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The General Assemblies

The Church of Scotland

In the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland the Queen's High Commissioner to the Assembly for this year was Sir John Gilmour and the new Moderator of Assembly was Rev. Professor John MacIntyre.

During the Assembly a great number of topics were dealt with. One matter which raised considerable interest was the case of Rev. Donald Riach of Thurso and his elder, both of whom had been re-baptised by immersion. The last Assembly had ordered an inquiry into the whole incident. The outcome of the affair was that the minister and elder were to be admonished and rebuked for having undergone a second baptism. They were also to be asked to give an undertaking to uphold the Church's position on infant baptism. One would have expected that if conscientious motives moved these men to seek baptism by immersion, that their consciences would also have told them to leave a Church upholding the paedo-baptist outlook and join the Baptist Church. One strange aspect of the disciplining of these men over the question of baptism is the fact that they would not expose themselves to discipline though the views they held of the main doctrines of God's Word were far from Scriptural.

Rev. Neil Craig expressed concern over the situation of women ministers in fixed-time parishes. He saw in it a reluctance on the part of some vacancy committees to give serious consideration to women, and this, he claimed, despite the fact that many of our women ministers are engaged in fruitful ministries. If there is, as Mr Craig states, a reluctance to appoint women minister to certain parishes we would see this as a hopeful sign. It would be well if they were all unemployed, so far as the pastoral office is concerned.

A call for one level of stipend for all parish ministers was rejected. The Convenor of the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee indicated that the minimum stipend last year was £5,250 and the average stipend £5,768. In 1983 the minimum stipend was likely to be increased to £6,300. One

minister told the Assembly that his minimum stipend was quite adequate for his needs. "I did not enter the ministry to make a million", he said, "I entered it to serve God and His people."

A move was made in the Assembly towards admitting baptised children to Communion. The Assembly agreed to send an overture with these proposals down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act. Rev. Finlay MacDonald, Jordanhill, said: "We are aware of practical difficulties but we are convinced of the theological rightness". An amendment by Rev. James Salmond of Holytown that the Assembly depart from the matter was defeated. This proposal, if agreed to by Presbyteries, will no doubt add many more unconverted communicants to the hundreds of unconverted communicants already desecrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper within the Church of Scotland.

The General Assembly decided that the concept of the "Motherhood of God" is to be discussed between the Women's Guild and the Panel on Doctrine. The blasphemous boldness of the proposal would surely have made the Assembly dismiss the proposal with repugnance but today any suggestion however bizarre or anti-Christian must be looked into and made the subject of serious study.

The Assembly was seriously split over the Falklands Crisis, only a narrow majority supporting Mrs Thatcher's stand and 122 commissioners recorded their dissent. By a large majority the Assembly voted in favour of a recommendation renouncing the use of nuclear arms and to press for the manufacture of nuclear weapons to halt immediately.

A proposal that May 30th should be a day of prayer and national repentance when both church and nation should be urged to turn again to God was passed in the Assembly. The decision was sent to the Free Church Assembly and Free Presbyterian Synod inviting their support. Replies were sent to the Church of Scotland by both churches recording their support for the proposed day of prayer.

On Friday of the Assembly the Inter-Church Relations Report was taken up and the question of the meeting between the Moderator of the General Assembly and the Pope. On this last matter the Religion and Morals Committee of our Church had sent in a Petition objecting to this meeting with the Pope and stating its grounds of opposition to it. The Convener and Clerk of the Committee were given an opportunity to speak to the Assembly on their Petition. It was gratifying to find some members of the Assembly coming to the rostrum to support our point of view though other speakers, as might be expected, were very much the reverse. When the vote was taken the Assembly overwhelmingly

supported the proposal for the meeting between the Moderator and the Pope. This meeting did eventually take place under the shadow of John Knox's statue to the shame of the Church of Scotland in its professed adherence to Protestant beliefs. The consequences of this tragic meeting are still in the womb of time.

Free Church of Scotland

At the Free Church Assembly Rev. Donald Lamont, Edinburgh was appointed Moderator. In his Moderatorial address he exposed the claim that the Church of Rome has changed. "The present occupant of the papal chair," he said, "is the living embodiment of the fact that it has not changed for he has stated in unambiguous terms . . . that he is unequivocally committed to the entire system of Roman dogma without modification or change." Mr Lamont was also critical of the complacency in his own Church and suggested that they had lost in great measure the spirit of John Knox and the reforming fathers whose avowed aim had been the evangelising of Scotland. In answer to the questions, Are we to conclude that the glory has completely and finally departed, and therefore it is futile to continue? Are we to fall into the pit of despair along with the apostate liberal Church and think of ourselves as living in the post-Christian era? Are we to stoop to worldly methods and gimmicks in the hope of salvaging something of what seems to be passing from our grasp? he stated, God forbid, and called on the Church to assert and proclaim, with redoubled zeal and energy, the sole authority of the Divine Word — the voice of the Spirit.

A call was made in the Assembly for a restoration of a genuine Christian sense of morality and order in the educational system. The Assembly agreed that the Authorities could help to deliver our youth from the spirit of lawlessness that is now taking possession of them and encourage soundness of aims, integrity of character and assiduous devotion to duty.

A proposal to examine the staffing level at the Free Church College was turned down and the Assembly went on to appoint Rev. Douglas MacMillan as Professor of Church History in place of Rev. Professor G.N.M. Collins who retired.

I fear nothing but sin.

Chrysostom

Presumption is the high road to ruin.

Matthew Henry

Sermon

by Rev. Jonathan Rankin Anderson

"Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, Thou shalt call a nation that Thou knowest not, and nations that know not Thee shall run to Thee because of the Lord Thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel: for He hath glorified Thee." Isaiah 55: 4, 5.

The prophet Isaiah is truly called the evangelical prophet: for the hand of the Lord was upon him, to carry him in vision over the period of 700 years, and to set him down in the midst of the gospel dispensation, as introduced by the personal ministry of Messiah the Prince. In the preceding verses, accordingly, the blessings of salvation are exhibited under the expressive emblem of waters, because of their refreshing properties, and the abundant measure in which they are dispensed; of wine and milk, because of their fitness to exhilarate and to nourish the soul: and of an everlasting covenant, to point out their certainty and perpetuity. A very free and gracious invitation is addressed to needy sinners to come and partake of these precious blessings, to secure a permanent interest in them, to enjoy refreshment from them, and to abide perpetually in this happy condition. The poverty of those who are addressed forms no barrier: their folly in seeking after lying vanities is exposed: and notwithstanding all their guilt and wretchedness, He against whom they have sinned, proposes to make with them an everlasting covenant.

To show how this covenant is to be made, he continues: "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." The covenant which the Most High is now willing to make with men is the covenant of grace, and therefore it is usually expressed in the form of free gift on His part. The whole burden of His covenant is laid upon the shoulder of His Incarnate Son, of whom David was an eminent type: the mercies which it ensures to all who lay hold of it are all laid up in His person. "For it pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell." The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And therefore is He proposed as the immediate object of attention. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." He is introduced with "Behold": and brethren. He is wonderful in His own person, and wonderful in the gift which the Father makes of Him. The Apostle responded to this

exclamation when he says, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

The Father gives Him in the gospel. "Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him also, freely give us all things?" "Unto you first, God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from His iniquities." The soul must receive this wonderful gift in the exercise of faith. And just so the Lord gives, and because He gives, must we receive. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

He is given as a "witness to the people." In their state of innocence our first parents were addressed by a false witness, the devil, in the form of a serpent, who threw out the most detestable insinuations against the character of God, who suggested that the law was unduly severe and rigorous, and that the service He had imposed on them stood in the way of their honour and happiness. And they were foolish and wicked enough to believe him: and many and grievous are the lies which this false witness hath imposed upon mankind: for he is "the father of lies."

