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The Murder of Dunblane's Children

AS we weep with those who weep, pray for those who mourn, and ponder the depths of wickedness which have been demonstrated by the murder of sixteen little children and their teacher, we strive to come to conclusions about the awful tragedy. We listen to the thoughts of some and we hear the refrain, "It is beyond comprehension." We are shocked to hear others, in overt opposition to God, speak blasphemous things about Him in connection with the horrific event. We note the foolish statements about God made by others who profess to be Christians. We cannot have even a modicum of right understanding of the whole sad happening apart from viewing it in the light of the revelation which God gives of Himself in His word - and even then, we can see only through a glass darkly.

Of this fact we are certain: there is no unrighteousness in God. In working out all things "according to the counsel of His will", He never errs. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Man, in his misery and pain, in his anguish and sorrow, wickedly points the finger of blame at God for allowing evil to come his way. Let us never forget that although man is fallen he has not been deprived of the power of volition. When man exercises his will in doing evil, it is upon himself that the guilt lies. Is God the author of sin when He permits man to sin and thus to bring misery and pain upon himself and others? God forbid. Let God be true and every man a liar.

This also is a fact: that God restrains men and nations so that they are not as wicked as they would otherwise be. This was a comfort to the Psalmist, for he said to God about the wrath of man, "The remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain." God also withdraws His restraining influence in the case of some persons and peoples who persist in resisting His restraints and repudiating His authority. He leaves them to themselves more or less. Is this not happening to our nation? Increasing violence and murder, including the Dunblane murder and others like it, show that God is leaving us more and more to go our own way. We ought to pray, "Oh Lord, cast us not off forever," (Psl 44:23).

We need not wonder that God is now striving less with us as a nation when we not only turn a deaf ear to His word but also condone and legalise such gross sins as abortion (160,000 abortions last year), sodomy and Sabbath desecration? We need not be surprised at the increase of violence when brutality and killings are beamed out nightly by television. How irresponsible the British Board of Film Classification was when, in February, it allowed the release of the video, *Natural Born Killers*, "one of the most violent Hollywood films ever made." Tacit admission of the correlation between murderous violence on the screen and on the street is seen in the decision by Warner Home Video, because of the Dunblane shootings, to postpone the release of the *Natural Born Killers* video. And on the day of the shootings, ITV cancelled the showing of the film, *Licence to Kill*. But we fear they will soon forget.

How much longer is God to be long-suffering towards our land? We see numerous indications of His displeasure against us, which, if we do not repent, will prove to be forerunners of sore judgements. The world before the flood "was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." God looked upon it and said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man," and then His just judgement descended upon man for his wickedness. Why should God continue to restrain us when we are bent on going our own way in opposition to Him? Let us fear. It is high time to plead with Him, "O God, thou hast cast us off,... thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again."

As we think of the evil which erupted from the heart of the murderer, we are bound to ask ourselves, "What great evil would I not do, if God left me to myself?" When saintly John Bradford saw some criminals being led to execution he commented, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford." Scripture asks, "Who maketh thee to differ?" The believer has to answer, "It is the Lord; by having renewed me and by keeping me." On the other hand, the unbeliever should answer, "God has placed restraints on me which He has not put on those, or has taken away from those, who have descended into great depths of sin." If we know our own sinfulness we will certainly be praying, "Lord keep me."

We must also ask ourselves, as we think of the murderer, "Where would I be if God were to punish me for my own sins?" The Psalmist had to say, "If thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand." It is solemnly true, as the Scriptures say, that "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him", and that "murderers... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." It is also true that those who write lurid and self-righteous banner headlines in newspapers, declaring that the murderer is "burning in hell", do not appear to understand the just deserts of every one of us, not excluding

themselves, and our need of returning to God. God calls to our covenanted nation, "Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

It is amazing that as we go further away from God, He is yet calling to us to return to Him. In the midst of all the sin and misery, the murder and massacre, in this world, God is stretching out His hands to men in their profound need as sinners. In Isaiah's day He pled with 'a disobedient and gainsaying people', "Come now, and let us reason together... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is He not the same God still? Most certainly! Those who return to Him will not only be abundantly pardoned but also will have Him as their God, in pain and sorrow, in life and death, and forever.

The greatest proof of God's willingness to receive returning sinners is His gift of His dear Son. He has given Him, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world", to open up the way for sinners to have peace with Himself. Not only such awful crime as the murder of little children, but also every single sin, is a manifestation of ill will to God. May we be melted by His showing good will to us. Hear the proclamation which heralded the coming of His Son: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Implicit in this heavenly declaration is His willingness to receive the returning sinner. May the day soon come when we will all join in responding willingly, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord."

The Editor

Sermon

The Trial of Faith

Rev. Angus MacKay, M.A.

(Mr Mackay was minister of Tarbert Free Presbyterian Congregation from 1953 to 1986 and is now retired. This sermon is republished, with some editing, from a past issue of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*).

Text: And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil, (Matthew 15:22).

IN this chapter we find Christ reproving the Scribes and Pharisees for transgressing God's commandment by their own traditions. Then He tells the multitude, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth; this defileth a man... For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies..." (verses 11 and 19).

In these words we have the Lord declaring plainly the total depravity of the

heart of man. This is a doctrine which the large majority in our day does not wish to believe, but the sin of our land is proving the truth of it. We should be thankful to the Lord for exercising His restraining grace. Also, we should be asking the Lord for saving grace. We should have this prayer continually: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

We read further, "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts," (verses 21 and 22). She was a woman in great trouble. From the words of our text we would notice: **first**, the trial of this woman's faith; **secondly**, the woman's perseverance in faith; and **thirdly**, the Lord answering her and comforting her.

In the **first** place, we notice *the trial of this woman's faith*.

We see that the woman did have saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. She believes and acknowledges His divinity when she says, "O Lord." She believes that He is the Eternal God. She also believes in His true, holy humanity, when she says, "Thou son of David." With regard to His humanity, she believes that He came through the lineage of David. She sees what only saving faith can see: the glory of the Person of Christ, and that He is both "God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever." When, in her trouble, she prays, "Have mercy on me, O Lord," she wholeheartedly believes that she is praying to "God manifest in the flesh."

We will not enter into the nature of her trouble, but just mention that she had severe trouble. The word of God tells us that her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. She felt the trouble of her daughter to be so very close to herself that it was even as her own trouble. Therefore she prayed, "Have mercy on me." When the people of God have deep affliction, the Lord means them to feel it. The Lord does not mean them to be stoical and unfeeling in trouble. And He means them also to see His own hand in their trouble.

When the woman prayed earnestly to the Lord, we read that "He answered her not a word". So now, along with her special trouble, she felt something else which was very trying - the Lord's silence towards her as she prayed. The Lord's people know something of this: they know what it is to pray earnestly in time of trouble, and to feel the Lord's silence in His not answering them a word.

Dear soul, do you know anything of this anguish of heart yourself? The people of God know it, and this is the Lord's way of teaching them certain lessons. In our troubles we should always remember, in all humility, that "with us he dealt not as we sinned, nor did requite our ill", (Psl 103:10). If the Lord were to mark our iniquities we could not stand.

Now, we see that the Lord tried her faith in another way. Instead of answering her according to her desire, the Lord, in His sovereignty, sent more trouble to her. We read that it happened thus: "And His disciples came and besought Him saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us." These words from the disciples must have given sore pangs to her troubled heart. They accused her of causing much trouble, and it seems they were doubting her grace and sincerity. This teaches us that we ought to be very tender towards a child of God in trouble. It is most grievous to a gracious soul in affliction to see aloofness in the people of God, and to feel coldness from them.

We see also that this woman of Canaan desired that the Lord would answer her at once - in *her* time. She learned by the trial of her faith that she must wait for the Lord's time.

So we see that where saving faith is present, it will be tried. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," (1Peter 1:70).

Now, the Lord spoke and said to her, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The Lord was again trying her faith, and she felt it, as indeed the Lord meant her to feel it. There is no trial of faith without a heart-feeling of it. She knew that she was not of the commonwealth of Israel. She was a Greek, a Syrophenician woman, and therefore what comfort could she receive from these searching words from the Lord? They went home to her heart and tried her faith, and she felt it.

