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## The One Source of Light

IT was the most vital of all questions that the lawyer asked the Saviour: "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The Saviour's answer was adapted to the man's own needs, but the fact that it is recorded in Scripture indicates that it was designed to teach a general principle as to how all succeeding generations should answer such questions. The Lord would have us not only know the answers to particular questions but also *how to find* a correct answer to other questions which may arise.

Christ certainly had more than sufficient authority to answer the lawyer's question Himself in words of His own choosing. Instead He directed the lawyer to the revelation from God which was already in his hands — the Old Testament Scriptures — asking him, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). In these Scriptures, which had already pointed so many others of his people in a right direction, the lawyer, and every other inquirer, could find an absolutely authoritative answer to his question, for "all Scripture is inspired of God". That is, it was from beginning to end breathed out by God and so is without error of any kind. It is, and always will be, perfectly reliable, the proper source for answering all questions which have a religious bearing.

Man's thoughts on religion are inevitably polluted by sin; they are no safe guide to eternal life, nor can they give safe light on any other religious matter. No one can be relied on in this whole area unless he is faithfully reflecting the teaching of Scripture. The teachings of every preacher and writer are to be examined under the spotlight indicated by the question, "What saith the Scriptures?" More than ever, in this age of almost overwhelming religious error, the attitude of the Bereans is needed — they "searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so", even when the preacher was someone as eminent as the Apostle Paul.

What is more, the Scriptures are a sufficient revelation of all we need to

know in religion. We may not obtain an answer for every question we might want to ask, but we can be sure that every question to which we genuinely need an answer will indeed find its solution between the covers of the Bible. This is summed up by *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:6): "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men".

The Saviour was pointing the lawyer to the proper source of religious knowledge, and the lawyer did indeed produce an answer from the Old Testament: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," but it was not an answer which could point him to eternal life, for he was a fallen sinner who could not love God perfectly. Perfection was once the way to eternal life, but that way became impassable when Adam fell, and all mankind with him. And when the cherubim were placed at the east of the garden of Eden "and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life", it was demonstrated clearly that that way was closed for ever.

The lawyer had stated the fundamental precept of the covenant of works, but he did not face the fact that this is now a broken covenant. He did not know his own heart. He could not love his neighbour as himself, far less love his Maker with all his heart, soul, strength and mind. Was it to teach him how far short he came in loving his neighbour that Christ told him about the Good Samaritan? He was told to go and do likewise. Perhaps if he took the Saviour's teaching seriously and tried to imitate the Good Samaritan he found out how far he really was from earning eternal life by his own exertions. Unless man can attain to this standard of perfection he can never earn salvation — and that fact has put salvation altogether out of the reach of man ever since Adam first sinned. There is an unwillingness in the heart of every unconverted sinner to accept this truth. While no one surely is so rash as to deny absolutely that he is a sinner, who will accept that he is so great a sinner that he cannot possibly save himself? Sinners may accept that they need to try rather harder than they do at present, but they want to argue that it is perfectly possible to do better, and to live so much better that they can attain to salvation in their own strength.

For sinners to argue in this way is to deny the extent of their natural corruption. Man is so corrupt as to be totally depraved — which does not mean that he is as corrupt as he could possibly be, but that every part of his being is thoroughly corrupted by sin. What he needs is to have the bright

light of God's Word shine into the darkness of his soul and show him how irretrievable his situation is unless God Himself will act. And he needs the Holy Spirit to make him willing to accept that truth.

Suppose then that the question is asked, *Is there a way back to God?* The answer is again to be found by listening to the Saviour's questions: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer could have easily found out even in the Old Testament Scriptures that there is such a way of return, through the Messiah who was to come in the fulness of time, of whom it was said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities". God's revelation of His grace in the law had told of sacrifice, which pointed forward to *the* Sacrifice who was Jehovah's equal, the Person who was even then speaking to the lawyer. And through these Scriptures Christ was even then calling to him, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else".

How disastrous to turn away from Christ, for the Scriptures make it plain that there is no other way to eternal life! "Neither is there salvation in any other," declared Peter in words which were themselves to become part of Scripture, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved". No other saviour has been revealed, and no other saviour ever will be revealed, but the One whose name *Jesus* means Saviour. This uniqueness of Christ Jesus as saviour is one of the main truths which this generation has rebelled against. Modern man is too broad-minded to refuse Jesus a place as an important religious figure; Christianity must be allowed its position as one of the more important of world religions. But only if it will give up its claim to uniqueness. Otherwise it is to be ignored, for no religion in this enlightened age is to be allowed to claim that it has any unique light to shed on man's condition. Yet it remains true in 1996, and it ever will, that the Word of God is a lamp, and the only lamp, which will guide us out of nature's darkness and set us on the way to eternal life. And while the whole multi-faith movement stands condemned for pointing a light in almost every direction but the right one, true Christianity unashamedly claims to be unique, for it stands alone in giving reliable directions as to how a sinner may attain eternal life.

Yet, though man cannot reach the standard which God has set in His law, that law remains the rule for his conduct. If our question is, *How are we to live out our lives in this world?* the answer must again be, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" Even today all of the Ten Commandments still have absolute authority — God's authority — over both believers and unbelievers. We should remember that when the moral law was given at Mount Sinai no new precepts were included, not even the Fourth

Commandment — beginning as it does with word *Remember*. And the arrangements for gathering manna involved the Sabbath, for no manna was to be gathered on that one day of the week. These arrangements were put in place before ever Israel reached Mount Sinai, for all ten commandments were written in the heart of man at Creation. The commandments were given by God in His goodness and wisdom, for the Creator knew the needs of that race which He brought into existence. He knew that mankind needed direction for the time to be set apart to worship Him, as well as needing to be guided on, for instance, the subjects of honesty and the sanctity of life.

One imagines that everyone wishes the protection of the Sixth, Eighth and Ninth Commandments, but so many, including the bulk of opinion-formers in the media, feel that the Seventh Commandment may be safely disregarded, as long as what they believe to be appropriate precautions are taken. But the disastrous consequences are there for all to see in the spread of particular diseases and in marriage breakdown.

Had someone wakened up in 1995 after being asleep for, say, 150 years he would still expect the Churches, and leading figures within the Churches, to accept without question the permanent relevance of the moral law. One can imagine his surprise to read about the leader of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Bishop Holloway of Edinburgh, declaring that the Bible's moral code must be rewritten in every generation. In a lecture given recently in Glasgow the bishop argued that, as rational creatures seeking moral well-being, people were forced to find appropriate rules for their own culture that reflected their needs, knowledge and understanding. He accepted, somewhat patronisingly, that "the Bible is still a useful guide" but at the same time he claimed that "we have to recognise it as a creature of its time" and that "this is particularly true of its moral systems".

This again is to refuse the light which God has given, and that refusal is at the root of all of the heresy that threatens to swamp the whole of the Christian Church at the end of the twentieth century. God has given a coherent and reliable revelation of His will for mankind, a revelation which is absolutely without error of any kind, and He has done so in a way which is valid for all time and for all cultures.

It may at first sight seem surprising that the Roman Catholic spokesman expressed substantial agreement with Bishop Holloway. But he explained that the Roman Catholic Church had always held that morality was a combination of Scripture and tradition. Rome has always wanted another light besides the clear light of Scripture, but in doing so she ignores the warning, "If . . . the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Rome has never given the Bible its due authority. She has

consistently set herself above the Bible, but as surely as the Bible is the one source of knowledge about the way of salvation, it is the one source of knowledge about moral questions. No man or organisation dare put human tradition on a level with the Bible. If, like Rome, they do so, they ignore the Saviour's questions, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" He never gave that place to tradition. And it is remarkable how often he reproved the Jews for their traditions.

