the Redeemer.

There are many precious doctrines of the word of God, acknowledged and professed in the Church of Rome; nevertheless, on account of her errors and immoralities, the people of God are commanded to come out of her, that they be not partakers of her sins, and that they receive not of her plagues. In like manner, we freely

admit that there are many excellencies connected with the British government; nevertheless, on account of the moral evils of the system, the people of God are bound to come out, and be separate, that they be not partakers of the nation’s sins. Besides all the moral evils habitually practised in the administration—it is our firm conviction, and we think it has been proved, that immoral principles and religious corruptions are essentially embodied in the British Constitution. These are distinctly known and openly avowed. They appear prominently in the statutes of the realm, in the treaties of union between the three kingdoms, and in the oaths required from the sovereign. We cannot therefore join in the national association, and be guiltless. We are constrained to continue, as did our fathers, in a state of separation from the national body politic, and to maintain our solemn protest against the evils of the British constitution, by which God is dishonoured, and the souls of men destroyed.

Ever since the overthrow of the covenanted Reformation, by the tyranny and perfidy of Charles the Second, and the persecuting violence of his brother James, when the blood of Christ’s faithful witnesses was so profusely shed for maintaining the principles we now advocate, the witnessing remnant have deemed it their duty to occupy the position of open dissent from the deeds of the national society—to bear witness for the insulted prerogatives of their divine Lord—and to testify against all the encroachments made upon his rightful authority, both in church and state.

We see no cause now to abandon the principles of the persecuted Covenanters. We cannot give the glory to another which belongs to our divine Lord. We cannot recede from the position occupied by our suffering forefathers in the days of Cameron, Cargill, and Renwick, and nobly maintained by their successors, in the cause and testimony of Christ, at the time of the Revolution, and ever since until the present day. Were we to accept the proffered use of the elective franchise, this position would be entirely abandoned. We would thereby incorporate ourselves with the national association, and homologate all its iniquities. The requirements of God’s word, the example of Christ’s faithful witnesses in every age, and our covenanted allegiance to the Prince of the kings of the earth, all forbid such a course. Through divine grace, we are resolved still to occupy, and firmly to maintain, the well-trodden battle ground of our martyred forefathers. We would earnestly invite our brethren in Christ Jesus of every name, to come and join with us on this high and holy ground. And were this done, we are persuaded that ere long the evils against which we protest would be entirely removed, and “the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”



AN INTERVIEW WITH **REV. MARK LOUGHRIDGE** (MILFORD AND LETTERKENNY) ABOUT **THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

1. What are the historical beginnings of the RP Church in the Republic of Ireland?

In a sense there is no beginning of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Ireland for the RPCI predates the division of the island by about three centuries! We are a whole island church, and always have been. As the Covenanters came over from Scotland many settled in the northern part of the island, but others fanned out especially into counties Donegal, Monaghan and Dublin. As years passed, these scattered groupings were formed into societies, into congregations, and eventually into a Synod. At the first synod of the RPCI in 1811 there were ministers and elders representing congregations in Donegal and Monaghan present. Over the years we have had significant mission work in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

2. How many congregations are there at present?

There are seven RP congregations at present in the Republic of Ireland, although there is a great desire to see more planted.

3. How is Christianity viewed by the general population?

Ireland is a radically changed country over the last few decades. It has experienced that secularisation which the rest of Europe has been experiencing but in a highly accelerated form. It has gone from being a highly religious country to viewing itself as a highly secular country. This whiplash effect has left many religious people very disorientated.

The negativity with which the Catholic church is viewed encompasses all things that come under the label of 'Christian'—no real distinction is made in secular eyes between Catholicism and Evangelicalism. The moral values which Christians hold are trampled on, and anyone who takes a stand on these issues faces patronising scorn or outright antagonism.

Yet, I believe, Ireland is in a markedly different position from the rest of Europe, for the gospel has never really taken root in Ireland the way it did in other countries.