At the same time the Lord was preparing her heart for comfort. When the Lord has a special blessing in store for a child of God, He prepares the heart to receive the blessing with humility and thankfulness. As we are in ourselves, we know not how to receive the mercies and blessings of God with humility and thankfulness. But the child of God will be taught to do so, as we read, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

This woman, however much her faith was tried, would not go away. The more she was tried, the more she cleaved to the Lord. What do we ourselves know of such an experience? When we are in trouble, it is cause of great anguish of heart to be conscious of the Lord's silence, and then to be searched by the word of the Lord. We need to cleave to the Lord. We need experimental, heart religion in order to be saved in view of death and eternity, and that is what this woman of Canaan had.

We read next that she came and "worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me." She knew that only the Lord could help her. Dear child of God, in your extremity, and by the teaching and loving-kindness of the Lord, you are

brought to this: to cry, "Lord, help me."

The Lord went even further in trying the woman's faith when He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." The trial was prolonged. The trial of our faith is often prolonged, and this shows that we are meant to learn patience under it.

The woman knew that the term "dogs" was used by Jews in referring to Gentiles. She knew that she was a Gentile and she undoubtedly felt being numbered among the dogs. The Lord was preparing her for the blessing. He was teaching her that she was utterly unworthy of it. When the people of God are prepared for a special blessing, they will learn painfully their own unworthiness. They are not worthy of the least of His mercies. Learning often is not easy, whatever trade or profession we are in. Spiritual learning is not easy, though profitable. It is often by painful experience that we learn. And this is one thing we must learn: to loath ourselves because of our sins and the sinfulness of our hearts. How precious this truth is: that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Now, the woman, although her faith was so tried, did not give up. Let us observe then, in the **second** place, *her perseverance in the trial of her faith.*

We see that when she was convinced of her unworthiness, she wholeheartedly acknowledged it and answered, "Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." I think the implication is that she was saying, as it were, "It is all true that I am unworthy, but if thou wilt give the blessing to me; if thou wilt help me, a poor, unworthy sinner, this will not deprive thy people of any good. I, with them, will be blest." Because she had that faith by which she saw the glory of the Lord, she saw her own unworthiness. Only those, who by faith see the glory of the person of Christ, as the Lord and Saviour, see their own sinful hearts. The person who has that "faith which worketh by love" and "purifieth the heart" is the person who sees the wretchedness and vileness of his own heart. The child of God is taught that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" - sinners! wretched rebels!

We notice also her gospel spirit and attitude towards the disciples. When she was despised by them, she still believed that they were the true followers of Christ - that Christ loved them and that they loved Christ. She still loved them and respected them as the servants of the Lord. It is only grace, and much grace, that will enable one to be exercised in such a gospel manner in similar circumstances.

When the Lord tried her faith by telling her, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," instead of hopelessly turning her back on the Saviour, she came and worshipped Him, praying, "Lord, help me." This is the

nature of faith - seeking the glory of God in worship and prayer. We cannot worship in spirit and in truth without spiritual, heart prayer. We cannot pray in a true sense, without adoring the Lord. This was the exercise of this Syrophenician woman, in the trial of her faith. The formalist knows nothing of the heart pain or comfort connected with the trial of faith. He has no saving faith, and, therefore, no trial of faith. It is a great comfort to the child of God, when the afflicting hand of the Lord is upon him, to know that it is written: "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," (Heb 12:6). There is no exception here. All of them are chastised and scourged. This woman learned much that was to the glory of God and for her own good, in her trial.

Sin has brought groans, sighs and tears into this world. The people of God know this experimentally in their trials and afflictions, but "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." They shall have their troubles in the wilderness but the promise is: "So to the haven He them brings, which they desired to see." When the Lord gives them moments of His sweet presence, He gives them a foretaste of the sweetness they will have in eternity.

Let us notice, **thirdly**, *the Lord answering the woman and comforting her.*

Jesus addressed her, in the presence of His disciples: "O, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." She received the special blessing which she requested, and for which the Lord prepared her heart. Along with the blessing, she received the joy of full assurance of faith, and rejoiced in the comforting presence of the Lord. Child of God, you know something of this yourself, and how sweet this has been to your soul. The Lord gave you (as he gave the Syrophenician woman) the blessing most suitable for you in your time of need. He gave you a measure of assurance, which caused you to humble yourself before Him. You had some consciousness of the love of God shed abroad in your heart. You tasted the sweetness of this promise (although maybe not in these exact words, yet in the essence of them), "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

We mentioned that the Lord gave her this comfort in the presence of the disciples. Now they realised that she was a believer in Christ; that she loved the Lord and that she was a humble petitioner in His presence. She and they were in the spirit of the gospel towards one another. This is what all the people of God need. "Let each esteem other better than themselves."

The woman was now in a haven of rest. By way of illustration, I might tell you of one morning's sea crossing from Lochmaddy to Tarbert. It was very stormy, and the waves were mountainous. Although I was used to the sea, I

was afraid at times that the "Lochmor" would capsize. I was alone in the lounge. The captain came in and kindly spoke to me, comforting me by saying, "She will soon run out of this; we will soon be in the shelter of the land." Oh, child of God, you may be in the storm at present, but the Captain of our Salvation, even Jesus, in eternal love, by His Spirit and word, whispers in your ear and comforts you, saying that you will be out of the storm soon, and in the shelter of Emmanuel's Land. Moreover, you will soon be with Himself in glory. At times, here, the people of God can sing,

The storm is changed into a calm
at His command and will;
So that the waves, which raged before,
now quiet are and still, (Metrical Psalm 107:29).

By faith they look forward to the rest that remaineth to the people of God - as we were reading in our magazine recently:

O happy harbour of the saints, O sweet and pleasant soil,
In thee no sorrow may be found, no grief, no care, no toil.

The Syrophenician woman, her trial of faith over, is now in glory with the Lord, rejoicing in a way that we cannot yet understand, except in the measure that we experimentally know the presence of the Lord here. Along with her, you, child of God, will know to all eternity, the glorious meaning of the truth that says: "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Roman Ecumenism

Roman Catholic Bishop Sets Out his Ecumenical Agenda in the Highland Capital

The Rev. Donald M. Boyd

ON Sabbath, 21st January 1996, Mario Conti, the Roman Catholic bishop of Aberdeen, delivered his ecumenical message in the main Church of Scotland congregation in Inverness, the capital of the Scottish Highlands.

It was "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity." Following so closely in the wake of the Queen's first attendance at Westminster Cathedral and her recent appointment of a Roman Catholic chaplain, Conti's remarks have an added significance. So also does the venue, for although Conti had spoken about 10 years earlier in another Inverness congregation of the Church of Scotland, on this occasion he was addressing the Old High Church congregation, considered to be the oldest and principal Church of Scotland congregation in the town.

Conti's views are not foursquare with papal views. For example, in 1992 he called for serious consideration of the ordination of married men to the Roman priesthood. There is a shortage of priests in his diocese in the north and north east; in 1992 there were only 36 priests covering the area, and many of these were in their 60s. Yet he is the President of the RC Commission on Doctrine and Unity, and he is on a Papal Commission which allows him access to a regular audience with the pope of Rome.

Furthermore, Conti is in the forefront of the ecumenical movement in Scotland. He was appointed the first Convener of Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS), probably in recognition that this organisation brought the Roman Catholics into formal membership of the ecumenical movement for the first time². To mark the occasion he wrote an article in the Church of Scotland magazine in which he brazenly set forth the Roman Catholic theology of baptismal regeneration as something to be mutually accepted: "It is this sharing of common ground in Christ - the recognising from our several parts that our lives 'are hid with God in Christ' [sic], the mutual acceptance of the sacrament of baptism whereby we are born again through Christ - that provides the true basis for ecumenism, of that 'promoting of the restoration of unity among all Christians' in which we believe ourselves engaged." Not only does he misquote Colossians 3:3, (the Bible never was a Romanist's strong point), but as far as I could ascertain there was no reference to this shocking statement in the letters column over the next six months³.

So in Conti's opinion, the ecumenical movement is rooted in the Roman theology of baptismal regeneration. This bold declaration is probably strengthened by the Romeward direction of Church of Scotland theology. This was noted in a former issue of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, in which I showed that the Church of Scotland position on paedocommunion (children being allowed to the Lord's Table) is based upon a Roman understanding of the sacrament of baptism⁴.

