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The Remedy for a Soul Burdened by Guilt

A heart burdened and troubled with guilt on account of sin is a heavy and pained heart indeed. When John Kennedy, later to become Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall, first saw "the exceeding sinfulness of sin", he had an "indescribable agony of mind under a sense of sin against God, especially in the neglect of the admonitions, instructions, and example of his father", now taken away from him by death. John MacDonald, later to become Dr. MacDonald of Ferintosh, began to be convicted of his guilt when reading Jonathan Edward's works. It is recorded that "such was his experience of the 'terrors of the Lord', that he was at the time persuaded that the agony of his soul was an anticipation of hell". Robert Murray M Cheyne had "deep and ever-abiding, but not awful or distracting, convictions" of sin, says his biographer.

When guilt gnaws at the conscience, and fear disturbs the mind, to whom can one turn for peace? When someone realises what he deserves from God for breaking His commandments, it is to none other but God Himself that he should turn. The Bible shows us clearly that there is none to whom we can turn but the One whose law we have transgressed. He reveals Himself, in Christ Jesus, as rich in mercy and ready to forgive. Scripture declares that there is no hope of mercy but from God; no hope of peace but through the blessed Saviour, who says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But the first inclination of the convicted sinner is either to despair or to think he can improve himself before turning to God. He says, as it were, "I must please God. Only then can I think of going to Him for peace and pardon." Dugald Buchanan, the renowned writer of beautiful spiritual poems in Gaelic, said that when he was first awakened to realise his guilt he began to feel hopeless. "I became dejected and sad, concluding I was undone, and that to refrain from sin was unavailing." Later, he thought, "If my life were to begin again, how I should read, and pray, and keep the Sabbath. I then heartily resolved against my sins, but my resolutions were soon at an end." Even the

Lord's people, who already have had their sins forgiven and have been brought to peace with God, when they go astray, backslide, and are then burdened and distressed by guilt, are sometimes tempted to try to make some kind of amends to God before going to Him with the prayer, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

David the Psalmist had such a profound sense of sin on one occasion that he was overwhelmed in the depths of distress, as we see in Psalm 130. He was convinced that if God were to mark iniquities against him, that is, to deal with him for his sins strictly according to His justice, there would be no standing for him; he would sink into eternal lostness. At the same time he knew that there was no hope of help, or peace, or a renewed sense of pardon, but from the God against whom he had sinned — and so to God he cried: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD." As someone has said, "Although he was in the depths of distress, he was not in the depths of despair." And another has said, "He cried to God from under the weight and waves of his sin."

What was it that encouraged David to cry to the Lord and to look to Him for pardon? It was, of course, the fact that God is actually waiting to be gracious and is prepared to pardon. David, at the time, had received such a view of the mercy of God in the promised Messiah that he could not refrain from declaring, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." He was enabled to lay hold of this precious truth by faith. Therefore, he went on to say, "I wait on the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."

Poor, guilt-laden sinner, hope in His word; God is showing you that He does abundantly pardon. Poor, tried, sin-burdened child of God, hope in His word; God is assuring you that He is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy". Heed not the evil "father of lies" who suggests that your sins are too great or too numerous, but listen to the blessed One who says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." David was very conscious of his just deserts when he acknowledged to God, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who should stand." But he could also say, *but* — "But there is forgiveness with thee." Spurgeon says, "How significant is that word *but*. As if you heard justice clamouring, 'Let the sinner die,' and the fiends in hell howling, 'Cast him down into the fires,' and conscience shrieking, 'Let him perish,' . . . when suddenly there comes this thrice-blessed *but*, which puts forth its strong arm bearing a golden shield between the sinner and destruction, and pronounces these words, 'But there is forgiveness with Him'."

The term *forgiveness* has in it the idea of sending away. Therefore it reminds us of the scapegoat on the day of atonement bearing symbolically the sins of the people and being sent away into the wilderness, (Leviticus 16), and so points us to the blessed "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Dr John Owen, whose exposition of Psalm 130 is one of his best known and valued

writings, asked a young man who had come to him for spiritual advice, "In what manner do you hope to come to God?" "Through the Mediator, sir," he answered. "That is easily said," replied Owen, "but I assure you that it is another thing to go to God through the Mediator than many who make use of the expression are aware of. I myself preached Christ some years, when I had but little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ; until the Lord was pleased to visit me with sore affliction, whereby I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with horror and darkness; but God graciously relieved my spirit by a powerful application of Psalm 130, verse four, 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,' from whence I received special instruction, peace and comfort, in drawing near to God through the Mediator, and preached thereupon immediately after my recovery."

Let us then, in our great need as sinners, be directing our cry to God, who says to His people, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." And let us draw near to Him in the name of the blessed Saviour, of whom the apostle Peter said to believers, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed."

"Lord, who shall stand, if thou, O Lord,
should'st mark iniquity?
But yet with thee forgiveness is,
that feared thou mayest be."



Notes of A Sermon

By Rev. A. McPherson

The Sin of Pride

Preached in Perth Free Presbyterian Church

Text: "*And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest,*" Luke 22 : 24.

IN this chapter we see Jesus and His disciples in an upper chamber in Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating the Passover. The account of the institution of the Lord' Supper is very brief and is followed by a declaration that one of the company is a traitor. Luke then informs us that there was an unseemly contention among the disciples over pride of place — which of them should be regarded by others as the greatest.