There has been little, almost nothing, by way of the revivals which were seen at different times and in different places over the last five hundred years of European history. The gospel itself has been little known here. That means there is a sense in which the gospel is new, fresh, and as people find that their outright rejection of religion and embrace of secularism hasn't fulfilled its promises, and as spiritually inquisitive people are still searching, there is an openness that I haven't seen in other places. It's a great time to be a Christian!

4. How does Irish culture affect your ministry?

When you come to a place where the message you bring is so at odds either with what has traditionally been taught, or what the prevailing worldview is, it isn't a matter of handing out a few tracts and preaching a few sermons. The message needs to be heard in a context of time and trust. If people are going to separate themselves from the beliefs of family or the close knit community it takes time and trust. It takes time to dismantle old belief systems, and it takes time for trust to build. That means ministry and outreach requires patience and commitment. But because of the wonderful interconnectedness of community life, it means too that there are ready-made channels for the gospel to run along which have relationships of trust already established. Often I have found myself sharing the gospel with the friend of someone who has recently come to faith. They don't know me, but they have seen something in someone they trust, and want to find out more.

5. What is the vision of the RP churches in the Republic?

To plant churches the length and breadth of this island, to see churches grow which bring the light of the gospel to places which haven't had it before. And more than that, to encourage and be a blessing to other Christians and churches on the island.

6. What can churches outside Ireland learn from the Irish church?

Unity—There is a wonderful sense of camaraderie amongst Irish pastors. Christians are so few on the ground and churches so small that we can't afford for denominationalism to separate us. We need each other for encouragement. Although we know our distinctives, and are committed to our differences, there is a recognition that the main things are the main things. For the past 21 years pastors in Donegal have met every month for prayer

and encouragement—Presbyterian, Baptist, Pentecostal, Church of Ireland, Independent, Reformed Presbyterian—and prayed, supported and encouraged each other. We co-ordinate our outreach at times so that we aren't duplicating effort, we gather our congregations for prayer at others. And this is replicated in different ways over the island.

Joyful perseverance—There is a great joy even amidst the smallness. I think that churches which have benefited from 'Christendom' and had the blessing of being influential in a culture are at a disadvantage as the world changes. In some ways Irish evangelicalism hasn't had that problem. We have always been nobodies. Church has never been big. Christians have had no voice. Being a Christian has always been tough. When I went to ministers' conferences in the UK I often used to hear ministers bemoaning small congregations, the state of society and that we "lived in a day of small things"; when I went to conferences in Ireland, where churches were far smaller, there was a sense of anticipation and joy amidst all the attendant trials. We need this as we live in the 21st century.

7. How can the Scottish RP Church take a genuine interest in the Irish RP Church?

- Pray for people and resources for planting churches in the Republic of Ireland.
- Pray for the gospel to spread rapidly along family lines.
- Pray for Christian young people to stand with winsome confidence in a very secular culture.
- Pray for towns where there is no gospel witness, and the vast swathes of countryside where there is no church within many miles.
 - 31 towns with a population reach of 5-10k with no known gospel witness
 - 84 towns with a population reach of 10-25k with no known gospel witness
 - 9 towns with a population reach of 25k+ with no known gospel witness



CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

Presbytery met online on the 2nd November. The regular items of business were dealt with – things like reports from the churches, oversight of the men under care from Presbytery, and the financial reports. The pandemic has, of course, brought financial challenges across the wider church but we give thanks to God for His continued provision. At this meeting the report of the Presbytery visitation to Glasgow was also presented. Presbytery organises the formal visitation of every congregation within it in order to oversee and encourage the spiritual life of the congregations and to give help with any issues that might arise. A committee is appointed by Presbytery to do this visitation. Ministers, elders, deacons, and members are given questions to answer and return to the committee, and then the committee meets separately with the minister, elders, deacons, and congregation. The committee presented an encouraging report to Presbytery with recommendations. The next regular Presbytery meeting will be in March 2022.