In carrying into effect the purpose of His grace, it seemed meet to the wisdom of God to raise up a faithful and true witness: and He brings back His banished by the faith of His testimony: just as they had apostatized from Him by believing the testimony of the devil. For the truth of God must be maintained: let come what will, and Satan and his children to be liars.

And now, behold the witness in the person of His own Son made flesh! He testifies of the blessed God: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He testifies to the perfect purity of His character: "This is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." He testifies to the riches of His grace. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

He testifies to the rectitude and goodness and immutability of the law. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am come

not to destroy, but to fulfil." He testifies to the excellence and equity, and blessedness of the service of God. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." He testifies, in a word, to all which concerns the glory of God, and the salvation of lost sinners: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." "And this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." He bore this testimony by His Spirit in His servants the prophets. "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testifies beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." He bore it in His personal ministry, by His life, doctrine, sufferings, and death, of which we hear in the four Evangelists: "What He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth: and no man receiveth His testimony." He bore it by the preaching and writings of His Apostles: "What we have seen and heard declare we unto you." "We have the mind of Christ." He now bears it instrumentally by His word read and preached, and inwardly by the illumination and power of the Holy Ghost. "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The grand design of His testimony is to illustrate the glory of Him of whom, and through whom and to whom are all things. But, subordinately unto this, is the salvation of His chosen people from sin and death: "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

The work assigned to Him is indeed great: but He is eminently qualified for it, being a Divine person, anointed with the Holy Ghost in His human nature, and possessing a perfect knowledge of the whole subject, design, and end of His testimony: "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth." "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness." "I speak that which I have seen with My Father." He is the "Faithful and True Witness." "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus: who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house."

He is given as "a leader to the people." The great enemy having

succeeded with our first parents to listen to his testimony, easily led them on to sin and ruin, because He led them to depart from the living God: and in this way has he prevailed with all their children: "They are led captive by him at his will."

To overthrow this foul enemy, the seed of the woman was raised up, and He by His testimony received by faith sends men in the way in which they should go. He leads them away from sin in its guilt and power. "He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present world, according to the will of God and our Father." He leads them back to God, from whom Satan seduced them: "He died the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." He leads them into the knowledge of God, as Satan led them into the ignorance of Him: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." He leads them back to the love of God. "Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." He leads them back to the service of God: "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

He thus leads them meritoriously by virtue of His death: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." He leads them efficiently by His Spirit: "He the Comforter, will lead you into all truth." He leads them instrumentally by His holy word. "Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path." He leads them morally by His example: "Who left us an example, that we should follow His steps."

The people need such a leader: for even after His testimony has been laid before them, and they have received it, they know not how to use it, what road to take, nor how to advance in the face of difficulties and dangers. The children of Israel had an eminent witness in Moses: and they believed his word concerning the land flowing with milk and honey: but they never could have found their way without him: and he could not have led them but that the Angel of the Divine Presence went with him: "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." And so it is with the spiritual Israel who journey towards the heavenly Canaan. They may receive the testimony of Christ concerning that land and their inheritance in it: but how are they to proceed without a leader? They are blind, and cannot see a step before them. Jesus must take them by the hand. They are like silly sheep, ever prone to stray: He must go before them, and cause them to follow Him. He accordingly leads them by the right way, that they may go to a city of habitation.

He is given "for a commander to the people." It was ordained in righteous retribution, that our first parents, having chosen the devil as their witness and their leader should be subject to his power. And now

they knew the sad difference between the dominion of the Lord and that of this tyrant. And their error has entered into the souls of all their posterity: for "we are of our father the devil, and the lusts of our father we will do." He is "the god of this world", the "ruler of the darkness of this world", who rules in the children of disobedience. But, behold the Conqueror of Satan, and therefore the Commander of His covenant people! He commands them by His authority. And in this He commands them to love God, whom Satan commands to hate: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." He commands them to love their brethren: "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." He commands that all their lives should be a doing of the Divine will. "And this is the will of God, that we keep His commandments."

He commands by the efficient operation of His Spirit: "He writes His law upon their hearts." By this means they are kept near to Himself as the source of their life: "Abide in Me, and I in you." He commands them by His presence and power. He is the Captain of the Lord's host, and conducts them in the day of conflict with their spiritual enemies. He commands them by His love. Such is the glorious Person that is given of God to the people. But it is most plain from the word of God that none will believe on Him but those that are taught of God.

"No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise Him up at the last day." The ground, however on which these believe in Christ is the promise made of Him by the Father. There are multitudes that profess to listen to Christ, and follow, and obey Him, who have never come to deal with God aright according to His word. They think they are at liberty to look to Christ for salvation when they please, and as they please. And they say it is their duty to profess to be Christians. Not so fast, brethren. It is the duty of men, no doubt, to profess, but they must first become the disciples of Christ, else their profession is deceitful and spurious. Now, no man is a disciple of Christ but by a new birth, by the power of the Holy Ghost. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." And till then men do not know what He is as a witness, a leader, and a commander; far less do they receive His testimony, and do His will.

But they who thus close with Christ by faith, do then lay hold of God's covenant, and have secured to them for ever an interest in the sure mercies of David: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

The glorious Person thus exhibited in the word of the truth of the gospel should not thus be exhibited in vain.

Verse 5. "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel: for He hath glorified thee." The gift of Messiah to a lost world is proclaimed in the gospel: but how is it to be made effectual? Not certainly by any disposition in men to accept of it: for had it been left to themselves, there is not an individual of all the generations that have lived, that would have shewn even a disposition to accept the gift. We know that this is a hard saying, and many will not believe that mankind are so depraved, and reckless of eternal destruction. But do not facts proclaim that so it is: for in every age the complaint has been raised: "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

And especially has this been the case with the people that appeared most likely to welcome the promised Messiah, and therefore the Jews appear to be passed over in silence in this passage. For, though Messiah was given for the people, yet the testimony of the Evangelist agrees with the prediction of the prophet, that they should not receive Him. "He is despised and rejected of men", says Isaiah. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not", says the Evangelist.

Here the Jews appear to be passed over in silence: for it is evidently to the Gentiles that reference is made when it is said, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not." The Messiah did not know the Gentiles: that is, He took no notice of them: "I am not come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs." "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

And the Gentiles did not know Him. The Jews had some notions of the Messiah: they looked for Him, and expected great deliverance from Him. But the nations of the earth in general had not so much as heard of His name. "Without Christ." And yet Messiah called these nations. The Apostles went everywhere preaching the word — the Jews, indeed, first, but also to the Gentiles? And in this they acted according to the commission of their Divine Master: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." He then said, "Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by His name." And this call the nations obeyed: "I am sought of them that asked not for Me: I am found of them that sought Me not." And many from among the Gentiles

believed, and turned unto the Lord. And in the days of the Apostles churches were planted in the principal cities of the Gentile world, in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, and Philippi.

But whence should this success arise? "Because of the Lord thy God, and the Holy One of Israel: for He hath glorified thee." The Father glorifies His Son in raising Him from the dead, in setting Him at His own right hand, and in giving to Him all power in heaven and earth. Now, this power was given to Him that He might call men to salvation. "As Thou has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou has given Him." The Holy Ghost is the immediate agent in effectual calling. Now, it was not till Christ was glorified that the ministration of the Spirit properly so called began its course: "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

And accordingly He told His disciples immediately before His ascension, to tarry at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high: "For, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you." The explanation given of the remarkable effusion of the Spirit in the day of Pentecost, by the Apostle Peter, contains these words: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

In the predicted calling of the Gentiles, we, brethren, are deeply and personally concerned. But, besides, it affords a striking proof of the abundance and freeness of the blessings of salvation, and also of the power of the Lord Christ to be a witness, leader, and commander of the people. For if nations that are so alienated from Him, and ignorant of Him, are yet to run after Him, who can deny that He is rich in mercy to all that call upon Him? For "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Amen.

