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Looking towards 2000 AD

The prospect of the dawn of a new millennium four and a half years hence is beginning to exercise the minds of a great variety of people. Those who humbly and prayerfully seek to discern the signs of the times in the light of the Word of God are taking note of the event. Others, whose religious affiliations are such that no true Christian, in our view, could possibly have fellowship with them have their own "millenarian visions" and yet others described by one writer as "wild-eyed prophets" and "self-serving politicians" are also giving expression to their prognostications.

The Pope, as the same writer points out, has been "relatively quickly off the mark with his own millenarian ambitions: his recent encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, appeals for Church unity and urges the Orthodox churches of the east to join with the Roman by the end of the millennium."¹ Whatever way it may be promulgated or worded, the Roman Catholic Church's aim and long-term strategy is clear: by the year 2000 it hopes to achieve universal supremacy with the Pope acknowledged as the world's Christian leader and head. The absorption of the Eastern Orthodox churches would be a major step in that direction. They already have much in common and the remaining difficulties in the way of reconciliation are far from being insurmountable. Even now the Orthodox are willing to regard the Pope as rightfully "the chief bishop of Christendom" and if that is acknowledged then the qualification that he is only "first among equals" and that he does not possess universal jurisdiction can easily be removed and without much loss of face.

In the forementioned encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* ("that they may all be one") the Pope makes clear that there is no question of "altering the deposit of faith" and if that means anything it must mean that his claim to be "the vicar of Christ on earth" is non-negotiable. Yet we find him

1. "The Daily Telegraph" 02/06/95

calling on leaders of other churches to engage with him “to find new forms of exercising his ministry as Bishop of Rome so that it might be accepted by all.” But if a previous Pope, Boniface VIII, speaking *ex cathedra* in his bull *Unam Sanctam*, made this infallible pronouncement — “*Every human creature is subject to the Roman Pontiff, — this we declare, say, define, and pronounce to be altogether necessary to salvation,*” — where is there room for dialogue or negotiation?

An editorial in “The Times” views it an “intriguing possibility” that “if the two churches (Orthodox and Roman) surmount their divisions, the trickle of conservative Anglicans seeking communion with Rome, and Constantinople, will become a flood.” It is easy to make that prediction when we find it reported that the Archbishop of Canterbury responded warmly to the encyclical and pledged himself to face the remaining difficulties, looking forward to “exploring more deeply, the ministry of unity which belongs to the Bishop of Rome.”² This response, in itself, is an indication of the weak state of Protestantism and how that is being exploited to the full by the Church of Rome. Opposition to Popery is now portrayed in the media as a lunatic fringe activity and there is now no occasion for Rome to hide her aims and intentions. Everything seems to be going her way. But: “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not.” Babylon may well have risen to a great height by 2000 but that shall only make her fall all the greater and the more spectacular.

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is not to be excluded. He called for “a special effort to mark the year 2000 by reviving the Church of Scotland and joining with other Christians in the celebration.”³ He was but echoing the aspirations of Cardinal Winning who, in addressing the General Assembly, expressed the hope that, “beginning today, these next five years will be a period of intense ecumenical activity . . . and that our ever deepening fellowship will bring, with the dawn of a new millenium, — an Assembly of all Scottish Christians — a new beginning for a shared proclamation of the gospel of life.”⁴ We wonder what all these “evangelicals” who are now supposed to be so numerous in the ranks of the Church of Scotland’s ministry and reputed to be faithful to the Westminster Confession of Faith think of the Cardinal’s address and visit? Are they in agreement with the Assembly’s Principal Clerk who said that he shared the Cardinal’s vision

2. “The Daily Telegraph” 31/05/95

3. “The Herald” 27/05/95

4. “The Herald” 26/05/95

himself and that he hoped it was widely shared in the Church of Scotland? The Cardinal himself did not lose any time in suiting action to his words and as an "ecumenical activity" visited the Free Church of Scotland General Assembly hanging on to the skirts of Her Majesty's High Commissioner.

The expectation of the New Age Movement is that there is to be "a release of new spiritual energies as mankind moves into the twenty-first century. The roots of this idea lie in astrology."⁵ Dr David Samuel sums up its aspirations as follows: "The New Age movement concentrates upon the year 2000 and it alleges that the year 2000 will mark the beginning of a New Age, the Age of Aquarius, and that the era that will then dawn holds out a great hope and prospect for the spiritual utopia of mankind, passing from one age to another. New Agers say we shall pass from the age of Pisces, the fish, which was the symbol of Christianity, into the New Age of Aquarius, the water-bearer. This is a New Age of group psychic spirituality. Man is casting off the old beliefs and the old ideas of Judaeo-Christian monotheism and its ethic. There will be a radical shift in understanding and emphasis at this time as we approach the year 2000. Man will evolve into maturity for the first time in his existence. Man will become fully human, and indeed fully divine. He will cast off the old deities. He will cast off the subjection to the idea of a God who is transcendent and he will become conscious of the divinity within himself. Man will become God."⁶ We could afford to be dismissive of such views were it not that New Age thinking is becoming increasingly influential. "The New Age Movement is not just a cult which has suddenly blossomed at the end of the twentieth century. Neither is it confined to a small number of naive idealists in search of a spiritual utopia. For it has pervaded a great many areas of cultural life today — science, the arts, the media, medicine, education, churches, business and world government — and is ardently promoted by Princes, Presidents and Prime Ministers of many lands."⁷

"New Agers" we are informed, "are encouraged by current trends in the world. Much of Christendom is in disarray with prominent clergy publicly denying the foundation beliefs of Christianity . . . New Age writer Lola Davies has praised the World Council of Churches, which she says 'has potential to serve as a source of unity among a diversity of religions. The West is becoming more familiar with the eastern religions because

5. "The New Age Movement" — Clifford Denton p3

6. FOCUS — Spring 1995

7. The Serpent and the Cross — Alan Morrison p14

of the efforts of their spiritual leaders' . . . Rome too, appears to be moving down this path. Leading New Ager, Benjamin Creme, has said, 'Pope John-Paul II is one of the few leaders who has consistently proclaimed the same message as Maitreya the Christ.' Significantly the Pope's New Year message in 1990 called on *humanity* to build "the hoped-for civilisation of love", not for Christians to build the kingdom of God. There are many danger signs in the Pope's enthusiasm for world peace and unity that are very similar to New Age objectives of one world government and one world religion. On October 27th, 1986, the pope organised the Assisi "World Day of Prayer", involving amongst others, the Dalai Lama, Hindus, Sikhs, Moslems, Bahais, Shintoists and pagan cult leaders, including snake worshippers from Togo. Commenting on this Michael de Semlyen says, 'Rome's leadership of both the peace movement and the multi-faith advance towards religious unity parallels her central role in the quest for the political unity.' *Ecumenism — Where is it leading us?* (p25). Parallel to this desire for world peace, visions of Mary are being claimed by Roman Catholics all over the world, especially in Eastern Europe and the messages bear a strong resemblance to New Age messages about a coming age of peace and light."⁸ There seems then to be a connection between Rome and the New Age Movement! We ought not to be too surprised on discovering that; they are, after all, both of Satanic origin and thus pursuing the same objectives.

What are our own expectations with regard to 2000? If we accept Ussher's chronology as correct, then the year 2000 will mark the beginning of the seventh millennium of the world's history, and if we use the divine time-scale — "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" — then the coming millennium will be the seventh 'day' from the creation. John Morison, the Harris blacksmith, whose bardic compositions were so well-known throughout the Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland in days gone by, makes use of this in his forty-six stanza poem on the Millennium:

Is e nis an seathamh là dhuinn	(This is now the sixth day with us,
Na bitheamaid lapach,	Let us not be inactive
Dh'ullachadh do 'n t-sàbaid	To prepare for the sabbath
Bhios air an t-seachdamh.	That shall be on the seventh.)