On Thursday evening the 11th of November, a few women in the Scottish RP Church were able to join in on the Irish RP Church's Women's Fellowship meeting over Zoom.

During this meeting we heard from a few of their women who are doing Kingdom work throughout the world. They shared encouragements, challenges, and prayer requests from each of their situations.

Timothy Duguid (member of Airdrie RPC) has combined his gifts as a musician as well as his computer skills in his most recent project – a digital split leaf psalter! He has made this wonderful resource free to use (www.splitleaf.org). We hope it will be of use to many in the RP church and the wider Christian world.

AIRDRIE

Call to Rev. Stephen McCollum

At a congregational meeting on the 11th November, the Airdrie congregation voted to call Rev. Stephen McCollum, minister of Stornoway RPCS, to be their minister. The call was then processed by the Presbytery and at a special meeting of Presbytery on the 24th November the call was passed to Rev. McCollum who accepted it. Presbytery

has set the date of Saturday 19th March 2022 for the induction service, God willing. We give thanks to God for this answer to our prayers, and we are looking forward to having Stephen, Brenda, Zoe, Eloise, and Knox here in Airdrie.

Kids Club Parties

Kids Club has been online now since March 2020, and while there have been advantages in children from other congregations being able to join in on Zoom, it's always so much better to get together in person. Although we have decided to temporarily continue Kids Club online, we did want to try and schedule some meet up times for the children so that we wouldn't completely lose that in person aspect. So we had two meet ups on the 16th October and the 4th December with 11 children at the first meet up and 6 at the second from Airdrie, North Edinburgh, Stornoway, and Stranraer churches. We played games, sang Psalms, had snacks, and made crafts. It was a great time for the children to spend together.



Kids Club Party

Girls Group Party

On Saturday the 11th December we had our end of year Girls Group party. 7 of the 8 girls who meet each Friday online were able to come to Beth's flat for an afternoon of making cookies, drinking hot chocolate, and watching part of a film. It was a really fun afternoon. The girls who come to Girls Group are from the Airdrie and Glasgow RP churches, a Northern Ireland RP church, as well as some friends from other churches. We are thankful that we have been able to meet regularly on Friday evenings to either study a Christian book, play games, make a craft, or listen to a godly Christian woman be interviewed about her life and experience.



Girls Group Party

GLASGOW

We are grateful to God that Shelby Gillies has had her visa application granted and that she and Ian were both able to return to Scotland at the end of the year. Ian is now available for full-time ministry in Scotland and we are sure the wider church will join us in prayer that the right door will open for him shortly (he is currently assisting in the Glasgow congregation). Despite so many restrictions, we have been encouraged by some new students attending our prayer meeting and joining with us for fellowship. Attendances have been steadily increasing since restrictions were lifted and we have been able to resume the women's Bible Study, the mother and toddler group and some house fellowships - although at the time of writing, there is renewed caution due to the new variant. We continue in prayer for the church, our city and our nation in these perilous times.

NORTH EDINBURGH

On 31st October 2021, we had the joy of welcoming David and Cheryl Morris into membership in North Edinburgh. David and Cheryl had been worshipping regularly with the congregation for almost one year. On the same night, David and Cheryl's son David was baptised too.

Rev. Peter Loughridge preached on the theme 'Confidence in God's Covenant' – about how God's covenant with us and with our children should impact us as parents and in the church.

We are thankful for God's blessing in adding this family to the North Edinburgh congregation.

STORNOWAY

Having reported in the last Good News our thankfulness to the Lord that our minister had declined the Call to Bready, very soon after we were faced with his receiving a Call from Airdrie. This one really did cause us concern which was justified when he accepted that Call at the end of November. Whilst thankful for the Lord's provision for Airdrie this, naturally, left us feeling rather despondent. In the meantime, however, the congregation has gone ahead with a unanimous Call to Rev Kenneth Stewart, Glasgow, which, God willing, we pray will result in a favourable outcome for us. These are matters which we leave in the hands of the Head of the Church who orders all according to His will.