A Lifting up for the Downcast

by William Bridge

Sometimes the discouragements of God's people are drawn from the lack of their evidence for heaven.

And thus they reason or argue: I am a poor creature, lacking assurance of the love of God and of mine own salvation; therefore I am thus discouraged. Indeed, if I had any evidence of an interest in Christ, I should never be discouraged whatever my condition were: but, alas! I

lack the assurance of God's love, and of eternal life. Should I now die, I do not know whether I should go to heaven or hell; and what would become of my soul to all eternity? Oh, I lack assurance of my salvation, and therefore I am discouraged. Have I not good cause and reason for my discouragements?

No, no reason yet. It is indeed a great evil and a sore affliction, to lack the assurance of God's love and of one's own salvation, yet, notwithstanding, the lack of this assurance is no sufficient ground or bottom for your discouragement. I confess it is a great evil and a sore affliction for a man to lack assurance; for sin and affliction are twisted together, of all afflictions they are the most afflictive. And thus it is in the lack of assurance: for as in assurance there is something of grace, and something of comfort or reward; so in the lack of assurance there is somewhat of sin or unbelief, and somewhat of affliction too. Sin and affliction, affliction and sin, are both twisted together in the lack of assurance.

The truth is, a man that lacks the assurance of God's love and of interest in Christ, is fit neither to receive mercy from God, nor to make return of love and praise to God as he should. Not fit to receive mercy as he should, for though he would have Christ come in, yet by unbelief he shuts the door against Him, and he makes an evil interpretation of mercies offered unto him. If a mercy or blessing be tendered unto him, he says, This comes in judgment to me. Thus he makes an ill interpretation of blessings and so is unfit to receive them. And he is not fit to make returns of love to God again: assurance returns praise. And therefore says the text here, O my soul, wait on God, hope in God, "for I shall yet praise Him": why? "For He is my God." Praise grows upon assurance. And upon this account, I say he is fit neither to receive mercy, nor to make return of praise as he should.

Yea, further, he that lacks assurance of God's love, converses too much with Satan. As he that has the assurance of God's love converses with Christ, "the Spirit bearing witness to him that is a child of God"; so he that lacks assurance converses with Satan, and Satan, though falsely, bears witness to his spirit that he is not a child of God. And is it not a misery to be in these converses with Satan, to be under his hellish droppings? David felt one pang of unbelief, and he cried out, and said, "It is too painful for me." Psalm 73.16. Oh, what a pain is it then, to lie bedridden of an unbelieving heart. You know a chaste and loving wife counts it an affliction to her to be followed with the solicitations of an unworthy person, to suspect and be jealous of her husband's love; for, says she, he

follows me with these solicitations to make me to suspect my husband's love, that so he may attain his own filthy desires. So says a gracious soul; the devil is always following and tempting me to suspect the love of Christ, and he does it that he may attain his mind upon me; for the devil knows well enough, that the more I suspect Christ's love, the more I shall embrace Satan's love. The truth is, beloved, this lack of assurance in God's love, or interest in Christ, is an inlet to many sins and miseries; for first a man doubts of his own salvation. Afterwards he has continued doubting. Then he rises up unto a full conclusion, saying, Now know I that Christ does not love me; I did but doubt before, but now I know He does not love me. And after he is risen to this conclusion, then shortly he rises higher, and he goes further, thus: If Christ does not love me now, He will never love me; and if I have not an interest in Christ now, after all the preaching I have heard, and the ordinances I have enjoyed I shall never have it; and so the longer I live, the more I shall aggravate my condemnation. Therefore as good in hell at first as at last, and therefore now I will even make away with myself. Oh, what a black chain is here! and the first link is the lack of assurance. If you should see a child, a pretty child, lie in the open street and none own it, would it not make your bowels yearn within you? You come to the little one, and say, Child, where is your father? I know not, says the child. Where is your mother, child? I know not. Who is your father? What is your father's name, child? I know not. Would it not make your heart ache to see such a little one in the streets? But for a poor soul to lie in the streets, as it were, and not know his father, whether God be his father or the devil be his father; for a soul to say, I do not know my father, whether God in Christ be my father, yea or no; this is pitiful indeed. The word "father" is a sweet word for it sweetens all our duties. Take the word "Father" out of prayer, and how sour it is! Surely, therefore it is a sad and sore affliction to lack the assurance of God's love in Christ. But now, although it be a great evil, and a sore affliction to lack this assurance, yet I say, the saints and people of God have no reason to be cast down or discouraged, although they do lack the same. How may that appear?

Thus: if the lack of assurance be not the same thing as a damning unbelief, then a man has no reason to be quite discouraged. Now, though there may be much unbelief bound up in the lack of assurance, yet I say, the bare lack of assurance is not the unbelief that shall damn one's soul to all eternity; it is not that unbelief which Christ threatens with damnation. For if you look into John 3.18, you will find our Saviour speaking thus: "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is

condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God." But now, lest any poor soul that would believe, and cannot, should be afflicted and troubled at these words, therefore says our Saviour Christ, in the following words, I will tell you wherein lies the damnableness of unbelief, verse 19, "This is the condemnation (He speaks in relation to the words before), that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; for everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd (or discovered)." This light is Christ, now therefore do you hate the light, even Christ? and do you therefore keep from it lest your deeds should be discovered? or rather on the contrary, do you not know there are evil deeds in your life, and much evil in your heart? and do you not therefore desire to come to Christ, who is the true light, that your deeds may be confessed, and your sin amended? Then, you cannot believe as you would, and though you lack assurance, and though you have much unbelief in you, the Lord Jesus Christ has spoken, you will never be condemned for this lack to all eternity, but the Lord Christ will pardon this unto you: and therefore certainly upon this account, God's people have no reason for their discouragement.

If there be such an overruling hand of grace and mercy upon the lack of the saint's assurance, as that it shall work to their and to other's good, then they have no reason to be quite discouraged, although they do lack assurance.

As for their own good: thereby they do gain experience: thereby they come to see the emptiness and nothingness of all their own righteousness. David says (you know the scripture), Psa. 116, 11, "I said in my haste, all men are liars." The words in the Hebrew may be read, "I said in my shaking, all men are liars." David was shaken by men and then he says that men were liars. So, when a man is shaken in his own righteousness, then he sees the emptiness and the lying disposition of it. And, I pray, when is a man's own righteousness more shaken, than when he lacks assurance of God's love? Thereby also, a man comes to get more and stronger assurance of God's love; *Certissimum est, quod certum est post incertitudinem* (that is most certain that is certain after uncertainty). The shaken tree grows the strongest. It is observed of Thomas, that of all the apostles, he cried out, and said, "My Lord and my God". Two My's! Not one My. My Lord or My God. But two My's, My Lord and My God." Two My's! Why? Because he had two No's before! "Unless I may put my finger into his side, I will not believe." So you read it; but in the original there were two No's, "I will not, not believe": a double Not, John 20. 24-29.

And as there were two No's of unbelief, so there are two My's of faith. So far as a good man is sunk in unbelief, so far he will rise in faith. So much as a man is shaken by unbelief, and by the lack of assurance, so much he will rise unto assurance and be confirmed and steeled in it.