The Bible is indeed a useful guide to morals, but it is more. It is a perfectly reliable guide — not only for Israel 3500 years ago, but for every nation and tribe, today and right down to the end of time. It has unique light to shed on how we ought to live in this world. Every generation which ignores it does so at its peril. Churchmen argue against its abiding authority and relevance at their peril also, and if they continue to do so they will be condemned at Christ's judgement seat as blind leaders of the blind. What a fearful responsibility lies on those who would turn away the eyes of an already dark generation from the one source of light, a light which has already brought multitudes to eternal blessedness! KDM

## Walking Humbly with God

*John Owen*

*Owen (1616-1683) was described by Rev D Beaton as the prince of the Puritan theologians. Volume 8 of his Works contains a series of five sermons on the expression, "And to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). In the third of these sermons Owen deals with humbling ourselves to the law of His grace in our walking with God. The first part of that section is printed here and the second part will follow next month, DV.*

**I**N all our walking with God, we are to humble ourselves in bowing to the law and rule of His grace; which is the way that He hath revealed wherein He will walk with sinners. The apostle tells us of the Jews in sundry places, that they had a mind to walk with God; they had "a zeal for God". So he had himself in his Pharisaism (Phil 3:6). He "was zealous towards God" (Acts 22:3); and so were the Jews (Rom 10:2), "I bear them record, they have a zeal of God". And they followed after righteousness, "the law of righteousness" (Rom 9:31); they took pains to "establish their righteousness" (Rom 10:3). What can be more required to walking with God than a zeal for Him — or His laws and ways, and a diligent endeavour to attain a righteousness before Him? How few do we see attain thus much! What repute have they in the world that do so? But yet, saith the apostle, they did not attain to walk with God, nor the righteousness they sought after (Rom 9:31). But what is the reason of it? Why, in their attempt to walk with God,

they did not bow themselves to the law of His grace. So (Rom 10:3) they went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. What righteousness is that? Why, "the righteousness of faith", according to the law of grace (Rom 1:17). "They sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law" (Rom 9:32). And the ground of all this is discovered (verse 33). Behold, here are two effects of Christ towards several persons: some stumble at Him, and so are not able to walk on with God. Who are they? He tells you, verse 32. Some are not ashamed. Who are they? They that believe, and so submit to the law of God's grace. It is evident, then, that men may labour to walk with God, and yet stumble and fall, for want of this humbling themselves to the law of His grace.

Let us see, then, how that may be done, and what is required thereunto. It is, then, required:

[1.] That the bottom of all a man's obedience lie in this — that in himself he is a lost, undone creature, an object of wrath, and that whatever he have of God in any kind, he must have it in a way of mere mercy and grace. To this apprehension of himself must proud man, that would fain have something of his own, humble himself. God abhors every one that He sees coming towards Him on any other account. Our Saviour Christ lets men know what they are, and what they must be, if they will come to God by Him. "I came," saith He, "to save that which was lost" (Matt 18:11). "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt 9:13). Verse 12, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick". "I came into the world," says He, "that they that are blind may see, and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). This is the sum: "If you intend to have any thing to do with God by Me, know yourselves to be lost sinners, blind, sick, dead; so that whatever you have, you must have it in a way of mere grace".

And how was this direction followed by Paul? Will you see the foundation of his obedience? You have it (1 Tim. 1:13-15), "I was thus and thus: I am the chief of sinners; but I obtained mercy'. It is mere mercy and grace upon the account whereof I have any thing from God" — which principle he improves to the height (Phil 3:7-9), "All loss, all dung; Christ is all in all". This the proud Pharisees could not submit unto. It is the subject of much of their disputes with our Saviour. To be lost, blind, nothing, they could not endure to hear. Were they not children of Abraham? Did they not do so and so? To tell them that they are lost and nothing, is but to speak out of envy. And on this rock do thousands split themselves, in the days wherein we live. When they are overpowered by any conviction to an

apprehension of a necessity of walking with God (as more or less, at one time or other, by one means or other, most men are) they then set themselves on the performance of the duties they have neglected, and of the obedience which they think acceptable, abiding in that course whilst their conviction abides; but never humbling themselves to this part of the law of God's grace — to be vile, miserable, lost, cursed, hopeless in themselves — never making thorough work of it. They lay the foundation of their obedience in a quagmire, whose bottom should have been dug into; and stumble at the stumbling-stone, in their first attempt to walk with God.

Now, there are two evils attending the mere performance of this duty, which utterly disappoint all men's attempts for walking with God:

*First.* That men without it will go forth, somewhat, at least, in their own strength, to walk with God. "Why," say the Pharisees, "can we do nothing?"

Are we blind also?" Acting in the power of self will cleave to such a one, so as not to be separated; it will steal upon him in every duty he goes about. Now, nothing is more universally opposite to the whole nature of gospel obedience than this, that a man should perform the least of it in his own strength, without an actual influence of life and power from God in Christ. "Without Me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). All that is done without strength from Him, is nothing. God works in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Whatever a man doth, which God works not in him, which he receives not strength for from Christ, is all lost, all perishing. Now, our fetching in of strength from Christ for every duty, is founded wholly in that subjection to the law of grace whereof we speak. *Second.* His obedience will build him up in that state wherein he is, or edify him towards hell and destruction of which more afterward.

[2.] The second thing that we are to humble ourselves unto in the law of grace is, a firm persuasion, exerting itself effectually in all our obedience, that there is not a righteousness to be obtained before God by the performance of any duties or obedience of ours whatever. That this lies in the law of the grace of God, the apostle disputes at large (Rom 4:13-15), "If," saith he, "righteousness be by the law" that is, by our obedience to God according to the law "then faith and the promise serve to no purpose;" there is an inconsistency between the law of grace (that is, of faith and the promise) and the obtaining of a righteousness before God by our obedience. So Gal 2:21, "If righteousness were by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." "You would walk with God according to His mind; you would please Him in Jesus Christ. What do you do? You strive to perform the duties required at your hand, that on their account you may be accepted as righteous with God. I tell you," saith the apostle, "if this be the state of

things, Christ is dead in vain': if this be a righteousness before God to be obtained by any thing you can do, the gospel is to no purpose."

And this, also, is the proud heart of man to humble himself to, if he will walk with God — he must obey, he must perform duties, he must be holy, he must abstain from every sin; and that, all, under a quick, living, energetical persuasion, that by these things a righteousness before God is not to be obtained. This is to influence all your duties, to steer you in your whole course of obedience, and to accompany you in every act of it. How few are influenced with this persuasion in their walking with God! Do not most men proceed on other practical principles? Is not their great reserve for their appearance before God hewed out of their own obedience? God knows they walk not with Him.

[3.] In the midst of all our obedience which is our own, we must believe and accept of a righteousness which is not our own, nor at all wrought or procured by us; of which we have no assurance that there is any such thing, but by the faith we have in the promise of God: and thereupon, renouncing all that is in or of ourselves, we must merely and solely rest on that for righteousness and acceptance with God. This the apostle affirms his heart to be humbled unto (Phil 3:7-9), the place before mentioned. He reckons up all his own duties, is encompassed with them, sees them lying in great abundance on every hand; every one of them offering its assistance, perhaps painting its face, and crying that it is "gain"; but saith the apostle, "You are all loss and dung; I look for another righteousness than any you can give me".

Man sees and knows his own duty, his own righteousness and walking with God; he seeth what it costs and stands him in; he knows what pains he hath taken about it; what waiting, fasting, labouring, praying it hath cost him; how he hath cut himself short of his natural desires, and mortified his flesh in abstinence from sin. These are the things of a man, wrought in him, performed by him; and the spirit of a man knows them; and they will promise fair to the heart of a man that hath been sincere in them, for any end and purpose that he shall use them. But now, for the righteousness of Christ — that is without him; he seeth it not, experiences it not; the spirit that is within him knows nothing of it; he hath no acquaintance with it, but merely as it is revealed and proposed in the promises, wherein yet it is nowhere said to him, in particular, that it is his, and was provided for him, but only that it is so, to and for believers. Now, for a man to cast away that which he hath seen, for that which he hath not seen; to refuse that which promises to give him a fair entertainment and supportment in the presence of God, and which he is sure is his own, and cannot be taken from him, for

that which he must venture on upon the word of promise, against ten thousand doubts, and fears, and temptations that it belongs not to him — this requires humbling of the soul before God; and this the heart of a man is not easily brought unto. Every man must make a venture for his future state and condition. The question only is, upon what he shall venture it? Our own obedience is at hand, and promises fairly to give assistance and help: for a man, therefore, wholly to cast it aside upon the naked promise of God to receive him in Christ, is a thing that the heart of man must be humbled unto. There is nothing in a man that will not dispute against this captivity of itself: innumerable proud reasonings and imaginations are set up against it; and when the mind and discursive, notional part of the soul is overpowered with the truth, yet the practical principle of the will and the affections will exceedingly tumultuate against it. But this is the law of God's grace, which must be submitted unto, if we will walk with Him — the most holy, wise, and zealous, who have yielded the most constant obedience unto God, whose good works and godly conversation have shone as lights in the world, must cast down all these crowns at the foot of Jesus, renounce all for Him, and the righteousness that He hath wrought out for us. All must be sold for the pearl — all parted with for Christ. In the strictest course of exactest obedience in us, we are to look for a righteousness wholly without us.