Although the increase in Covid cases over the winter has left us all more cautious, we are thankful that we have been spared any further restrictions on gathering for worship. Cautiousness as a result of Covid has virtually brought an end to our fellowship gatherings. This is regrettable and something which we pray will not last for too long.

In the congregation we have several with a variety of health issues. This has affected our attendances and for

this we covet your prayers. Please also remember us as we continue to look for a permanent place of our own for worship.

STRANRAER

In November we marked 40 years since Rev. Gerald Milligan's induction as minister in Stranraer (having been unable to do so in 2020 due to coronavirus restrictions) with a congregational meal at a local restaurant. At the close of the meal, Rev. Stephen Steele paid tribute to his predecessor for his service in the congregation (past and present). Gerald and Ruth were then presented with gifts and flowers to mark the occasion.

In the autumn we were also glad to be able to start two Sabbath School classes with four pupils. Another new initiative is a men's breakfast, which we hope to hold every couple of months. It has also been encouraging to have a number of new people begin worshipping with us in recent months. In other news, the Church of Scotland are closing a third church in the town since 2004, leaving just one remaining.



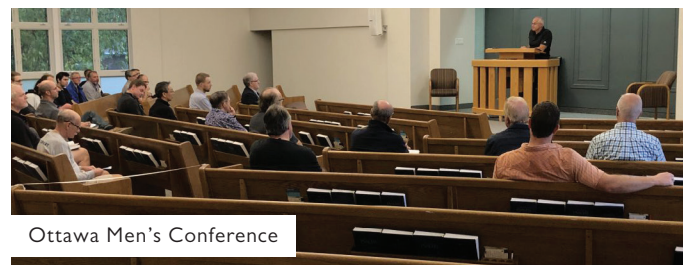


AUSTRALIA

Frankston Reformed Presbyterian Church celebrated the sacrament of baptism for the first time in 6 years in January. Edward ‘Teddy’ Schwertley is the covenant child of Dillon and Yolanda Schwertley. Praise God for his blessings to this family and the Frankston Congregation!



Canada. The practical reasons outlined included provision of an opportunity to create a focused vision, strategy, and culture for the Canadian church. After the explanation, there was a time for the men in attendance to ask questions about the details of the process. It is clear that we can see the hand of God moving in this effort toward the formation of a RP Church of Canada.



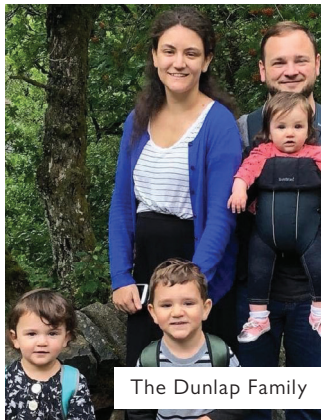
CANADA

Ottawa RPC held a Men's Conference on 16th October for over 30 men from 4 local RP churches. Rev. Matt Kingswood, pastor of Russell Reformed Presbyterian Church, gave two addresses on “The Godly Man”. In between the two messages, there was a session for Matt and Rev. Dr. Andrew Quigley, Minister of the Ottawa RPC, to explain the reasons for an RP Church of Canada. They sought to make it clear that the planned formation of this national denomination in 2022 is not a divisive decision but one based on theological and practical reasons. They made the point that a national covenanting church will enable the RP Church in Canada to speak to the government in

IRELAND

Give thanks that Joey Dunlap, a graduate of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, USA, has accepted a call to be the minister of Loughbrickland RP Church in Northern Ireland. Joey participated not only in the RPCS Semester in Scotland programme, he also led three RPCNA Mission Teams to Scotland. Pray for Joey, Monica, and their children as they settle into life in Loughbrickland.

The Reformed Theological College of the RPCI officially opened for its new term with two new students. These are two young men, both of whom are married with young children, both of whom are keen to serve Christ and his bride but neither of whom have grown up in the denomination. Kenny Stephenson and his wife Charlene



The Dunlap Family

(along with their two year old daughter Abigail) are members of Fairview RPC in Co. Monaghan. Jonny Fitzsimons and his wife Joanna have been blessed with two children: Imogen and Jesse. They are members of Woodstock RPC.