And as for others: a man is never more fit to comfort, to relieve, to satisfy others in their fears, than when he has been in fears and doubting himself. I would rather believe poor doubting Thomas, than confident Peter: I would rather believe poor doubting Thomas than Peter who never doubted. Thomas, who had himself once doubted, knew how to deal with a poor doubting soul. Thus, I say, God turns the lack of assurance of His servants unto their own and other's good: and therefore there is no reason that they should be cast down, and quite discouraged although they lack assurance for the present.

If a man, a gracious man, may have comfort, yea and live comfortably, although he lacks assurance, then he has no reason to be quite discouraged. Now, though it may seem a paradox to you, yet you will find a truth in it; I say a man that has no assurance for the present, may have comfort; yea, he may live comfortably, if things be rightly ordered. For he that has no assurance, may have hope; and hope is comfortable. He that has no assurance, may yet rely upon Jesus Christ, and stay his soul upon Christ; and in all reliance there is some comfort. He that has no assurance may be justified, and being justified by faith, we have peace with God. He that has no assurance may submit unto God's commandments; and says the Psalmist, "the entrance into thy commandments giveth light," and so comfort. "In keeping thy commandments there is great reward," and so comfort. "It is a comfortable thing (says Solomon) to behold the light": and in all light there is some comfort. Now God is light and the free grace and love of God is light, which a man may behold that has no assurance. You sometimes find a great deal of contentment in the reading of a story: I do not mean a scripture story, but in other books, I say, a man sometimes finds a great deal of contentment in reading a story, although it does not concern him; for, says he, although this story does not concern me, yet I find complacency and contentment in reading of it, because here I read of the valour of such a man; and of the faithfulness of such a man to his friend; and of the excellent behaviour and virtues of men. Now, my beloved, is there no excellency in God Himself to content the soul? Is there no faithfulness in God? Is there no love and mercy in God himself? Is not the Lord the God of all consolation, and the God of mercy, without particular relation to my own condition? Is there not an ocean of excellent love and grace in God Himself? How many sweet stories of love and grace

may you read in this little book, the Bible? Besides, a man that has no assurance, now and then may have some promise thrown into his soul, to uphold him. When Elijah was by the brook, and could not enjoy the ordinary meat of the land, a raven brought him meat: and whenever was any godly man in such a condition, but he had one raven or other to bring him comfort? Sometimes a temptation is a raven: God makes it so; sometimes a desertion is a raven; sometimes an affliction; sometimes a particular word and promise is thrown into his soul: and is there no comfort in it? I say, though a man lacks assurance for the present, he may live comfortably. Surely therefore a godly man has no reason for his discouragement, though for the present he lacks assurance?

Wheat and Tares

By Rev. John Flavel

However difficult it may be to discern the difference between wheat and tares, yet doubtless the eye of sense can more easily discriminate them, than the most quick and piercing eye of man can discern the difference between special and common grace: for all saving graces in the saints have their counterfeits in hypocrites. There are similar works in these, which a spiritual and very judicious eye may easily mistake for the saving and genuine effects of the sanctifying Spirit.

Doth the Spirit of God convince the consciences of His people of the evil of sin? Rom. 7, 9. Hypocrites have their convictions too, Exod. 10 v 16 "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you". Thus was Saul also convicted 1st Sam. 15 v 24.

Doth true conviction and compunction work reformation of life in the people of God? Even hypocrites also have been famous for their reformations. The unclean spirit often goes out of the hypocrite by an external reformation; and yet still retains his propriety in him Math 12, v 43, 44. That departure is indeed no more than a polite retreat. Many that shall never escape the damnation of Hell, have yet escaped the pollutions of the world, and that by the knowledge of the Son of God. 2nd Pet 2 v 20 and 21.

Doth the Spirit of the Lord produce that glorious and supernatural work of faith in convinced and humbled souls? In this also the hypocrite apes and imitates the believer Acts 8 v 13. "Then Simon himself believed also". Luke 8, v 13 — "These are they which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."

Doth the precious eye of faith discovering the transcendant excellencies that are in Christ, enflame the affections of the believing soul with vehement desires and longings after Him? Strange notions of heart have also been found in hypocrites towards Christ and Heavenly things John 6, v 34 — "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Math 25 v 8 "Give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out." With what a rapture was Balaam transported, when he said "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his" Numb. 23 v. 10.

Doth the work of faith in some believers bear upon its top branches the full ripe fruit of a blessed assurance? Lo! what a strong confidence and high built persuasions of an interest in God, have sometimes been found even in unsanctified ones? John 8, v 54 "Of whom ye say that He is your God, and yet ye have not known Him." To the same height of confidence arrived those vain souls mentioned in Rom 2, v 19. Yea so strong may this false assurance be that they dare boldly venture to the judgment-seat of God, and there defend it "Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Thy name?"

Doth the Spirit of God fill the heart of the assured believer with joy unspeakable and full of glory, giving him through faith a foretaste of Heaven itself, in those first fruits of it? How near to this comes that which the apostle supposes may be found even in apostates Heb. 6, 8 & 9 who are those said "to taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." If real Christians delight in ordinances, those that are not may also delight in approaching to God. Ezek 33, v 32.

It may be you will say, through the difference be not easily discerned in their active obedience, yet, when it shall come to suffering, there every eye may see it; the false heart may then flinch, and cannot brook that work. And yet this is no infallible rule, for the apostle supposes that the salamander of hypocrisy may live in the very flames of martyrdom. 1 Cor. 13 v 3 "If I give my body to be burned, and have not charity it profiteth me nothing."

As in so many things the hypocrite resembles the saint; so there are other things in which a real Christian may act too like a hypocrite. When we find a Pharoah confessing, a Herod practising, as well as hearing a Judas preaching Christ, and an Alexander venturing his life for Paul; and on the other side find a David condemning that in another which he practised himself, a Hezekiah glorying in his riches, a Peter dissembling, and even all the disciples forsaking Christ in the hour of trouble and danger. O then! how hard it is for the eye of man to discern between wheat and tares. How many upright hearts are now censured, whom God

will clear? How many false hearts are now approved when God will condemn?

“The Lord knoweth them that are His” 2 Tim. 2, v 19. He will have a day perfectly to server the tares from the wheat, to melt off the varnish of the most resplendent and refined hypocrite, and to blow off the ashes of infirmities, which have covered and obscured the very sparks of sincerity in His people. He will make such a division as was never yet made in the world. “Then shall ye return and discover between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not.” Mal. 3, v 18.

Augustine: The Burning Heart—I

by Rev Angus Morrison, M.A., Oban

(Based on a paper delivered at the Free Presbyterian Church’s annual Theological Conference, September, 1981).

From time to time in the history of the Christian Church God, in His all-wise providence, has seen fit to raise up a man whose spiritual power, intellectual gifts and inspiring leadership have left their mark, not merely on his own times, but also on the course of many centuries to come. Just such a man was Augustine, the fourth-century bishop of Hippo in North Africa.

The sheer range of Augustine’s interests and accomplishments is staggering. He was, and with distinction, a preacher and theologian, philosopher and rhetorician, commentator, historian, teacher and controversialist. As an author his two best known works were epoch-making. The best-selling *Confessions* established a completely new genre of Christian literature — that of spiritual autobiography (a form enriched in more modern times by such gems as Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding* and John Newton’s *Authentic Narrative*); and his massive *City of God*, described by Henry Bettenson as “one of the milestones in the history of Western Thought” was the first major formulation of a Christian philosophy of history. Augustine, in fact, was both a powerful scholar and a spiritual genius.

Equally impressive is the extent of his influence on the development of Western civilisation in succeeding ages. There is scarcely any aspect of Western thought and life which has not felt, directly or indirectly, the impress of the bishop of Hippo’s personality and work. In particular,

probably no one personality since Paul has made such an impact on the doctrine, worship and practice of the Church, for good or ill, as he. B.B. Warfield justly writes: "The Western Church has felt the force of his influence in all the main lines of his development, and in no one of its prominent characteristics could it have been, without him, what it has become." In short the whole Western world would, today, be very different had Augustine of Hippo never lived.