[4.] We must humble ourselves to place our obedience on a new foot of account, and yet to pursue it with no less diligence than if it stood upon the old. Eph 2:8-10, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "If not of works, then what need of works any more? The first end appointed to our obedience was, that we might be saved. This end, it seems, is taken away: our works and duties are excluded from any efficiency in compassing of that end; for if it be of works, then grace is no more grace' (Gal 2:21). Then let us lay all works and obedience aside, and sin, that grace may abound." That many did, that many do, make this use of the grace of God, is most evident; so turning it into lasciviousness. "But," saith the apostle, "there is more to be said about works than so. Their legal end is changed, and the old foundation they stood upon is taken away. But there is a new constitution making them necessary — a new obligation, requiring them no less exactly of us than the former did, before it was disannulled." So Eph 2:10, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works'. God saving us by grace, hath, on that account, appointed that we should

walk in obedience. There is this difference: before, I was to perform good works because I was to be saved by them; now, because I am saved without them." God saving us in Christ, by grace, hath appointed that we shall perform that in a way of acknowledgment of our free salvation, which before we were to do to be saved. Though works left no room at all for grace, yet grace leaves room for works, though not the same they had before grace came. This, then, are we to humble ourselves to — to be as diligent in good works, and all duties of obedience, because we are saved without them, as we could be to be saved by them. He that walks with God must humble his soul to place all his obedience on this foot of account. He hath saved us freely; only let our conversation be as beseemeth the gospel. How this principle is effectual in believers, as to the crucifying of all sin, Paul declares (Rom. 6:14), "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace". The argument to carnal reason would lie quite contrary. "If we are not under the law — that is, the condemning power of the law — then let sin have its dominion, power, sway. Did not the law forbid sin, under pain of damnation? — Cursed is every one that continueth not . . . ." Did not the law command obedience with the promise of salvation? — The man that doth the things of it shall live therein'. If, then, the law be taken away from having power over us to these ends and purposes, as to forbid sin with terror of damnation, and command obedience for righteousness and salvation, what need we perform the one or avoid the other?" "Why, upon this account," saith the apostle, "that we are under grace; which, with new ends, and on new motives and considerations, requires the one and forbids the other."

Have we now, or do we constantly humble ourselves to this part of the law of God's grace — that we build up and establish our obedience on grace, and not on the law; on motives of love, not fear; from what God hath done for us in Christ, rather than from what we expect because "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"?

We cannot be safe, much less happy, but in proportion as we are weaned from our own wills, and made simply desirous of being directed by His guidance. This truth is sufficiently familiar to the judgement; but we seldom learn to reduce it into practice without being trained awhile in the school of disappointment.

*John Newton*

A religion of blood is God's appointed religion for a sinner, for the wages of sin is death.

*John Duncan*

There is no holiness save through the knowledge and faith of Christ; and such knowledge and faith infallibly lead to holiness.

*William Tait*

# Faith and Justification

*W S Plumer*

*Plumer (1802-1880) was an American Southern Presbyterian minister who spent the last 13 years of his life teaching in a theological seminary. He is best known today for his massive, but popular, volume on the Psalms (published by the Banner of Truth Trust). Here is a chapter from another of Plumer's many volumes, The Grace of Christ, recently republished by Odom Publications. This excellent volume, which has as its subtitle Sinners Saved by Unmerited Kindness is available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom at £9.50. Some quotations have been omitted.*

THE Scriptures abound with assertions that our justification is by faith. Thus Habakkuk says: "The just shall live by faith" (2:4). Some would read the passage thus, "The just by faith shall live". There is no solid ground of objection to this rendering, for it really asserts but the same thing now taught by it. We are at no loss for the sense of this passage; for we have an inspired interpretation of it given by Paul. Indeed it seems to have been a very favourite text with him. He quotes it in Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11, Heb 10:38. But we may go further back than the days of Habakkuk, even to the time of Abraham. Of him we read: "And he believed in the Lord and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). This passage is no less celebrated than that already quoted. It is also divinely interpreted by the inspiration of God in Rom 4:1-6, Gal 3:6-14. Indeed the Scriptures are very explicit on this point: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:16). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). "Thou standest by faith" (Rom 11:20). "God shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith" (Rom 3:30). Many other texts are no less clear.

But what is the meaning of the expression *we are justified by faith*? How are we justified by faith? Why are we never said to be justified by other Christian graces? Humility is an excellent grace, much commended in Scripture, and putting us where we ought to be, in the dust. Meekness bears with pity and forgiveness outrageous wrong heaped upon us, and so makes us like Christ, who was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Hope is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and being lively, animates the soul in all times of trial. Charity with her broad mantle covers the faults of others, fills the world with the fame of her deeds, and never faileth. Penitence sits at the feet of Jesus and bathes them with its tears. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death.

Excellent as all these graces are, yet it is nowhere said in Scripture that a man is justified by fear, by charity, by penitence, by hope, by meekness, or by humility. But he is often said to be justified by faith. God does not put this honour upon faith because it is greater than other graces, for it is not (1 Cor 13:13). Love is greater. So are all graces which shall flourish for ever. But the reason why faith justifies is because it receives Christ. In the language of the Bible, to receive Christ is to believe on him. "To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name" (John 1:12). The hand of the beggar receives the loaf, which charity offers him, and so he is fed by his hand and not by another member of his body. To believe in Christ is in Scripture said to be looking to Him (Is 45:22, Heb 12:2). Now although he, who looks, may have all his other senses, and in other respects they may be of eminent use to him, yet he sees only with his eyes.

Faith is the vision of the new-born soul. It looks back thousands of years. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were made" (Heb 11:3). It looks forward also thousands of years. "Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). And as the dying Israelite looked to the brazen serpent and was healed, so do perishing sinners look by faith to Jesus and are saved. They look and live.

Faith is a reliance upon testimony, and saving faith has special regard to the testimony of God concerning His Son. Even to men we extend our belief of their word in certain circumstances. But "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:9-12). So that he, who believes he has need of a Saviour and credits this testimony of God, does rest the whole weight of his salvation here and not elsewhere. He takes Christ as his sole, sufficient Redeemer. Faith justifies us only as it receives Jesus Christ as "the Lord our Righteousness". It takes the robe He has wrought and puts it on, and so hides the nakedness of the soul.

*The Larger Catechism* says: "Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the Spirit and word of God; whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability of himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon

Christ and His righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation”.

Bishop Hall says: “The spiritual hand whereby we receive the sweet offer of our Saviour is faith; which in short is no other than an affiance in the Mediator. Receive peace, and be happy; believe, and thou hast received.”

Ussher says: “Justifying faith consists in these two things, in having a mind to know Christ, and a will to rest upon Him. Whosoever sees so much excellency in Christ, that thereby he is drawn to embrace Him as the only Rock of salvation, that man truly believes to justification.”

Others very well represent the office of faith when they say that by means of it a union is formed between Christ and believers. Thus Luther says: “Faith unites the soul with Christ as a spouse with her husband. Everything which Christ has becomes the property of the believing soul; everything which the soul has becomes the property of Christ. Christ possesses all blessings and eternal life — they are thenceforth the property of the soul. The soul has all its iniquities and sins: they become thenceforward the property of Christ. It is then that a blessed change commences: Christ, who is both God and man, Christ who has never sinned, and whose holiness is perfect, Christ the Almighty and Eternal, taking to Himself, by His nuptial ring of faith, all the sins of the believer, those sins are lost and abolished in Him; for no sins dwell before His infinite righteousness. Thus, by faith, the believer’s soul is delivered from sins, and clothed with the eternal righteousness of her bridegroom, Christ. O happy union! The rich, the noble, the holy Bridegroom takes in marriage His poor, guilty and despised spouse, delivers her from every evil, and enriches her with the most precious blessings. Christ, a King and a Priest, shares this honour and glory with all Christians. The Christian is a king, and consequently possesses all things; he is a priest, and consequently possesses God, and it is faith, not works, which brings him all this honour. A Christian is free from all things, above all things, faith giving him richly all things.”