New Students at RTC

JAPAN

Pastor Shigeru Takiura recently married Chizuru. Eight years ago she came to the Okamoto-Keiyaku congregation but sadly during that time she was seriously ill, and expected the church to be the place where her funeral was held. Wonderfully, Gods was pleased to grant her a

miraculous recovery and she is now a faithful member! She also serves as a secretary at Kobe Theological Hall and is one of the treasurers. Rev Takiura says "I have been living single, after my wife Masako entered Heaven 10 years ago. I now still serve in ministries of two congregations, and in responsibility of teaching and administration of the



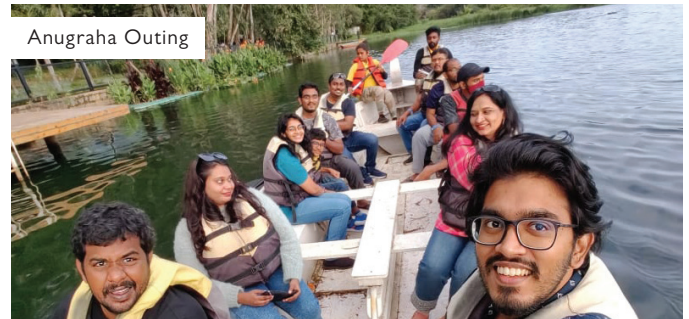
Rev and Mrs. Takiura

Theological Hall, so I am thankful to the Lord for His provision of my wife as a helper in many ways. Please pray for Chizuru and me that we may be kept in one in love and obedience from Christ, and that the Lord bless our new home and use us for building His kingdom here in Japan."

SOUTH ASIA, SOUTH

Anugraha RP Church in Bangalore, India broke away from the monotony of the isolation and pandemic woes to retreat as a church family. Nearly 30 of them travelled together in a fun mini-bus into the wild Bannerghatta

forests for a one-day adventure of teaching, fellowship, and games.



Anugraha Outing

USA

Stillwater RPC recently sent out 26 individuals from their congregation to help begin the Oklahoma City RP church plant which held their first worship service on the 28th November.



Oklahoma City Church Plant

College Hill RPC in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania has recently started a church plant in Beaver called River Valley Fellowship.

Just over nine years ago there were no RP congregations in Texas, but in October was the 5th Annual Texas RP Picnic and four RP congregations were represented! People came from Dallas RPC, Living Way RPC (in Bryan), San Antonio RPC, as well as from the new RP Outreach group in Houston. and faithful men to serve in those works!



Texas RP Churches Picnic



TEENS

&

How do I deal with bullies?

Peter Loughridge
North Edinburgh RPCS

You might be bullied because you're a Christian or because you go to church. The whole book of 1 Peter in the Bible is written to people who were being left out and mistreated because of their loyalty to Jesus. It might be a helpful book of the Bible to read. Chapter 4 reminds us that it's actually an honour to suffer for the One who suffered so much for us: "If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (v14) and "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name" (v16). These words, written by Peter, are very like words Jesus Himself spoke: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you".

However, it's also possible that you're being bullied for some other reason. There are no simple answers I can write – if you're being bullied for any reason, that's really hard. But there are some pointers I would encourage you to think about.