Morison was converted under the preaching of Dr MacDonald of Ferintosh and was widely revered as a man of God. It may safely be asserted that his view of the Millennium as expressed above was that

8. A Christian Response to the New Age Movement, Tony Pearce — p23.

commonly held by the godly in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Seventy-eight years ago, the Rev Donald MacFarlane was exercised in regard to the same matter and expressed himself thus: "One may ask when the Millennium is to begin? Many students of unfulfilled prophecy are strongly of the opinion that it shall begin at the end of the two thousand years of the Christian era. There are yet eighty-three years of that period to run, and this is, to say the least, very probable, for something very remarkable took place at the end of every two thousand years since the beginning of the world. At the end of the first two thousand years from the creation, Abraham, in whose seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed, was called. And at the end of the second two thousand years Christ came in human nature to this world, and as the Millennium is a remarkable event it is very probable it shall begin at the end of the third two thousand years since the creation of the world . . . In the Churches we have the darkest day since the Reformation, and the same may be said of the state in our own nation, and in all the other nations to which the Reformation brought the light of the Gospel. It is said that the darkest time of the night is a little before the dawn of day."⁹

The Profanation of the Sabbath

The following is the substance of a sermon preached by one of the well-known ministers of the past — the Rev Gavin Parker. He was a minister in Aberdeen. His text was: "Will a man rob God".

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For the same kind of disobedience the most severe calamities also befell the Israelites in subsequent ages. Their captivity in Babylon was predicted, and afterwards took place on account of profaning the Sabbath. "I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you; and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths. They polluted my Sabbaths; then I said I would pour out my fury upon them. I lifted up my hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; because they had polluted my Sabbaths. If ye will not hearken to me to hallow the Sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, and it shall not be quenched." Nehemiah contended with the nobles of Judah, after their return from Babylon, respecting the profanation of the Sabbath, saying, "Did not your fathers thus; and did not God bring all this evil

upon us and upon the city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." How awfully have these predictions been accomplished! The people have been led away captive and dispersed among the heathen. They are in a state of dispersion to the present day. Jerusalem had been burned and destroyed, and ploughed like a field. Its palaces and gates and temples have been levelled to the ground, and a sorry and meagre-looking town now occupies their place. Can we produce any one instance in which robbery has been punished in a manner so terrible?

We can, therefore, have no hesitation in affirming that the pollution of the Sabbath by secular conversation, is a more aggravated sin than common robbery.

At the conclusion of the discourse it may not be improper to mention some reasons for illustrating and enforcing this doctrine.

We have reason to think there are some among us who sigh and cry for the abominations of the land. They are grieved at witnessing the disgraceful and impious profanation of the Sabbath, so prevalent in this place. They complain that the evil has greatly increased during their own time. Should not something be said and done to resist its progress? It may soon come to a crisis. Who knows but that period may speedily arrive when God will say to this overflowing deluge of profanity, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." O that many present may begin to think on the Sabbaths they have wasted in idleness, or profaned by unprofitable conversation! O that God would awaken them to consideration, and bless them with true repentance!

It is a scene awfully affecting, to witness so many of our brethren deliberately bringing everlasting ruin on themselves. Little do thoughtless sinners consider the worth of a soul! Seldom do they seriously anticipate what awaits them in the approaching eternity. But the people of God are affected, and weep over their perishing brethren.

It is peculiarly distressing to think of the dangers to which the young are exposed by the prevalence of Sabbath profanation. They are thus induced to think that the Bible is not true; or that many of those who profess to believe it are mere hypocrites. They are in danger of following the multitude to do evil, and of imitating the hypocrisy and profanity of those among whom they live. Although something is done for their instruction and admonition, the influence of evil example may counteract all their good resolutions, and soon efface from their minds every serious impression. None but God can preserve them from the ways of the destroyer. O that I could successfully exhort them to avoid this fascinating sin, and to flee from the wrath to come!

The sacred Scriptures hold out to us the prospect of great prosperity to the Church of God upon earth. Some preparations are carrying forward in different countries for this auspicious change. The Word of God is read with eagerness and pleasure by many thousands who never till of late enjoyed the precious gift. A general desire to possess the Bible is excited among the nations. In several heathen countries the gospel has been preached with the Holy spirit sent down from heaven, and astonishing have been the effects. "Waters are breaking out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." Would it not be desirable that a revival of religion should take place in our country? We have reason to think that God yet intends to favour our land, and to bless her children within her. But while Sabbath profanation so greatly abounds among us, little good can be effected even by the preaching of the gospel. If a people can attend the sanctuary of God on one part of the Sabbath, and wilfully employ another part of that day in worldly conversation, the most alarming, the most discriminating, the most animating truths of Christianity will be to them of no avail. They may come to the house of God as His people come; they may sit as His people sit; they may hear His words, but they will not do them; they are triflers in religion; they are hypocrites in Zion. The solemn ordinances of God become the means of blinding their minds and of hardening their hearts.

If God revive His work in our land, there will be among us a very great and conspicuous change in the manner of observing the Sabbath. At present, how painful it is to think of an institution so useful, so fraught with good to man, perverted to the meanest purposes! A day "made for man", for his instruction, improvement, and comfort, wasted in idleness, or wantonly abused by dissipation and open profanity! There is a loud call for a Divine visitation. May it be in kindness, and not in wrath! Let God appear in glorious power and majesty to shake the earth, to destroy the false confidence of impenitent sinners, and to subdue a people to Himself! Then shall the Sabbath be accounted a delight, and its prescribed exercises sources of dignified pleasure. Then all its hours shall be devoted to God, and employed in His service. In place of idleness, and amusement, and festivity, and vain talking, after retiring from the sanctuary of God, there will be great searchings of heart; there will be deep convictions of sin; there will be vigorous attempts to make proficiency in the knowledge of Divine truth and in holiness; there will be zealous and persevering exertions to promote the interests of religion in families, and vicinities, and towns, and in all places of the land.

It may occur to some, that were they to refrain from worldly

conversation, the Sabbath would be to them dull, and melancholy and "a weariness". It might be so. But what would heaven be to the same persons? Surely much more cheerless. The Sabbath is a type of heaven, and a happy means of preparation for that everlasting and holy rest. If sinners or professing Christians cannot take pleasure in the exercises of religion during one day in seven, how could they endure to remain for ever before the throne of God, and to serve Him day and night in His heavenly temple? If they have no desire for communication with Him in the ordinances He has appointed upon earth, how could they relish that full and uninterrupted enjoyment of communion which constitutes the bliss of heaven? Let not men, therefore, deceive themselves with a false hope of heaven: their dislike to the spiritual and delightful exercises of the Sabbath, proves that they are totally unqualified for heaven; and that, without a change of nature, they can never be admitted into that holy place.

It is a happy circumstance for our country that the crime of robbery is held in general detestation. This useful feeling holds out the prospect of a quiet and peaceful life upon earth to the great majority of our countrymen. Long may this feeling remain in all its acuteness, and in all its strength! It ought to be cherished; it ought to be improved and extended. O that this discourse may have some influence in exciting a similar and proportional abhorrence of the crime of Sabbath profanation! Although this crime cannot disturb the order and harmony of society *upon earth* as much as the other, there is an *eternity* to come: and if the peace and happiness of *eternity* be prevented by Sabbath profanation, it cannot be too much abhorred. God has published a law by which the world shall be judged. He who said, "Thou shall not steal," has with equal authority commanded, "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy." God will render to every one according to his works. Multitudes may live in peace and honesty; they shall not be condemned for robbing man: but if they have neglected to sanctify the Sabbath, God will assuredly condemn them to endless woe, for robbing himself. The serenity and comfort that exist among the profaners of the Sabbath in this world, afford no proof at all that they shall enjoy any peace or any pleasure in the world to come.

The very appointment of the Sabbath calls upon us to admire the wisdom and goodness of God. To the sincere Christian, it is a day of holy rest from the toils and anxieties of life — a day of intercourse with God — a day of refreshing to the soul. It is the means of increasing knowledge, and faith, and holiness. Sabbaths spent with God will soften the terrors of death. They bring heaven down to earth, and introduce the saints to the exercises and pleasures of the celestial world.

Even to those who are yet in their sins, the Sabbath is a distinguished blessing. Were it not for this day, and the exercises prescribed upon it, their salvation would be very improbable. Many have been called into the grace of God by this appointed institution. Let even those who have long profaned the Sabbath by vain conversation think on their ways. Let them seek God while He is yet to be found. Let them call upon Him while He is near. Let them return from their evil ways, to fear God, and to reverence His institutions. Let them henceforth employ the precious hours of the Sabbath in attending with ardour to the things that belong to their everlasting peace. Let them read, and hear, and meditate, and apply to themselves the truths of Christianity. Let them think on the compassionate and almighty Saviour, whose finished work and resurrection the Christian Sabbath is intended to commemorate. Let them be ashamed and grieved in heart on account of their base ingratitude in so long despising His great salvation and rejecting His gracious invitations. Let them be horrified at the insults they have offered to the Son of God, in trampling His blood under their feet, as if it had been something common, or even contemptible. Let them seek grace to repent of all that they have done against God, and against the anointed Saviour. Let them humbly and patiently wait on God, and beseech Him to make them new creatures, to sanctify them wholly, and to prepare them, by His grace, for that everlasting Sabbath which remains for the people of God.

