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The General Assemblies

The Church of Scotland General Assembly

THE General Assembly made some pronouncements, especially on issues such as abortion and euthanasia, which are to be welcomed, but it is a sad fact that the national church of Scotland continues to decline spiritually. Its decisions in Assembly on several matters underline this fact.

The new Moderator is the Rev. John McIndoe, of St Columba's, Pont Street, London. He hoped that his moderatorship would be to the strengthening of all those who bear responsibility for parish ministry, but this cannot happen if there be no adhering to the Scriptures. It is apparent that certain views of Mr McIndoe are unscriptural. He believes, says one report, that the Church is justified in using various forms of worship, and that if this means that the Kirk at the end of your road goes all clap-happy with people rolling round on the floor speaking in tongues, he would not object - provided it is what the congregation wants. He ought rather to warn the people that such conduct is a perversion of the true worship which God requires.

Of considerable concern to the Assembly is the fact that there has been a 40% drop since 1993 in the number of applicants for the ministry. One reason given for the decrease was that the Church has a poor image. It has to be said that the image given by a large part of the Church is of a body that preaches a nebulous man-made gospel rather than the verities of the "glorious gospel of the grace of God". There is indeed a pressing need for men who would proclaim all the counsel of God, but we hear no acknowledgement on the part of the Assembly, that we must plead with the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into the harvest. This, surely, must be the urgent prayer of all of us.

When the workload of ministers has increased so much because of the shortage of manpower and the increase of secularism, it is little wonder that the burden is too much for many of them. The Assembly was informed that one in ten ministers are unwell from stress caused by their work.

The Assembly rightly called for the showing of compassion to

immigrants, and to asylum seekers in particular, but, strangely, it advocated breaking the law of the land, if necessary, in order to do so. Rev. A. McLellan, convener of the Church and Nation Committee, argued strongly for such action in the case, for example, of a congregation wishing to illegally harbour a refugee facing deportation. While we believe that the Church of Christ will be faced with situations when it must say to the State, "We must obey God rather than men," we do not believe that this is such a situation.

While it was good to read that the Assembly voted overwhelmingly against the motion that congregations be allowed to accept National Lottery money in certain circumstances, it does not bode well that the Assembly voted also for looking further into the matter. While one headline says, "No let-up on Lottery", we suspect that another is nearer the truth when it says, "Kirk to play a waiting game on the lottery". There are some grounds for suspicion when the senior members of the Church, (Moderator, Principal Clerk of Assembly, Procurator to the Assembly and the ministers of St. Giles Cathedral and Glasgow Cathedral), in their capacity as Trustees of Iona Abbey, all sanctioned a bid for Lottery cash and received £348,000.

On the ecumenical front, there are no surprises - the Church has reiterated its commitment to an ecumenism which, in fact, is unbiblical, by accepting the report of the Committee on Ecumenical Affairs, and rejecting the amendment that the report was "based on the wisdom of men, rather than the wisdom of God." The convener of the Committee regards the ecumenical steps taken so far, as "small pieces, which when all is finally in place, will make a glorious mosaic of the Church worldwide united in a technicolour diversity." The unity aimed for by the Church is certainly not the unity that is truly glorious: - unity in, and upon, the Word of God.

The Roman Catholic delegate at the Assembly (the Church has fallen low indeed when such a person should be present as an invited delegate) stated his Church's firm belief in transubstantiation. It was one of the reasons, he said, why Roman Catholics do not join in intercommunion. It is to be noted however that the Roman Catholic Church has made concessions. It has lifted the "complete" ban on intercommunion, the delegate said, and restricted it to a prohibition of "indiscriminate" communion between churches — another subtle accommodating strategy of Rome.

It was deplorable that a professed minister of the gospel, in the person of Rev. John Matthews, used a swear word twice, in giving a speech about the drugs problem. The excuse that he did so to tell things exactly how they were, does not hold water. To swear is wrong for anyone, worse for a minister, and more heinous still when done in a court of the Church of Christ.

The Free Church General Assembly

The Rev. Neil MacDonald, Fearn, Moderator of the Free Church Assembly, in his opening address spoke on "A Christian Perspective on the Family". "In the absence of moral absolutes," he said, "public opinion takes its cue from the latest philosophic theories. It is therefore vital that the moral vacuum is countered by a positive Christian approach based on the divine revelation, which lays down clear guide lines for both individual and family life." He rightly said that many modern marriages failed because the marriage partners had not understood the level of commitment required and had been unwilling to devote real effort to making the relationship work. He also pinpointed the devaluing of marriage by the feminist movement as a contributory factor.

The Ecumenical Relationships Committee reported that the Free Presbyterian Church replied thus to an approach to have talks: "the Synod feel there can be no advantage in having formal discussions with the Free Church of Scotland." We may add that the Free Presbyterian Synod also stated that it was "most definitely of the mind that no Church should co-operate or seek union with another Church, if such co-operation would, to any extent, lead to a lowering of that Church's testimony on the side of Christ and His Word." There were no talks between the Free Church and the Associated Presbyterian Churches this year but it was agreed to exchange delegates for the first time.

The Assembly condemned the National Lottery as a robbing of the poor to give to the rich. Addiction by many people to the Lottery is confirmed by 17% more calls for help being made to Gamblers Anonymous since the Lottery began. The Committee for Public Questions, Religion and Morals, also dealt at length with Homosexuality in its Report. It recommends that ministers and congregations be urged to reach out with care and love of the gospel to all those guilty of sexual sin, including homosexual sin. We fail to see in the Report any recommendation that sodomites are to be called to repentance.

The Youth Committee (which also has responsibility for the Church magazines) had to face criticism of its new youth magazine *Free*. One minister was of the view that it undermined Presbyterianism, the Lord's Day, the local congregation, and that the film focus article should never have been included. This month's issue of *The Young People's Magazine* carries a review of *Free* and concludes, "We should be able to expect something better from the Free Church. Sadly, the magazine cannot be recommended." The Rev. I.D. Campbell, Back, was appointed to succeed the Rev. R. Christie as the editor of *The Monthly Record* of the Free Church.

Sermon The Saviour's Joyful Approach

Rev. Ralph Erskine

THIS Sermon, taken with some editing from *Ralph Erskine's Works*, was preached on Saturday, 27th April, 1734, the preparation-day before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Abenethy next day. Ralph Erskine (1685- 1752), was the son of Henry and the younger brother of Ebenezer. He was minister in Dunfermline and was said to be "one of the most popular preachers in the Church." See *Church Information* in this issue for a notice about the availability of his *Works*.

TEXTS: "Lo, I come!" Psalm 40:7; "The voice of my Beloved! behold he cometh." Song 2:8.

WE have a communion solemnity in view: but if the question be proposed, How shall we have communion with God at this occasion? we answer, Two things are necessary to it. First, His coming to us graciously. There is no communion with Him to be expected, unless He come. So He saith in the first text here, "Lo, I come!" Secondly, our apprehending His approach, and giving Him welcome entertainment upon His coming. Then, and not till then, have we communion with God: when we hear His voice, and see Him, as it were on the tops of the mountains, and say, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!"

In the words of the texts we have two things more generally. Here is intimation given to the church, by the Lord Jesus, "Lo, I come!" And here is notice taken by the church, "Behold! He cometh!"

Again, here is the joyful voice of the Son of God, "Lo, I come!" And here is the joyful echo of the church, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!" Mark the frame He is in when He speaks of His coming; it is a joyful frame; "Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God." And observe the frame she is in upon the intimation of His coming; it is a joyful frame; "Behold, He cometh!" He speaks with a joyful, "Lo, I come!" and she speaks with a joyful, "Behold, He cometh!"

These two texts being all I propose to speak of at this time, I shall refer the further explication of them to the prosecution of this doctrinal observation: *That Christ's coming to His people graciously in their time of need is a joyful and delectable coming, both to Him and them.*

The time wherein Christ said here, "Lo, I come!" was a time of great need, even when "sacrifice and offering" would not suffice to atone for sin;

when there was no hope of salvation unless He himself had undertaken it. Then said He, "Lo, I come!" The time wherein the Church said, "Behold, He cometh!" was a time of great and felt need; for the Lord had withdrawn Himself behind mountains of sin and guilt till He paid a new visit that made her cry out with joy, "Behold, He cometh!"

That Christ's gracious coming to His people is joyful both to Him and them, will appear in the sequel; only it is enough here to state that as He is a joyful proclaimer of his own approach, saying, "Lo, I come!" so she is the joyful beholder thereof, saying, "Behold, He cometh!"