² The first meeting took place in Dunblane Cathedral where the Rev. John R. Gray, who was considered to be an evangelical, was once the minister. Dunblane has been central to the ecumenical movement in Scotland for decades. Scottish Churches House was established there in 1960 as a focus for ecumenical activity. Its first Warden, Ian Fraser, became the first General Secretary of the Scottish Church Council. This Council gave way to ACTS, and the secretariat for ACTS is based at Scottish Churches House, Dunblane.

³ *Life and Work* May 1991, pp.16-17.

⁴ "Romish Trends in the Church of Scotland — Children at Communion" *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* Vol 96, June 1991, pp. 179-184.

Conti's perception of ecumenism is that of the Second Vatican Council,⁵ that is, to restore the unity of baptised Christians under the Pope. A national newspaper drew attention to this at the time of his appointment as Convener of ACTS. "Bishop Conti did not disguise his belief that unity must eventually be centred on the See of Rome. He also stated that 'intercommunion in this context does not mean a full sharing of each other's communion rites.' Intercommunion is rather a common holding of faith and mutual acceptance of each others' ministries and practices and the key to that is the apostolic See," stated the Bishop."⁶

Second Vatican Council ecumenism

This is the official Roman position as seen in the Second Vatican Council *Decree on Ecumenism*. One of the chief concerns of this Council was "promoting the restoration of unity among all Christians." According to the Decree, the ecumenical movement is striving to overcome the obstacles to full ecclesiastical communion. The meaning of this is clearly stated: "Nevertheless, our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those whom He has regenerated and vivified into one body and newness of life - that unity which the holy Scriptures and the revered tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fulness of the means of salvation can be obtained."

In his address to the Old High congregation, Conti drew attention to the slow progress in the ecumenical movement at the 'grass-roots level'. However, he cautions against the frustration of forcing inter-communion upon each other. Instead, he quotes the second Vatican Council's way forward, such as prayer services for unity and ecumenical gatherings, which is termed 'spiritual ecumenism'. 'This change of heart' which makes Protestants pray together with Roman Catholics is 'the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and can rightly be called spiritual ecumenism.' Common worship, which signifies the unity of the Church and provides a sharing in the means of grace, is too premature. In other words, Vatican II views such joint prayer services as opportunities for changing the heart and attitude of 'separated brethren' towards Roman worship. Once the heart is changed, then they can be

⁵Second Vatican Council: 1962-65.

⁶*The Scotsman* 30/8/90. Quoted in *The Bulwark*, Dec 1990, p.15.

⁷*The Decree on Ecumenism: The Documents of Vatican II*, London, 1967.

incorporated into Roman worship.

1999 - "the Year of the Great Return" to the Roman fold?

Instead of Protestants forcing Romanists into inter-communion, Conti endeavours to set the agenda himself. "It helps to have a programme which can focus objectives and harness energies," he says. "Our sights are set on the advent of the Third Millennium." "Pope John Paul II, in a beautiful encyclical letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (As the Third Millennium approaches), has suggested that we mark the remaining years of preparation, 1997, 1998 and 1999, by focusing in turn on God the Son, our Redeemer; God the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier; and God the Father."

The strange Trinitarian order the pope of Rome has suggested becomes clearer as Conti continues. He informs us that 1997 is meant to be a year to deepen our personal commitment to Christ. The year 1998 "would be the year of Baptism (and Confirmation) when our celebration of this divine institution would help us appreciate our membership of the Church through the grace we receive by means of water and the Holy Spirit." But the interesting year is 1999, dedicated to God the Father. During this year they would look back over man's inhumanity to man; "as we review the past Millennium we would see it marred by the emergence of profound divisions, among them the schism between the Churches of East and West, and the breakup of Western Christianity. If we are to look forward in hope and love we will need to be reconciled as nations and as Churches. The year 1999 would be the year of repentance and reconciliation, the Year of the Great Return, the year when the prodigal son returns to his Father. I commend this programme to you."

This ambiguous language needs to be clarified. It is possible to interpret his words as meaning that when the churches get together, and come under the umbrella of Rome, that this is equivalent to the prodigal son returning to his father; i.e. it is equivalent to the prodigal Protestant son returning to the father-fold of Roman Catholicism. There can be no doubt that the Vatican II documents view the ecumenical movement as aiding the return to Rome.

The hidden agenda

Conti does not say if the pope of Rome says anything about the year 2000. However, knowing the Pope's veneration for the Virgin Mary, is it out of place for us to conjecture that he has reserved the 'big year' for Mary? It is a strange omission from Conti's speech. Why did Conti not tell us what he plans for 2000? Why stop short at 1999? Conti's article in *Life and Work*, referred to previously, is entitled, "We Catholics have no hidden agenda." It is certainly true that in it he openly twits the Protestant churches with their refusal to join the Roman communion, but in his 'sermon' we are left wondering what the

rest of his agenda contains.

What is clear is that Rome wants to set the agenda and its pace. They do not wish to be pushed too quickly into common worship. Rather, they wish to soften up non-Romanists and help them to become accustomed to Roman forms of worship through joint prayer sessions and carefully managed ecumenical events.⁸

Common action may break down prejudices against each other. In the forefront of such common action is 'moral ecumenism'. "Ecumenical dialogue could start with discussions concerning the application of the gospel to moral questions."⁹

When it comes to theological problems, these are only to be discussed in prescribed circumstances: "Such meetings require that those who take part in them under authoritative guidance be truly competent."¹⁰ So the agenda is set - let gullible Protestants join with us in prayer sessions, in prayer breakfasts, in moral crusades, and become acclimatised to our form of religion. Don't let Romanists get involved in theological discussion; leave that to the Roman experts, for the Vatican documents accept that Protestants are "constant and expert"¹¹ in their study of the Bible. Ecumenical meetings are not designed from the Roman viewpoint to instruct Romanists in the Protestant understanding of the Bible except so far as to inoculate them against it. Ecumenical meetings have the primary aim of gathering the erring prodigals back to the embrace of the father, *il papa* in Rome.

Presbyterianism contra ecumenism

The biblical answer to ecumenism is Presbyterianism. Ecumenism is a forced unity of disparate bits. As this is becoming more apparent, there is a greater demand for conformity under the episcopal system with Rome at its top. This has been mooted in Scotland several times over the past four decades, and there is a new initiative at present by a group called Scottish Churches

⁸ 'Prayer breakfasts' seem to be in vogue. Not only did Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, host one of these, but the Grand Master of the Orange Order, the Rev. Martin Smyth, chaired a prayer breakfast in Armagh on 2nd October 1995 which included Roman Catholic Cardinal Cahal Daly and a number of 'evangelicals' such as Lord Tonypany, former speaker of the House of Commons, and Sir Fred Catherwood.

⁹ *Decree on Ecumenism*. Para 23. For moral ecumenism, see *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* Vol 100, Sep 1995, pp.281-2.

¹⁰ *Decree of Ecumenism*. Para 9.

¹¹ *Decree of Ecumenism*. Para 21

Initiative for Union. This group includes the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Congregational Church, the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Synod in Scotland, and the Scottish Episcopal Church. "

On the other hand, after the Reformation there was much discussion on the doctrine of the Church. Presbyterianism was viewed as the biblical answer to the unity of the Christian church, and Presbyterianism has proved to be a powerful force in the Christian world. Its strength has been weakened by the ecumenical movement.

Particular Redemption

Rev. Donald Beaton

This article completes the section on particular redemption in Mr Beaton's book, The Reformed Faith, and is continued from the last issue.

(D) The Double Reference Theory. In the early part of the eighteenth century the Church of Scotland was agitated by what was known as the Marrow Controversy. It arose through the publication of a Scottish edition of Edward Fisher's *Marrow of Modern Divinity* in 1718. It contains such expressions as God the Father "hath made a deed of gift and grant to them all [ie sinners], that whosoever of them shall believe on His Son shall not perish, but have eternal life." Another expression was: "Christ is dead for him [ie the sinner], and if he will take and accept His righteousness, he shall have Him." That these expressions are liable to be misunderstood is evident from the charges brought against the Marrowmen - Thomas Boston, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, etc. - by their opponents, and by the explanations offered by the Marrowmen as to what they understood them to mean. They were charged with holding a universal doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, and for this and other alleged errors they were condemned wrongly, we believe, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

We cannot enter more fully into the position taken up by the Marrowmen here on the extent of redemption, except to say that they were thoroughly Calvinistic on this doctrine, and strongly opposed to the Arminian and Amyraldian heresies. In fact, what has been described by Dr Smeaton as "perhaps the best refutation which is to be found in English of Amyraldism, or of the double satisfaction, the one effectual and the other ineffectual, is in the

¹² *The Herald* 24/2/96.