In retiring from this place of worship, it may be proper to think upon the meaning of these words of Divine inspiration, "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation."

"I speak as unto wise men, judge, ye what I say."

English Presbyterianism in Decline

The Salters Hall Controversy: 1719

Roy Middleton, Barnoldswick

By the end of the seventeenth century a great change had taken place in the Presbyterian churches of the British Isles. Spiritual blight had cast its withering influence over both the maintenance of Calvinistic doctrine and the practice of vital piety. Thomas M'Crie commenting on this spiritual declension observes "it is difficult to explain in any other way than by supposing a withdrawal of God's spirit from the churches of the Reformation. . . In England the change was soon apparent, though the

process was gradual. The approach of doctrinal laxity was heralded by the loud paeans of praise of what was termed christian charity.'¹

Factors for change

Orthodoxy was maintained while the older ministers were alive who had suffered for maintaining a witness for the truth of the Great Ejection of 1662. The change came when this older generation died. Historians have sought to analyse the external circumstances that led to the decline.² Four main factors can be identified:

Richard Baxter

The influence of Richard Baxter, one of the most respected and influential Presbyterian ministers, in a direction away from Westminster Calvinism was a significant contributory factor for change. The doctrinal cast of English Presbyterianism at the end of the seventeenth century was "Baxterian".

In 1654 Baxter served on a committee, set up by Oliver Cromwell, which had as its object drawing up a list of fundamental doctrines that would serve as the basis for religious toleration. Baxter suggested to the committee, "The Creed, The Lords Prayer, and the Decalogue alone as our essentials and fundamentals, which at least contain all that is necessary to salvation". Baxter was criticised for the suggestion on the grounds that such terms were wide enough to include "Papists and Socinians". Baxter's reply is reported to have been, "so much the better".

Baxter further wrote, "Two things have set the Church on fire, and have been the plagues of it above one thousand years. 1. The Enlarging of our creed and making more fundamentals than God ever made. 2. Composing (and so imposing) our creeds and confessions in our own words and phrases . . . Every new article that was added to the creed was a new engine to stretch the brains of believers and in the issue to rend out the bowels of the Church"³. Opinions regarding the validity of

1 Thomas M'Crie, *Annals of English Presbytery*, London, 1872, p297.

2 For the historical background and analysis see: A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, London, 1889, p345-542; C.G. Bolam, J. Goring, H.L. Short and R. Thomas, *The English Presbyterians*, London, 1968, p113-174; M.R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, Oxford, 1978, p263-393; H.W. Clark, *The History of English Nonconformity*, London, 1913, Vol II, p137-202; A.P.F. Sell, *Presbyterianism in Eighteenth Century England: The doctrinal dimension*, *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol 4, p352-386.

3 Richard Baxter. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* Vol II p523 cited in H.R. Jones, The death of Presbyterianism in *By Schisms rent asunder*, papers read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, 1969, p37. For a recent assessment of Baxter's strengths and weaknesses see Iain H. Murray, Richard Baxter — the Reluctant Puritan? in *Advancing in Adversity*, papers read at the Westminster Conference 1991, p1-24.

confessions that had been dismissed at the time of the Westminster Assembly were becoming dominant by the turn of the century. Richard Baxter had a decisive influence on this change.

Theological Education

A further factor contributing to the change within English Presbyterianism was its system of training theological students. After the Great Ejection the Puritans were excluded from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In order to secure a succession of Gospel ministers they set up "Dissenting Academies". Whilst these institutions were in the hands of the older ministers⁴ they were a blessing to the churches. When the institutions passed into the hands of a younger generation they became a significant factor in the growth of Arian and anti-confessional doctrines. The Academies are renowned for liberalising the curriculum of higher education. Their significance from the view point of the history of doctrine is the toleration which many tutors displayed towards divergent opinions.

Philip Doddridge's tutor was John Jennings of Kibworth. Jennings was against subscriptions to confessions. He insisted "that the Scriptures are the only genuine standard of faith". Doddridge described Jennings' teaching as follows: "I have almost finished Mr Jennings' system of divinity and the better I am acquainted with it the more I admire it. He does not entirely accord with the system of any particular body of men; but is sometimes a Calvinist, sometimes a Remonstrant, sometimes a Baxterian, and sometimes a Socinian, as truth and evidence determine him . . . He furnishes us with all kinds of authors upon every subject, without advising us to skip over the heretical passages for fear of infection. It is evidently his main care to inspire us with sentiments of catholicism, and to arm us against the zeal which is not according to knowledge"⁵. Doddridge declined a call to an important London congregation due to his views on creedal subscription. He explained his position to a correspondent in these terms, "I thought it very probable that I should be required to subscribe, which I was resolved never to do; for as I had been accustomed, under my dear tutor, to that latitude of expression which the scriptures indulge and recommend, I could not resolve upon tying myself up in trammels, and obliging myself to talk in the phrases of

4 While tutors were men of the stature of John Flavel, Philip Henry, Thomas Doolittle, Richard Frankland and Theophilus Gale orthodoxy was preserved. The later history of these institutions makes depressing reading. See A.H. Drysdale, *op cit* p510-511, I. Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England*, Cambridge, 1914.

5 Philip Doddridge, *Correspondence and Diary*, Edited by J.D. Humphreys 1829-1831 Vol 1, p198, See *Philip Doddridge, 1702-51. His contribution to English Religion*, Edited by G.F. Nuttall, London, 1951, p132.

assembly's catechism which Mr Some told me would been necessary there''⁶.

Doddridge was later to run an Academy himself, his lectures were transcribed and circulated among his students in shorthand in order to keep them from the eyes of orthodox ministers among whom they had an "evil reputation". The result of Doddridge's labours are plain from the following statistics, "... of the fifty-nine former pupils of Doddridge known to be in the Dissenting ministry in 1772 no fewer than fifty-three are found among these liberal minded men who in that year signed the petition for the relaxation of subscription to the thirty-nine articles; of the remaining six, four did not sign because they were Unitarians of the Priestleyan school who wanted a much more radical reform, while two remained to champion the cause of Calvinistic and Athanasian orthodoxy''⁷.

Intellectual Climate

Far reaching intellectual movements came to the fore in the Restoration era. This was the age in which Cambridge Platonists, Latitudinarians and Deists all flourished. If Isaac Newton was the creator of scientific physics, John Locke was the creator of scientific philosophy. Beyond the influence of any other man, John Locke⁸ was the moving spirit of the eighteenth century. Locke was an empiricist and held that ideas are to be tested by the senses. A proposition is known to be either true or false only by testing it with experience. Locke taught that if a man begins with self evident facts and self evident propositions there is no reason why he should not reach results in the religious sphere as reliable as those in the scientific sphere.

Locke believed he could provide evidence for the existence of God that was equal to mathematical certainty. Unfortunately this idea of God, like the God deduced from Newton's premises was just the postulate of a series of deductions. He lacked the glory and the lofty splendour of the God of the Puritans.

Locke's contribution to our narrative is the influence of his treatise *The reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures* (1695). This book served as a catalyst for the thought of eighteenth century English Presbyterian ministers. Locke believed, as the title of his book made clear,

⁶ *Correspondence*, op cit, p335.

⁷ *English Presbyterians*, op cit, p195.

⁸ Locke was trained at Oxford whilst it was under Puritan control during the Vice Chancellorship of John Owen. See Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, London, 1969, p61-64.

the Christianity that was reasonable was the one “delivered in the scriptures”. This clearly advertised the fact, all apparent from its pages, that the Christianity delivered in the scriptures was very different from the Christianity delivered in the Creeds of the Church. Locke’s book made the point that no more was laid down in scripture than belief in Jesus as the Messiah and that controversy could be allayed by acceptance of this minimum belief which had satisfied the first apostles.