But what of the man behind the legend? Most readers of this article will have heard his name and be aware of his great reputation. Some will have read at least the autobiographical part of the Confessions; a few dauntless souls may even have tackled the "City of God". To most people, however, Augustine remains a shadowy, remote, somewhat austere and ascetic figure whose life-story can hardly be expected to contain many elements of interest. This rather common view is not really surprising, in view of the wide chronological, cultural and linguistic gulf which separates us in the twentieth century from him in the fourth. To open any of his works is indeed to enter an atmosphere which is, at first blush, strange and unfamiliar and many would-be readers are thus put right off at the outset. This is a pity for, with the initial hurdles surmounted, Augustine's story is found to contain a great deal that is intensely interesting and deeply instructive for us in our day. It is, above all else, the story of a great sinner, met in his deepest needs by a great Saviour, and transformed into a humble-minded, self-denying and Christ-exalting servant of God. Augustine was a miracle of grace and none was more aware of that fact than *he* was. The goal of his renewed life was ever to magnify divine grace and his preaching, teaching, writing and godly living, together reflect that sanctified purpose. An old woodcut depicts Augustine with upturned eyes, with pen in his left hand and a burning heart in the right. It is a true representation. This is the Augustine whom this paper seeks, necessarily in a sketchy and impressionistic manner, to portray.

We shall concentrate on three phases of his life and work: the early years leading up to his conversion in 386 at the age of 33; his career as pastor and preacher at Hippo; and his emergence as the Church's greatest ever theologian of grace.

1. A Trophy of Grace

The most outstanding characteristic of Augustine's mind as a Christian was its humility. As his fame as a preacher and theologian began to spread far and wide, he became increasingly troubled by the thought that

the honour and adulation he was receiving belonged properly to God alone. He came, eventually, to feel that the only corrective for this would be for people to know more about his early life and of the Lord's gracious dealings with him. And so, some sixteen years after his conversion, he sat down to write his most famous book, the *Confessions*, in which he traces the course of his wanderings in the "far country" till his thirty third year. The Latin word "*Confessio*" in the book's title meant for Augustine two things — accusation of oneself and praise of God, and that is a fair summary of its contents. "He sets himself in this work," says Warfield, "to exhibit the grace of God in action." Towards the end of his life Augustine received a letter from a young friend and admirer requesting a copy of the *Confessions*. The Doctor gladly complied and the covering note which accompanied the book is completely characteristic of the writer: "Herein you have a portrait of me which will prevent you from praising me beyond my deserts; in that mirror you can see me, you can see what I was *and* through my own fault. If you find therein anything that pleases you, then in company with me praise Him whose praises for His work in me I would have men sing; but do not praise me. He made us, not we ourselves! Rather had we made shipwreck of ourselves, had not he who made us re-made us!"

He goes on: "And when you discover me in that volume, then pray for me that I fall not but may be brought to perfection. Pray, my son, pray; you will be robbing me of a very great help if you do not do so."

Let us look, then, at the self-portrait which Augustine presents to us in the *Confessions*.

Boyhood Years

Augustine was born on the 13th November 354, in the North African town of Tagaste. His father, Patricius, was employed in the Roman administration of the town. Little else is known about Patricius at this time, except that, sadly, he was a thorough-going pagan in both beliefs and morals, that he was not seldom guilty of infidelity to his young Christian wife, Monica, and that he had a notoriously bad temper!

About Monica, who at the age of 23 gave birth to Augustine, her third child (he had an older brother and sister), the *Confessions* contain much more information. In fact, it would be true to say that, until her death in 387, a year after her son's conversion, Monica's life was inextricably interwoven with that of Augustine. It is clear that, under God, no one factor was more telling in his life than the influence of his godly mother. "To her", he writes, "I think I owe everything that is best in me." Some of

the most moving passages in the Confessions are those in which he speaks of the influence on him of Monica's example, precepts and prayer.

Converted at an early age, Monica, as a young mother, maintained a quiet but radiant and consistent Christian witness. She bore the temper-tantrums and infidelity of her husband with a patience which astonished her friends and neighbours. At a time and in a society where wife-battering was very widespread, she was never seen sporting cuts and bruises as wives of less tempestuous husbands often were in Tagaste. No doubt, this fact says something for Patricius' powers of restraint, too! In due time, however, Monica's gracious example bore fruit in her husband's conversion, as Augustine records: "Finally, at the close of his life here on earth, she gained even her husband for Thee."

From their earliest childhood, Monica did her utmost to bring Christian influence to bear on her three children — all of whom were later converted. She spoke often and tenderly to them about the Lord Jesus, and although he was to wander deeply into the far country, Augustine never entirely lost something of the respect for the Saviour's name engendered in him by his mother's early instructions. "This name of my Saviour," he recalls, "Thy Son, O God, my tender heart had piously drunk in, deeply treasured even with my mother's milk."

There was at least one element in Augustine's upbringing on which Patricius and Monica were in entire agreement. Both were eager that their son should have the best education available in North Africa. Being comparatively poor, they were prepared to make sacrifices to achieve this purpose. And so, on the completion of his primary schooling, Augustine, at the age of 11, was sent from home to attend secondary school at Madaura, a town which lay some 25 miles to the south of Tagaste.

The Confessions provide some fascinating glimpses of Augustine the schoolboy. The future great Doctor of the Church was, in fact, much like any other boy. He was not specially precocious and far preferred the excitement of the playing-fields to the drudgery of classroom work. Two subjects he found particularly disagreeable. One was arithmetic. "One and one are two; two and two are four — that was a hateful chant to me!" he later wrote. His other great dislike, strangely enough in view of his later vocation, was for the Greek language. This was, at least partly, due to the brutality of the Greek master at Madaura. Speaking of his inability to cope with Homer's *Iliad*, he recalls: "I understood not the words thereof and they did urge me extremely with cruel fears and pains to understand them." Indeed, excessive beatings and floggings seem to have been the rule at this school and the young Augustine had his fair share.

What schoolboy cannot sympathize with these pathetic words: "When I was a child I besought Thee with no little earnestness that I might not be flogged at school — but Thou didst not hear me?" At one point during his course at Madaura, Augustine required a year off school suffering from severe stomach pains. These were possibly connected with the cruel treatment which was meted out by the masters there.

Augustine was not, however, himself a model child. We find him involved in as many pranks and escapades as the next boy — many of them harmless enough. But one incident, which occurred when he was about sixteen, was to cause him profound grief following his conversion. One night he and some friends stole into a neighbour's garden and stripped bare a heavily-laden pear tree. It was not, he sadly tells us, as if he and his friends were hungry — they weren't! What was more, their own parents had any number of pear trees growing at home. Rather, it was an act of "pure wickedness, inspired by love of evil for its own sake." And so we find him lamenting, in words which bear clear witness to the sensitivity of his Christian conscience: "Behold my heart, O God, behold my heart which Thou hadst pity upon in the bottom of the abyss. Now, behold, let my heart tell Thee what it sought there that I should be gratuitously wicked, having no temptation to that evil deed, but the evil deed itself. It was foul and I loved it. I loved to perish; I loved mine own fault, not that for the sake of which I committed the fault, but my fault itself I loved. Foul soul, falling from the firmament to expulsion from Thy presence; not seeking ought through the shame but the shame itself."