* See the [author's] paper in Scottish Church History Records, vol 1, pp 127-131.

Rev Adam Gib's *Display of the Secession Testimony*, vol. 2, pp 131-190 and pp 273-298".⁵ Adam Gib was a devoted follower of the Marrowmen and was one of the ablest defenders of their theology, and the Church to which he belonged was a strong supporter of the Marrow theology.

While this was the position of the Secession Church at its beginning, as time went on the Marrow theology on the extent of the atonement drifted into what was known in the Scottish Secession Churches as the Double Reference Theory of the Atonement. This gave rise to the Atonement Controversy which was waged with considerable heat during a number of years.

We have already seen that Amyraldian views had been vented in the Secession and Reformed Presbyterian Churches.⁶ The General Associate Synod (Anti-Burgher Secession Church) passed an "Act concerning Arminian Errors", in which these views were condemned. The Rev Thomas Mair, one of their ministers, objected to the Act, and after being repeatedly dealt with by the Synod, was deposed in 1757, as has already been stated. The whole subject will be found treated in the Rev Adam Gib's *Display of the Secession Testimony* and in the Rev Andrew Robertson's *History of the Atonement Controversy in the Secession Church*. This leads on now to what was known as the Double Reference Controversy.

In 1845, at the United Secession Synod some reference was made to the views held by Professors Brown and Balmer. Both were theological professors in the United Secession Church. Brown stood by his colleague and stated his position thus when before the Synod: "In the sense of the great body of Calvinists that Christ died to remove obstacles in the way of human salvation by making perfect satisfaction for sin, I hold that He died for all men". Balmer, in a preface to a reprint of Polhill's *On the Extent of the Death of Christ* says: "Twelve years ago the supreme court of the United Secession Church passed an Act condemning the doctrine of a universal atonement and forbidding the use of the phrase. But how great the change effected within the last two years! The doctrine of a general reference to the death of Christ has been officially recognised; such a reference as necessarily implies a universal atonement."

This Double Reference view was one of the objections advanced by those

⁵ Smeaton, *Our Lord's Doctrine of the Atonement*, second edition, p472.

⁶ In addition to reference study already made to the controversy in the Reformed Presbyterian Churches. see Rev W J Couper's paper, "A Breach in the Reformed Presbytery, 1753", in *Scottish Church History Records*, vol 1, pp 1-28.

⁷ An Amyraldian work.

in the Free Church who opposed union with the United Presbyterian Church.⁸ The whole subject may be studied at greater length in Robertson's work, to which reference has already been made. It is necessary to point out, however, that the account there given in so far as it is an attempt to father on the Marrowmen the views of Brown and Balmer is misleading. It is probably owing to this that Dr A A Hodge in his *Outlines of Theology* (new edition, p 417) and also in a certain reference in his *Atonement* (p 352) makes the views of the Marrowmen and the United Secession professors similar. This is a mistake not confined to Dr Hodge.

(E) Cosmic or Eschatological Universalism. Professor Warfield states this view as follows: "When the Scriptures say that Christ came to save the world, that He does save the world, and that the world shall be saved by Him, they do not mean that there is no human being whom He did not come to save, whom He does not save, who is not saved by Him. They mean that He came to save and does save the human race; and that the human race is being led by God into a racial salvation; that in the age-long development of the race of men it will attain at last to a complete salvation, and our eyes will be greeted with the glorious spectacle of a saved world. Thus the human race attains the goal for which it was created, and sin does not snatch it out of God's hands, the primal purpose of God with it is fulfilled; and through Christ the race of man, though fallen into sin, is recovered to God and fulfils its original destiny" (*Plan of Salvation*, pp 131-132).

Dr Warfield sees in this a parallel of what takes place in the sanctification of the individual which is not completed in the day of effectual calling. This eschatological universalism, maintained today by Professor L Boettner, is very different from the universalism of Arminius, the hypothetical universalism of Amyrald, or the restorationism set forth by Professors Hastie and W P Paterson in recent times. Dr Warfield does not suggest that no souls are lost in the course of the long process through which the world advances to its salvation, or that all men are saved without exception. There are, however, difficulties created by this view which we cannot discuss here, and we prefer the older and, in our estimation, the more satisfactory explanations that have been usually given by Calvinistic theologians of the universalistic texts of Scripture.⁹

⁸ The Church formed by the union of the United Secession and Relief Churches in 1847.

⁹ Some of these texts, especially those which occur in the Pauline writings, can be explained on the ground that the catholicity of God's salvation is set over against the national particularistic ideas of

St. Jude's Congregation Centenary

Rev. Donald MacLean

Editor's note: This article, in a fuller form, has been published as an attractive pamphlet, *St. Jude's Congregation, Glasgow, 100 Years, 1896-1996*. It sketches the history of the congregation and contains pictures of the church buildings and also of the four ministers, including the present minister, Rev. Donald MacLean, who have successively been inducted to the charge. The pamphlet may be obtained from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, by sending a first class stamp.

WHEN Rev Donald MacFarlane, then minister of Raasay, made his historic Protest in the General Assembly of the Declaratory Act Free Church, in May 1893, he thus separated from that body with all who adhered to his Protest. A movement began throughout Scotland to form congregations in support of what later came to be called the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. One of those congregations was in Glasgow.

In the city of Glasgow last century there was a Free Church congregation known as the Main Street (Gaelic) Congregation. The minister of the congregation was Rev. Evan Gordon. On one occasion the elders of the congregation requested him to call a meeting of the Kirk Session, which he duly did. At the meeting the elders informed him that they wished to know what position the congregation intended to take relative to the Protest tabled by Rev. D. MacFarlane, and the separation effected by it. When the minister offered to give them his explanation of the Declaratory Act, the elders said that the time for talking was past and the time to take action had come. They wished to know if he would agree to call a meeting of the congregation to give them an opportunity to decide what to do as a congregation in view of the present circumstances. When the minister saw their determination to take appropriate action he left the meeting without closing the Kirk Session.

Having consulted among themselves, the elders approached Mr Neil Cameron, divinity student, who at that time was acting as an assistant to Rev. Evan Gordon. They informed him that they had separated from the Main

Jews; others, again, on the ground that the universalistic expressions refer to different classes of men, while another class may be explained as a polemic against the Gnostic dualist teaching which was disturbing the churches. The whole subject of these universalistic texts is dealt with by Dr. Owen in his *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Works, vol 10, pp 316-421 [also available separately]) and Professor G Vos in "The Scriptural Doctrine of the Love of God" (*Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, vol 13, pp 1-37, [and reprinted in his *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, pp 425-457]), R S Candlish, *The Atonement, its Reality, Completeness and Extent* (pp 47-85), A A Hodge, *Atonement* (pp 385-395) and W Skyes, *Salt of the Covenant* (pp 155-177).

Street congregation, as now constituted under the new creed and constitution of the Free Church, and were determined to adhere to Rev. D. MacFarlane's Protest. Mr Cameron promised to help them as far as he could.

The elders, on the following Sabbath, kept prayer meetings in private houses. On the next Sabbath services were kept in the Blythswood Halls at which about 300 people were present, most of whom came from the Main Street congregation. Some time after that, a church belonging to the Church of England, called St. Jude's, became vacant. It was rented, and subsequently purchased and renovated by the congregation.