From the *Reasonableness of Christianity* Locke went on to draw up a series of paraphrases of the Pauline epistles. His central principle is illustrated again by the title, *An Essay for the Understanding of St Paul’s Epistles, by consulting St Paul himself*. The paraphrases were intended to consign the “Commentators” and the “Puritan lecture” to oblivion by appealing to St Paul himself. Before he died he had worked through the first five Pauline epistles. Locke’s project was completed by two leading minds among the Presbyterians, James Pierce, whose heretical teaching on the Person of Christ sparked the Salters Hall Controversy, and George Benson who was a protege of Edmund Calamy. Locke’s writings, drove a wedge between the Bible and the Creeds and were the staple diet of the more “progressive” Dissenting Academies. Philip Doddridge commenting on the paraphrases says: “I find Locke of far greater service to me than any of the rest. I own I cannot fall in with his exposition of many particular texts; but I have very little to except against his general scheme, and his division of the matter, which seems to me to throw additional light upon the whole”⁹. The Lockean principle of the sufficiency of Scripture was the basis of the Dissenting stand against subscription of man-made creeds. In the first part of the century Locke’s philosophy was the guiding spirit of the Arians. This is seen in the title of one of the treatises that sought to undermine the doctrine of the Trinity — Samuel Clarke’s, *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*.

In 1709 Edmund Calamy visited the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and sat as an honoured guest next to the Moderator. An item of business that came up was the case of a minister accused by the Synod of Aberdeen of being “deficient in knowledge and unsound in principles”. After a gruelling examination, in which some of his answers were weak, the Assembly were at a loss how to proceed. The Moderator whispered in Calamy’s ears and asked him what his apprehensions were. Calamy responded by saying “. . . we in England should reckon this way of proceeding, the inquisition revived”. Commenting on this incident Roger Thomas observes, “When Calamy disparaged the inquisitorial procedure

9 *Correspondence*, op cit, p428.

of the Scottish Assembly it will be noted that he was passing on from the Lockean toleration outside a given worshipping society to the more exciting toleration of differences within the same society. He was not just criticising the Scottish Assembly, he was criticising the traditional Presbyterian discipline of recalcitrant individuals'¹⁰.

Church discipline

A fourth factor that made the English Presbyterian Church of the early eighteenth century particularly vulnerable to doctrinal error was its practical disuse of Presbyterian church courts and church discipline. The church had no control over the Academies which were responsible for ministerial training. Both tutors and pupils were not directly subject to church courts. The Presbyterian churches at the local level were in the hands of the minister and a few trustees. There were no Church courts outside the individual congregations. Eighteenth century English Presbyterianism had all the disadvantages of the independent system of church government. Outside a congregation there was no check on heterodoxy.

The background to the Salters Hall controversy

The debate that occurred at Salters Hall¹¹ is important as it appears to have been the first instance in which a largely Presbyterian body weakened its commitment to the theology of the Westminster Confession. This was achieved not by the modification of the Confession, but by the refusal of ministers to subscribe to it as the confession of their faith. The decision at Salters Hall did two things; it made clear the changed climate of opinion which had taken place in England and gave an impetus to the non-subscribing movement in Ireland, Scotland and America.

Because of the fragmented state of English Presbyterianism following the Act of Toleration records are not available to chart the shift in theological opinion that was taking place. Details of a few instances have survived and they indicate the transition did not occur without opposition. In 1711, some neighbouring ministers boycotted the ordination of Samuel Bourn the Elder at Crook, near Kendal, because he refused to subscribe to the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Bourn later published his own

¹⁰ *English Presbyterians* op cit, p133.

¹¹ On the Salters Hall Controversy see: Watt op cit, f371-382; *English Presbyterians*, op cit, p151-174; Roger Thomas, The Non-Subscription Controversy among Dissenters in 1719; the Salters Hall debate, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History, (JEH)*, London, 1953 Vol IV, p162-186; F.J. Powicke, The Salters Hall Controversy, *Congregational Historical Society Transactions*, VII, no2, 1916, p110-124. The Salters Hall Synod was a meeting of the General body of protestant dissenting ministers. It was comprised of Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists. The Presbyterians were the largest body.

modification of the Catechism¹². In 1716 Daniel Wilcox, the Presbyterian Minister at Monkwell Street, London, dismissed his assistant, Henry Read, for Arminianism. Wilcox demanded his subscription to doctrinal articles; Read refused. The London ministers took up his case and advised Wilcox against dismissing him; advice which Wilcox did not accept. Later in the year Read was ordained by several leading Presbyterian ministers one of which was Edmund Calamy. Wilcox defended his action in an anonymous pamphlet with the title *The duty of holding fast a form of sound words* (1717). For him the form of sound words was the Westminster Confession, one purpose of which was "to be a test of truth and error". To the question "Is not the Bible . . . test sufficient?", his reply was that "a man may be a Protestant or Papist, Calvinist or Arminian, and no discovery made of him". "The calling any to the Assembly's Confession of Faith", he added, "we by no means take to be a calling of them from the scripture but a putting them to trial in what sense they understand scripture"¹³.

The writings of Locke and Clarke had done their work and by 1716 the time had gone when such arguments would go unchallenged. It was only a matter of time before there would be a serious conflict between the old school Westminster men and those who had imbibed the new principles. When the conflict came it was a conflagration. The spark that set the flame alight came from students at the Exeter Academy. This was a Dissenting Academy maintained by the Exeter Presbyterian Minister Joseph Hallet, a colleague of James Pierce.

In the early part of the century the Trinitarian controversy had been renewed by men whose published works, either leant in an Arian direction or insisted on the subordination of the Son to the Father. Leaders in this movement were, Thomas Emlyn, the Pastor of a dissenting church in Lowestoft who later became Joseph Boyse colleague in the pastorate of the Presbyterian church in Dublin; William Whiston, Professor of mathematics at Cambridge, a Boyle lecturer and successor to Sir Isaac Newton as Lucasian Professor, and Samuel Clarke, Rector of St James Piccadilly and the author of *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). Clarke concluded that though the Bible does reveal a God in Trinity, a supreme worship and honour should be given only to the Father. Locke had taught dissenters to test revelation by reason, not by the theological systems of Athanasius and Calvin. When they did so they not infrequently came up with unorthodox answers.

12 Sell, op cit, p365.

13 *English Presbyterians*, op cit, p152.

Among the first Presbyterians to be influenced by the views of Whiston and Clarke was James Pierce. Before going to Exeter, Pierce had held a pastorate in Cambridge, where he became acquainted with Whiston. He was led by reading Clarke's book to the opinion that he must either "part with some beloved opinions, or else quit my notion of the authority of Holy Scriptures"¹⁴. Initially Pierce kept his doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity to himself. Towards the end of 1716 it became known in Exeter that "at the house of a layman who boarded some of Mr Hallets' pupils, the divinity of Christ was disputed"¹⁵. One of the students let it be known he had been converted to Clarke's views. As a result, Pierce came under suspicion and was asked to preach on the deity of Christ. In order to foil the orthodox in the congregation he delivered the crucial words of his sermon so fast they could not take down his words. In September 1718, the Devon and Cornwall Association of Ministers — the Exeter Assembly — following a stormy debate demanded that every member should declare his position on the Trinity either in the words of the first article of the Church of England or in the words of the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism¹⁶ or, if they preferred it, in words of their own. Hallet made his confession in words selected from Scripture, Pierce stated he believed "the Son and Holy Ghost to be divine persons, but subordinate to the Father"¹⁷.

Pierce first excited suspicion when he stopped the practice of singing the doxology after the Psalms had been sung in public worship. The doxology ascribed glory to Father, Son and Holy Ghost as one God. He gave his reason for this omission, not his opposition to the Trinity, but that he objected to singing anything other than the inspired Psalms without human additions. The excitement in Exeter continued to increase. It was reported Hallet's students were becoming Arians. Members of the Church of England forgetting that fellow Anglicans Whiston and Clarke were

14 *Watts*, op cit, p374.

15 *ibid*

16 Article 1 of the *Thirty Nine Articles* states "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body parts or passions, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. And in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." The answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the *Shorter Catechism* are, "There is but one only, the living and true God". "There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same substance, equal in power and glory."

17 *Watts*, op cit, p374, R.W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, London, 1907, p533.

leaders in the movement, said to Dissenters whom they met in the streets, "You denied your Church first, and now you are denying your Saviour"¹⁸.