Should any be startled at such expressions as *he possesses God*, let them consider the import of these words: “Thou art my portion, O Lord” (Ps 119:57), “God is our refuge and strength” (Ps 46:1), “I am the Lord thy God”, and many such expressions of Scripture. On the other hand how many scores of times does God call the saints, “My people”, “the lot of Mine inheritance”, “My redeemed”, “My love”, etc. “All grace flows from Christ united to the soul, as all life flows from the soul united to the body.” This union between Christ and believers shall never be broken. It is in perpetuity as to all its blessed consequences.

From all that has been said, it is very evident that there is no *merit* in our believing, though by believing we become interested in the merits of Christ. If faith itself, the act of believing, were the ground of our acceptance, it would certainly be works, even the work of faith. And as no man's faith is absolutely perfect, we should then have justification by a work full of imperfection. Faith is indeed the instrument, but not the ground; the means, but not the cause of our justification.

If faith itself were the *ground* of our acceptance, it would be our saviour, and it would be entitled to all the glory of our salvation. And as faith is an act of the soul, each man would then be entitled to the full honour of his own salvation; and instead of boasting being excluded, as Paul says (Rom 3:27), all heaven would be filled with it, and each man would have a right to say that he came thither by his own act, merit and virtue. And where then would be the glory of Christ? His reward would consist in nothing. Those who should be saved would owe him nothing. They would have saved themselves. To be justified by faith itself as the ground of acceptance would surely be to be "justified by works of righteousness, which we have done," and Paul says this is impossible.

The faith by which a soul is united to Christ is itself the gift of God, and a gift which never could have been bestowed but for the finished work of Christ. That it is a gift from God is declared in Matt 16:16,17, in John 1:13, in Rom 12:3, in Eph 2:8, in Phil. 1:29, and in many other places. The Saviour is expressly called "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:1). Again it is expressly ascribed to God's Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith" (Gal 5:22). How then could it be any just ground of acquitting the guilty, and of taking the undeserving into the favour of God? Faith makes no satisfaction for sin. Faith even when genuine is not in any case perfect and blameless. Should we have no better righteousness than this in which to appear before God, His holy eye would behold rents in every part of it. So that the Scriptures ascribe even our believing to the amazing kindness of God. In Acts 18:27 men are in so many words said to have "believed through grace".

How clear and harmonious is God's way of saving sinners! And how safe is it to follow Him in all things! Holiness no less than bliss follows a true faith. "Reliance is the essence of faith. Christ is the object, the Word is the food, and obedience the proof; so that true faith is a depending upon Christ for salvation in the way of obedience, as He is offered in the Word." Well may all give thanks for such a gift. It is the earnest of salvation.

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

## Particular Redemption

*Rev Donald Beaton*

*A further extract from The Reformed Faith, continued from the November issue, p 336. The final part of this section will appear in next month's magazine, DV.*

PASSAGES in Scripture which speak of the possibility of those perishing for whom Christ died are hypothetical, and as Dr A A Hodge says: "They truly indicate the nature and tendency of the action against which they warn us, and are the means which God uses under the administration of His Spirit to fulfil His purposes. . . . In the case of Paul's shipwreck, it was certain that none should perish, and yet all would perish except they abode in the ship (Acts 27:24-31)" (*Outlines of Theology*, p 421).

(b) **Amyraldianism, or Hypothetical or Conditional Universalism.** This view was first promulgated by the theologians of Saumur. It had its origin in the teaching of John Cameron, Professor of Theology at the above-named college in France. Cameron declared that Christ died for no man simply, but on condition that we who are of the world should be delivered from the world and engrafted into Christ by true faith (Smeaton, *The Apostles' Doctrine of the Atonement*, p. 540). The doctrine was shaped into a system by his distinguished pupil, Amyraud, whose Latin name, Amyraldus, was given to the doctrine. Amyraldus in his *Treatise on Predestination* (1634) systematised the teaching of his master. In this treatise Amyraldus says: "The sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered was *equally for all*; and the salvation which He received from His Father, in the sanctification of the spirit and the glorification of the body, was destined equally for all, provided the necessary disposition for receiving it were equal". This teaching met with strong opposition, especially from Rivetus and Spanheim<sup>1</sup>. Amyraldus expressed admiration for Calvin and maintained that the system which he advocated was but a logical outcome and historical development of ideas found in the *Institutes*. He had also the idea that this view of the extent of redemption would appeal to the Lutherans who, since the Synod of Dort, had become more opposed to the Reformed teaching on this doctrine. Amyraldus tried to show that there might be a general reference to all men in redemption, a doctrine which the Lutherans insisted on maintaining, while he also retained the Reformed doctrine of limited, or definite, redemption.

The French National Synod of 1637 summoned Amyraldus and his

<sup>1</sup>The great work, however, on this subject is Frederick Spanheim's excercitations on *Universal Grace*, 1646. Here every point is calmly and lucidly reviewed, with little of the acrimony of controversy (Smeaton, op cit, p 471).

friend, Paul Testard, pastor at Blois, before it. They stated: "That Jesus Christ died for all men sufficiently but for the elect only effectually; and that consequentially His intention was to die for all men in respect of the sufficiency of His satisfaction, but for the elect only in respect of its quickening and saving virtue and efficacy" (Quick, *Synodicon*, vol 2, p 354). After being cautioned, they were given the right hand of fellowship by the Moderator. Further complaints were made at the National Synod of 1644-45, when the following decision was come to: "This Assembly, being very well satisfied with his [Amyraldus'] explications and sense given of his doctrine agreeable to that of the Synod of Alençon [1637]; and judging it best to bury in the grave of oblivion all those reciprocal complaints brought in from all parties, hath, as formerly, dismissed the said Sieur Amyraud with honour to the exercise of his professorship, wherein he is exhorted to employ himself with courage and cheerfulness" (Quick, *op cit*, vol 2, p 455).

It would thus appear from these decisions that the French Protestant Church did not see anything seriously wrong in the Amyraldian teaching. That we are not doing them injustice the followings words from Principal Cunningham will show: "The Synod of 1637 manifested a considerable amount of unfaithfulness to God in connection with the doctrines, and the unfaithfulness did not fail to appear in the Synod of 1645 — the one only 17 and the other 25 years after the solemn adoption by the National Synod of the canons of the Synod of Dort. The National Synods and purity of doctrine seem very much to have gone down together, as it is remarkable that the one became more impure as the other grew rarer. In point of fact, so far had the Synods come short of faithful testimony to the truth of God, that the most elaborate book in defence of the universality of the atonement, in a Calvinistic point of view, by Daillé, is literally entitled as 'an apology for the two Synods'. This impurity of doctrine must be viewed, I think, in connection with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes" (Speech in the General Assembly of the Free Church of 1859 on the occasion of the Tercentenary of the French Synod).

The Amyrldian system has been summarised by Dr Charles Hodge under the following heads: "(a) The motive impelling God to redeem men was benevolence, or love to men in general. (b) From this motive He sent His Son to make the salvation of all men possible. (c) God in virtue of a universal hypothetical decree, offers salvation to all men *if* they believe in Christ. (d) All men have a natural ability to repent and believe. (e) But as this natural ability was counteracted by a moral inability, God determined to give His efficacious grace to a certain number of the human race, and

thus to secure their salvation" (*Systematic Theology*, vol 2, p 322). At present it is not necessary to expose the unscripturalness of this view, except to say that Dr Smeaton has in a few sentences laid his finger on its weak spot. "The whole Amyraldist theory was without a foundation," he says, "and its absurdity was increased by the fact that these divines formed a new arrangement of the divine decrees, making the atonement universal, and the election special" (op cit, p 470).