The first Kirk Session meeting was held on 16th November, 1893, when Rev. D. MacFarlane acted as Moderator *pro tem*, and Neil Cameron, divinity student was placed in charge of the congregation. Mr Cameron was licensed to preach on 9th December, 1895, at Strathcarron, by the Free Presbyterian Presbytery. Ten days later a deputation from the St. Jude's congregation appeared before the Presbytery with the request that the Presbytery would moderate in a Call to Mr Cameron to become the minister of St. Jude's. This Call was eventually signed by about 600 people. Mr Cameron accepted the Call, and on 9th January, 1896, he was ordained and inducted to the charge. The congregation was now complete, with a godly minister, godly elders and a considerable number of godly people. Thus began its history, which reached 100 years on 9th January, this year.

Rev. Neil Cameron remained minister of this congregation for thirty-six years. There are still a few, including the present minister, who remember his solemn appearance, and his impressive way of preaching the Word of God. Among those who have good reason to remember him is a lady, now 90 years old, who was brought to a knowledge of the Saviour during his ministry. She has been professing Christ in this congregation for 68 years, and is the last of Mr Cameron's communicants to be still spared. His preaching was richly blessed, also, in all the congregations throughout the Church. On 9th March, 1932, Mr Cameron died at the age of 77, having served his generation by the will of God.

He was succeeded by Rev. Roderick MacKenzie who had been the minister of Gairloch congregation for nine years. He was inducted to St. Jude's on 9th December, 1932. He was a gifted preacher, and although some of Mr Cameron's flock thought that no-one could take his place, there are good reasons for concluding that many came to feel that his successor did indeed meet that need. After a period of 12 years, Mr MacKenzie resigned on the grounds of ill health on 31st October, 1944.

Although it is sad to relate, yet history dictates that mention be made of the

fact that Mr MacKenzie had a difference of opinion with the Synod. A large section of the congregation disapproved of the Synod's method of dealing with Mr MacKenzie's case, and in 1945 they began to hold separate services in another building in the city. Mr MacKenzie ministered to them until his death in 1972. By this move, the congregation was much reduced in size.

Steps were taken to fill the vacancy, and the choice fell on Rev. D.J. Matheson, who was minister in Lairg, Sutherland. Mr Matheson was inducted to Jude's on 20th September, 1946. He had a good, clear voice, and sound doctrine continued to be preached during his ministry. He was a most energetic and assiduous visitor among the people, and his coming to the congregation at such a critical stage was undoubtedly beneficial to its interests. After a pastorate of 14 years, Mr Matheson was translated from St. Jude's to the Stratherrick congregation, being inducted there on 13th January, 1960. The present minister was inducted to St. Jude's congregation on 14th June, 1960. He had previously been the minister of Portree congregation, in the Island of Skye, for eleven and a half years.

In 1975 the congregation moved from the old St. Jude's church in Blythswood Square to a vacant church on Woodlands Road. Because a change of the name of the congregation would have affected its public identity, it was decided to retain the old name, St. Jude's.

The main reason for praising the Lord at this Centenary is that the doctrines preached, the worship conducted, and the discipline exercised, all being founded on the infallible and inerrant Word of God, are those which the congregation enjoyed one hundred years ago. When this fact is considered in the light of the appalling apostasy of individuals and churches from Scriptural Christianity during these 100 years, there is abundant reason for praising the Lord for His preserving us, for it is written:

*Except the Lord the city keep,
the watchmen watch in vain,* (Psalm 127:1).

Salvation Army's Easter Vigil

The Rev. Donald M. Boyd

THE Salvation Army is organising another Easter vigil around a cross in the centre of a pedestrian precinct in Inverness.

As this is an ecumenical age, the Free Presbyterian minister of Inverness got an invitation along with his congregation to this "public act of Christian witness". The invitation spoke of the success of last year's witness "as a means

of testimony for Christians of differing denominations.”

The letter goes on to say: “The witness is silent in its nature, for we only wish to present Jesus and He crucified and all that is required is for Christians to surround the cross, taking their turn in holding the cross, as the Spirit leads and directs them.... With the Christian Church fragmented by doctrinal difference I feel this silent witness gives opportunity for all who share our Saviour’s name to make a united declaration of faith without compromising our differing doctrinal beliefs. For this reason I pray earnestly you will find the Lord guiding you to come and place Christ where He would most surely want to be on the day we celebrate His crucifixion, in the market place in the midst of the people He died to save.”

The reply was as follows: “I am responding briefly to your letter inviting me to your Easter vigil in Inglis Street.

“Your letter mentions that this witness does not compromise our differing doctrinal beliefs. I am sorry that it does compromise the doctrinal beliefs of my church. You speak about people ‘holding the cross, as the Spirit leads and directs them.’ In my church we believe that holding crosses has got more to do with Roman Catholic and Orthodox doctrines than Protestant ones, so that your letter begs the question whether in holding a cross it is the Spirit and not rather one’s own spirit that does the leading and directing.

“You hope that ‘this silent witness gives opportunity for all who share our Saviour’s name to make a united declaration of faith without compromising our differing doctrinal beliefs’. ‘We cannot make a united declaration of faith’ in this way. The Saviour warns us against false forms of Christianity, so that our ‘declaration of faith’ includes this warning. Consequently we warn and witness against the ecumenical movement which minimises the importance of doctrine in the Church’s witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Many people do not understand this form of witness which our Church considers to be biblical. They assume that if we do not hold their form of witness, then we are acting contrary to the mind of Christ. If I may respectfully point out, you suggest this in your letter when you say that Christ expects His people to be with you in the market place ‘on the day we celebrate His crucifixion’ and that you are earnestly praying that we will find the Lord guiding us to come with you. May I remind you, however, that since the beginning the Christian church has ‘celebrated His crucifixion’ by the Lord’s Supper, according to Christ’s appointment and institution. This was His method of healing divisions, (1 Cor 11:2,18,22-23).

“Further, the biblical memorial of the Saviour’s resurrection is not Easter but the Lord’s Day. We seek to remember His resurrection every week, and

not as a mere annual event. Consequently, the celebration of His crucifixion cannot be a mere annual event on Good Friday.

"I hope you will come to respect our witness to the truths of Christ's Gospel."

John Welsh

Rev. K.D. Macleod

Continued from page 85 of the March issue.

9. A Godly Seed

Banished in 1606, for the sake of the gospel, from Scotland to France by the Scottish Privy Council, at the command of the King, Welsh landed in Bordeaux. Eventually, a door was opened for him to preach the gospel regularly in France, when he was appointed the minister of Jonsac, a small town near Bordeaux, at the end of 1608.

IT was possibly also while Welsh was the minister of Jonsac that a friar, unable to find lodgings in the village, came to Welsh's door. It was late, but he was taken in, given something to eat and shown to bed. When the friar awakened up in the middle of the night, he heard a quiet, but continuous, whispering noise coming from the other side of the wooden partition. The next morning the friar met a local man as he walked through the fields. The friar told him that he had stayed with the Huguenot minister. And, in answer to a question about how he was looked after, he added, "Very bad, for I always held there were devils haunting these ministers' houses, and I am persuaded there was one with me this night, for I heard a continual whisper all the night over, which I believe was no other thing but the minister and the devil conversing together."

The man explained that the minister would have been praying, and added that Welsh prayed more than any other minister in France. He suggested that the friar stay another night to check that this explanation was the right one. So the friar pretended to be unwell and was allowed to stay for the extra night. He joined the family for their meals and for family worship. This second night too, after Welsh had some sleep, he began to pray. The friar crept along to Welsh's bedroom door, where he could hear the minister's words clearly. There he heard what he had never heard before. In the morning the friar confessed to the minister that he had been brought up in ignorance and had lived in darkness all his life. He stated his intention to forsake his Romanism, and we are told that he remained a faithful Protestant to the end of his days.

To have visitors from Ayr in the summer of 1613 must have been a warm memory for Welsh for long afterwards. The visitors were two of his former godly elders, John Stewart and Hugh Kennedy. Possibly as shipowners they were in France on business, but that would not have made their visit any the less welcome. It was in Stewart's house that Welsh lived when he first moved to Ayr, and Kennedy had held the office of provost.