The method I would here endeavour to observe, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, shall be the following; to show:

- I. What comings of Christ to His people are joyful to Him and them.
- II. What makes His coming joyful to Him.
- III. What makes His coming joyful to them.
- IV. What expressions of joy in Him are imported in His "Lo, I come!"
- V. The expressions of joy in them imported in their "Behold He cometh!"
- VI. Whence is this combination of joys; or, why it is that, like a resounding echo, His "Lo, I come!" is answered with a "Behold He cometh!"
- VII. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

I. The first thing proposed was, To observe what comings of Christ to His people, are joyful to Him and them. Here I shall mention only four comings of the Lord Jesus, namely, His coming in the flesh, His coming in the clouds, His coming in the Word, and His coming in the Spirit.

1. His coming in the *flesh* was a joyful coming both to Him and His people. The first text, Lo, I come! is particularly applied to His coming in the flesh. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." Heb. 10: 5,7 — which shows also that this was a joyful and delightful coming though it was upon that errand of being a sacrifice to divine justice for our sins, when no other sacrifice would do the business. And surely this coming of Christ that is a joyful coming to His people, brings ground of joy unto all people. "Behold," said the angels to the shepherds upon Christ's coming in the flesh, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people: for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke 2:10. And it is probable, as many divines show, that these words of the spouse here saying, "Behold, He cometh!" have a particular reference to Christ's coming in the flesh. The Old Testament saints saw His day afar off, and rejoiced in the view they had of it by faith. They saw Him

coming, skipping on the dark mountains of shadows, and ceremonies, and typical sacrifices, to be the substance of all the shadows. In a word, His coming in the flesh is the very root and foundation of the joys of all the redeemed. If He had not thus come, according to the promise, they would never have had any ground of joy; but faith's view of His coming, or of God in our nature, God incarnate, "God manifest in the flesh", is a fountain-head of joy. Faith sees Him as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh: and we having access to God through Him, who became like unto us in all things, except sin: and God in Him reconciling the world to Himself. O sirs, do you believe that there is a man in heaven called Immanuel, God-man? We read of joy and peace in believing; surely you have never believed there was such a man, the God-man, if it never afforded any joyful thoughts to you.

2. His coming in the *clouds* is a joyful coming, both to Him and His people; this is what is called His second coming; "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," Heb. 9 :28. And, indeed, this will be a joyful coming to Christ, for it is a coming to salvation. When He comes to save, He comes always joyfully. When He came first to save, by the price of his blood, he came leaping and skipping joyfully; and much more when He will come to finish the work of salvation and to perfect the salvation of all the redeemed. His coming to marry His people is joyful to Him, much more is His coming to consummate the marriage. Christ had an eye to this in His coming to suffer. He endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him, Heb. 12:2; even the joy of an exalted state. And you know that the last step of His exaltation is His coming to judge the world at the last day; then He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. And as it will be a joyful coming to Him, so it will be to His people. It is true, it will be terrible to His enemies that slighted His coming to save, and neglected the great salvation; for "He will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel," 2 Thes 1:8. His second coming will be dreadful to them that do not welcome His first coming. "Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all nations shall wail because of him," Rev 1:7. But to His people, to His followers and servants, to all that welcome Him now, His coming will be joyful; they will welcome Him with joy saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." They long for His coming; and they are called to lift up their heads with joy, because the day of their redemption draweth nigh. They cry to him to hasten His coming. "Haste, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether." No wonder, for then they enter into the joy of their Lord. Christ, who says, "Lo, I come!" will as

certainly come the second time, as He came the first; and as He came the first time in order to His coming the second, so He speaks of His second coming with a "Behold!" "Behold! I come quickly," Rev. 22:20. And the Church's joyful echo follows, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

3. His coming in the *Word*, to court a people for Himself, is a joyful coming for Him and for His people; for then, both the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come", Rev 22:17. The Spirit of Christ, and the bride of Christ, joyfully invite sinners to come to Christ: hence a gospel day is called the day of the Son of man. And Christ, in the gospel dispensation, says, "Lo, I come!" He comes riding in the gospel chariot. He comes with outstretched arms, saying, "Behold me! Behold me!" And His coming thus is joyful to all His people; "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace; that bring glad tidings of good things!" Rom 10:15. His coming in the Word is joyful to them, insomuch that nothing in the world is so precious to them as the Word; it is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." This is their food. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This is their comfort in their affliction. His Word quickens them; they hear His voice therein, and say, "It is the voice of my Beloved! Behold He cometh! leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." But His coming in the Word is joyful and beneficial, as it is attended with what follows, namely, his coming in the Spirit; for,

4. His coming in the *Spirit* is a joyful coming: and this is that which makes all the former ways of His coming to be joyful. We have no joyful view of His coming in the flesh, nor joyful hope of His coming in the clouds, nor joyful apprehension of his coming in the Word, unless we have some share of His coming in the Spirit, as the Spirit of faith and consolation: His coming in the Spirit not only to court, but to win the heart; not only to deal, but to prevail with sinners, by his convincing and converting power. This coming is joyful to Him, for it is a day of the gladness of His heart. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart." Then He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied, Isa. 53:11. O, this should encourage us to pray for the Spirit, the promised Comforter, since nothing gladdens the heart of Christ more than the giving of the Spirit to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgement, and to comfort His people. And, on the other hand, this coming of Christ in the Spirit, cannot but be a joyful coming to His people; for then they are anointed with the oil

of gladness, and get the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then they get their bands loosed, their maladies healed, their doubts resolved, and their fears dispelled. When Christ says, "Lo, I come!" let us view therein the promise of His coming in the Spirit: for why did He come in the flesh but that he might come in the Spirit? Having come in the flesh and finished His work, according to his Word, He promises the Spirit, and sends the Spirit. "He shall glorify me;" John 16:14. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me," John 15: 26. His coming in the flesh was the great Old Testament promise; and His coming in the Spirit the great New Testament promise; and as the Old Testament was but a porch to the New, so His coming in the flesh was to pave the way for His coming in the Spirit. Therefore, when you hear Him say, "Lo, I come!" take up the meaning of it not only to be, "Lo, I come in the flesh;" but also, "Lo, I come in the Spirit." And, O sirs, is this His voice? What say you to it? Is there any joyful echo in your heart welcoming Him, saying, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!" Surely, if He comes in the Spirit to you at this occasion, it will be a joyful coming. I might here speak of His coming in His *providence*; His coming at *death*; His coming first to *begin*, and his after comings to *advance his work*; but His joyful comings are only so by His coming in the Spirit.

II. I go on, **secondly**, to the next thing proposed, which is **to show what makes His coming joyful to Him**; and what makes Him come with a joyful "Lo, I come!"

1. He rejoiced from eternity in the thoughts of His coming and therefore cannot but rejoice in *the accomplishment of His word and design*. He declared: "Or ever the earth was, I was rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men," Prov 8:23,31. It was in the council of peace he said to His Father, "Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will;" and in the fulness of time He says in our hearing, "Lo, I come!" O to give a joyful welcome to that joyful "Lo!"

2. His coming is joyful to Him; because He comes *clothed with a commission from His Father*, and He rejoices to run His errands. It is His Father's will that He executes when He comes; and therefore He says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God. This commandment have I received of my Father: to lay down my life for my sheep." And, therefore, with desire He desired this passover, even that He Himself be our passover sacrificed for us. He hath a commission to come; for He is the Sent and the Sealed of God: "God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through

him." "Him hath God the Father sealed." He comes in His Father's name, and His Father's seal is appended to his commission.

3. His coming is joyful to Him because it is on a glorious design of *glorifying the Father*; and therefore, when He comes He says, "Now is my Father glorified; now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him," John 13:31. When He came and was just ready to lay down His life, He said, "I have glorified thee on earth," and, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do," John 13:31. He brought in glory and honour to all the perfections of God, and full reparation to all His injured attributes.

4. His coming is joyful to Him because, as His coming was on a glorious design, with reference to His Father, God being glorified by His coming, whether in the flesh, or by the Spirit; so it is on a *loving design towards His people* that He comes. He comes to save them, and justify them, and sanctify them, and comfort them, and heal them, and help them; and all for love because He has loved them with an everlasting love, therefore He comes to draw with loving kindness. Love makes Him come joyfully. It was love made Him come joyfully in the flesh, and love makes Him come joyfully in the Spirit; love made Him come at first; and notwithstanding many provocations, love makes Him come again, according to His word, "I will see you again," John 14:22. "Now you have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice." O the height, and depth, and length and breadth of His love! He comes joyfully because He lives cordially.