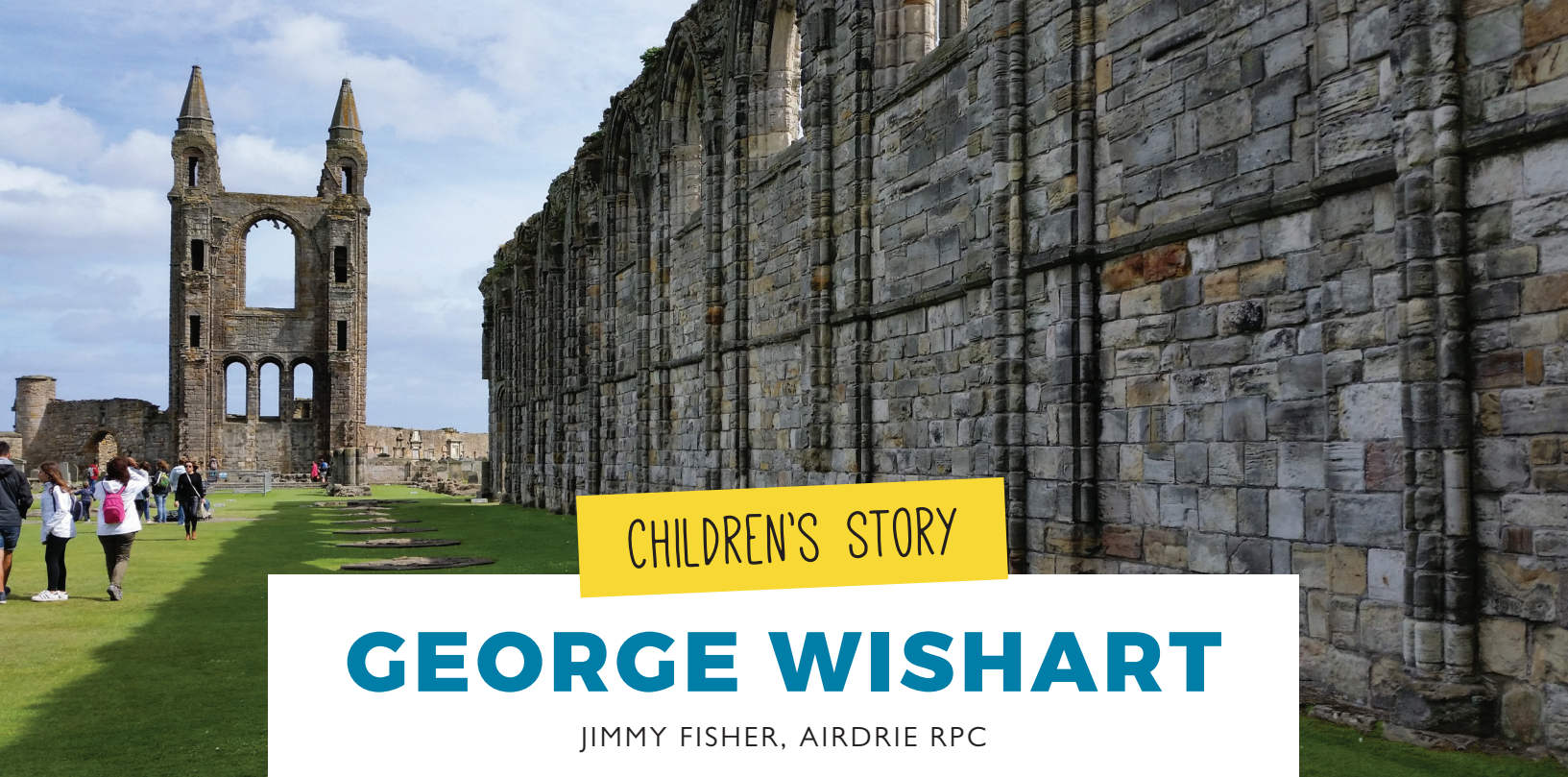
Don't suffer alone. Don't keep it all to yourself. Speak to people you trust and love. Don't hide this kind of thing from your parents. They can support you and pray for you and give you advice. Most of all, bring this problem to God in your own prayers. Proverbs reminds us that's the most important 'friendship' – and, in fact, too much

of other friendships can be a bad thing: "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (18:24).