Student at Carthage

At the age of sixteen Augustine left home again, this time for the city of Carthage, with a view to completing his education at the University there. He had spent a year at home in Tagaste, during which time Patricius was saving hard to accumulate the necessary funds for a University course. Soon after Augustine's arrival in Carthage, however, his father died. Monica's comfort lay in the fact that by now Patricius gave evidence of a true change of heart. He died a professing Christian. It looked for a time as if Augustine's promising academic career might come to an abrupt end. At this juncture a wealthy friend of the family came to the rescue, and through his generosity the young student was enabled to continue his studies. To this "friend in need" Augustine pays loving tribute:

"When I was a poor boy, pursuing studies that were not available in our town, you provided me with a home, with funds, and with something better — courage. When I was bereaved of a father, you consoled me with

your friendship, roused me with your encouragement, and aided me with your resources. By your favour and friendship, you made me almost as renowned and prominent a personage as yourself in our town."

It was favour well invested. The student from Tagaste soon began to show remarkable abilities in his chosen field — so much so that he carried off all the coveted prizes.

There was, however, another and much darker side to the exciting new beginnings at Carthage. Removed from the sphere of a Christian mother's immediate influence, and surrounded by new and attractive enticements to sin — "a cauldron of unholy loves was seething and bubbling all around me" — Augustine's capitulation was swift and complete. The same year of his arrival in the city, to Monica's intense grief, he took a mistress who later bore him a son, Adeodatus.

"Where was I," he sadly asks, "and how far was I exiled from the delights of Thy house in that sixteenth year of the age of my flesh, when the madness of lust which hath license through man's viciousness, though forbidden by Thy laws, took rule over me and I resigned myself wholly to it."

To be sure, there were periodic bouts of remorse during which he would pray, "Give me chastity and continence — but not yet"; but these Carthage years, despite his academic achievements, were a period of life on which, later, he could only look back with sorrow.

At the same time, Augustine was beginning to experience a curious restlessness and strange yearning of heart — for what, he simply could not tell. Philosophers might explain it in terms of "gropings towards the ultimate", poets might speak about "islands in the West", but it was not till much later that Augustine came to recognize these feelings for what they really were. He expresses it like this in his most frequently quoted words, from the first paragraph of the Confessions: "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee."

At the age of 19, Augustine read, as part of the prescribed work for his academic course, a now lost work of the Roman orator and philosopher, Cicero. This treatise, the "Hortensius", had apparently been written in praise of wisdom. It had a profound effect on the young student. He writes: "Suddenly every vain hope became worthless to me, and with an incredible warmth of heart I yearned for an immortality of wisdom and began now to arise that I might return to Thee."

The immediate fruit of this new-found thirst for wisdom was that Augustine began to read the Bible. "Here, here is that for which all philosophers have sought throughout their life, but never once been able

to track down, to embrace, to hold firm . . . He who would be a wise man, a complete man, let him hear the voice of God.” So Lactantius, the well known third-century Christian apologist had written in his *Divine Institutes*, and so Monica, doubtless, had often urged upon her son. It was natural, then, that at this time of intellectual awakening he should turn to the Scriptures. The result, however, was very disappointing. The proud student of Rhetoric was so upset by the poor style of the early Latin version he was using — the only one to hand — that he quickly abandoned his Bible study in disgust. If the Scriptures could not even equal in matters of style the dignity and beauty of Ciceronian prose, seemed to be his feeling, what hope could he have that their content would prove superior? He did not wait to find out and turned elsewhere in his search for truth — with disastrous results!

Strange Involvements

That same year, 373, Augustine joined a strange group of people known as the Manichees, and with them he was to remain for nine long years. This sect had been founded on the teachings of a Persian guru by the name of Mani, a self-styled apostle of Christ. Augustine was totally taken in by their claim to be the only true body of Christians around, and by their provision of simple solutions to some of his theological and philosophical difficulties. “Thus I fell among men delirious in their pride, carnal and voluble, whose mouths were the snares of the devil — a trap made out of the syllables of Thy name, and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Paraclete.”

What did this false sect teach? One of the many questions agitating Augustine’s mind at this time was the problem of evil: “If God is good, how then does evil arise?” The Manichees gave him a ready and superficially satisfying answer. “God,” they replied, “*is* good, but evil exists entirely independently of him.” Manichean theology was dualist. That is, they believed that the world was the product of a struggle between two co-equal, co-eternal and independent powers of light and darkness; this struggle was still in progress and would reach its climax only at the end of time, when light and darkness would be finally separated. The duty of the faithful (i.e. the Manichees) meantime was to assist in this struggle by living an ascetic life — one of celibacy, poverty and vegetarianism. In practice, however, only a small percentage of their number, the so-called ‘Elect’, lived by these rigorous standards. The great majority, referred to as ‘Auditors’, married, ate meat and drank wine, and by all accounts plenty of it! Augustine never progressed beyond

the stage of being an 'Auditor'. The Manichees regarded the God of the Old Testament as an evil deity, and thus rejected the Old Testament Scriptures in their entirety. They denied the reality of Christ's incarnation and held him to be something less than true man (a form of the Docetic heresy). They had no doctrine of atonement. Later, Augustine was to denounce these doctrines with fiery vehemence as, "that most pestilential and empty-headed teaching which every Christian must needs anathematize", but for the meanwhile they held him firmly in their grasp.

These years were a period of deep anxiety for Monica as she witnessed her son's deepening moral and spiritual degeneration. One night, in a dream, she saw herself standing in a wood, weeping. A shining youth came towards her and asked the reason for her tears. Monica replied that she was mourning her son's lostness. The shining youth told her to be of good cheer, assuring her that where she was, there her son should be also. When Monica told Augustine about the dream, he replied that it really foreshadowed her conversion to Manicheism! "No," was his mother's immediate rejoinder, "for it was not told me that where he is there *you* shall be, but that where you are, there *he* shall be."

On another occasion, Monica spoke about Augustine to her old and godly pastor, who himself had once been a Manichee, urging him to reason with her son and to refute his errors. He refused to do so, holding that Augustine was as yet unteachable. "Let him alone for a time and only pray for him to God; and he himself will discover what an error it is and what a great impiety." Monica continued to plead tearfully, but the old man was resolute. At last he said, "Go your way from me; as you live, it is impossible that the son of those tears should perish."

(To be continued)

Obituaries

Finlay Macleod, Leacklee, North Harris

The subject of this brief obituary was born in Leacklee, North Harris, on 4th April 1926. He was brought up in a home where his parents conducted family worship morning and evening. Like many others, although he showed himself to be an intelligent, talented boy he left school at the age of 14.

As a young lad he joined the Merchant Navy and continued in that occupation until his late thirties. Beginning to experience the life and conversation there hard to endure and particularly because of unnecessary work on the Lord's day he decided to leave the Merchant Service. He also

had a desire to stay at home to be under the preaching of the Gospel. At this time he showed a warm side to the people of God, and while he was attentive on the means of grace on Sabbath his place would not be empty at the weekly prayer meeting. For his livelihood he bought a loom for weaving Harris tweed. He was soon a proficient weaver.

Through the preaching of the word of God he came to the conviction that he was a guilty, lost sinner and that "therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Rom 3:20. According to his own testimony his mind, by the preaching of the Gospel, was gradually enlightened in the knowledge of Christ and the way of salvation became precious to him. While he showed a lively interest in the Cause of Christ he had a desire for some time to witness publicly for his Saviour and he was seeking diligently to make his calling and election sure. On Sabbath 16th September, 1972, he came forward to the Lord's Table for the first time. It is remarkable that three from the same village were before the Kirk-Session for membership in full communion the same day and the one not knowing that the other intended to come forward. Finlay was ordained a deacon on 11th October, 1973. Having the prosperity of Christ's Cause at heart, in its temporal as well as its spiritual affairs, he was an excellent deacon. As he kept an open eye on church and manse property he often came gladly to do any necessary work, which he was able to do himself, without any remuneration. On 15th April, 1976, he was ordained an elder. A man of prayer he was of a meek and humble spirit. In his public prayers one could notice that he was graciously conscious of the plague of his own heart, and that his only hope for forgiveness and cleansing was by the blood of Christ. Finlay knew what it was, as Dr. Owen writes, "to mourn over forgiven sin and to water a free pardon with tears". He learnt by experience to say with David "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities." Ps 141:5. As a friend said of Hugh Binning it could be said of Finlay that "when he did lick with his tongue the mote out of his brother's eye, he did it with all tenderness and with the tear in his own" — a lesson we all need to learn.