In November, the committee of thirteen laymen, responsible for the financial affairs of the Presbyterian meetings in Exeter, asked the city's four Presbyterian Ministers for a statement confirming their orthodoxy. When they got no satisfaction from three of the four ministers and at a loss what to do next, they appealed to the Presbyterian ministers in London for advice.

Pierce, who could see trouble ahead, wrote to London to try to save the situation. One of the men to whom he wrote was John Shute Barrington MP, afterwards the first Viscount Barrington. Though Barrington's mother was a daughter of the Puritan Joseph Caryl, he was an advocate of the newer more tolerant ideas. He had been a friend of John Locke and was still a devoted disciple. When the controversy broke in Exeter one of its consequences was to imperil a Bill that Barrington was piloting through Parliament designed to repeal the legislation which prevented Dissenters holding office in central and local government. The opposition to the Bill was led by men who insisted on a provision requiring subscription to Trinitarian orthodoxy. Barrington was, therefore, anxious to keep the dispute in Exeter as quiet as possible. To achieve his objective he drew up and submitted a paper of "Advices" to the London ministers. The central thrust of Barrington's paper was, that if it became necessary to apply a test of orthodoxy, the test should be adherence to Scripture as the perfect and only rule of faith and not to any formula of merely human composition.

The London ministers met at Salters Hall on the 19th and 24th of February 1719. After protracted debates the issue crystallised into whether a clause¹⁹ containing a declaration of the doctrine of the Trinity should be contained in the advice sent to Exeter. The old way of taking a division was for those against the motion to go into the gallery, whilst those in favour stayed in the body of the church. As the division proceeded slogans were bandied about. Those against subscription called out "you that are against persecution come upstairs", whilst those on the other side cried, "you that are for the doctrine of the Trinity stay below". When order

18 Dale, *op cit*, 533f.

19 The clause read, "That there are some errors in doctrine, that are sufficient foundation for the people to withdraw from the communion of their ministers holding such errors. That the denying of the true and proper divinity of the Son of God, viz that he is one God with the Father, is an error of that nature, contrary to Holy Scriptures and the common faith of the reformed churches", cited in *English Presbyterians*, *op cit*, p160.

was restored, it was found that those against the inclusion of a declaration on the doctrine of the Trinity had carried it by 57 votes to 53. The crucial decision had gone against subscription and in favour of the Baxterian concept of scripture sufficiency. Sir Joseph Jekyl, the Master of the Rolls and an interested onlooker, summed up the prevailing views in the words, "The Bible carried it by four".

The aftermath

As a result of the Salters Hall controversy the London ministers split into two separate bodies over the issue of creedal subscription. R Tudur Jones observes, "In general, the tendency was for the younger ministers to be non-subscribers and the older men subscribers"²⁰. Bishop Hoadly of Bangor, a Church of England liberal, rejoicing at the Salters Hall decision saying "it was the first convocation or assembly of divines, since the time of the apostles, that had carried a question of liberty"²¹.

The vote had no effect on events in Exeter. The trustees of the Presbyterian meeting houses, on the advice of orthodox local ministers, closed their doors on Pierce and Hallet. The leader and first moderator of the London subscribers was Thomas Bradbury. Among his distinguished supporters were William Tong and Daniel Mayo, both of whom were in the ranks of the thirteen non-conformist divines who completed, after his death, Matthew Henry's commentary on the Bible. Edmund Calamy, Isaac Watts²² and David Neal did what so many others were to do in later controversies concerning creedal subscriptions, they kept out of the strife and by so doing aided the heterodox party.

Though the crucial division at Salters Hall was over the inclusion of a statement on the Doctrine of the Trinity, the real issue was not Arianism. Few of the London non-subscribers were Arians²³. The real issue was that of subscription to creeds. This is made abundantly plain in the non-subscribing advice to Exeter; after condemning Arian doctrine and

20 R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England: 1662-1962*, London, 1962, p137.

21 cited in Thomas *JEH*, op cit, p181.

22 M.R. Watts observes "As for Isaac Watts, he not only reached a Baxterian position in attempting to mitigate the rigours of Calvinism, but spent his last years worrying about the Trinity, praying almost despairingly that God show him "whether he be one pure and simple being or whether thou art a threefold deity", op cit, p380-381 cf, A.P. Davis, *Isaac Watts*, London, 1948, p109-126 esp p121; C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, London, 1960, Vol II p423-428.

23 Isaac Watts in a letter to Cotton Mather writes "The subscribing ministers themselves do generally believe there are few of their brethren in London that are chargeable with this (i.e. entering into Dr Samuel Clarke's scheme); perhaps there may be three or four of which they have suspicions, but there were above eighty (including Watts himself) that refused to subscribe". Massachusetts Historical Society MS, 11 February 1720 cited in Thomas, *JEH*, op cit, p175.

affirming their belief in the Trinity they go on to assert that no man should be condemned for refusing to sign a human creed as a test of orthodoxy. The underlying difference between the two parties was similar to that in Scotland during the Declaratory Act controversy, it was a semi-Arminian reaction against Calvinism and Calvinistic creeds.

Robert Woodrow, the indefatigable Scottish letter writer, in a letter to a correspondent in Ireland voiced the views of Scottish Calvinists, "I may be mistaken, but could never yet comprehend any plausible reason for non-subscribing, but some real dislike at the doctrine declared in the confession or articles to be subscribed"²⁴.

William Chillingworth's famous dictum, "The Bible, the Bible only the religion of protestants," was actually a non-subscribing battle cry. Thomas Bradbury commenting on this so-called protestant principle observes, ". . . 'Tis strange that none of the Protestants should ever understand their own principle till now. 'Tis well enough known how fast a desertion from the Church of Rome drew the nations into it; England, Scotland, France, Ireland, Poland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and several more. These all agreed upon confessions of faith, that were drawn up by the divines of those different countries . . . And there was not one of 'em but what had the article of the Trinity, deliver'd in the words they thought the most convenient. So that 'tis very accountable, tho' they were all Protestants, none of 'em should understand their common principle'"²⁵.

It was over the question of subscription to a creed that English Presbyterian began to fragment. The Salters Hall decision was a victory for laxity. Arianism soon got a foothold among the non-subscribers²⁶ and this led to the virtual extinction of English Presbyterianism. The non-subscribers wanted complete freedom of religious inquiry and profession. By the end of the eighteenth century the term "Presbyterian" was equivalent, in England, to speculative liberty²⁷.

24 Robert Woodrow, *Correspondence*, Edinburgh, 1843, Vol III p39, cited in Thomas, *JEH*, op cit, p183.

25 Thomas, *JEH*, op cit, p183.

26 Though Philip Doddridge was a congregationist he was a typical non-subscriber. When his Northampton congregation wish to expel one of its members accused of Arianism, Doddridge strongly protested. Men of this stamp were helpless in the face of heresy. See Nuttall, op cit, p149.

27 Liberty becomes progressively the badge of those Presbyterians who were moving firstly towards Arminianism and then to Arianism. The Presbyterian minister, answerable neither to Bishop or ecclesiastical court on the one hand nor to inquisitorial church meeting on the other, was at liberty to pursue error. He interpreted his commission "to teach whatever Christ commanded in light of the theology of Arminius, Arjus or even Socinius rather than Athanasius or Calvin". See Watts, op cit, p379-380. For a summary of the latest history, which makes depressing reading see: Drysdale, op cit, p533-542, *English Presbyterians*, op cit, p169-174.

The Unitarian view of the importance of Salters Hall is given by their leading historian Alexander Gordon "The rift of Salters Hall will be for ever memorable; for then and there the future of the liberties of English Dissent was at high cost secured". "The Salters Hall decision is viewed by Unitarians as the charter of their liberties; and properly so, for while it permitted a Trinitarian congregation to get rid of an Arian minister, it allowed a Unitarian congregation to exercise a similar right"²⁸.

The drift to Arianism was the consequence of refusing to subscribe to the Westminster Confession and putting liberty of conscience in its place. A. H. Drysdale has described the characteristics of the two parties at Salters Hall, "Those who took the non-subscriber's side could boast of greater learning, social status and culture in their ranks; but the old fashioned party (the subscribers) as their opponents considered them, included the more saintly and devotional of the ministers and people"²⁹.