Amyraldianism was introduced into England by the works of Polhill and into Scotland by a posthumous work<sup>2</sup> by the Rev James Fraser, of Brea. It was prepared for the press by the Rev Thomas Mair, minister of the Associate congregation at Orwell (Milnathort), and published in 1749. It produced a great commotion in the Associate Synod and in the Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery. Mr Mair described Adam Gib's condemnation of Fraser and the book as "truly shocking". Mair pleaded that he did not subscribe to Fraser's scheme of doctrine in its entirety. In April 1737 he was deposed from the ministry (Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, vol 1, p 375). In 1753 the book caused a disruption in the Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery<sup>3</sup>. What was the teaching in this book which caused so much disturbance? Dr. James Walker in his *Theology and Theologians of Scotland* summarises it as follows: "He [Fraser of Brea] asserts that Christ obeyed and died in the room of all as the head and representative of fallen man'; that men are all fundamentally justified in Him and through Him'; that Christ died for all'. But, then, are all men saved? No; God did not mean to save any but His chosen. What, then, was the effect of that one indivisible sacrifice for all which God's Son offered on the cross? Well, first of all, to lay a real foundation for the gospel offer. For every man satisfaction was rendered, and every man might appropriate it as something subjectively real. It comes to this, in short, Fraser plainly states it, that Christ dies for reprobates that they may come under a more tremendous doom; as, on the other hand, He dies for the elect that theirs may be an all-transcendent blessedness." We have been at pains to enter more minutely into these discussions than we otherwise would owing to the fact that we wish to clear our way to deal with the views held by Ussher, Davenent, Baxter, and the Marrowmen.

Let not our readers go away with the idea that the subjects discussed in

<sup>2</sup>Doubts have been expressed as to its authorship, but it is generally accepted as the work of the Rev James Fraser of Brea, and minister of Culross. Fraser belonged to the Frasers of Lovat and was held in high esteem by the evangelical party in the Scottish Church.

<sup>3</sup>The story of this controversy will be found in M Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, pp 194-203.

these controversies are trivial, and that, after all, the discussions are merely fine hair-splitting by ecclesiastics with a penchant for controversy. It is scarcely correct to say that Amyraldianism was taught by Baxter and Calamy, as we shall see later on is affirmed by the late Principal Lindsay. He is nearer the mark, however, when he says it is part of "much modern evangelical theology" (Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol 1, p 406).

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## John Welsh

### 6. Condemned

*Continued from the November issue, page 341*

THE six prisoners, Welsh among them, had been summoned to their trial, and their very lives were at stake. Two of their lawyers, distinguished members of the bar, declined to take any part in the case, and it was suggested that this was the result of pressure from the Chancellor. This left Thomas Gray, an old man, willing enough to proceed, but lacking in ability, and Thomas Hope, for whom this was his first case before a court. But Hope conducted the case with such skill that it established his reputation as a good man and a good advocate. These two remaining lawyers argued that their clients ought not to be tried for high treason as they had manifestly not been granted the 40 days allowed by law to persons accused of capital crimes so that they could prepare their defences. The argument was not accepted and, not for the last time, the court was less than open in the way the votes of its members were counted.

Hamilton, the King's advocate, then addressed the court with such malice against the truth that Andrew Melville told him to his face the following year "that the accuser of the brethren could have done no more against the saints of God". Hamilton rested his case on an Act of Parliament of 1584 which gave the King and his councils total authority over all his subjects in every conceivable respect. But the defence were able to point out that this act had been amended in 1592 to make it clear that it did not apply to ecclesiastical matters. Welsh told the court that he and his fellow-accused fully acknowledged the authority of the King and Council in civil matters, and concluded, "As civil affairs should be judged by the King and civil persons only, so should ecclesiastical affairs be judged only by the Kirk, and by the King only as a member of the Kirk". When further attempts to make the prisoners withdraw their declination proved unavailing, the court came to its decision. The presiding judge announced that all the Lords had

found the prisoners' declinature to be treason. "Say not all, my Lord," cried the Earl of Mar, "for there are here that are not, and never will be, of that judgement." It was even alleged that only five out of the at least 23 members of the court concurred in the decision given in their name. Justice and truth in Scotland had indeed fallen in the streets by the early 1600s.

The jury was then called, some of whom, Welsh freely accepted, were "faithful and honest men", but others could easily be threatened into doing what the authorities wanted. Most of them had not been present at the previous part of proceedings, which was quite contrary to proper procedure. The Lord Advocate began by informing the jury that the accused were on trial for treason because they had declined the authority of the Privy Council in the matter of the Assembly held in Aberdeen — of which the Council were the proper judges, he went on to claim, by the act of 1584. The jury had no business to decide whether or not treason was involved, he told them, only to decide the facts of the case. He concluded by threatening the jury that their lands, goods and lives would be forfeit to the Crown if they did not bring in a verdict of guilty. Thomas Hope, speaking for the defence, argued that it was the duty of the jury to consider the wider issues, and exhorted them "to fear the great and righteous God and His Son Jesus Christ, who shall be the great judge of the world," and they were to remember that the accused were held both in the Church of God, and in the country generally, with almost universal respect.

The prisoners were then permitted to address the jury themselves. Forbes spoke first and explained in detail all that had happened. Before closing his speech he reminded the jury of how the King himself and the nobles of Scotland had a number of times sworn the National Covenant. Among those who had done so, Forbes reminded them, were a number who that day were their judges. By subscribing the Covenant they had bound themselves to maintain the existing government and discipline of the Church. He then took out of his pocket a printed copy of the Covenant and read this extract: "To the which (that is, the Reformed Church) we join ourselves willingly in doctrine, faith, religion, discipline and use of the holy sacraments as lively members of the same in Christ our Head, promising and swearing by the great name of the Lord our God that we shall continue in the doctrine and discipline of this Church, and shall defend the same according to our vocation and power all the days of our life upon the pains contained in the law, and danger both of body and soul in the day of God's fearful judgement".

Welsh spoke next. "Although our persons are not to be much regarded," he told the jury, "yet have we found this mercy of God, to be the servants

of Jesus Christ. However men esteem of us, yet in His sight, and before the Lord, we are no less than ambassadors of the great God, carrying the message of death and life, of salvation and condemnation, to the people; and, therefore, whatever shall be done to us He shall account it as done to Himself." Welsh went on to explain the legal position, as their counsel had previously done, reminding the jury of the difference between the spheres of authority of, on the one hand, the King, parliament and councils, and on the other hand, the courts of the Church, which "belong essentially to Christ's royal authority; and the judgement of all His assemblies . . . , and so consequently of a General Assembly, belongs only to Christ Jesus the only King, in and by His Kirk. As civil affairs should be judged only by civil persons, so spiritual and ecclesiastical affairs should be judged only by spiritual persons." He pointed also to a previous "declinature of the authority of His Majesty and of the Lords of the Secret Council, which was subscribed by almost the whole ministers of the whole Kirk in this land, to the number of 400 ministers or thereby. Yea, these same bishops of ours and commissioners, who are now the fountain of all our troubles . . . they also subscribed the same declinature . . . which we have in readiness to produce, to witness to their faces that not only all the ministers, but they also who are now our enemies, approved and justified the same cause for which we now suffer."

By this speech, we are told, "the hearts of the jury and of all that were present were much moved", but what could plain, logical reasoning be expected to achieve, and even powerful appeals to the conscience, when the whole system was so corrupt? Hamilton, the Lord Advocate, even interrupted Welsh to tell the jury over again that their only business was to decide whether or not the accused had declined the authority of the Privy Council. And, after Welsh had finished, Hamilton spoke again; he ended by once more making dire threats against the members of the jury if they did not bring in the verdict he was looking for.

In a second speech Forbes spoke with tremendous solemnity about Saul's breaking of the oath made by Joshua and all Israel to the Gibeonites. He applied the matter to the King, because he was violating his solemn engagements to the Church in Scotland; he did so, we are told, with "threatening most terrible (and) made all the hearers astonished and their hairs to stand". For over six hours the jury considered their verdict in a room below the court. But, doubtless to see that they did their duty to the King, one of the judges was present — which, of course, was completely illegal.

When it became clear that the jury would probably acquit the accused, their foreman and the judge returned to court to let them know which way

the matter was likely to go. Two judges and the foreman of the jury were then dispatched to make a further attempt to persuade the accused to withdraw their declinature claiming, though they expected the opposite, that the ministers would certainly be condemned. When this proved unsuccessful, more threats were applied to the jury, along with promises that no harm would come either to the Church or to the prisoners. By a majority of nine to six the jury at last returned a verdict of guilty. One juryman, John Livingstone, declared that he not only acquitted the prisoners of treason, but owned them to be honest ministers of Christ and good subjects of the King. And two of the nine who condemned the ministers became deeply disturbed for their part in bringing in so flagrantly unjust a verdict, and only found peace after making confession of their sin.