III. But I go on, **thirdly**, to the next thing proposed: **to show what makes His coming joyful to His people**; what makes them welcome Him with a joyful "Behold!" "Behold, he cometh!"

First, because His coming is their *life*. When He came in the flesh, He came to give life, and to give it more abundantly, John 10:10. And when He comes in the Spirit, He comes to give life, to give the well of water springing up to everlasting life, John 4:14. Whenever he comes life enters the dead and dry bones. We are like dead carcasses, our spirits sinking within us; but whenever the Spirit of life comes in the word, then we get up, as it were, to our feet; then we have life: "He that hath the Son, hath life". Whenever He comes, and that we have Him with us, then the life of faith, the life of repentance, the life of love, the life of joy, the life of humility, the life of holiness, and the life of comfort come. We live or die as He comes or goes. If life be sweet, then His coming must be sweet; and of all lives, the life of God, a spiritual life hid with Christ in God, is the most pleasant and glorious.

2. Also, His coming must be joyful to them, *because His absence is their*

death; yea, His absence is a hell to them who know what a heaven His presence makes: hence their many "Oh's" when He is away. "Oh, when wilt thou come to me?" "Oh, that it were with me as in months past." And hence their many "How longs" when He is away; "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?" "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Psalm 13 :1,2. They cannot live without Him; or, if His absence be to such a degree as that they are careless, stupid, and unconcerned, yet they, knowing what His joyful presence is, will admit that their careless times are their sad and sighing times; they are not their joyful times; they are not their life, but their death; and they never expect to have a joyful life till He come again.

When he is away from the church, then all goes to confusion: "The servants of the house begin to smite their fellow servants," Mat. 24:46. Why? Because the Lord delays His coming. They begin to smite them with sentences of suspension or seclusion, as at this day. When He is away, then the shepherds begin to smite His people with force and violence, Ezek. 34:4. And what is the effect of that? See verse six: "My sheep wandered over all the mountains; my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them." Might not this smite the hearts of rigid rulers: to see the flock scattered here and there, upon the violent obtrusions of hirelings upon them? It does not! "None did search or seek after them." They even slight them as an ignorant mob, a rabble, that need not be regarded; (and, indeed, if matters go on at this rate, if God do not stir up the ensuing Assembly [1734] to take course with these disorders, the ruin of the Church of Scotland is but beginning.) But whence are all these confusions? May we not say, as it is in Deuteronomy 31:17, "Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us?" When He is away from a Church, nothing but confusion and disorders take place; but when He comes back, then His work is revived, Zion is built up, and reformation restored. When he goes away from a particular believer, O what confusion till He returns! His presence gives rest, but His absence troubles: "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

3. His coming is joyful to them, *because the errand on which He came is merciful*. What does He bring when He comes? Why, He even brings God with Him, and all the fulness of God; and so He brings the chief good with Him. God is in Christ, and all the fulness of the Godhead in Him; and therefore, when He comes, all good comes. When He comes graciously, He comes in the capacity of a friend to help, a physician to heal, a shepherd to feed: "He feedeth among the lilies." When He comes, His presence is a reviving and refreshing presence, an enlightening, enlivening, and enlarging presence; sometimes a confirming and comforting presence; sometimes a

humbling and a sweetly debasing presence; yea, it is an exalting and dignifying presence. The effects of His coming are most joyful, for when He comes to His people, then their sins are pardoned, their wants supplied, their enemies conquered, their crosses sanctified, their kingdom secured. Therefore, His coming must be joyful to them.

4. His coming is joyful to them, because His coming is *all their heaven upon earth*; yea, His presence is the heaven of heavens. What is heaven, but a being like Him by seeing him as He is. Now, this heaven is begun on earth when He comes; for then they behold His glory, and are changed into the same image, 2 Cor 3:18. How can they be but joyful at His coming, when they consider who He is. He is enough to make a heaven, whatever way they look to Him. If they look to Him absolutely, He is altogether lovely, the brightness of His Father's glory." When they look to Him comparatively, He is "fairer than the sons of men"; "more glorious than the mountains of prey". When they look to him relatively, He is their Head and Husband; their God and guide; their righteousness and strength; their light, life, joy, and all. "O," says the strong believer, "My beloved is mine, and I am His; He is mine, and I will not part with Him for the whole creation." "O," says the weak believer, the doubting believer; "O, if He were mine, I would not part with Him for a thousand worlds." He is such a heaven to them, that nothing can make up the loss of His presence; ministers cannot do it; ordinances cannot do it; angels cannot do it. Ordinances are but the shell without the kernel when Christ is not in them; all creature comforts cannot take His place. Naturalists say that the loadstone cannot draw in presence of the diamond; surely, when Christ is present with a soul, all the pomp and pride, all the gallantry of the world, will have no influence on the soul. Offer the believer mountains of gold and silver instead of Christ; his answer will be, "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thy money perish with thee." There are so many thousand excellencies in Christ, that might be so many thousand reasons why His coming is joyful, that they cannot but say upon the notice of it, "Behold, He cometh!"

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, to show what expression of joy in the Lord Jesus Himself is imported in His "Lo, I come." What sort of joy does it express?

1. I think this "Lo, I come!" expresses *present* joy. "Lo, I come!" is something like that of John 13:32, "Now is the Son of man glorified." There was a time when He said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" John 12:27. But when He comes graciously, He says upon the matter, "Now is my soul satisfied, now is my heart glad." The "Lo" is in the present time,

and the "I come" is in the present tense: "Lo, I come." And if Christ be presently saying, with reference to any company here, "Lo, I come to you," O, it is a present joy to Him. He comes rejoicing; he comes leaping and skipping; His set time of coming is the time of the gladness of His heart.

2. It expresses *active* joy: "Lo, I come!" He rejoices to do good; it is His joy to do service to His Father and His friends. If He rejoiced in His work when He came to save by the price of His blood, how must He rejoice when He comes to save by the power of his Spirit! The natural sun is said to rejoice as a strong man to run his race, Psalm 19:5. It is a metaphorical saying, for the sun is not capable of joy; but without metaphor it is true of the "Sun of righteousness", the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a strong man, the man of God's right hand whom He hath made strong for Himself; and He rejoices to run His race; He rejoices to arise with healing in His beams. "Lo, I come!" It is an active joy.

3. It expresses *certain* joy. The "Lo" is a note of certainty. The thing is certain and true: "Lo, I come!" And His joy is certain, true, solid joy. There is nothing more certain than that believers have sometimes joy unspeakable; but these are only streams that flow from the joy that is in Christ's heart. His joy is the fountain of their joy. He is anointed with the oil of joy above His fellows; and the fellowship they have with Him is by some drops of that oil of joy. Can they be certain of the streams and the drops when these are allowed? How much more is it certain, that all true joy centres in Him. Believers have sometimes a fulness of joy; but their fulness is the fulness of the streams, or of the vessel. His fulness is the fulness of the ocean. If it be certain that there is a stream of joy in the believer sometimes, much more that there is the spring of joy in Christ.

4. It expresses *communicative* joy; designing His people should share of His joy; "Lo, I come!" The joy that Christ has, as Mediator, is a fulness of joy, designed for His people's use, so that out of His fulness we may receive, and grace for grace, and joy for joy; grace answering grace in Jesus, and joy answering joy in Him. Christ as Mediator is anointed with the oil of joy, the Spirit above measure, that He may communicate this joy, and give to them the oil of joy for mourning. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; to comfort all that mourn; to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa 61:3. Christ has a commission from His Father to communicate His joy; therefore it must be communicative.

5. It expresses *triumphant* joy. "Lo, I come! And nothing shall hinder my coming, nor stop me in my course." Mountains nor hills cannot hinder the sun

rising: this points out His coming as a conqueror, despite principalities and powers in His way. He can easily throw them down. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save," Isa 63:1. "Behold, it is I. Lo, I come!"

6. It expresses *solemn* joy. He comes with a solemnity: "Lo, I come, according to the council of a glorious Trinity." Now, when the purpose of heaven is come to the birth, and the decree breaks forth, and the fulness of time is come, He takes heaven and earth witness, as it were, to his solemn march on the errand. He says it with a loud "Lo", that all the world of men and angels may notice, "Lo I come!" And, indeed, all the elect angels break forth into joyful songs of praise at this solemnity. When He came in the flesh they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill towards men." And when He comes in the Spirit to convert a soul, there is joy in heaven over that soul that repents. It solemn joy.