Don't believe lies. From the very beginning, the devil's strategy against God's people has been to lie (Genesis 3:4). "He is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Often the words of bullies about us are simply not true. They may pick on us because of something about who we are or how we look. But our identity, if we're Christians, is in Jesus Christ – not in who we are or how we look. Hold on to what is true about you in Jesus, which is unfailingly true no matter what anyone else says about us.

Don't retaliate. When others are unkind to us, the temptation is to treat them the same way in return. Yet Jesus' teaching (and His example, especially as He Himself suffered going to the cross) calls on His followers to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile (Matthew 5:39-41).

One last pointer is: surround yourself with good company, especially in the family of the church. Your church should always be a place where you feel welcome and loved by those who also love the same Father. The church should always be a place of fairness and kindness and not bullying. Also, your church can pray for you in the painful situation you face. Prayer makes a difference! God can give you new friendships or change the attitudes of those who are bullying you. He can bring good from all circumstances (Romans 8:28)



CHILDREN'S STORY

GEORGE WISHART

JIMMY FISHER, AIRDRIE RPC

George Wishart was born in a small village on the East coast of Scotland near Aberdeen. After studying in Belgium he came back to Scotland and became the schoolmaster at Montrose. But George's heart had been changed and he now wanted to tell people what the Bible said. He soon got into trouble with the Catholic church for doing so. He escaped and went to England but got in trouble for preaching there too. So he fled England and went to Switzerland and Germany.

In 1542 he came back to England and taught at the University of Cambridge. The people loved him because of his kindness and he often gave away his clothes and even bed sheets to poor people. In 1543 he came back to Scotland to preach again. At Dundee he was forced to leave the town so he went to Ayrshire to preach. Arriving at Ayr he found the church packed with soldiers looking to cause trouble, but by this time he had lots of followers wanting to hear him preach. They wanted to fight the soldiers but George didn't want trouble, he just wanted to tell people about Jesus. Instead of using the church he preached outside in the middle of the town. Something similar happened when he went to another town nearby called Mauchline.

George heard that plague was in Dundee and people were sick and dying. George loved the people there so he returned and began preaching and looking after sick people. He would stand on the city walls and preach to the sick outside and the healthy inside the walls. Cardinal Beaton, the head of the Catholic church in Scotland, was furious and sent someone to kill him. When he was coming down from the wall after preaching, a man ran at him with

a knife but George grabbed his wrist and stopped him. The people wanted to kill this man but like Christ, George was kind and forgiving, and he protected the man and let him go safely.

When the plague was over he left Dundee and began preaching in other places and there was another attempt to kill him. He escaped but knew that it was only a matter of time before Cardinal Beaton caught him, so he decided to use his short time left to continue preaching. He preached in towns around Edinburgh but people were scared, they had been told not to listen to him. George felt sad and alone. But he wasn't totally alone. He had befriended another man with a long beard and a large two handed sword. That man was called John Knox and he would follow George and protect him. But the time was coming to an end and he told John he didn't want him to be arrested and killed too, so he sent John away.

George was eventually arrested and taken to St Andrews where he was held in a cold, dark dungeon under the castle. He was put on trial and found guilty of speaking against the Catholic church and was hanged and burnt at the stake outside the castle on the 1st of March 1546.

George Wishart knew how important it was to tell people about Jesus Christ and how He is the only way to heaven. Many times George could have left Scotland and saved his life but he didn't. He loved people more than his own life and wanted to see people saved. We have to be brave like George Wishart and tell our friends and family members about Jesus too.