When Elizabeth Welsh heard in Ayr that her husband was likely to be brought to trial she made her way to Blackness as quickly as possible. While the jury was considering the verdict she waited with the wives of the other ministers. And, when the verdict was announced, they thanked the Lord Jesus, who had given their husbands strength and courage to stand for His cause, before adding, "They were even entreated as their Master was before them, judged and condemned under silence of night".

(To be continued)

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## In the Papers

*Rev D J MacDonald*

THE pages of popular newspapers are not normally recommended reading for those who have a true interest in spiritual matters. However, there are times when to glance through some news reports in the light of eternal realities will focus our minds on the sheer godlessness of this generation, a fact which we continue to ignore at our peril.

A recent copy of the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* carried a brief news item which said, "More than 20 000 people passed through Aberdeen's Bon Accord Shopping Centre yesterday — the first Sunday opening in the run-up to Christmas". So at least 20 000 people broke the Fourth Commandment of God's holy law that day. One wonders sadly how many sinners in Aberdeen heard the gospel preached that day. Only a very small fraction of 20 000, we fear. The sin of 20 000 people was not, alas, confined to themselves. Their desire to go shopping on the Lord's Day involved others in work which was undoubtedly Sabbath-breaking. To transport them to the shopping centre, bus crews had to work; in addition all the staff of the shops that were open, security staff in the Centre itself, policemen and car

park attendants. All were robbed of their Sabbath rest, perhaps half as many again as the 20 000 shoppers. Worse still, God was robbed of the day which He has claimed for Himself. A timely reminder of the Scripture that says, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me."

Of course we need not go to a shopping centre to rob God of His day. We can do so in the privacy of our own homes. Still it is a sad commentary on the spiritual condition of our nation that 20 000 people are enticed into a shopping centre in one of our cities to satisfy the craze of celebrating Christmas, bowing to a variety of idols at the expense of the Sabbath Day.

One wonders how many people envied a certain Mr Pattison of Yorkshire, who won £1.4 million in the National Lottery some two months ago. According to *The Daily Telegraph* of October 28, his most "compelling pastime is drinking beer" and his "biggest problem is boredom". In spite of all the obvious evidence that large sums of money cannot buy happiness even in this world, millions of people buy tickets for the National Lottery and watch avidly while the winning numbers are drawn. Surely we are a nation given over to covetousness, the sin that underlies every form of gambling. This is a sin that breaks yet another of God's commandments: "Thou shalt not covet", though it is widely practised in all strata of society—from football pools to the newly-introduced scratch cards, from card-playing to casinos. The fact that most people in this country impatiently thrust aside God's law to "have a flutter" is ample evidence that we "have rejected the word of the Lord" and are proving our lack of wisdom. What dishonour is done to the God who is the giver of all good when our life as a nation is no longer guided by His Word and by respect for His commandments, but revolves round the drawing of "winning" numbers in a lottery which can make instant millionaires! The millions of pounds "won" every week in the National Lottery will never buy happiness for the winners and, whatever material prosperity may come their way, they must leave it all when they are called out of time to eternity to give an account of the deeds done in the body. However much that is forgotten by our generation, it is written, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God". That the great majority are ignorant of this truth, or choose to ignore it, is obvious from the way they live year after year.

How godless the thinking of our day has become is clearly shown by a comment in *The Times* of November 2: "Our late twentieth century pre-occupations are so very different from those in the days before modern medicine, when life could be seen as a preparation for death". The writer of these words scarcely veils her scorn for this old-fashioned idea that life is a preparation for death. Of course, it should be a preparation for death,

and not only for death but for judgement and eternity. The Bible teaches with transparent clarity that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement". So it is not just religious men and serious-minded men and thinking men that must die. The irreligious, the careless, the indifferent, the scoffer, and the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God", must all die. If they have not taken this matter seriously they will obviously have made no preparation, so they will not be ready. Yet this lack of preparation will not enable them to escape death or judgement. How sad to see those to whom God in His goodness has given undoubted talents employing them to mock the revelation He has given of Himself in His Word, and to pour scorn on those who seek to live their lives in obedience to Scriptural principles! It is as true today as when spoken by Jesus in this world, "He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings". One of His most momentous sayings was, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins". The passage of centuries of years, and the mocking of millions of unbelievers and infidels cannot change that word or its demands on all men everywhere.

In a talk given on the Radio Four *Today* programme, Mr John Patten, the former Education Secretary and a Roman Catholic, said that at present four out of every ten marriages in Britain end in divorce and that approximately a quarter of a million children are born every year to parents who go on to divorce. This, says Mr Patten, brings "misery for parents, millions and millions of pounds of expenditure to the taxpayer and a myriad of future problems for our children," Mr Patten went on to say that new proposed legislation indicated that the lawmakers feel that the marriage certificate is just a piece of paper, and a contract once intended for life is to be turned into a probationary matter from day one. It is comments such as the above that have prompted headlines like *We're the divorce capital of Europe*. Such an accurate description of our national disregard for God's Word indicates our low spiritual and moral condition. Marriage, like the Sabbath, is a Creation ordinance, yet both are being cast aside by a pleasure-loving generation. Instead of trying to stem the tide the present Government is set on bending over backwards to make divorce easier. Divorce, as we have sought to point out, is never an easy option, but is fraught with social, domestic and spiritual problems for more than one generation. What a harvest of misery is yet to be reaped by the nation's casual attitude to marriage!

Yes, all this and much more is in the papers. Day after day and week after week there are accounts of terrible crimes: old people are attacked in their homes, teenagers are killed by illegal drugs or alcohol or a mixture of both, gangs of children, some as young as ten years of age, terrorise their

neighbourhoods. The list seems endless. The judgement prophesied against Israel and the cause of it come readily to mind: "Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land? . . . And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers . . . and laid hold on other gods and worshipped them and served them; therefore hath He brought all this evil upon them."

It is time for us to seek that the spirit of repentance would be poured out on ourselves, on our families, on our congregations and on our land so that the cry would go up from this nation of ours, "Come and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn and He will heal us; He hath smitten and He will bind us up". This is the only hope for us, for God has said, "Shall I not visit for these things?. . . and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

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## Deputation Visit to Kenya and Malawi

August 23 to October 6

*Rev J R Talloch*

**T**HE resignation of Dr Christine MacDonald on medical grounds was accepted with regret by the Foreign Missions Committee in July. The purpose of my visit was to provide ministerial supply and to help at the hospital.

My flight out was uneventful and I was met by Mr Donald MacDonald at Nairobi Airport. Our first call was at the Medical Registration Office in Nairobi as it was essential that I be registered in order to be of real assistance to the nurses at Sengera. Normally of course this is a long process involving forms, photographs, certified certificates and an examination. In a kind providence all this was waived and I obtained registration for the duration of my stay on the basis of a phone call to the chairman of the registration committee. Mr MacDonald and I then went on to see the lawyer who is trying to sort out the remaining difficulties we have with registration as a Church in Kenya. Later that afternoon we travelled part of the way to Sengera. We completed the journey the next day, to be welcomed by Sisters Jessie Coote, Truus Ringelberg and Celia Renes. I became immediately involved in the work of the hospital and only relinquished this when I left early on Monday morning, October 1.

The rise in malaria which occurs in June, July and August was largely past, but the 40 beds were usually fully occupied and there were many sick patients. The death rate from malaria in Kenya is high among young children from the time they cease to get immunity from their mother's milk

until they gain some immunity of their own at around 6 years. At the hospital, despite blood transfusions, intravenous quinine, and blowing oxygen onto their little faces, some succumbed to the disease. Often in those cases the final insult was the native medicine put down their throats before admission.