7. It expresses *infinite* Joy. If we consider who the person is that speaks, namely, God, assuming our nature in the person of His eternal Son; the joy of an infinite God must be infinite joy. Finite creatures cannot tell what infinite joy is. Nay, the joy of saints is joy unspeakable and full of glory; what, then, must be the joy of the King of saints? It is infinitely above speech and expression, infinitely glorious. The joy of saints is unspeakably great; the joy of the man Christ, of the human nature, is unspeakably greater; but the joy of God, of God in our nature, is infinitely great above all finite apprehension. Finite thoughts are lost in this infinite depth.

8. It expresses *everlasting* joy, and eternal joy; joy from everlasting, before time; and to everlasting after time. It is true, that the "Lo, I come!" as I said first, imports present joy, with respect to our view of it, but with respect to God, nothing being past or future but all things eternally present to Him, this "Lo" expresses the everlasting joy He had, and will have for ever, in this work now transacted in time. It is said in Psalm 104, verse 31, "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in His works." Why? His glory is everlasting glory, His joy everlasting joy in all His works; especially in that work wherein all His glory shines most brightly: His saving work of which He is here speaking when he says, "Lo, I come!" Thus you see what sort of joy is expressed in this "Lo, I come!"

V. The fifth thing proposed was to show what expressions of joy are imported in the echo from the Church, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold he cometh." What sort of joy does this express?

1. It expresses joy with *surprise*. O but His coming fills the believer with a sweet surprise; like that "Or ever I was aware" in Song 4:12. How abruptly does the Church here speak, like one suddenly ravished with joy. "The voice of my Beloved! Behold He cometh!"

2. It expresses joy with *wonder and admiration*. "Behold, He cometh! Wonder, O heavens and earth, that He should come to the like of me! And wonder that He should come back again, after I have heaped up mountains and hills of provocation in His way. 'Is this the manner of man, O Lord? And what can David say more?' What can I say, but sit down and wonder!"

3. It expresses joy with *faith*. "Behold, He cometh!" The eye of faith first sees His coming, and then the tongue of joy sings, "Behold, He cometh!" "Faith cometh by hearing." Hearing what? Even the voice of Christ, the joyful sound of the gospel. Christ rides in the chariot of the gospel; and the believer, by faith, hearing the noise of His chariot wheels; yea, the sweet voice of him that rides in the chariot, who has grace poured into His lips, then he cries out, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!"

4. It expresses joy with *love*. And, indeed, as faith is the head, so love is the heart of the new creature: and the joy here is a loving joy; for it is in the view of Christ as her Beloved, "The voice of my *Beloved*! Behold, He cometh!" He is the Beloved of the Father who says, "This is my beloved son;" and the true believer is of the Father's mind, saying, "This is my Beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." And what but joyful love makes her here speak, with her heart at her mouth, "The voice of my Beloved!"

5. It expresses joy with *praise and adoration* (as well as wonder and admiration); "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!" O blessed be the Comer, as it is in Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." It is a "Behold" of adoration, as well as admiration; and, indeed, they both go together; an admiring heart is an adoring heart. As the presence of Christ makes a heaven in the heart, so it stirs up the heart instantly to the work of heaven, which is to sing His praise, and to glorify His name, saying, "O glory, glory, glory to Him for coming to the like of me, who was afraid that He would never give me a visit. O let all the world praise Him with me: Behold, He cometh!"

6. It expresses joy with *humility*. "Behold, He cometh! and cometh even to me. 'What am I. and what is my father's house?' Behold, He cometh to me! I had no power to come to Him, no heart to come, and I would have remained for ever at a distance from Him, if He had not graciously condescended to come unto me. I could do nothing but depart from Him by an evil heart of unbelief: but He comes; 'His own arm bringeth salvation':

and He comes with all the salvation I need." Self is sunk to nothing at the appearance of this glorious "He"; Behold, He cometh!

7. It expresses joy with *contempt of the world*. "Behold, He cometh, and his appearing darkens all the glory of the world, and makes it disappear, as the stars at the rising of the sun. 'I count all but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Him'." O, but how little does the believer think of the world when Christ comes. "Earthly crowns, kingdoms, thrones and sceptres are but little despicable toys. Here, here is an object worth the beholding; let mine eyes be for ever turned away from beholding vanities. Behold, He cometh!"

8. It expresses joy with *desire that others may see and behold Him*. "Behold, He cometh! O, that all the world would come and see what I see, come and enjoy what I enjoy!" They that see the glory of Christ, though they slight a world of vanities, yet they pity a world of perishing sinners, and would gladly be instrumental in bringing others to Christ. "Come see a man, that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" said the woman of Samaria. Thus David, "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation: then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

In a word, this "Behold, He cometh!" expresses joy with *all the qualities of heavenly and spiritual joy*. It expresses unspeakable joy, as appears by her broken speech, "The voice of my Beloved!" It expresses glorious joy; for it flows from a view of His glory, "Behold, He cometh!" It expresses holy joy for she rejoices to see him come skipping and leaping upon the mountains and hills of sin and guilt, and levelling all the high towers of strong corruption in His way. O how glad to see Him coming down, and making the mountains to melt before Him!

So it is a *holy joy*: the very opposite of all carnal and sensual joys. It expresses a quickening and strengthening joy; for now her heart is open, her lips are open, whatever indisposition for duty took place before; now the joy of the Lord is her strength. Again, it expresses a solid and well-grounded joy; it is no fancy, no delusion, nor enthusiasm; no: the Word and Spirit both concur to this joy. "The voice of my Beloved!" — there is the Word. "Behold, He cometh!" — there is the Spirit. Words cannot give the believer joy without the Spirit; and the Spirit will not without the Word; the joy of the Holy Ghost is still grounded upon, or agreeable to, the Word. Finally, it expresses a welcoming joy. "Lo, I come!" says Christ. "Behold, He cometh," says the Church, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly; come, and welcome with a thousand good wills." O may He be a welcome guest here!

William Tyndale: A Biography

Rev. K.D. Macleod

This is a review article on **WILLIAM TYNDALE: A BIOGRAPHY** by *David Daniell*. Published by Yale University Press, 439 pages, £19.95.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING Christians owe an enormous debt to many of the great men of the past, but perhaps to no one more than to William Tyndale. It was he who first translated a great part of the Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek into English. Only his martyrdom in 1536 prevented him finishing the task he set himself — which he thus expressed to an ignorant cleric: “If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest.”

Some 150 years before Tyndale’s day, John Wycliffe had published the Scriptures in English, but his translation was not from the original languages; he went no farther back than the Latin Vulgate, with all its imperfections. It served a useful purpose however, in the absence of anything better, and devoted scribes painstakingly wrote out copies of it by hand which were sent out throughout the length and breadth of the land. Tyndale had the enormous advantage of the invention of printing, and he used the presses of Europe to pour out copies of his English translations, which then flooded into the kingdoms of England and Scotland through the various ports on the east coast.

Daniell does not write from Tyndale’s doctrinal perspective; rather, as a Professor of English in the University of London, he focuses more on the literary achievements of his subject. Yet he is remarkably sympathetic to Tyndale’s position; though a passage beginning, “The fault of Adam hath made us heirs of the vengeance and wrath of God, and heirs of eternal damnation. And hath brought us into captivity and bondage under the devil”, is too much for him. For Daniell the Bible is an important volume with much to teach us, but unlike Tyndale he does not accept the inspiration of Scripture. Tyndale had found life for his soul in these Scriptures and it was his earnest desire that multitudes of his fellow-countrymen would find that same life also. Not surprisingly he writes thus in his *To the Reader* which he appended to his 1526 edition of the English New Testament: “Give diligence Reader (I exhort thee) that thou come with a pure mind, and as the scripture saith with a single eye, unto the words of health, and of eternal life: by the which (if we repent and believe them) we are born anew, created afresh, and enjoy the fruits of the blood of Christ. Which blood crieth not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel: but hath purchased life, love, favour, grace, blessing and whatever is promised in the scriptures.” (Daniell has also produced editions in modern

spelling of both *Tyndale's New Testament* and *Tyndale's Old Testament*).