To appreciate the quality of his godliness we may note Robert Boyd's comments when Kennedy died the year after Welsh: "In June 1623, died at Ayr Hugh Kennedy, many times provost of that town, a man who walked with the Lord, endued with singular piety, exercised in secret, and in the practical part of religion discreet, wise and zealous. He was exercised with many family crosses and afflictions. Before his death he was filled with peace, an inexpressible joy in the Holy Ghost above what it was possible for him to express or apprehend, and one of the most familiar friends of that man of God was Mr John Welsh." A minister suggested to Kennedy that he was now assured that the angels were waiting at the posts of his bed to conduct his soul into Abraham's bosom. "I am sure thereof," he replied, "and if the walls of this house could speak they could tell how many sweet days I have had in secret fellowship with God, and how familiar he hath been with my soul." Such was the calibre of one of Welsh's elders, a man of whom Welsh himself wrote, "Happy is that city, yea, happy is that nation, that hath a Hugh Kennedy in it." Would that Scotland today - and other nations too - were blessed with a multitude of such Hugh Kennedys!

In 1614 Welsh lost his closest friend in France, Robert Boyd, not by death, but on his return to Scotland to become Principal of Glasgow University. Much of what we know about Welsh comes from his frequent letters to Boyd; from now on these letters become understandably less regular - how often would Welsh find someone who could take a letter from south-west France to Glasgow? Welsh counselled his friend about his duty to be faithful to the cause of truth in Scotland, and told him, "My desire to God for you is that He may accompany you with His most abundant benediction, and that He may render your last works greater than the first (see Rev 2:19), and that you may finish your course with joy, without reproach, waiting for the day of His appearing."

Welsh and Boyd made arrangements to meet halfway between Jonsac and Saumur to bid each other farewell, but Welsh had to call off the meeting when his eldest daughter died after being ill for less than a week. "My soul is in anguish," he wrote to Boyd, "but the God of consolation, who comforts those that are cast down, knows how to comfort us. I would beseech you to

come this length, though you would find little but subject for sorrow. . . . Let us have a room in your most ardent prayers." Boyd left Saumur on the day that Welsh wrote to him. When he reached the place where he expected to find Welsh he found only the messenger who brought the letter. So, as Welsh had requested, he continued on to Jonsac. The visit of a fellow-Scot in a foreign land must indeed have been an encouragement to the sorrowing family, but it was the close spiritual bond over at least the previous eight years that would have been far more significant than the mere matter of nationality as they enjoyed that brief and final period of fellowship in this world.

It was probably later the same year that Welsh left Jonsac for the old town of Nerac, 67 miles south-east of Bordeaux. No record remains of Welsh's ministry in one of the four Protestant congregations there. It is one illustration of the vindictiveness of the Roman Catholic persecution which followed the revocation, in 1685, of the Edict of Nantes that every Protestant book and document, at least in south west France, was destroyed. One letter from that period did survive. It was written to Boyd in 1614 while Welsh was in such poor health that he expected to be called away soon from the world. In this letter he also discusses arrangements for boarding his second son Josias with the Boyds. "Advertise me," he writes, "if he is capable of profiting in learning, to the end we may lose neither time nor charges upon him."

Welsh need not have worried overmuch. Josias went on to teach Latin in Glasgow University, but had to leave because of the oppressive ecclesiastical conditions under the bishops. About 1626 he began to preach at Six-Mile-Water in Ulster, and was afterwards minister of Templepatrick. Robert Blair declares that a great measure of his father's spirit rested also on the son. And Kirkton refers to "his mighty wakening preaching gift". His preaching at communion seasons seems to have been specially blessed. After being suspended from the ministry for the period of six months he was later deposed, but for no worse reason than what resulted in his father being banished from his native land - his church principles.

Josias Welsh continued his ministry from his own house, preaching at the front door to the large congregations which had to gather outside after the house had been packed out. It could not have been long when, through preaching in the open air, he caught the cold which led to his death. Notwithstanding his lack of assurance of salvation in his lifetime, just before he passed into the eternal world he clapped his hands together and said, "Victory, victory for evermore!"

Josias Welsh left behind him a son John, altogether worthy of his grandfather's name. He became minister of Irongray in Galloway and was

described by Kirkton as “a godly, meek, humble man and a good, popular preacher”. He too suffered for his principles, and he was ejected in 1662. Though not the best known of the Covenanters, possibly because he did not die a martyr’s death, we can surely say, nevertheless, that he was not a whit behind the chiefest of those faithful witnesses for the crown rights of their Redeemer. Certainly Kirkton reckons him “the boldest undertaker that ever I heard of as a minister in Christ’s Church, old or late; for notwithstanding all the threats of the state, the great price set upon his head, the spite of bishops, the diligence of all the bloodhounds, he maintained his difficult post of preaching upon the mountains of Scotland many times to many thousands for nearly 20 years, and yet was always kept out of his enemies’ hands. It was well known that bloody Clavers, upon intelligence that he was lurking in some secret place, would have ridden 40 miles in a winter night, yet when he came to the place he always missed his prey. I have known him ride three days and two nights without sleep, and preach upon a mountain at midnight in one of these nights.” He died in London in 1679, after a life of consistently devoted service to his Master and by which he showed that he was altogether worthy of the name of his illustrious grandfather, John Welsh of Ayr.

(To be concluded)

A Question of Conscience?

By Rev. John Goldby, M.A., Chairman of the Deacons’ Court of the Aberdeen Congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

IN 1993 we wrote to Rev. John Tallach, the minister of the Aberdeen Congregation of the Associated Presbyterian Churches (APC), seeking to arouse his conscience with regard to him and his congregation continuing to unlawfully occupy our church and manse in Aberdeen, but without success. We pointed out the harm done to the Free Presbyterian remnant when he abandoned them and deprived them of services and property in 1989. We asked him whether there were now any plans to restore our property to us.

In his reply, Mr Tallach refused to return the property and indicated that the APC claim to Free Presbyterian property is founded first, on their view that they are the true Free Presbyterian Church continuing, and secondly, upon their assertion that the Free Presbyterian Church (FPC) has ceased to honour, as Mr Tallach put it, “important aspects of the constitution of the church, as Communion of Saints and Liberty of Conscience.”

In the interests of truth the APC congregations should consider carefully two key questions which lie at the heart of the APC position on property.

1. Is the APC really the true FPC continuing?

Can APC members still honestly and sincerely before the Lord, continue to support their Church's claim to the property on the ground that the APC is the true Free Presbyterian Church continuing? Is the APC faithfully honouring the constitution of the original FPC? Professor Cartwright of the Free Church, it appears, thinks not. Following a meeting with APC representatives in 1993 he said that his personal impression was that the APC "were not sufficiently clear as to their own identity and future to contemplate movement towards union with any other body in the immediate future" (Monthly Record, July 1993, page 138). That was a frank, considered and independent assessment.

We have heard from a reliable source recently that an APC minister (we omit his name in order to avoid giving unnecessary irritation), in introducing himself while doing door to door visitation, said that the APC was a church positioned between the Free Church and the Church of Scotland. This seems to be a fairly accurate statement of fact, and if so, how then can the APC leadership claim to be the 'FPC continuing'? Furthermore what is the purpose of such a claim when it is common knowledge that the APC has a very different church outlook to that of the FPC? The newer members of the APC might be very surprised to learn that they are committed to maintaining the doctrine, worship and practice of the FPC of 1893.

2. Has the FPC failed to honour the doctrines of Communion of Saints and Liberty of Conscience?

Disregarding for a moment the recent past and minor differences, there are yet manifestly great differences in outlook between the APC and the FPC of former years. For example, it is a fact that the FPC was never in the habit of exchanging pulpits with Church of Scotland, Baptist or other ministers, however orthodox, loved and respected they may have been personally. By contrast, pulpit exchange with ministers of other denominations is a common practice in the APC. We all value and enjoy communion with true Christian friends in other churches but the FPC remains committed to formal and public separation in order to preserve scriptural doctrine, worship and practice.

The Lord Mackay case is the principal example cited by the APC of the FPC failing to honour the doctrine of Christian Liberty and was the chief, immediate cause of the 1989 division. Lord MacKay refused to comply with the instruction of the Southern Presbytery to cease attending 'requiem masses'. (He was not barred from attending a funeral, as the press still continues to say). Was the Presbytery's action contrary to the practice and constitution of the

FPC? Let the following quotations be considered. Both are by Rev.R.R.Sinclair, a former Editor of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, and who became an APC minister in 1989.