As far as the preaching and teaching of the Word was concerned I continued the pattern already established, a short address at worship every morning in the hospital, on Sabbath the Catechism class (15 adults and 20 children), two services (150-200 attending, with a large proportion of children) at the church, and the 2 pm service at the hospital. The Sisters have a very well attended Sabbath School at the church at 3.30 pm. We were all agreed that a mid-week class for the nurses and care attenders, whose background varies from Roman Catholic to Seventh Day Adventist to nothing at all, would be a worthwhile addition. The problems of original sin and native antipathy to the gospel are no different in Sengera to those in Scotland and our duty is equally plain: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that" (Ecc 11:6).

The Dutch Embassy have offered to support the building of a child welfare/antenatal clinic at Sengera. They have agreed to delay the construction of this until Mr I MacLean goes out at the beginning of 1996, DV. With TB and other infectious diseases an ever-present threat, the hospital needs an isolation unit. Both these buildings would be temporary structures which could be moved if the more permanent expansion of the hospital required this.

Politically Kenya is going through a difficult phase, but the country at large, and certainly Sengera, is quiet. The last few days of my stay coincided with a medical conference in Nairobi, which I attended, principally because the information and contacts would be valuable for those remaining at the hospital. The second day of the meeting had to be foregone in order to go down to Malawi. The implementation of the Synod decision to disengage from work in that area was not proving easy. Our "evangelists" were not entirely happy with the conditions they were being offered. A meeting was set up by Mr McGrath, a Christian businessman in Blantyre who has been a great help to the Mission, and I met up with the Rev N Ross, who was coming up from Zimbabwe. After discussion they agreed to go along with the plans of the Church. I was glad that Mr Ross was able to be present.

In the recent past the area around Sengera has been given District status, and local leaders are anxious that our hospital should be advanced rapidly

to district hospital level. Quite apart from this, the presence of a resident doctor would justify expansion to 100 beds and the addition of a theatre and X-ray facilities. When we started planning the hospital at Sengera we were confidently told that, once the buildings were up, running costs would be met from patient fees. It is now evident that this was never a realistic expectation. While the out-patient department may well break even financially, the in-patient work will continue to require financial support into the foreseeable future.

After my last visit I reported that the patient (the Kenya Mission) had undergone a serious operation and that the outcome was in doubt. A year on I have to report that the patient is now out of intensive care and is as well as can be expected.

I should like to thank the Lord for health and strength and a safe journey and to thank the Mission staff for their kindness.

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## Visit to Moldova and the Ukraine

October 1995

*Rev D A Ross*

ONCE again we acknowledge the help of many people in giving money and material aid, as well as much of their time, making it possible to undertake mission work in Eastern Europe. We acknowledge with gratitude to the Most High that we travelled safely to and from the Ukraine, despite a number of problems throughout our journey.

While travelling through Austria a tyre blew out and we later sustained a puncture in another tyre. In Romania a second blow-out brought us to the brink of disaster; but thankfully Mr Edward Ross managed to keep the van with its tyreless front wheel on the road. After clearing up the mess two burly policemen approached us demanding to see our money, ostensibly in search of counterfeit money. We discovered later on that one of them stole \$50 US. At the Moldova border there was considerable friction between customs officials and soldiers and we were caught between the "warring factions", which caused a delay. Again while parked in one of the streets in Kiev, a passing lorry tore off our front bumper and twisted one of our driving mirrors.

However, this and other problems in travel seemed trivial in comparison to disappointments in connection with spreading the Word of God. One disappointment was to find that families who were previously very interested in us taking services in their homes are not now showing that desire.

It was our intention, after delivering some of our goods in Kishinev, the capital city of Moldova, to press on and spend two Sabbaths in Kiev, Ukraine. However it was not to be as we planned. Due to some of the travel problems already mentioned we spent only one Sabbath in the Ukraine. The other was spent in Kishinev.

We made our usual visit to Mr Gregory Katz, a director of homes for the destitute and of a large orphanage. We left him with about a third of our load, and again he and his staff were delighted with our assistance, although it was so very small in comparison with their needs. Mr Katz cared for us during our stay in Kishinev. On the Sabbath he took us to his church and we were asked to speak to a large Baptist congregation, but we did not accept the invitation.

After the service we visited one of Mr Katz's homes and through an interpreter addressed the residents from the Word of God. Mr Katz asked us to supply 1000 Catechisms for the orphanage and, God willing, will deliver these on our next visit. We gave Mr Katz practically all 5000 of the Trinitarian Bible Society calenders in Romanian for the orphanage and homes. In all we received from the Trinitarian Bible Society 25 000 calendars with Scripture texts in Romanian, Hungarian and Russian. We are thankful for the opportunity to spread the Word of God in this way.

In Borispol, Ukraine, we had the opportunity of preaching to a small gathering of people in a private home. Our interpreter and helper, Igor Belozyorov was very anxious to maintain accuracy of interpretation. The people listened attentively and there was a short Bible study after the service, which indicated that some of those present had a considerable degree of Bible knowledge. We were invited to pay another visit at a later date but, God willing, when we return we hope to take the services in a public place rather than in a private home. A good friend who has been of help in the past has arranged with a local Baptist pastor that his place of meeting be used for the occasion.

The bulk of our load went to Kiev where we distributed it to a small independent Baptist Church, without whose help we would not have been able to enter the Ukraine with our Bibles and other goods. We also gave some medicines to a hospital in Kiev, which also assisted our entry into the Ukraine. As well as distributing to the above we left a quantity of items in other towns and visited a number of homes with Bibles, calendars, food and clothing which was received with genuine gratitude.

One great disadvantage regarding the mission work in Eastern Europe is the brevity of the visits, which leaves us very little time to speak to people about the Word of God. Nevertheless we look to the good and gracious God

of mercies to bless what we do. Whether we do little or much by way of spreading the Word of God, it is necessary that God by His Holy Spirit give the increase. The Apostle Paul paid, it seems, a brief visit to Philippi, and it pleased God to bless that short period of labour to Lydia and the Philippian jailor. We look to the Lord to do likewise as we engage in these short visits to Eastern Europe.

We appreciate greatly the kindness shown by the many friends we met and their readiness to give of the little they had for our comfort, but above all we are thankful for the mercies granted by the Most High in affording safe travel to and from the Ukraine.

I take the opportunity also to remind our readers again of the excellent booklet, *The Shorter Catechism*, which we have now printed in Russian. It is available from the Church Bookroom for those who wish to use it for spreading sound doctrine among Russian-speaking people. I also ask that you continue to support this small mission to Eastern Europe with your prayers and financial contributions.

The whole earth let His glory fill.

Amen, so let it be

(Ps 72:19).

## Mission News

### Zimbabwe

MISS Katie Macaulay is expected home in Scotland towards the end of December, DV. Miss Norma MacLean will be due leave in the spring of 1996, if all is well. Miss Marion Graham is in great need of assistance. One can imagine the responsibility of having 600 boarders on the Mission, ordering food, seeing to their general health and well-being and interviewing the parents when difficulties arise, as well as seeing that the standard of teaching and discipline is maintained.

The John Tallach School has had an excellent record for good examination results and also for firm discipline. Marion, of course, has been ably assisted by Katie Macaulay and Norma MacLean and a fine African staff. The general atmosphere is one of happy and harmonious co-operation in the daily tasks. We can recommend the work to any young people interested in promoting the cause of Christ in Zimbabwe.

We heard with interest that Dame Sibanda, lately retired from the police force in Bulawayo, has offered his services as boarding master in the John Tallach School. Mr Sibanda is a former pupil of Ingwenya School and has been a regular attender of the services in Bulawayo. His wife is a member there. We hope that if this appointment goes through, Mr Sibanda will be

a strong and able helper in the boarding school and a good influence.

Dr Stamps, referred to previously as Minister of Health, told the staff at Mbuma Hospital how much he appreciated the good work done at Mbuma over the years. He fully sympathised with the difficulties of staff shortage but was doubtful if the situation would improve as far as African trained staff were concerned. Young African men and women feel the isolation of Mbuma a great disadvantage and prefer the city. They also had a visit at Mbuma from the Senior Provincial Medical Officer, Mr Mthamo, a former pupil at Ingwenya, whose grandfather was an elder there in the days of the Rev John Tallach. He is a pleasant, approachable man, and he referred with affection to two of his former teachers at Ingwenya, Mrs Margaret Macleod, Harris, and Miss Cathie Mary MacIver, now in London. It is disappointing to hear that Mr Mthamo does not attend church services while in Bulawayo.