The author follows Tyndale from his birth, probably in 1494, in Gloucestershire, through his university career, his time at Little Sodbury manor as tutor to the family of Sir John Walsh — where he uttered his famous words about the ploughboy and also preached in the neighbourhood. Then on to London, where he hoped to begin translation work under the auspices of Bishop Tunstall, but, as Tyndale himself put it, he “understood at the last not only that there was no room in my lord of London’s palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England”.

After Tyndale’s flight from London we next find him in Cologne. From there he had again to flee to escape arrest, just as the sheets of the Gospel of Matthew in English were passing through the press. From then on he had no settled dwelling place but, in spite of so many adverse circumstances during these last ten years of freedom, he completed his New Testament translation, went on to produce a revision of it (“the glory of his life’s work”, Daniell calls it) and proceeded with his translation of the Old Testament as far as Nehemiah, with Jonah besides, before he was betrayed by Henry Phillips, a spy sent by the authorities in England.

After a 15-month imprisonment Tyndale was condemned as a heretic and handed over to be burnt at the stake. Says John Foxe the martyrologist, “Such was the power of his doctrine and the sincerity of his life that during the time of his imprisonment . . . it is said he converted the keeper, the keeper’s daughter and others of his household. Also the rest that were conversant with Tyndale in the castle reported of him that, if he were not a good Christian man, they could not tell whom to trust.” So lived and so died one of England’s greatest sons. His words at the stake have often been quoted: “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.”

Perhaps the most important feature of the book is Daniell’s high praise for the quality of Tyndale’s translation work. “The impact of this New Testament”, Daniell tells us, “was, and is still, so splendid in its accuracy and its clear, memorable English.” Much of Tyndale’s version survives today in our Authorised Version, such was the excellence of his work. Listen, for instance, to part of Tyndale’s version of John 10 (in modern spelling): “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. An hired servant, which is not the shepherd, neither the sheep are his own, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flyeth, and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.” This passage illustrates Tyndale’s capacity to give rhythm to his translation, a point which Daniell makes again and again. Daniell’s tendency to criticise the changes which the AV translators made to Tyndale’s version reflects his enthusiasm for Tyndale’s use of English, but he underrates the

greater accuracy of the AV. Daniell's analysis of the literary qualities of Tyndale's translation, and of such of his writings as *The Obedience of a Christian Man* may at times become somewhat tedious, but it is good to have a tribute of this kind to a man who, because he had such a single-eyed desire for the glory of God, endured so many hardships to carry out his life's work.

It was that desire which made him attack the ecclesiastical abuses of the time. He complained about the Pope making seven years in purgatory the penalty for every deadly sin and then selling relief from it for money: "Thus is sin become the profitablest merchandise in the world"! And "all the promises of God have they either wiped clean out or thus leavened with open lies to stablish their confession withal. And to keep us from the knowledge of the truth, they do all thing in latin . . . only curse they in the English tongue." There is wit in Tyndale's attack and it is devastating, but if he opposes abuses and false doctrines such as "that cankered heresy of justifying of works" it is so that he may direct his readers to a better way, the way of Scripture: "And when the gospel is preached unto us we believe the mercy of God, and in believing we receive the spirit of God, which is the earnest of eternal life, and we are in eternal life already, and feel already in our hearts the sweetness thereof, and are overcome with the kindness of God and Christ and therefore love the will of God, and of love are ready to work freely, and not to obtain that which is given us freely and whereof we are heirs already."

Daniell also makes useful historical points. For instance: "Modern champions of the Catholic position like to support a view of the Reformation, that it was entirely a political imposition by a ruthless minority in power against both the traditions and the wishes of the pious lay people of England, with its claim that, if matters had not been interfered with, the Church in its reforming wisdom would have got round to issuing a vernacular Bible in its own time." He goes on to show in detail how weak is the evidence for such a position and concludes, "Only when the whole Bible . . . was printed in English could it be seen that the Bible preceded the Church and gave it all its authority." Which was Tyndale's position; writing against Sir Thomas More (who became Lord Chancellor of England and was a vicious enemy of Tyndale) he declared, "Judge therefore reader whether the pope with his be the church, whether their authority be above scripture, whether all they teach without scripture be equal with the scripture, whether they have erred and not only whether they can", for the Church must be judged by Scripture — a doctrine which made Tyndale even more dangerous to Rome.

John Frith, who himself suffered martyrdom three years before Tyndale, is quoted bearing witness to Tyndale's learning: "For his learning and judgement

in Scripture he were more worthy to be promoted than all the bishops in England." Daniell pays special tribute to Tyndale's Hebrew learning: "There can be no doubt at all that Tyndale was a remarkable Hebrew scholar, and, by the standards of Englishmen of the 1520s, astonishing." It was a learning which he consecrated to the great purpose of giving the Scriptures to his countrymen in the only language which they could understand.

Daniell's book is one more stone added to Tyndale's memorial, but would-be readers should have a serious interest in Reformation history. Were it written from a perspective closer to Tyndale's understanding of the Scriptures and illuminated by his faith in a living Saviour, it would be an even more worthy contribution. Yet everyone who comes to a living faith in Christ through the English Scriptures is a more lasting memorial to this godly man to whom all succeeding generations in the English-speaking world owe so much.

Charity Towards the Ignorant

From an old author

Extracted from *The Alarm* (No. 11, 1855), which was published for some time by the Rev. Jonathan Rankin Anderson (1803-59), minister of Kirkfield Chapel and then of John Knox Church, both in Glasgow, and author of *Sermons on Sacramental Occasions*.

I WOULD therefore have much charity exercised towards such persons as are going ignorantly on with a course of defection, even although they should live and die so, without making any public acknowledgement of the same; providing they are:

1. Sound in their judgement with respect to all the fundamental articles of the true Christian faith, which are necessary to be believed and practised, in order to glorify God and obtain salvation, in the way that it is offered to sinners in the gospel.

2. Of a tender conversation, and exercised unto godliness, and students of holiness.

3. Tender, careful, and honest, in holding fast such truths as they know to be truths; by opposing and refusing to comply with such things as they know to be sinful; or to give themselves away to neutrality and indifference.

And I would have this a rule to be well observed by all who are professing the name of Jesus in sincerity and in truth: to love all who, in the judgement of charity, seem to have anything of the likeness and image of God restored unto them. For to whom God shows mercy, His people should show love and charity; not by joining with such as are going on in courses of defection, in church communion, either in public congregations or private fellowship meetings, for that I hold to be sinful; but, by praying for, sympathising with, and administering comfort to them, either in their inward or outward distresses, and bearing love and affection to them.

Christian Profession in the USA

Rev. K.D. Macleod

ONE must assume that religion in the USA is in a very healthy state — if one takes at face value the professions of Americans to be born again. Yet the very extent of this profession is enough to make even the most credulous observer a little sceptical of the genuineness of such claims, especially when their religion seems to make so little impact on the lifestyle of most people. Although many American leaders — their “born-again” Presidents among them — are not ashamed of their religion and speak of prayer in a way that would, sadly, be almost unthinkable in the UK, yet religion and worldliness seem to go hand in hand throughout the USA.

One’s suspicions are confirmed by a recent survey of American adults which reveals gross ignorance of basic Christian doctrines. For instance, 15% of those who claimed to be born again did not accept the statement, “The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings.” Again, 29% clearly have no conception of the kind of saviour they need if they are to be saved; they accepted the survey statement, “When He lived on earth, Jesus Christ was human and committed sins, like other people.” Roughly the same proportion, 30%, denied a literal resurrection; they agreed with the statement, “Jesus Christ was a great teacher, but He did not come back to physical life after He was crucified.”

After seeing these figures no one need be surprised to find that 39% of these “born again Christians” seem to think that they do not really need a saviour; they accept that “if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven.” They agree with this statement although it would seem that for the purpose of the survey, born-again Christians were defined as those who believe they will go to heaven because they “have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour”.

An even greater proportion, 80%, approved of the statement, “The Bible teaches that God helps those who help themselves.” While it may be rather ambiguous, this statement does illustrate the man-centredness of modern American religion.

Finally, 49% deny that the devil is a person; they accept the statement, “The devil, or Satan, is not a living being, but a symbol of evil.” If they know their Bibles at all these people clearly do not believe what the Word of God teaches. It is worth noting that the numbers who are on shaky ground for other doctrines are much higher than the proportion who reject the reliability of Scripture.