In July 1980 he became ill. At first his doctors entertained good hopes that he would recover, but after surgical examinations specialists in Glasgow discovered that his disease was incurable. After coming home from hospital he lived for seven months. During that period he showed an intelligent and keen interest in the Cause of Christ both in its spiritual and temporal affairs. As it was obvious to Finlay that the end of his sojourn in

this world was near, with remarkable composure and much wisdom he set in order his earthly affairs. Among other things he advised his wife not to dress in black after his departure. In our opinion this was a wise advice.

On 17th June, 1981, he departed this life, we believe, to be forever with the Lord. A peaceable, friendly, wise and intelligent man he was a most useful elder in the Cause of the Lord. Therefore he is greatly missed by his minister and elders, and by all who love the Lord among us.

To his sorrowing widow and two young sons we extend our sympathy. "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." Jer. 49. 11. We also sympathise with his aged mother who lost her two sons, Malcolm Angus in January, 1980 and Finlay in 1981. We also extend our sympathy to the sorrowing brothers and sisters and to Mrs Morag Macleod, Malcolm Angus's sorrowing widow and two children. May the God of patience and consolation sustain and comfort them and bless His own word to them. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Ps. 55:22.

A. McK.

Mrs. Marjorie MacDonald, Tomatin

The Lord's promise that the generation of the upright shall be blessed (Ps. xcii, vs.2) was amply fulfilled in the family to which this gracious woman belonged and in due time was realised by herself. In her childhood years the family of Cameron-Mackintosh attended the ministry of the late Rev. D. MacFarlane who at the time was minister of the Free Church congregation of Tomatin in the Parish of Moy and Dalarossie and as far as memory served, her earliest recollections were of the visits of the minister to her parents' home when she listened to his godly conversation. Marjorie was thus highly favoured in being born into a home where the Lord was feared and grew up under the ministry of the godly Mr MacFarlane. To her mother Mr MacFarlane was especially attached and to her he was able to speak of the periods of soul depression when he was assaulted under the "fiery darts of the devil", and in her he found a sympathetic and helpful woman of orderly and sober habits. She was accepted by the Tomatin Kirk Session into membership of the Free Presbyterian Church in 1914. For Mr MacFarlane she retained to the end of life a warm place in her heart and often spoke of his visits to the home. She loved the Free Presbyterian Church and valued the testimony which he raised by his protest in the 1893 General Assembly of the Free Church against the flood of false doctrine and lax discipline which were on the increase in the church. She had a first hand knowledge of the beginnings of the Free Presbyterian Church and gained an intelligent grasp of the reasons which

made separation from a backsliding church so necessary and which bound her by the strongest ties of faith and love to the church to which she belonged, and when the occasion arose could with clarity and charity declare her unswerving loyalty to the Word of God and to the Church. She will be sadly missed and is a great loss to the small congregation of Tomatin. She passed away to be forever with the Lord and was laid to rest in Dalarossie churchyard on 3rd January, 1981.

Majorie was one of a family of 15 children and was born in the farmhouse of Mid Morile, Tomatin in October 1890. She left home in 1911 to train for the teaching profession and thereafter taught in different parts of the country till the time of her marriage to John MacDonald, an elder in St. Jude's congregation, Glasgow in September 1917 where they lived until the death of her godly husband in 1920 at the early age of 33 years. The young widow stayed on in Glasgow with her young son till 1927 when she moved to her old home at Tomatin and again took up teaching. For some years she taught in Harris and in 1933 was appointed to the small school at Dalarossie near her old home where she remained for the next 23 years till she retired in 1956. For a time she lived in the old home with her brother, Donald who is still spared to mourn his sister's death.

It was under the searching sermons of her minister that Marjory came under concern for her soul's salvation and felt her pressing need of believing in Christ. The process was gradual, her heart opening like Lydia's to the influences of the Gospel and in her case very likely off and on from early youth. She herself placed the saving change to a sermon she heard from Mr MacFarlane in the year 1914 on the words: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. To the esteem with which she always regarded her minister were now added warm love and strong attachment in the bonds of the Gospel to one who was blessed as the Messenger of peace to her soul. Her pastor had noticed the regular church attendance and general conduct of Marjory and when she came before the Tomatin Kirk Session to be received into church membership she was at once accepted. When one of the elders proceeded to admonish her regarding the pleasures of the world and especially the danger of dancing, Mr MacFarlane interrupted with the remark, "Marjory never attends dances."

Her new found "joy and peace in believing" made the Word of God precious to her and invested the services of God's House with fresh interest. From the year of her conversion she kept notes of the sermons she listened to, particularly what she heard under the searching

ministry of Rev. N. Cameron, St. Jude's, Glasgow and the appealing, affectionate addresses of Rev. D. Graham, Shildaig. She was present at the Bonar Bridge communion in 1914 and heard Mr Cameron invite the Lord's people to come to the Lord's table with the words: "You that feel today that should you be certain in your own mind that God would cast you to hell at last, yet you cannot go back to the vanities of the world, come you to His table and He may meet with you there" and, she added, He did. She took notes of the solemn words addressed by Mr Cameron when baptising 3 children in his congregation when putting the vows upon the parents whom he charged to be the Lord's and to live according to these vows or their children would curse them through an endless eternity in hell, "so that", he concluded, "each and everyone requires grace to fulfill these vows" and brought the service to a close with the most appropriate last 2 verses of Psalm 56.

She listened to Mr Graham preach on a Sabbath morning in St Jude's church in December 1914 on the words: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God" (i John iii, vs. 1.). In illustrating the circumstances in which believers find themselves, he said: "The Lord's people would be like the children of Israel when they left the land of Egypt, that if a man met one of the Israelites and asked him where he came from, where he was going and when he expected to reach Canaan, he replied: "Oh, in less than 40 days at the longest". If the same man were to meet the Israelite again 40 years later and asked him if he were the man he had met before and on being assured that he was, observed "I thought you would have been in the land of promise long ago". The Israelite replied "It is my fear now that I will never see it". In the evening of the same Sabbath she listened with pleasure to Mr Graham preaching from the words: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved that ye tell him I am sick of love" (Song v. vs.8). "The church when her beloved was lost to her, rose from her bed to open to him but he was gone. She went in search of him. She met the watchmen who found her (unconverted ministers and men) and they smote her and wounded her. She met the daughter of Jerusalem who some say were young Christians. Not till she had passed from them did she find the Beloved, the altogether Lovely One". These must have been memorable days in her life.

Our Church has lost a warm friend who carried the concern she felt for the Cause of the Church to a throne of grace. She mourned the defections of the professing church and our beloved land, for she had enjoyed and experienced the Lord's favour as she listened to the sermons of the early

ministers of our church, and walked in fellowship with the Lord's people in a better day than ours. She is now with the Lord and shall be ever be in His presence with His people around the throne. "They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy". Her son, Ronald and her surviving brother Donald and sisters, Mrs Johnston and Mrs Fraser we commend "to God and to the Word of His grace" and pray that they too may have "inheritance among all them that are sanctified" Acts xx, vs. 32.