One of the staff at Mbuma writes, "We have a fine African staff here at Mbuma. They are not trained, but they take on all the nursing duties without complaint. We have four church members on the female staff, and five on the male staff. The two youngest male members, both as to age and membership, are the most active in Christian duties. They are very anxious to read any good religious literature and try to pass on what they read in little Sindebele lessons for the many children who run around the hospital, waiting for their parents who may be receiving treatment. The two young men are Thembelani Ncube and Simon Ngulube. Thembelani was brought up in the Church; his grandfather was an elder in Mpakama. The other young man's grandfather was Paul Magaya Ncube whose photograph is in the biography of the late Rev James Fraser. He is holding his bicycle and his words are recorded, 'The whole reserve will be lit up with the glory of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

"We are so thankful to have the photocopier as the two young men mentioned are constantly bringing material to type or to put through the photocopier to be used in their missionary efforts. Many African adults come to the hospital for long periods for treatment for TB. Sister Anne is mostly at work in Isolation and she tries to get these patients to memorize the catechism as they sit around for hours doing nothing. Relatives and "grannies" join in and seem to enjoy the exercise. Many of the older women cannot read but the others help them. They are mostly AIDS patients who have no resistance to such illnesses as TB. Anne has asked Milton Ndlovu to help among the Isolation patients. (Milton is a half-brother of the late David and they were close friends.) What we really need is an evangelist who would be wholehearted in this work among those poor

people. We hope the people at home will be remembering us all in prayer." This is an excerpt from a letter from one of the Sisters.

### **Kenya**

It was reassuring to hear that Rev and Mrs Neil Ross hope to remain in Kenya until Mr and Mrs Ian MacLean and family arrive in January, DV. This will be a great help for Sisters Celia and Truus.

## **Notes and Comments**

### **Divorce in England and Wales**

Last month's magazine commented on the Lord Chancellor's political difficulties over his plans to bring in a bill to amend the law on divorce. These difficulties should have made him reconsider the matter in the light of Scripture; it was certainly a loud voice in God's providence. However, it was announced in the Queen's Speech that this measure is to proceed.

A main proposal in the new legislation is to remove the concept of fault from divorce proceedings. But the stubborn fact remains that the Scriptural provision for divorce is very firmly based on fault — of two kinds, adultery and desertion. Whatever may be achieved by proposals for mediation, by making the process of divorce less painful, for children in particular, it can only be a retrograde step to interfere further in the prescriptions of the all-wise God. "He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?" (Ps 94:10). When a secular newspaper can comment, "Marriages may be made in heaven, but it is time the Government gave them a little help on earth", things have come to a very sorry pass.

It is a sad fact that marriages are breaking down on an unprecedented scale. Yet in all those marriages both bride and bridegroom committed themselves to each other in permanent love. The unwillingness of partners to a marriage to treat with due seriousness their marriage vows, made before God and human witnesses, is a factor in the serious increase in cohabitation. So others who might contemplate marriage ask, Why enter into a marriage if it is likely to break up after a few years? How much better society would function even in human relationships if people would listen to the Word of God! The Bible clearly teaches that the intimate union of a man and a woman is to be a permanent affair — that is, until death. It may seem a harsh statement to many today, but if more people would take it seriously a lot of unnecessary misery would be prevented: sexual relationships are only proper within the commitment and permanence and security which should be provided by the marriage bond.

### **. . . And in the Republic of Ireland**

Change in the Irish position on divorce has been brought about through a referendum. By the slimmest of margins voters in the Republic have approved Government proposals to legalise divorce. Until now, because of the dominant influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the state has made no provision for divorce, even when, on Scriptural grounds, it is justified. Rome threw all her massive weight against the proposals for change. The Pope asked the Irish people to pray that "the unbreakable bond of marriage" would be preserved. More heavy-handed was the threat by a bishop that Roman Catholics who divorced and remarried would not be entitled to the sacraments of the Church. This shows a peculiar understanding of degrees of heinousness in sin, for even the most vicious terrorists from the IRA are not denied the sacraments. But then Rome's ideas on discipline always had much more to do with maintaining control of her followers than in promoting morality.

However, though divorce has not existed in Ireland, marriage has been less than unbreakable, because of the possibility of Roman Catholics obtaining an annulment of their marriage. This is the pronouncement that a true marriage never existed. Because, for instance, the priest made a mistake during the marriage ceremony, or the bride or bridegroom claim mental reservation when they made their vows, it is possible to have the Church authorities declare that the marriage never took place — and both husband and wife are free to marry again. A second marriage in these circumstances ought to be bigamy in the eyes of the state, because the state could not but recognise the first marriage as valid. The vows were made; what more can be demanded in any sane and moral system?

"Ireland semper fidelis" (Ireland always faithful) were the last words the Pope said when he was there in 1972. The words were less than infallible. And no wonder that Rome's hold on Ireland has weakened, with the exposure of so much depravity among her priests.

### **Resignation**

Rev John Graham, a missionary to the Jews in Sydney, has resigned from the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland because he no longer accepts the teaching of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* on the Sabbath. He is prepared to accept that the first day of the week is the proper time for believers to assemble "to worship the risen Christ", but "it should not be imposed on unbelievers because they do not know the risen Christ". He refuses the claim of the Sabbath to be a Creation ordinance, in spite of the example of the Most High, who rested on the seventh day. Despite the

evidence noted elsewhere in this issue that the Sabbath predated the giving of the Ten Commandments, he claims that the Sabbath was only for the Jews. But the Saviour told the Jews that the Sabbath was made for *man*, that is, for his good, physical as well as spiritual, and not for the Jews only.

It is a matter of concern that the official announcement of this resignation in *The Monthly Record* of the Free Church seems to treat this doctrinal error complacently. The chairman of the Church's Foreign Missions Board commends Mr Graham's honesty in acknowledging his changed views and wishes him every blessing in the Lord's work. We are not, of course, suggesting that he should wish any ill whatever to Mr Graham. But we have the example of Paul, who withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed. This did not cause a permanent breach, and Peter never again, one would believe, went astray as when he refused to eat with the Gentiles. Surely the best that anyone can wish for someone who has gone wrong is that he would be brought back to the truth. No one can do the Lord's work satisfactorily if he cannot bring others to a proper understanding of the blessings of the Sabbath.

KDM

## Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

**Bookroom Fund:** R & C M, North Harris, £20 per MM.

**Eastern Europe Fund:** Providence Strict Baptist Chapel, Irthlingborough, £75.

**Foreign Mission Fund:** Anon, £70. Providence Strict Baptist Chapel, Irthlingborough, £175. "Ps 60:4", £180. Mrs M Hardy, Vancouver, £29 per MM. Anon (Oct) Can \$100. Anon (Nov) Can \$100.

**Legacy Reserve Fund:** "In memory of loved ones" £200 where most needed.

Congregational treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

**Breasclate:** Sustentation Fund: Friend of the Cause £30; PJM £50. For door collections: Friend of the Cause £20, £20.

**Dornoch:** Communion expenses: £20.

**Gairloch:** Congregational funds: Skye friends £20, £55, £30; Lewis friend £10, Anon £100, 300; JJS £5; Halkirk friend £50; Portree friend £20; Communion expenses: Anon £100. All per Rev AEW. Communion expenses: Anon £100, £20, both per JM.

**Kames:** Friend, Kyles of Bute, £120, congregational fund.

**London:** Friend, North Tolsta, £10, where needed. Anon, £60, congregational fund.

**Portree:** For congregational purposes: Gairloch friend, £100; Friend, £20; both per FM. Where most needed: Friend, £20 per FM; JMML £50 (envelope in plate); Friend, £10; Friend £10; both per SYM. Bus fund: Anon, £10 (envelope in plate).

**Stornoway:** Sustentation Fund: Miss K A Macleod, The Cottage, Callanish £240 (two donations); Friend £10, £11, £10, £10; Friend NT £10. Congregational funds: Friend £10; Anon £200. "Where most needed": Friend, Stockinish £10. Foreign Mission Fund: £200. Communion expenses: Anon £20. All per Rev JM. Communion expenses: Anon £20, £5; Friend of the Cause, Breasclate £10. All in church plate.

**Uig:** Communion expenses: Anon £10; Anon £10; Anon £20. Church door collection: B Buchanan, £40. All in church plate.