Word Search

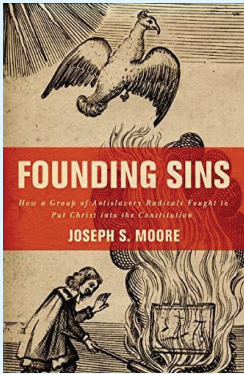


George Wishart

SCOTLAND
TEACHER
GEORGE
WISHART
DUNDEE
SICK
PREACH
KNOX
BODYGUARD
SWORD
BIBLE
LIES
DEATH

D V E O E K N P Q E V P O O E I B C B H
K N O L G H D W O X A S I E L L X N C V
W I Z I U N L B B R D I D H D Z U A A B
S C P I H F S T E A C H E R C M E T X N
V D W I S H A R T X J I V K T R L V K G
B E N G B S S S T G G H M I P C W C M O
H P H G O Z W I N R D E K G Y Y L Y H G
X G Z R S P K F C P R D O G T I T I Q X
X J F B J G E Z Z K X I N R W F R D E Z
G Q U D N L Q J J B Q Z A V G O L L C S
G K O O B S W O R D O R B M W E J K I T
M A Y I P N T Q L L J W G B C V Q S T M
W O B Q J J W Z V S X U U O J D J B K R
M N Z W V N B V S U I C K D R J T L Q V
M N T M W U G I I O A V N Y Q X Q N Z B
D T I F X F B N Q N N K O G D S M E M H
N E O S T D U N D E E T X U S E T J D F
E C V F S C O T L A N D S A K Z A T G T
V K E L K T U E V D B N L R A I Z T X F
M F C U S X F D Q L Q F I D Q P R S H W

RECOMMENDED READING



Founding Sins: How a Group of Antislavery Radicals Fought to Put Christ into the Constitution by Joseph S. Moore

Oxford University Press

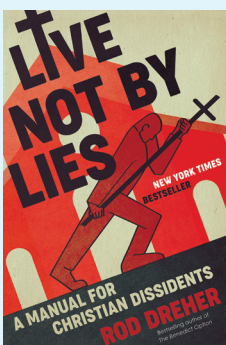
This book is one that I have wanted to read for quite some time. A common misconception about the United States of America is that it was founded on Christian principles, even that it was once a Christian nation. This conjecture is difficult to reconcile with the writings of the Founding Fathers and with the witness of the Covenanters, particularly within our own denomination, who had emigrated to America. *Founding Sins* shows that instead of a decidedly Christian foundation, America deliberately abandoned a Christian view of civil government. Moore evidences his premise in two particular regards: (i) the fact that Christ

was explicitly not honoured in the framing of the American Constitution, and (ii) the endorsement of ungodly slavery in the Constitution. In these points he is convincing.

Moore takes a broad Covenanting consensus that includes diverse denominations in America, particularly Reformed Presbyterian, Seceders, and the various subdivisions of each. While there was not always unanimity on each point of doctrine, for example whether Covenanters may incorporate with an anti-Christian constitution or should practise political dissent, there was consensus on the question of whether the nation was to be regarded as Christian. Moore traces the history of many ineffective attempts to have Christ given pre-eminence in the Constitution. Perhaps the closest was when Abraham Lincoln was convinced that the Constitution needed to be amended.

Although Moore is not himself a Covenanter and presents his own views there is much in this book that is interesting about the history of our denomination in America and the common theology that we share to witness for national covenanting. We long to see that day when nations will “kiss the Son” by honouring Him in their constitutions and policies.

- Rev. Stephen McCollum



Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents by Rod Dreher

Sentinel

Live Not by Lies is not written from a Reformed perspective. Dreher was raised a Methodist and has converted twice, once to Roman Catholicism and again to Eastern Orthodoxy. Throughout the book he uses examples of people who come from the wide spectrum of Christendom who lived on the other side of the Iron Curtain under tyranny. These examples are inspiring, yet many are those who we may not necessarily consider to be Evangelical or Biblical Christians. Nevertheless, Dreher presents a thought-provoking case that nations in the West are being infiltrated by a soft totalitarianism in matters such as identity politics and

that now is the time for action. For those who are concerned with the liberties of the individual and particularly with the liberty of the Church to preach an undiluted message, these matters are pressing. We are convinced already that there is much to keep separate from in our own nation, but some of the challenges that have come before the church in the last few years have left us stunned. The more we consider these topics the better.

- Rev. Stephen McCollum



**"And out of the ground the Lord God made
every tree grow that is pleasant to the
sight and good for food."
Gen. 2:9**