The world has obviously entered the Christian Church. In fact, when Americans who do not profess to be born again were surveyed, their beliefs were not wildly different; 45% (only 15% more than professed Christians) denied Christ's resurrection, and 68% (19% more) said that Satan is no more than a symbol of evil.

One has no wish to condemn every American who makes a profession of conversion. That would be absurd. Yet the extent of false profession is vast: far beyond anything that we experience in the UK. Religious observance — of a kind — is far greater in the USA, but no one should think it harsh to question the claim of a large proportion of those who say they are born again when 43% of them had not even read their Bible in the previous week.

What need there is for a race of ministers to be raised up who would go out in the name of Christ and preach as Jonathan Edwards did in his famous awakening sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God!*

Obituary

Mr Alistair McKenzie, Deacon, Dingwall and Beaully

ALISTAIR McKENZIE was born into a Church of Scotland home in the Black Isle, Ross-shire, in 1909. His father, who was a native of Little Lochbroom in Wester Ross and had been brought up in a pious home where the Sabbath was carefully observed, instilled Christian principles into his children. Young Alistair did not rebel against that upbringing and grew up to be an upright person who continued to attend the Church of his fathers, was diligent in his business of farming near Fortrose, and was transparently honest in his dealings with others. However, he had no interest in spiritual matters: it was to his worldly business and affairs that he gave priority.

Although he went regularly to the local Church of Scotland he did not stand in the way of his wife (a daughter of the late John MacLeod, an elder in the Edinburgh Congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church) attending the services of the Free Presbyterian Church in Dingwall when she had the opportunity of being taken there by a friend. Indeed he encouraged her.

One Sabbath evening in 1959 he went, not to the Church of Scotland service, but to the Free Presbyterian service in Dingwall, and took his family with him. It was not the minister of the congregation, the Rev. D.A. MacFarlane, whom he heard that evening but the late Alick MacLennan, missionary and elder in the congregation, whose turn it was to conduct the service. So impressed was he by what he heard from Mr MacLennan that he

said, "I've never heard a sermon like that. I've never heard anything like it." He also said that he would not be attending the Church of Scotland again. He continued attending the Free Presbyterian Church services regularly, at first on Sabbath evenings only, but then on Sabbath mornings and mid-week also, as his farming duties permitted. He appreciated Mr MacFarlane's preaching and appeared to be having some serious thoughts about eternal issues.

His continued and determined attendance at the public means of grace, his evident interest in them, and his diminished interest in worldly things made it appear to some that perhaps a saving change had taken place in him and that his affections were set on things above. On one occasion he was invited and pressed to attend a worldly social function connected with the farming community of which he was a respected and knowledgeable member. When the time came for him to prepare to go to the function he had no heart for it and decided to stay at home. When asked next day about his absence he quietly said, "Well, we just didn't want to go, and I decided we wouldn't go." Never again was he troubled with such invitations. However, his conduct in that matter was not the result of a saving change but of the workings of a conscience in which the Holy Spirit was striving.

Alistair McKenzie was a man of few words when it came to speaking about his own spiritual experience, but it appears that his serious thoughts rose to a height when his sister-in-law died suddenly in hospital in Edinburgh in 1969 and when, 10 weeks later, his mother-in-law became seriously ill and died. One evening, as he was conducting family worship at home, he read these solemn words: "Be ye also ready." They pierced his heart like a knife, convincing him of his awful lack of preparation to meet his God, and moving him to be right earnest in seeking that preparation. However, it was some considerable time before he entertained the hope that he was reconciled to God through the blood of the Cross.

It would seem that this occurred one day when, accompanied by an elder of the Church, he went to deal with some business matter. They spent much of the day engaged in spiritual conversation. He was asking many questions, for the greater business of his soul's safety weighed upon him, and the elder was giving answers and explanations from the Word of God. As they travelled home in the evening, still talking about spiritual verities, light broke in upon his soul, and the way of salvation through Christ and Him crucified was made clear to him by the secret illumination of the Holy Spirit. So overcome was he by this gracious visitation to his soul that he could not refrain from saying, "The like of this has never happened to me before."

He was received as a member in full communion in August 1979, ordained

as a Deacon of the Dingwall and Beaully Congregation in May 1986, and proved to be a gracious, wise and practical office-bearer. In its tribute to him the Deacons' Court stated, "He discharged the responsibilities of his office conscientiously and zealously and was accorded a warm place in the esteem and affection of his fellow-office-bearers and of the Congregation."

In his prayers in public and in his speaking at the fellowship meeting at communion seasons there was an attractive freshness and savour which, as the above-mentioned tribute says, "was the fruit of a deep consciousness of his own utter unworthiness and of the supreme worthiness of his Saviour." When "he spoke to the question" at the fellowship meeting, his illustrations, drawn from his farming experience, were sometimes quite striking.

The cause of Christ was exceedingly dear to him and he had a keen and prayerful interest in the work and witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The 1989 division in the Church grieved him to the quick, but no one had any doubt about his genuine loyalty to the Church and his whole-hearted support for the stand it had to make during those testing days.

During his last illness in 1993 he had considerable discomfort and pain, but he was upheld by the "Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" and was enabled to endure his affliction with much patience. Some who visited him in his illness came away from him feeling that it was they themselves, rather than he, who benefited from the visit. He continued coming to the house of God until near the end despite much weakness, and we could not but feel that these words of the Psalmist could most appropriately be put into his mouth:

"The habitation of thy house,
Lord, I have loved well;
Yea, in that place I do delight
where doth thine honour dwell."

During his illness he had been looking forward to being present at the August communion season in Dingwall but that was not to be. He passed away peacefully on the Thursday following the communion, 5th August, 1993, at the age of 84, to enjoy, we believe, that perfect communion with God which is the eternal portion of the spirits of just men made perfect. While his passing away brought him "to be with Christ, which is far better", and to the "full enjoying of God to all eternity", it has left a great blank in his family circle, in the congregation, and in the Church.

May we heed, as he did, that call, "Be ye also ready," and may his sorrowing widow, daughter and son, and all the members of the bereaved family, to whom we express again our sympathy, be enabled to say about his God, "This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death."

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Book Review

THE FAITH OF THE VATICAN — A Fresh Look At Roman Catholicism by *Herbert M. Carson*. Evangelical Press, 192 pages, £5.95. Available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

MOST sections of nominal Protestantism see the face of Rome to be fair and attractive, especially since the encouraging of the laity to read the Bible, the rise of a form of Pentecostalism within Roman Catholicism, and the publication of the document "Evangelicals and Catholics Together". Rome is being regarded increasingly as a true church. But she is condemned as false out of her own mouth by her *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Published in 1992, on the thirtieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, the *Catechism* is the first full and authoritative statement of Roman Catholic doctrine for more than 400 years. While the Scriptural tone of some of its language might suggest to some that Rome is perhaps moving closer to the truth, the very opposite is true. The *Catechism* not only reaffirms the false teaching of the 16th century Council of Trent but also reasserts more recent heresies such as the infallibility of the Pope and the assumption of Mary.

In this useful and easily read book, *The Faith of the Vatican*, the Rev. Herbert Carson demonstrates that the Romanism today is indeed the old soul-destroying system of the Counter-Reformation and earlier, to which have been added further poisonous ingredients during the intervening centuries. After giving a brief but broad historical survey of the rise and ascendancy of the papacy, the author deals with the principal doctrines of modern Rome, especially as presented in the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* - the doctrines of papal infallibility, Scripture and tradition, transubstantiation and the mass, the priesthood, justification, the worship of Mary, penance and purgatory. He also shows in the chapter entitled "Catholic Pentecostalism", that the form of Pentecostalism in Roman Catholicism bolsters rather than impedes certain Romish errors: a fact that is seen especially in the cult of Mary, transubstantiation and the supreme authority of the papal office. After accurately stating Rome's teachings the author shows clearly from Scripture that they are false, and lucidly explains the correct meaning of the portions of Scripture which Rome misuses to support her errors.

The reviewer found the chapters entitled *Transubstantiation and the Mass* and *Mary* to be especially helpful. Rome reasserts the blasphemous teaching of Trent about the claimed presence of Christ in the sacramental bread and wine when she states in her *Catechism* that "it is presence in the fullest sense, that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man,

makes himself wholly and entirely present." With regard to the cult of Mary, Carson emphasises that the 'Mary' of Catholic devotion has no links whatsoever with Mary of Nazareth. "The role they have given her, the extravagant titles (Advocate, Helper, Benefactress and Mediatrix), the omniscience required to know the prayers of people around the world — all this points to the ultimate idolatry, and the enthroning of a female goddess alongside the Saviour." Mariolatry and the idolatry of the mass are indeed the principal undergirding of this masterpiece of Satan.