John Welsh

Rev K. D. MacLeod

Continued from the last issue (Page 149)

3. A Rich Harvest of Souls

Ayrshire was one of those districts in Scotland which embraced the Reformation most heartily. It was there too in a previous century that the Lollards, Wycliffe's followers, had got a hearing for their doctrines. Welsh came to Ayr in August 1600 as assistant to the ageing John Porterfield. His fellow-ministers seem to have held Porterfield in a degree of respect, but he was not distinguished by his zeal or his abilities or anything else. When Welsh arrived, he found some true followers of the Lamb, but the town as a whole was sunk in ignorance, superstition, lawlessness and immorality. Many still had leanings to Roman Catholicism, and priests in the town still performed mass in private. Welsh once addressed Scotland in writing, but perhaps with his eye more especially on Ayrshire: "Alas, sinful nation, laden with iniquities, who is so sinful as thou art? . . . Thy iniquities are more than the sand of the sea; they are grown up so high that the top of them reaches up to the very heavens . . . Are not thy nobles in thee ready to shed blood? . . . In thee the very abominations of the Gentiles are committed."

28 Cited in Sell, *op cit*, p384. See also Alexander Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History*, London, 1985, p34. Gordon was a major contributor to the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

29 Drysdale, *op cit*, p506.

One of Welsh's first objectives was to put an end to fighting in the streets. Whenever he heard that a fight had begun he would rush unarmed to the scene. But he did take the precaution of covering his head with a helmet. He would get himself between the opponents in an attempt to separate them. On at least one occasion, after stopping the fight he brought the antagonists around a table in the street. Welsh prayed and then tried to get them to affirm that they were now friends. Then as a token of their reconciliation he had them eat together, and he brought the proceedings to a conclusion by singing a Psalm. And his efforts were successful. Difficult as his task was, he saw the town transformed into a peaceful community.

Welsh also attacked the Sabbath-breaking which was such a prominent feature of life in the town. Apart from the times of public worship, the Sabbath was treated as a weekly holiday, and the place set apart for sports such as archery was right beside the church. Even Porterfield, Welsh's colleague, joined in the sports when the afternoon service was over. Welsh himself had begun to spend a considerable part of his Sabbaths in prayer and fellowship with two godly men. Welsh succeeded in diverting his brother-minister from desecrating the Sabbath by inviting him to join the little meetings for prayer and fellowship. And we are told that Porterfield also benefited from these meetings in other ways. One of the men who joined Welsh for prayer was John Stewart, another correspondent of Samuel Rutherford and at one time a provost of Ayr. It was in Stewart's house that Welsh lived when he first came to Ayr, because no one was willing to provide a house for the new minister and his family.

Welsh spent all his spare time in study, a habit that followed him all his days. We have already noticed him as in an exceptional degree a man of prayer, and his prayers are described as "frequent, fervent, importunate, occasionally prolonged, and often accompanied with strong crying and tears." Among the petitions overheard on one occasion was the impassioned cry, "O God, wilt Thou not give me Scotland! O God, wilt Thou not give me Scotland!" For greater privacy he often betook himself to his garden or to the church to pour out his heart before God, sometimes becoming so engrossed that he would forget himself and lose all track of time. And he had his reward; his heavenly Father, who sees in secret, did indeed reward him openly, for his ministry in Ayr was richly blessed. There was also an outward reward on which Welsh would have set much less store; in 1602 as a mark of respect for their minister the Town Council presented him with the freedom of the burgh.

Besides his two services every Sabbath, Welsh also preached twice every

weekday, from nine to ten in the morning, and from four to five in the afternoon. In his preaching he spoke, we are told, with much simplicity, with deep earnestness, often with many tears, and the impression produced was correspondingly great. Yet Welsh did not go to his labours brimful of self-confidence. Though he was no coward, he sometimes felt so much the responsibility of taking a service that he would say to his elders on his way into the vestry that he was afraid to enter the pulpit; he would ask one of them to pray for him before he would venture to begin.

Welsh was again a member of the General Assembly of November 1602, when James was still manoeuvring with a view to setting up bishops once more in the Scottish Church. It was the King who obtained the consent of the Assembly to the appointment of commissioners to visit certain parts of the country. Welsh was chosen commissioner, and it would have pleased the King no end had he been able to flatter Welsh into accepting the see of Galloway or indeed any of the richer bishoprics which he was repeatedly offered. The King knew how to get men over to his side; but with men of the principles of John Welsh it was much more difficult, and indeed impossible. Shortly after his return from the Assembly we find the Ayr Town Council showing their practical care for their minister. "In respect of the dearth of the year and scarceness," their records read, "they ordain four bolls of meal, of the first and readiest of the mill farm, be given to Mr John Welsh, their minister, to his support, upon their very good will and favour towards him."

At the end of March 1603 the people of Ayr heard that their king was now also King of England. Welsh was one of several ministers who headed for Edinburgh to offer their congratulations. What he said, or even whether he spoke personally to the King, we do not know, but we can be sure that he was of the same mind as Robert Bruce, who was admitted to the King's presence and finished his address by telling James in plain and faithful terms, "The things which have just happened crave a twofold duty of Your Majesty. First, that you take heed to your own heart, that the glory and glance of these earthly things deceive you not; that you make them not your reward, nor place the comfort and consolation of your heart in them, but rather, as they are given, use them as steps and degrees to step up to the crown that cannot fade or fail. Next, seeing the God of heaven has manifested His unspeakable care in preserving so many crowns and kingdoms for you, Sir, Your Majesty cannot eschew the note of ingratitude if you extend not Your Majesty's credit, and employ your whole care, for preservation of His one kingdom."

It was only in April 1604, on the death of John Porterfield, that the

way became open for Welsh to become fully responsible for the pastoral charge of Ayr. While Welsh had no automatic right to succeed Porterfield, no one else was considered for the vacancy. Later that year the plague broke out in the east of Scotland and was spreading westwards with great loss of life. Welsh probably used the occasion repeatedly to call his people to repentance, but one such exhortation is recorded: "As the ark of Noah was an example and preacher of righteousness to the Jews, even so the pest (the plague) in Glasgow and Edinburgh and in other parts of the land is now a preacher good enough to you, for it cries, 'Repent, repent, or else it shall be so with you as it was with them'. Now therefore, seeing you have so many means of repentance offered to you, and so many preachers proclaiming repentance in your ears, I beseech you, my dear hearers, delay no longer, but return to the Lord in time, before the judgement overtake you.

The magistrates of Ayr posted guards on the edge of the town to keep out everyone suspected of having the plague. One day two pedlars arrived on horseback. They showed evidence from the previous town they had visited to prove that they were in good health. They were refused admission till a magistrate would give his verdict. The magistrate decided to seek advice from the minister. After a moment's silent prayer Welsh said, "Bailie, cause these men to put on their packs again and be gone, for if God be in heaven the plague is in these packs." The pedlars made their way instead to Cumnock, where very soon there was a severe outbreak of the plague. It is assumed that in the cloth the men were selling there were fleas carrying the plague.

(To be Continued)

The Darling of Heaven

(Continued from last issue — page 186)

Thy Spirit be dwelling and ruling in me;
Oh rid me of all that is grievous to Thee;
In light of Thy truth be Thou leading me,
Conformed of thine image I'm longing to be.

In performance of all that's appointed for me,
Of afflictions and troubles, Oh do Thou keep me.
While Satan harass and I feel it so hard —
Oh save me from bringing a shame on Thy cause.

Till life-storms are over, I'll continue to plea,
Remember, dear Jesus, those dear unto me;
My sisters and brothers and their need to the end,
Have mercy upon them and make them Thy friends.

Oh! Lover of souls, I would further implore,
The windows of Heaven to open once more;
Pour out Thy blessing which Thy word has foretold,
Thy glory and beauty shall men then behold.

And so while I wait for the change that's to be,
In Thy means of appointment with Thy people I'll be.
On Sabbath and weekdays in love let me be
Enquiring and seeking sweet glimpses of Thee.

Oh Lord of Lords Who reign'st over all
And Who is the One and true living God;
Empower They people whom Satan oppose,
More than conquerors make them and prosper Thy cause.

Oh Darling of Heaven, what a wonder 'twill be,
When a wretch of a sinner presented by Thee,
Without spot or blemish to the Father will bring;
Darling of Heaven Thy mercy I'll sing.

Now as in the vision Thou showed unto me,
As well as the Word Thou spoke unto me,
By Thy free grace in glory, Thy face I shall see,
The Darling of Heaven my anthem shall be.