In *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* of October 1957 he gave a faithful statement of the FPC view of attending mass, when he wrote as follows: "It was reported on the BBC news that Mr. MacMillan, the Prime Minister, was present on 29th August at what is called requiem mass in the Roman Catholic Cathedral, London, for RC priest Ronald Knox.... It was reported that the Prime Minister was a friend of Ronald Knox for many years. The action of the Prime Minister is to be deplored, being himself a nominal Protestant, and the head of the Government of a Protestant nation. His example is bad indeed... It will not be for his honour to recognise publicly an idolatrous service."

Twenty two years later we see a shift, not in the view of the FPC but of those who soon were to leave the FPC to form the APC. In the report about the 1989 Synod in the July issue of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, we read on page 201: "Rev.R.R.Sinclair reminded the court that Lord Mackay belonged to a group of men - judges - who have great authority from God. Though Lords Russell and Wheatley were Roman Catholics [Lord Mackay attended the requiem masses for both] yet Lord Mackay had contact with them in a civil way. He put in an appearance at these funerals to express respect and regard for his colleagues and sympathy with his relatives. Lord Mackay did what his moral conscience allowed him to do. Lord Mackay is a highly intelligent Christian and a strong Protestant..."

The reason why the Protestant churches, including the FPC, have always been so opposed to the mass is because it is a gross violation of the first two Commandments, and that in the name of Christianity. The priest in the mass claims to convert the symbols, the bread and wine, into the actual body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The bread and wine are then worshipped as God and offered up as an expiatory sacrifice! This is idolatry.

The Presbytery decision was not a personal attack on Lord Mackay. Once his public appearances at requiem masses were known by the Presbytery, how could the Presbytery then allow one of its own office-bearers to do what we as a Church were condemning in others? Nevertheless, some disagreed with the Presbytery decision, which became the occasion for their leaving the FPC. This is a right that anyone in the Church is free to exercise, and a right we must all respect, but the property should remain with the body continuing, as the title deeds state, and in accordance with the constitution of the Church.

APC congregations still occupying FPC property should therefore now do all they can to put matters right. If they themselves are not prepared to return to

the Free Presbyterian fold, they should at least urge their office-bearers to do the honourable thing and return FPC property without further delay.

Book Reviews

The Westminster Confession of Faith. Free Presbyterian Publications. Booklet, A5 size, 36 pages. Price £1.50 from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.

THE previous Free Presbyterian Publications (FPP) edition of this booklet sold well and proved very useful, especially to groups and classes studying the *Confession of Faith*. This new booklet is even better. It uses the edition of the text by S. W. Carruthers who ascertained the original text of the *Confession* and produced an accurate edition which did not have the misprints that had slipped into previous editions. The layout of the text is much improved, and, more important, all the Scripture references (not full quotations) for each point of doctrine are now given: they appear in smaller type at the foot of each section of each chapter. The cover carries an eye-catching colour picture of the Houses of Parliament.

Without dispute, there has never been a more accurate and concise statement of the Christian faith than that of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. James H. Thornwell, the renowned theologian stated, "I have read the creeds of most Christian bodies, I have been rejoiced at the general harmony of Protestant Christendom in the great doctrines of the gospel, but I know of no uninspired production, in any language, or of any denomination, that for richness of matter, clearness of statement, soundness of doctrine, scriptural expression, and edifying tendency, can for a moment enter into competition with the *Westminster Confession*..."

The *Confession*, in its hardback and paperback editions (which include *The Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, *The Directory of Public Worship*, *The Form of Church Government*, *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, and *The Solemn League and Covenant*), continues to be the flagship publication of FPP, but it issues this inexpensive edition of the *Confession* on its own to make it more accessible, especially to young people. We heartily concur with the publisher's statement: "Because of its faithfulness to Scripture the *Confession* has permanent worth and abiding relevance." We pray that many will prove this to be so by reading this new edition.

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Singing in the Fire by Faith Cook. Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, £4.95.

THE title of this book comes from the words of Susannah Spurgeon, whose husband was the great nineteenth-century London preacher. Lying in bed after a long period of illness she noticed the melodious sounds emitted by the oak log burning in the fire. Susannah expressed herself in the words of the title and added, "God helping us, if that is the only way to get harmony out of these hard, apathetic hearts, let the furnace be heated seven times hotter than before." Both Spurgeons, husband and wife, were to endure long periods of serious illness, nevertheless they both succeeded in making extraordinary efforts for the cause of Christ. Susannah, who is the subject of one of the chapters in this book, sent out thousands of books to the multitudes of ministers who at that time were living in great poverty.

The book's subtitle is *Christians in Adversity*, and all who are the subjects of the 14 chapters endured adversity in one degree or another. The earliest is Monica, who endured so much through the waywardness of her more famous son Augustine, until his conversion shortly before her own death. Others include John Bradford, the English martyr; Thomas Hog, who suffered greatly during the persecutions of Covenanting times, before returning briefly in weakness to his parish in Easter Ross; Catherine, wife of the great minister of the Scottish Borders, Thomas Boston, who described her as "a woman of great worth, whom I therefore passionately loved . . . patient in our common tribulations, and under her personal distresses." She suffered prolonged periods of severe mental illness.

Not all who appear in these pages are well known. Nor should one accept all of them as altogether reliable doctrinally. Wang Ming-Dao, a Chinese pastor, who endured extremely cruel treatment from the authorities during many years of imprisonment, has elsewhere expressed himself in a quite unsatisfactory way about the Sabbath. One feels also that as times of persecution loomed ever closer Ming-Dao wrote with too much confidence: "We are ready to pay any price to preserve the Word of God." As it turned out he succumbed to the pressure of his enemies, which caused him great grief afterwards. No more than Peter should we trust in our own powers.

Those who have read the author's earlier book *Samuel Rutherford and His Friends* will not be surprised to find that she has again produced a series of well-written and interesting brief biographies, which prove the power of God's grace to sustain His children in trouble, however severe.

KDM

Mission News

Zimbabwe

FRIENDS will be sorry to hear that another of our Ingwenya elders has passed away. Mr. Cecil Sobantu, who was well over eighty years of age, had become rather frail and had gone recently to live with his son James in Bulawayo, and that is where he passed away. Mr. Sobantu lost his first wife many years ago. Their family are now married and living in their own homes. Mr. Sobantu's second wife died a short time ago.

Mr. Sobantu frequently preached at Ingwenya when Rev. A.B. Ndebele was preaching elsewhere. He also preached at Matapa Mine, some distance from Ingwenya, where he used to spend the weekend and take the services on the Sabbath. He accompanied Rev. Z. Mazvabo to Scotland in 1986 and thoroughly enjoyed his visit. Again in 1989 he was among a party of office-bearers who came to Scotland for the Synod.

Mr. Sobantu was intelligent and well informed and his presence will be greatly missed on the Mission. He was very interested in the history of his own people - he belonged to the Fingo tribe, (as did the late Rev. J.B. Radasi and as does Rev. P. Mzamo). On one occasion, when giving talks to the pupils of the John Tallach Secondary School about the Fingoes, he told how Cecil Rhodes invited the Fingoes to come from the Cape province to Matabeleland as he knew the Fingoes were friendly towards the British and would be a help in advancing the government's interests in Matabeleland.

At one time, Mr Sobantu took a course in animal husbandry. This knowledge proved very useful as he could deal with sickness among the cattle at the Mission and at his own home.

When last we heard from the Mbumba Hospital there were not so many patients as usual. The people were very busy in the maize fields. Sister Anne Zekveld said that there were many premature babies and it was a great joy to the nurses when the little ones began to thrive and grow apace. There was a little boy in the Childrens' Ward who had a dreadfully injured hand. He had been bitten by a donkey. Because the donkey had been behaving in a very strange way for a couple of days, the staff were afraid it might be a case of rabies, but the tests were negative and the little boy is recovering.

They had a young woman patient who had a very swollen foot: she had been bitten by a snake. Very often the patient who has been bitten brings along the carcass of the snake for identification, as some snakes have a more poisonous bite than others and different treatments are required. People suffering from snake-bite are kept under close observation, and are treated

according to symptoms, but it is very seldom that anti-snake-bite serum is required. During the rainy season the snakes come out of their holes and care has to be taken, especially at night.