Carson, who also wrote *Roman Catholicism Today* (published by IVF in 1964), was formerly a Church of England minister and is now a Baptist minister (retired). It is not surprising to see that he is opposed to Infant Baptism and the Establishment Principle. *The Faith of the Vatican* is not *Roman Catholicism Today* under a new title, but is what its subtitle claims: *A Fresh Look at Roman Catholicism*, and therefore is a helpful work for giving one an understanding of the beliefs and practices of Romanism in its modern garb. However, it is surprising that the author does not cite and explain those parts of Scripture which point to the Roman Papacy as the "man of sin" and the "antichrist". A well rounded view of Popery must necessarily include this aspect of it which God has revealed in His Word but which few, even in the professing church, treat seriously today.

The book has a full index, end-notes, and a useful bibliography. An index of Scripture references, as in his *Roman Catholicism Today*, would have been useful also. It is a very great pity that the author quotes from the RSV instead of the unsurpassed Authorised Version - the most faithful and accurate version of the Holy Scriptures in the English language.

His exposing of error and presenting of truth is not done in rancour but in compassion, and he argues, not for the sake of controversy but for the benefit of those who are deluded by Rome. We hope that the book will also serve to instruct Protestants in the errors of Romanism, move them to pray for its downfall and for the liberation of those held in bondage by it, and arouse them to contend for the honour of the only Head and Saviour of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

NMR.

African Mission News

Zimbabwe

A communion season was held in Bulawayo at the end of June. At the Sabbath morning service Rev. P. Mzamo preached from Zech 13:7. There

were two reasons for encouragement: First, one of the late Rev. Alfred Mpofu's daughters, a married lady with a family, was received for membership, and secondly, a former pupil of John Tallach School was received for baptism.

At the end of the second service on Sabbath Rev. A. Ndebele strongly urged the believers present to pray that the Lord of the Harvest would raise up ministers of the Gospel and leaders of the church. He also exhorted them to plead the promise: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

On Ingwenya Mission engineers have installed a new telephone system. (The present telephone system has been very unsatisfactory until now). They were to erect a 30-foot mast, surrounded by 8-foot high fence with large double gates, right in front of the John Tallach School. Miss Marion Graham, Headmistress, objected strongly, and it was agreed then to fix the mast in a less conspicuous spot. The new system works by radio link to satellites, and the Mission should now be able to communicate easily with any part of the world.

At the John Tallach School they are busy with midterm exams. In a community of that size (six hundred boarders, twenty African teachers, a few European teachers, the minister's household and some domestic helpers), there are bound to be small crises from time to time. Recently, one of the teachers went to sleep with a small charcoal fire burning in the room and the windows shut. She became unconscious because of the carbon dioxide fumes. Providentially, the Boarding Master, Mr Dame Sibanda, and his wife found her lying on the floor. She had obviously been trying to reach the door. They quickly took her to a local clinic and then to the hospital. She is teaching again for which all are thankful.

We had a letter recently from Mr Levie Ndlovu, Headmaster of Lutsha School which is a few miles from Mbumba. He was a close friend of the late David Ndlovu. He mentions that he had been preaching at Binga, a place often referred to in reports of previous years. The people of Binga belong to the Tonga tribe and originally came from Zululand on the East coast of South Africa, but had to flee, as many other tribes had to do, from the warlike Tshaka. Eventually, after many conflicts and hazards, they arrived in the valley of the Zambezi River where they had abundance of fish and arable land. However, the Government of that time dammed the river to form a lake, the now well known Kariba Dam, to produce electricity for the whole of Rhodesia. The Tonga were moved to the present inhospitable, dry area where they are often hungry. Our Mission regularly brings help to them and conducts services. If they would receive the riches of the Gospel it would more than make up for their losing the riches of the Zambezi valley.

Mr. Ndlovu also mentioned in his letter that two elders have been ordained in Mbuma Congregation - Mr Mtandazelwa Dube, Headmaster of Mbuma School, and Mr Elijah Mpofu, Headmaster of Zenka School. Mr Milton Ndlovu, brother of the late David Ndlovu was made a deacon, and Mr Manford Mloyi is now Catechist at Mbuma Hospital.

Kenya.

Everyone was very sorry to hear of the sudden illness of Dr. James Tallach after a strenuous month in Kenya. When he arrived at Inverness Railway Station, where he was met by his wife, on his return from Kenya, he felt chest pains. His wife drove him to Raigmore Hospital where he was diagnosed as having had a mild heart attack. Dr. Tallach is now back in Raasay where he is convalescing. Our prayerful wish is that, the Lord willing, he will soon recover completely.

One of the nurses describes the alarming episode when the large water tank under the Health Centre at Sengera began to leak, and the water came through to the dispensary. The flowing water made the hole much larger and thousands of gallons of water rushed down the hillside. After the tank was repaired there was no rain for two weeks. They were now faced with another problem - shortage of water. However, they then had two weeks of heavy rain, and more water has collected in the tank.

At the time of writing, Rev. John Goldby is due to leave for Kenya on 30th July to begin his work as Missionary at Sengera. It is expected that he will be inducted to the work in September, God willing. J.N.

Protestant View

The one-way ecumenism of Romanism

ECUMENIST enthusiasts in the Protestant camp are deluding themselves in thinking that Rome may do a U-turn on such matters as the nature of the mass or the supremacy of the Pope. Therefore, there cannot be the shared partaking of communion between Roman Catholics and Protestants which the Iona Community calls for, unless there be full unity first - a fact recently stressed by Cardinal Thomas Winning.

Nor, in Rome's view, can there be any head of a universal united church but the Pope — another fact indicated by the following statement to the editor of *Life and Work* by the same Scottish cardinal: "It looks to me as though the ministry of the Bishop of Rome is the permanent and visible

source of unity as far as we are concerned. For good order, you need someone to make ultimate decisions about things. I can't see how we can go forward without some kind of ultimate authority vested in an individual."

There we see it once again — Rome's road to ecclesiastical togetherness is a one-way road. The system is not for changing! When will the purblind leaders of the national Churches begin to see that this is so?

The Vatican's devotion to Mary

A RECENT Vatican Press release stated that the Pope, in addressing 4,000 pilgrims, spoke of his recent visits to the Marian Shrine at Loreto. "This Marian basilica-shrine contains the remains of the house in which Mary is said to have received the visit from the Archangel Gabriel," says the Vatican. "Towards the end of the 13th century, the house miraculously appeared- carried by angels..." During a visit of young "pilgrims" to Loreto last September the Pope urged them to "look always at the Mother of Jesus and learn from her..."

Four days later, another press release stated that the Pope spoke to pilgrims on the Romish dogma of "Immaculate Conception of Mary" - that there was "a total absence of sin in Mary from the beginning of her life".

On the same day he said to a group from Foggia, Italy, "I am happy to donate to you today a crown for the sacred image of the virgin so venerated by you," (the Crowned Madonna of Foggia).

All this demonstrates the extent of Rome's mariolatry, which, as Herbert Carson shows in his *The Faith of the Vatican*, (see review in this issue) is nothing less than idolatry.

Sexual abuse by priests

IT IS a well-known fact that the Roman Catholic hierarchy has dealt with numerous allegations of immorality by priests by sweeping them under the carpet. Further proof of this has come to light at the recent trial of former priest, Desmond Lynagh, who was jailed for three years for sexually abusing two teenagers when he was a teacher at Blairs College, Aberdeen.

The Roman Catholic Church paid one of the victims £42,000. It also promised to review its policy on dealing with allegations of abuse — but such promises have been made before to no evident improvement.

These revelations (and we believe that there will yet be many more) are reminiscent of the unveiling, at the time of the Reformation, of the uncleanness of Rome. We hope that these increasing disclosures are a prelude to the downfall and destruction of the Roman Papacy and the setting free of those who are deluded by it.

Notes and Comments

The Churches and the "gay rights movement"

THE growing influence of the so-called "gay rights movement" throughout the world, and the succumbing of certain Churches to its arguments despite the explicit condemnation of sodomy by the Scriptures, is shown by the proposal of the Uniting Church of Australia, presently being considered, to give recognition to homosexual relationships. Also, in the Episcopal Church of America, an ecclesiastical court has ruled that "core doctrine" does not prohibit ordaining homosexuals who are in committed relationships.