Marjory Urquhart

Mbuma Zending Meeting — 1995

The thirty-second annual mission meeting organised by the Mbuma-Zending was held at Geldermalsen on Saturday, 29th April, 1995. The venue was, as in previous years, a spacious building which is normally used as an auction market but, with seating and other facilities in place, proves to be an eminently suitable place for the holding of these meetings which, on this occasion, attracted a congregation of some 6500 souls. We

can only marvel at the expertise of those responsible for organising the event. Outside and inside the hall there was evidence of careful planning and all concerned are to be commended for their work, so much of which is done voluntarily behind the scenes. On this occasion everything seems to have gone smoothly and by the end of the day approximately £47,000 had been collected. For this, as well as all their help over the years, we have reason to be thankful to our friends in Holland.

At the invitation of the Mbuma-Zending Committee I was privileged to be present together with my wife and, in the course of the meeting, which followed the usual pattern, I delivered the short address appended below. Mr van Vliet met us at Amsterdam Airport and after being kindly entertained by himself and his wife in their home at Dordrecht, we were taken by them to the Alblasserdam home of Mr and Mrs Leo Janse. Over the period of our stay in Holland we were to remain under their hospitable roof and we are deeply grateful to them as to the van Vliets and others, including, old friends Mr and Mrs Joh Freeke, 's Gravenhage, Mr and Mrs Beukers, Doornspijk, and Miss Peta van der Ridder who worked on our Mission in Zimbabwe for some years.

The Rev A B Ndebele and Mr E Zikhali were also present at the meeting. They were, over the period of their stay, kindly entertained in the home of Ds Tj and Mrs de Jong of Staphorst. Miss Celia Renes, who works at our Sengera hospital in Kenya was also present at the meeting but I regret to say that I was not able to contact her. My firm impression was that our Dutch friends remain as enthusiastic as ever as far as supporting our Mission is concerned.

Address — It gives me great pleasure to be among you once again and I wish to convey to you the greetings and good wishes of the Foreign Mission Committee in Scotland. We deeply appreciate your help — without it, we could not possibly maintain our mission work at its present level. As a result of your generosity, children are being educated, and taught the rudiments of the Christian faith. Also, the sick are now being treated, not only at Mbuma Hospital in Zimbabwe, but also at our Sengera Hospital in Kenya. At both hospitals, as you will know, we have on our staff those who belong to your country — Dr Hak, Lia Terlouw — Celia Renes and Truus Ringleberg — and we much value their contribution to the work. In Africa, however, our main purpose is to bring the Word of God to the ears of sinners, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will regenerate those that hear, and turn them from darkness to light. We believe that we are carrying out the commission given to the Church at the beginning of the New Testament dispensation — “GO YE INTO ALL THE

WORLD, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE!"

The Gospel which we preach is the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it was delivered to the Apostles and which they preached to such effect that in a short period of time, on their arrival in Thessalonica, it was said: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also". The weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but they were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, and the mightiest weapon of all was the Gospel. He who commissioned them was faithful to His promise — "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" — and their labours, accordingly, were not in vain in the Lord. As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed. At the heart of that Gospel was and is, the doctrine of Christ crucified. Paul came to Corinth and would have left it again very soon afterwards were it not that the Lord revealed to him that He had "much people" in that city. They were there — in a notoriously wicked city — such as were chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world, but who were still in a state of spiritual death and alienation from God. The time had now come when they were to be awakened and brought nigh to God, and that was to be accomplished through the preaching of Christ crucified and that only. That is what the Spirit of God blessed to so many in Corinth to the salvation of their never-dying souls. It is the same Gospel that we preach in Africa and elsewhere. The Christ we preach is both human and Divine — "God and man, in two distinct natures, and in one person, for ever" — "The one Mediator between God and men." — the Christ who assumed our nature, that He might bear the wrath of God and die the accursed death of the cross, in the room and stead of the guilty, according to His covenant engagements. Tidings of this is to be conveyed to sinners of Adam's race irrespective of colour of skin or place of residence. There is no difference — in Africa, in Scotland or in Holland — for all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God. We are to tell sinners that they are by nature, as fallen in Adam, the children of wrath, and that except they repent they shall be lost forever and ever. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent for He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead". As Gospel ministers we are placed under the obligation of preaching the Gospel to every creature — to declare to them that it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." — and that men are commanded to believe the Gospel in order to obtain the salvation of their souls. Our authority for doing this

is the command of the Saviour. We are clearly to state that if they believe, they will be saved, they will be saved, and if they believe not, they shall be damned. That is indescribably solemn. It is our hope that there are souls in Africa who will yet respond to the Gospel and that this is why the Lord, Who sees the end from the beginning, continues to make provision for the work to continue. The promise is: "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God". We ask you to pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit will be poured out from on high that the Gospel may be accompanied with power. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Notes and Comments

Immorality and the Priesthood

It is nothing short of nauseating hypocrisy for Cardinal Hume to assume the mantle of a champion of Christian morality when the church to which he belongs (which we do not believe to be a branch of the Christian Church at all) tolerates within its supposedly celibate priesthood men who are increasingly being exposed as guilty of sexual immorality. A Press review of a recently-published book called "*Sex, Priests and Power; Anatomy of a Crisis*", by A W Richard Sipe, (see "The Daily Telegraph" (03/06/95) provides statistics that are staggering in their implications. Sipe himself is described as being "a psychiatrist, a former priest and a man whose sincere concern for the future of the Roman Catholic Church is evident on every page." We quote from the Review: "He provides a clear and concise statistical picture, based on a sample of 1500 clerics. He estimates that some 20 per cent of priests have, at some time following ordination, a sexual relationship with a woman. Another 10 per cent are active homosexuals, six per cent child abusers . . . another eight per cent any combination of the above. . ." With that information, it is little wonder that Sipe describes the situation confronting the Roman Catholic Church as "a crisis of epic proportions". In the Review we are reminded of the conduct of "Father" James Porter of Fall River, Massachusetts, who was recently jailed for 18 years. "Some 200 youngsters placed under his care were punished, humiliated and raped by him in a systematic and sadistic fashion that beggars belief. Twelve of his victims later attempted suicide. Porter is just one of an estimated 12 Roman Catholic priests in American jails. All are convicted child abusers. And the problem is not restricted to the United States. In Ireland, the mishandling of the case of a paedophile priest last year forced the resignation of Albert Reynolds as Prime Minister."

Immoral behaviour, we may add, is not confined to the lower ranks of the priesthood but is also found among the clerical elite. The Primate of Austria, Cardinal Hans Herman Groer is the latest to be exposed. "Morality", Cardinal Hume is reported as saying, "is concerned with human behaviour at all levels." No one will disagree with that but actions speak louder than words.

APC Services

Among the church buildings which the APCs continue to occupy illegally is our church in Tain. It must be grieving to those who remember better days and the solemn communion services which used to be held within its walls to find that it is now used for Sabbath activities which would have been unheard of in the days of the Rev John Nicolson and before him the missionary and man of God, Archie Robertson. The *Ross-shire Journal* (09/06/95) carries two APC advertisements: one of them intimates the holding of a communion service on "Sunday" 11th June, at 11.30 am, with the Rev Derek Prime officiating, the other intimates that a "Let us Praise God together" service was to be held, at 4 pm, on the afternoon of the same day, the Rev Derek Prime was again to be the speaker, but on this occasion the "Inverness and District Male Voice Choir" was to be in attendance. It need hardly be said that in days gone by such a service would never have been held in the afternoon of a solemn communion Sabbath and that the introduction of choirs in the public worship of God would not have been tolerated for a moment. But the Tain/Fearn APCs now enjoy "liberty of conscience" and Free Presbyterian practices have now been jettisoned in the interests of ecumenism and popularity. The Free Church General Assembly, we notice, have now officially recognised the APCs as a body "fully committed to the Confession of Faith" and worthy of a place on "the list of churches and organisations with whom the Free Church can exchange delegates and letters of greeting." In the circumstances presently prevailing in the Free Church and the APCs, we would rather not be on the list ourselves. If we were there, it would create real difficulties for those APC office-bearers and others whose consciences apparently allow them to attend a Roman Catholic requiem mass but not a funeral worship in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The re-defining of Sin

The Shorter Catechism, based on the Word of the living God, defines sin as "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God".