A.F.M.

Extracts from William Guthrie

'Lest the God of this world blind us'.

Look if the world, or anything in it, lays claim to the first fruits of your labours daily. If it be first in your heart, or first in your hand, in the morning, it is your God; for a man's God claims his first thoughts, and ordinarily his last thoughts at night, and often his thoughts when he is sleeping. O, how few can say their 'sleep is sweet' unto them on a better account, and, 'when they awake, they are still with Him'.

Look if the world lays claim to your most precious time, which is devoted to a deity. Doth it come often in your heart when you are about holy religious exercises? It is an ill token.

Look if the world takes the pre-eminence of God more avowedly, hasting all His matters that it may take up the whole man, never hasting itself to give God His due; wearying of God, but never of itself. And look if, for a business of the world, your heart will curse God and blaspheme and sin against Him. This is a woeful token.

Look if the world claims the prerogative of quickening your soul: then it is your God. Hath it power to enliven you when most dumpish and indisposed for anything? But the remembrance of all that God hath said or promised in spiritual things doth not so, and hath no power nor influence upon your spirit to quicken or cherish or raise it up. That is a bad token. Yea, you who are godly, in as far as you feel yourselves guilty in these things, know that you are too far engaged.

'Which a man found and hid'

There is a prejudice by venting religion too soon. Profession gets the foregate of both knowledge, faith, and tenderness; and ordinarily there is an ill-holden house afterwards. I may say, through the untimely din of some folk's religion, both godly folk and piety do suffer. It often holds true, they that show their gear, long to be robbed. This reproves many

who, if they but find some warming in the outer court of affection, proclaim that they have found Christ. Stay a while, till you look about you; the trial follows. But you question me: what shall we do, if we may not vent what we find? Go and examine thy way, by what thou findest in others and their finding of the jewel. Go, look what ado you have had for it, and search your former ways. Bethink what it may cost you, and what you must quit for it. By all means insure it, and hide it till you do insure it.

'He abideth faithful'.

Why is He called the Bridegroom, since the Marriage is past between Him and many? There are various answers. Because of the vigour and greenness of love that is still on Him; He 'remembers the love of espousals and kindness of youth'. Because He is still wooing others, and carrying on marriage daily. Because there be some things to perfect to them all, whom He hath married.

What, then, is wanting in that marriage — business, for which Christ must come back to perfect it? There wants full possession of Himself, which we could not bear hereway, we shall drink of that wine 'new in His kingdom'. We want that equipage that beseems the Lamb's wife; she will be made suitable to Him, when she shall be 'made like His glorious body'. She wants possession of the dowry, of which she hath got but poor investiture hitherto — these rivers of pleasure, these mansions. The saints want a full sight of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, whom they shall see no more 'through a glass'. In a word, He is yet to put them in a state where they shall be not only in a capacity not to fall out of His love, but also of a capacity of offending Him and of all mistakes of Him.

And these are great things.

Book Review

No Pope Here by Rev. Ian R.K. Paisley. Martyrs Memorial Publication. Available from Mourne Missionary Trust, "Hor-Kesel", Church Road, Carginagh, Kilkeel, Co. Down, N.I. Price £1.95, by post £2.20.

This book was written in connection with the visit of the Pope to Great Britain. It exposes the Anti-Christian nature of the Romanist system and its intrigues. It asks the question — Were the Reformers right in separating from the Church of Rome at the Reformation? — and answers it in the positive. It reminds readers of the persecutions instituted by the Church of Rome when it was in the ascendancy, referring to such noted martyrs as Hooper, Ferrar, Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer. The

book also pointedly asks the question — Are we to lose our Protestant heritage for ever?

We commend the book to our readers as a timely warning to our nation in its present circumstances. *D.B.M.*

Church Notes

Perth Communion

The Perth Communion will be on the 4th Sabbath of August, God willing. The usual services will be held, as follows:—

Thursday and Friday 7.30 p.m.

Saturday 3 p.m.

Sabbath 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.

Monday 7.30 p.m.

All services will be held in the Forteviot Hall, Perth and it is expected that Rev. D.A. MacLennan, Staffin, will assist on this occasion.

Theological Conference 1982

The Annual Theological Conference will be held this year in the Free Presbyterian Church, Inverness on Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th September, God willing.

The following papers will be read:

TUESDAY

2.30 p.m. "Communion with God — Rev. D. Nicolson, Glendale.

7.00 p.m. "Divorce — the Conflict between Church and State" — Rev. D. Maclean, Glasgow, Mr. D. Laing, Aberdeen.

WEDNESDAY

10.00 a.m. "Hugh Martin — Rev. A. Mackay, Tarbert.

2.30 p.m. "The Charismatics" — Mr R. Middleton, Barnoldswick.

7.00 p.m. "Church Discipline" — Rev. D.B. MacLeod, M.A., Dingwall.

Conference Chairman — Rev. A.F. Mackay, M.A., Inverness.

As usual all office-bearers and male members are eligible to attend.

D.J. MacDonald, Convener, Training of Ministry Committee.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 31st August at 2 p.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 21st September at 2 p.m.

Western: At Kyle on 21st September at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 26th October at 11 a.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 28th January 1983 at 2.30 p.m.

Acknowledgment of Donations

Zimbabwe Mission:

Rev. Dr James A. Tallach wishes to acknowledge with grateful thanks the following collections taken at Mission Meetings:—

Scourie £147.07; Lairg £91.80; Dingwall £180.85; Edinburgh £90; Knockbreck Primary School S.U. Tain £135; Stornoway £34; Broadford £150.46.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations desire to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Beaulys: Friend, Home of Rest £1 for Church Door Coll, per Rev. D.B.M.

Dumbarton: E.M. & I.M. Dowlen £20; W. & M. Balfour £10, both for Congr. Funds.

Gairloch: 2 Lewis Ladies £15 per Rev. A. MacDonald; £10 for Strath Meeting House; Passer-by £10 for Strath Meeting House; Mr I. £30 for Sust. Fund per Rev. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow: Anon £20; Anon £4; Anon £5; Anon £15, all for Sust. Fund; Anon £20; Anon £15, both for Home Mission Fund; Anon £10 for College & Library Fund; Friend £15 for Aged & Infirm Ministers Fund; In Memory of my beloved mother and brother £100 for Aged & Infirm Ministers Fund, £100 for Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund, £90 for T.B.S.; Anon £15 for T.B.S.; Anon £15 for Underground Evangelism; Mrs S.M. £5 for Church Door Coll. per Rev. D. MacL.; Anon £3; Anon £5; Anon £5; Anon £10; Anon £6; L.G. £5; E.M.M. £2, all for Bus Fund.

Greenock: R.H.C., Bangor, N.I. £15; Anon £20, both for Sust. Fund; Anon £5; Anon £3, both for church door collection; D.R.M., Glasgow £15, for Congr. Purposes, last four per Rev. L. MacLeod; Friend (in Church plate) £5 for Communion expenses.

Oban: Dumbarton friend £5; Harris friend £5; Glasgow friend £40 all for Congr. Funds per Rev. A.M.

Stornoway: Mrs MacD., "Dun Eiseann" £5 per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon (in Church plate) £10, both for Congr. Purposes; Friend, Inverness, £20 for Congr. Purposes; Uig Congr. £60 for Car Expenses, both per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Uig: Uig Friend £5 for Manse Needs; Uig friend £10 for Manse Expenses; Anon £5 where most needed; M.M. Stornoway £5 for Communion expenses, all in church plate; Bequeathed by the late Miss Catherine Edith Matheson, Stornoway £200 for Uig F.P. Church per solicitors.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOKROOM:

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