This is in marked contrast to the decision of the Reformed Church in Hungary to condemn a recent decision by Hungary's Parliament to give legal recognition to homosexual relationships.

The Royal divorce

SADLY, the crumbling marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana has finally ended in divorce. In less than two minutes, at a court hearing at Somerset House, the Prince was granted a decree nisi dissolving his marriage to the Princess on the grounds that they had lived apart for at least two years and the Princess consented to his petition. Thus ended a marriage which many expected would be a model one.

There are three factors in this divorce, apart from the heir to the throne being involved, which especially sadden those who prayerfully wish well to the Queen and her family. The divorce is on grounds other than those permitted by the Scriptures. Secondly; there has been the admission of adultery by both parties. Thirdly, the Queen requested the couple to begin divorce proceedings. It is to be feared that the Royal Family has gone far astray from the narrow, pleasant and safe path prescribed by the Word of God.

Islam's persecuting policies

ONCE a wealthy contractor, Robert Hussein, 44, a professing Christian, has been stripped by Kuwait's courts of his civil rights and material wealth (assets totalling \$4 million) and driven into hiding for fear of his life. His crime? Refusal to renounce Christianity and revert to Islam. In June, Judge Jafar Al-Quzweeni ruled that Islamic law calls for Muslim leaders to execute Hussein as an apostate. Like many nations, Kuwait declares by its constitution that it allows freedom of religion, while its Muslim-dominated court system contends that the constitution gets its power only from Islamic law, which does not allow conversion from Islam.

Church Information

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

NORTHERN: At Dingwall on Tuesday, 8th October, at 2.00 pm.

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 12th November, at 6.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 3rd September, at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Tuesday, 5th November, at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 3rd September, at 1.00 pm.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND: At Auckland on Friday, 24th January, 1997, at 2.30 pm.

Theological Conference - Preliminary Notice

A THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE will be held in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church, next December, God willing, and the subjects and speakers will be as shown below. Fuller details will be given later.

The Need for Creeds and Confessions, Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow

Personal Piety, Rev. Alex. McPherson, Perth

The Church of Rome at the Bar of History, Rev J MacLeod, Stornoway

Alexander Henderson, Rev. K. D. Macleod, Leverburgh

The Toronto Blessing, Rev. K. M. Watkins, London

(Rev) D. J. MacDonald

Bookroom Special Offer

The Works of Ralph Erskine are still available in six substantial cloth-bound volumes (an average of over 650 pages per volume) from Free Presbyterian Publications. Normally retailing at £89.50 they will continue to be offered by the Free Presbyterian Bookroom at the reduced price of £60 until the end of September.

These volumes have been highly regarded by the godly throughout the time since they were first published, and justly so. No one who has read them will disagree with Thomas M'Crie's judgement that they are "rich throughout in the exhibition of gospel truth, glowing in Scripture imagery, and breathing the life of Christian experience".

New Missionary Biography

We are glad to be able to announce that Miss Jean Nicolson's biography of Rev J B Radasi should be available from Free Presbyterian Publications at the end of August, DV. *John Boyana Radasi, Missionary to Zimbabwe* is a well-illustrated large paperback of 112 pages and will cost £4.95. Copies may be ordered from Christian Bookshops but there will be a special

introductory price of £4.00 plus postage if it is ordered from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE (Tel. 0141 332 1760).

Mr Radasi was a Fingo from South Africa who established a mission work among the Matabele of what is now called Zimbabwe. In God's providence he established a church and school at Ingwenya, and from this has grown the much larger Free Presbyterian Mission in Zimbabwe today.

He worked on in the face of many difficulties and distinguished himself as a faithful servant of his Master in heaven. He had the joy of seeing remarkable conversions among his adopted people. These accounts, many of young people, provide fascinating reading.

The author spent a lifetime of devoted service as a teacher and administrator on the mission founded by Mr Radasi. She now enjoys a well-earned retirement in Edinburgh and is known to readers of this magazine as the contributor of the monthly African Mission News.

While the book was written with young people specially in mind, it will give readers of all ages an interesting and useful historical account of the beginnings of our Mission in Africa and of the faithful minister whom God so wonderfully used in extending His kingdom.

Acknowledgements by Congregational Treasurers

CONGREGATIONAL Treasurers are requested to cease using the form, *F.P. Magazine Acknowledgements*, which has the NAME OF DONOR on the first column, when sending acknowledgements to the Editor. They are asked to use the new form instead, which is available from the General Treasurer, so that it will be easier to prepare copy for the printer.

Publication date of The Free Presbyterian Magazine

THE Editor apologises for the late arrival of this issue, which is due to difficulties in his own department. We also regret that this delay means that the *The Young People's Magazine*, which is sent out with *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, will also arrive late.

At the same time we take the opportunity to respond to those of our readers who wish to know why the Magazine does not arrive sometimes until as late as the 5th or 6th day of the month, instead of by the first day of the month as in the past. The reason is that the Magazines Committee decided last year that the date of issue be put forward slightly and that both *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and *The Young People's Magazine* be now published on the Friday prior to the first Sabbath of the month.

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

Eastern Europe: Where most needed, £200, Royal Bank of Scotland.

Foreign Mission: Old Baptist Chapel S.S., Chippenham, £1 19.50

Legacy Reserve: In memory of a dear mother, £500, per Rev. K.D.M.

Leverburgh Home of Rest: In memory of a dear mother, £500, per Rev. K.D.M.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Applecross: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, 10, per Miss C. Finlayson. *Eastern Europe:* Anon, £55, per collection plate. *Congregational Fund:* M. & N. Finlayson, £16.50 & £1.80; Mr J. Beaton, Milltown, £100; Mr D. Gillanders, Alness, £100; all per Treasurer; Anon, for where most needed, £250, per Rev. F. MacDonald; Miss S. Gillanders, Stornoway, £50, per Miss A. Dunbar, Inverness; Anon, for church heating, £50; Anon, for manse refurbishment, £50; Anon, for Applecross communion, £10; all per collection plate. *Fabric Fund:* Mr D. Gillanders, Alness, £100 "for where most needed" per Treasurer; Miss C. Finlayson, Lochcarron, £10 per Treasurer. **Beaulay:** *Sustentation Fund:* Anon (at Beaulay Communion) £20, envelope in plate. **Broadford:** *Sustentation Fund:* "In loving memory of dear parents and all our loved ones", £300, per Treasurer.

Glasgow: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £10; Anon, £16; Anon £10; Anon, £20. *Foreign Mission Fund:* Anon, £20, £21. *T.B.S. and Eastern Europe:* Anon, £40. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £55, £40, £100, £30. *T.B.S.:* Anon, £70, £40, £40, £10. *Church Bus Fund:* Anon, £40, £5, £10, £10, £30; R.McR., £10, £10. *Communion Expenses:* J.C., £30. *Where Most Needed:* In memory of a beloved sister and brother £60. *Congregational Fund:* Miss N.H., £40 per Rev. D. MacLean.

Glendale: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £410, per envelope in plate.

North Tolsta: *Pulpit Supply:* Anon, £20, "In memory of loved ones", per collection plate. *T.B.S.:* Anon, £18.65, £5, both per collection plate; Anon, £6, per Treasurer. *Church Repairs:* Anon, £20, per collection plate. *Heating:* Anon, £20, "In memory of our beloved parents", per Treasurer.

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Raasay: *Congregational Fund:* Friend, Inverarish, £100, per Treasurer. *Kenya Mission Fund:* Friend, Raasay, £20 per Rev. J.R. Tallach. *Church Heating:* A. Gillies, £30, per Treasurer.

Staffin: *Communion Expenses:* Friend, Inverness, £20; Anon (Portree Postmark), £10; both per collection plate.

Stornoway: *Sustentation Fund:* Miss K. A. MacLeod, Callanish, £490; A friend, £20, £10, £10, all per Rev. J.M.; Anon, £5, per collection plate. *Congregational Fund:* Friend, Stockinish, £10; Friend, N.T., £10; Mr. & Mrs. S., £50. *Car Fund:* Friends, Point, £10. *Church Painting:* Friend, £10, all per Rev. J.M. *Foreign Mission Fund:* Anon £20. *Petrol:* Anon, £10. *Manse Expenses:* Anon £7. *Communion Expenses:* Anon £10; Friend of the Cause, Breasclete, £10, all per collection plate.