That law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments and the Seventh Commandment — *Thou shalt not commit adultery* — was written, like the rest of them, by the finger of God, on a tablet of stone. That is clear enough to most people and especially to those who profess to be of the Christian faith, but not, it would seem, to the Bishop of Edinburgh, The Rt Rev Richard Holloway. The *Daily Telegraph* reported him as saying: “The Church is about promoting goodwill and kindness. Obviously someone who is cheating on his or her partner is not being very kind. But the Church should not condemn affairs as sinful and wrong. It must accept that adultery is caused by our genetics and help people control their instincts so that they can share loving relationships.” Such are the views we might expect an atheistic humanist to advance and we would not be surprised on hearing them were that their source, but coming from a man who professes to be a teacher of Christian doctrine and morality — claiming to be a spokesman for the Church — they are, in our view, shameful and appalling. Even in our permissive age the bishop’s views on adultery, if correctly reported, will be shocking to most people. But will this perception change in the future? Clifford Longley, the Religious Affairs Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, thinks that such views are, indeed, going to prevail: “The novelty raised by the Bishop of Edinburgh will quickly wear off, and a Church Commission somewhere will reach much the same conclusion, less contentiously expressed.”

Cohabitation condoned

When men depart from the standard of the divine Moral Law and seek to follow a moral code of their own devising they are plainly on the slippery slope that leads to the situation where no moral absolutes remain and every man simply does what is right in his own eyes. Cohabitation has come to be so common in our generation that some Church of England clerics are now pronouncing it an acceptable arrangement and asserting that those living together without being married ought not to be described as “living in sin”. This is what is contained in a report on the state of family life in Britain prepared by a Church of England working party and entitled *Something to Celebrate*. It maintains that “the traditional family structure was now only one type among many and the Church should not be seen to exclude the rest.”

Not all the members of the Working Party went along with the final report and one of them even resigned before it reached its final stage. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury to some extent distanced himself from it. It is to be debated in due course by the General Synod and it will then

become evident what proportion of the Church of England's clergy are prepared to accept this further departure from accepted standards. A stormy debate is anticipated. One Synod member, said to be a leading Evangelical, has already called the report "an obituary on the traditional family . . . riddled with the discredited permissive thinking of the 1960s", but it is only the Anglo-Catholics within the Church who seem to have shown anything like solidarity in opposing it. They declared that the report deserved "absolute and outright condemnation". Things have come to a sorry pass when it is Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics — represented by Cardinal Hume — that are widely regarded as the defenders of Christian morality while so-called Protestants are engaged in attacking it.

Mission News

The death of David Ndlovu had been a great shock to the Mission staff although he had been in failing health for a few years. The week before his death, David was supervising the work done at Ingwenya, extending the dining-room for the 600 boarding pupils, and fixing the new toilet facilities.

David was an apprentice builder and man of all trades, in the late James Tallach's squad of workmen. Like James, he was prepared, over the years, to undertake any work, night or day, for the Mission. David was responsible for the purchase of new cars and for the repair of the old. Since the war in Zimbabwe, cars had to be purchased in South Africa, and David with the assistance of other members of staff, went to Johannesburg, 600 miles south, and even to Durban to purchase the cars at present in use on the Mission. There were many difficulties to overcome with Customs etc.

During the war in Zimbabwe, those who travelled from Bulawayo to Mbumba and elsewhere, were in constant danger of their lives from the Army, looking for dissidents, and from the Freedom Fighters. One Sabbath morning David was waiting in his house until it was time for him to go to take a service in Lutsha church, nearby. He was listening to a tape-recording of a sermon by the late Rev Donald Malcolm MacLeod, on "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the World". His little boy came to call him. "Daddy, there are eleven men with guns outside and they want you." David went to speak to them. "What are you doing?" they asked. "I am listening to a tape," he replied. "We want to hear it," they said, thinking it was something political. They crowded

into the room and listened for 15 minutes to Mr MacLeod's clear, melodious voice. "That is wonderful," one of them said. "May we have it?" "You may take it," David said, "but I will not give it to you. This is my bread and this is my life, listening to the Word of God." They did not take it.

On another occasion David found a scrap of paper on the seat of his car with the words, "Should we also not hear the Word of God?" Many of those boys in the Army and among the Freedom Fighters were "Mission Boys" from various Missions.

One Sabbath morning at Mbumba, David was preaching. All of a sudden five men appeared in the doorway carrying guns. The congregation became restive and some tried to slip outside. David went down on his knees behind the small table which acted as a pulpit, and prayed for guidance. He then rose and walked down the aisle. "Is it right to bring guns into the House of God?" he said. "We are not allowed to leave them outside," one of the men replied. "Well, sit down and put the guns at your feet," David said. The men, belonging to the Army, did as they were told and listened quietly to the rest of the service.

David has left a widow, Flora, a former pupil an Ingwenya, and six of a family. He was a bright witness and will be very hard to replace.

There is a small dam opposite Ingwenya Mission, on the Jigijani River. It was built some years ago by the late James Tallach and was called the Vancouver Dam, as it was built with money received from the Vancouver congregation at that time. Recently it was repaired and enlarged. To the joy of the local people there have been some very heavy showers of late and the dam has filled up; some of the trees are now in the water. "It is lovely to look at, almost like a Scottish loch," writes an ex-patriate. One of the Local Development Committee was warm in his praise for the Mission. "This water should last until July," he said. One correspondent from the Mission said: "How much more wonderful would it be if many of our local Committee would see their need of drawing from that well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Church Notes

Appointment of New Editor

The Synod, when it met in May, appointed the Rev Neil M Ross BA, Free Presbyterian Manse, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, IV15 9JB, Editor of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. We wish Mr Ross every blessing and success in the performance of these duties which now devolve upon him.

The Editor *pro tempore* desires to thank all who contributed articles and helped him to bear the burden of the Editorship over the past five months.

Meetings of Presbyteries (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 3rd October at 11 a.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 12th September at 1.30 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 19th September at 6 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 5th September at 1 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 19th September at 6 p.m.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer Mr R A Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE, wishes to acknowledge with thanks the following donations:-

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Can, \$100; N.Z. Friend (Mozambique famine relief), £120.

Eastern Europe Fund: Anon., £120; Ft William Congregation, £100, per A.N.M.; Anon., (where most needed), £500.

Legacy Reserve Fund: Anon., (Postal Orders), £100.

Sustentation Fund: Anon., £120, "After Assembly 1892 . . .", £10, "As one born out of time", £5.

The Treasurers of the following congregations wish to acknowledge the following donations:

Bracadale-Strath: Mrs J. Curtin and Mrs J. MacPherson, Heaste, in memory of much loved parents and loved ones, for upkeep of Bracadale F.P. Church and Manse, £400; Stockinish Friend, £10, where most needed, per Rev G.G.H.

Breasclete: Friend of the cause, for Sustentation Fund, £30, for door collection, £20; Dr R.J.D., where most needed, £30; D.M.D., where most needed, £100; Friend of the Cause, for Sustentation Fund, £30, for door collection, £20.

Dingwall: In memory of our mother, for Church Funds, £100, per Rev. N.M.R.

Dumbarton: J.C., for Congregational Funds, £25, per J.H.; E. McD., for Foreign Mission, £50.

Inverness: Anon., £20. Anon., £40; Anon., £20; Anon., £30; Anon., £50; Anon., £15, all for Sustentation Fund and per envelopes in plate; T.B.S., £100, per envelope in plate; T.B.S., £18.24, per Collection Box in Ballifeary Home of Rest; Anon., for church bus maintenance, £5, per envelope in the plate.

Lochcarron: Anon., (Feb.), £85; Anon., (Apr.), £100, both for Eastern European Fund; Friend, Carnoustie (Mar.), for Congregational Funds, £40; R.M., (Apr.), for door collection, £20; D.G., for Sustentation Fund, £1; Friend, Carnoustie (May), for Congregational Funds, £50; D.T., for car license and insurance, £270.

London: Anon., for Congregational Fund, £600, per Rev. K.M.W.

North Harris: Friend, Stockinish, for congregational purposes, £10; Friend, Stockinish, for petrol, £20.

Portree: Braes Friend, for Bus Fund, £30, per envelope in plate; Friend, where needed, £20, per F.M.; Friend, £10; Friend, £10, both for Sustentation Fund and per S.Y.M.