At Mbuma they are looking forward to having a hospital evangelist once more. The previous man has retired. The new man, Manford Mloyi, was a schoolteacher at Simbo near Mbuma where he regularly took services for the Simbo congregation. He expressed the desire to join the staff at Mbuma, and to give up teaching. The Church Session has examined him and they feel he is suitable for the position. We hope he will be very useful.

Miss Katie MacAulay returns to Zimbabwe on 30th April if all is well. She will be accompanied by Miss Ishbel MacCuish who will assist in the John Tallach School for three months. Miss Norma MacLean hopes to go on leave in mid-April and expects to visit her sister in New Zealand. *JN*

Kenya

MR. Ian MacLean, who is the Mission Administrator and Building Supervisor on our mission in Sengera, and his family are settling down well on the Mission at Sengera. He is being kept exceedingly busy between conducting services and a Catechism class on Sabbath, conducting worship every day at the Health Centre, and attending to the numerous administration tasks which require attention throughout the week, and week by week.

Mr. MacLean is no stranger to the Mission, having gone there in December 1994 for two months in order to complete the building of the Health Centre - now known as Omorembe Health Centre - and to build the church.

Both Mr. MacLean and Rev. N. Ross were glad they were able to be together for a week on the Mission for the handing-over process, before Mr. Ross returned to Scotland in mid January.

Although electricity has not yet come to the Mission, it is a relief that the new well is completed and is working efficiently. Mr. MacLean will have much extra work on his hands in building the required accommodation for the new mission staff members.

Miss Jessie Coote, matron of the Health Centre, returned to Sengera on 28th February after almost six months refreshing furlough in Scotland. Her return enabled Sister Truus Ringleberg to go on furlough to Holland for a well-earned rest. Miss Peta Van der Ridder has rejoined our mission staff and will go to Sengera in May to work in the Health Centre, God willing. It will be remembered that she used to be a nursing sister in our Mbuma Mission Hospital. Sister Henriette Burggraaf is now a permanent member of the hospital staff.

It is encouraging to hear that the numbers attending the church services, and of children attending the Sabbath School, have increased recently. Some come a long way to be present. One party comes sometimes from distant Kuria, arriving on Saturday and departing on Monday. NMR

Notes and Comments

One in five British pregnancies end in abortion

The barbarity of British society is underlined yet again by the latest recorded figures for abortions - 160,000 per annum. This means that one in five pregnancies are deliberately and unnaturally terminated, or one unborn child is slain in the womb every three and a half minutes of every day.

What a warped morality we have as a nation. At the same time as we mourn (as we must) over the 16 infants and their teacher massacred in their school, we do not shed tears for 160,000 babes slaughtered in the womb. We cannot evade our corporate responsibility for this culpable destruction of human life. Guilt lies upon our nation, and this will yet be shown. "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets."

Hospital seeks court permission for passive euthanasia

Mrs Janet Johnstone has been in a coma and persistent vegetative state for the past four years in Law Hospital, Carlisle. The Hospital Trust is asking the Court of Session to declare that it would be lawful to withdraw Mrs Johnstone's artificial feeding and let her die - also known as passive euthanasia. The lawyer representing her interests stated in court, "Mrs Johnstone has been committed to the care of this hospital and, if they fail to provide her with the necessities of life and she dies, it is a criminal offence."

No doubt the Court is bearing in mind the recent cases of people who have wakened from a coma and persistent vegetative state. Dr Fiona Smith, Dundee, who was in a coma for three months, suddenly awoke and asked for her children. An American girl recovered over four years after being in a deep coma for fifteen months. Gary Dockery, a Tennessee policeman, woke up from a coma lasting seven and a half years and started talking. Well might some doctors question current assumptions about persistent vegetative state.

We fear we are going down the same road as Holland where euthanasia is technically illegal but prosecutions will not be mounted in certain defined circumstances, and therefore euthanasia is widely practised. We are fast losing sight of the fact that the imparting and ending of life is God's prerogative.

Dr J I Packer - correction

Among the Notes and Comments in the February issue was a piece entitled Slipping Away, which sketched the downward course followed by Dr J I Packer and stated that he had a meeting with the Pope during his visit to the United States late last year. This information was taken from reports which appeared in other Christian magazines. More recent information makes it clear that although Dr Packer was invited to meet the Pope he did not in fact accept the invitation. We regret the error. *KDM*

Church Information

Fort William Communion

The communion services will be held, God willing, from Thursday 11th April to Monday 15th April, in the Red Cross Hall, Inverlochy, as follows:

THURSDAY7.00 pm

FRIDAY 11.00 am

SATURDAY6.00 pm

SABBATH11.00 am and 6.30 pm

MONDAY7.00 pm

The Rev. A. Morrison (North Uist) is expected to be present.

Further information from Mr I. Mackinnon, Onich. Tel. No. 01855 821308.

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

NORTHERN PRESBYTERY: At Dingwall on Tuesday, 18th June at 2.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 11th June at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Tuesday, 23rd April at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 18th June at 1.00 am.

Staff required for African Missions

THE Foreign Missions Committee would be pleased to hear from any suitably qualified persons with a desire to serve the Lord in the foreign mission field in the following areas and positions.

ZIMBABWE

1. Secondary School Ingwenya. Teachers urgently required.
2. Mbuma Hospital, Nkayi. At least four nursing situations vacant.

KENYA

1. Omorembe Health Centre, Sengera. Nurses required immediately.
2. Sengera Mission. Primary or secondary teacher.

Enquiries should be made to the Clerk, Rev. J.R. Tallach, Free Presbyterian Manse, Raasay, Kyle, Ross-shire, IV40 8PB (Tel. and Fax: 01478 660216), in the first instance.

The late Mr Donald Campbell

We regret to announce the death of Mr Donald M. Campbell, elder and missionary, formerly of Bonar Bridge, who passed away on Wednesday, 20th March, at Ballifeary Home of Rest, Inverness, at the age of 93. He served the Lord faithfully in the Church for many years and was the missionary consecutively of Scourie and Kinlochbervie, Plockton and Bonar congregations. It is hoped that a fuller notice will appear in due course.

Acknowledgements of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

Bookroom Fund: Anon £100.

Foreign Mission Fund (Zimbabwe): Estate of the late Miss Annie Macleod (Ullapool & Inverness), £200.

Foreign Mission (New Canaan), Anon £60.

Foreign Mission (John Tallach Secondary School), Anon £40.

Congregational treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Bracadale - Strath: Acknowledgement in July 1995 issue should have read: Mrs J. Curtin and Mrs J. MacPherson, Heaste, £400 for the upkeep of Broadford F.P. Church.

Daviot - Stratherrick - Tomatin: *Congregational Funds:* Friend, Stockinish, £10 per Rev. J. Goldby.

Kyle - Plockton: *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £20 and £10, per envelopes in plate.

Inverness: *Tape Fund:* Anon, £1.50 per D McD; *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £30, envelope in plate; Anon, £50, envelope in plate; Anon, £20, envelope in plate; Anon, £15, envelope in plate; Anon, £1, envelope in plate; *Blind Children, Ingwenya:* Anon, £30, envelope in plate; Anon, £50, envelope in plate; *Where most needed:* £20 per H.C.G.

North Harris: *Communion expenses:* Two friends, MacQueen St., £10 per J.N.; Friend, Leachlee, £40, envelope in plate; Friend, Tarbert, £10, envelope in plate. *Sustentation Fund:* Friend Tarbert, £10 per Rev. R.M.L.. *Manse Repairs:* Friend, Kyles, £10 per Rev. RML.; Friend, Stornoway, £10. *Where most needed:* Friend, Tarbert, £10 per Rev. R.M.L.

Raasay: *For medical equipment for the hospital in Kenya,* Anon, £257.50 per Rev. J.R. Tallach; *Where most needed:* J.M. MacLeod, £50 per Treasurer, B. Nicolson, £20 per Treasurer, *Car Fund:* D. MacKenzie, £10 per Rev. J.R. Tallach; Anon, £5 per envelope in plate; D. MacKenzie, £10 per Rev. J.R. Tallach.

Shieldaig: *Eastern Europe:* D. MacLennan £10; *Congregational Fund:* Anon for Shieldaig Church Centenary, £100 and £10; *Where most needed:* Anon for Shieldaig Church Centenary, £50; *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, in grateful memory of a dear husband and father, £100.