1. Pride — the universal sin

At what point in the evening this wrangling took place, we cannot tell. It may have been connected with the feet washing as told in the thirteenth chapter of

John. Which of them would perform this necessary but menial task? It appears that within each of them there arose the protest, "Surely you don't imagine that I should stoop to such a servile task!". So, none of them did it, and the actual performance of the task bore out the truth of the Saviour's words, "but I am among you as he that serveth" (v. 27).

Or the strife may have arisen over who should sit where at the table. But whenever it was, it was an exhibition of pride that was specially out of place that evening. It is probable that the pride exhibited now had a connection with the euphoria created by the events of that week. As the disciples saw it, the kingdom of God was about to be set up, and they were to occupy seats of honour, power and influence. Their carnal thinking on the subject and their ambitions were matched by feelings of self-importance. Little did they guess what a terrible anticlimax lay just ahead. I would think though, that once Jesus began the solemn address that John records, more serious and appropriate thoughts would occupy their minds.

"Which should be accounted the greatest!" The desire for eminence and superiority has marked the whole history of fallen man, often with terrible consequences. It was part of the first sin; the temptation, "Ye shall be as gods", was seized and acted on. Cain could not bear the rejection of his sacrifice and the acceptance of his brother's. Joseph's brethren were scandalised at the suggestion that they should be inferior to their young brother. Saul was unwilling to be a king under God. His monarchy must be absolute. Joab, afraid of losing his primacy as chief general, murdered Abner and Amasa; and so on down sacred and secular history to the disciples and to ourselves.

Pride is an unduly high opinion of ourselves, unduly in opposition to sober. It is true that we cannot help forming an opinion of ourselves, any more than we can help forming an opinion of others. But unless grace will compel to a sober judgement, we will esteem ourselves too highly. And even where saving grace exists, we will tend to pride. Where there is no grace, pride will prevail and show itself. Those who follow Christ, present-day disciples, need to always be on the watch for pride, and to subdue the inclination to be greater or greatest.

Think of some ways in which pride shows itself. It appears in complacency over what we think are our good qualities. It is there when we warm to compliments or accept flattery. Pride resents slights, and envies those who get ahead of us. From proud feelings it is a short step to words that reveal the sin, such as telling things that reflect well on ourselves in the hope that hearers will esteem us accordingly. On the other hand, there is the disparaging of rivals, or, like Absalom, speaking of how much better we would do than others, if only we were given the opportunity (2 Samuel 15:3,4). It is another short step from words to actions, such as, avoiding what we think would demean us, seeking positions

of honour, cultivating the friendship of those who may be able to help us attain our ambitions, and so on. These are just examples; the manifestations of this sin of pride are legion.

As far as those in their natural sinful state are concerned, there is no possibility of enumerating the ways in which pride shows itself. Suffice to say, that pride allows the sinner to break God's law in whatever ways he wishes; pride forbids repentance in those instances where conscience condemns the sin, and pride in a sinner troubled about his sins rejects the very idea of depending on divine grace for salvation. The devil's temptation, "Ye shall be as gods" has had fearful consequences in the way of sin and misery.

2. Christ's rebuke (vv. 25, 26).

The rebuke was remarkably mild. Knowing what lay ahead of these men, the Saviour dealt very gently with them. He showed them first the resemblance between their conduct and that of heathen monarchs. By whatever means these kings gain their supremacy, they keep it by keeping down their subjects. Being the greatest meant oppression for those under them, be it taxation, conscription or heavy-handed policing. (That was true of Hitler, a modern heathen ruler, and his Germany). Supremacy, being the greatest, meant misery for many. It often does so still. Is it therefore to be greatly desired?

The strange thing, though, is that such tyrants wish to be called benefactors, wish it to be said that their rule is for the good of their subjects. This surely is an acknowledgement that goodness is the highest form of greatness! What, therefore, the disciples ought to keep before them was to shun the dominating greatness that usurps the name of goodness and seek rather to really be well-doers by bringing the Gospel to perishing men. That way lay real greatness.

Secondly, following from the instruction, Christ prescribed the conduct that would make them honourable, namely, humble service in the cause of God. "But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." It is natural to give precedence to those up in years and with qualities of leadership. But in Christ's Church, those also must see themselves as bound to serve in whatever ways service has to be done. No task or work that God requires is too lowly or arduous for any of His servants. There is no place in the Church of God for displays of pride or ambition.

3. Christ's example (v. 27).

Are these instructions not specific enough? Very well, a practical example is a hand (v. 27). The disciples are acquainted with the order obtaining in household where servants are employed. The master of the house sits at the table and served. (Earlier, in chapter 17, verses 7 and 8, the same order is referred to). Y

He whom they called Master and Lord had been among them as one who served. Had it not been so that evening? Had it not been the case all His ministry when the needs of the sick and diseased, the poor and the lost had been attended to by day and night without thought of the cost to Himself? During these years the disciples had witnessed their Lord's humble, self-denying service to people in need.

But was it only men whom Christ served? The prophet Isaiah made it clear that Christ's service was done primarily to God. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgement unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42: 1-4). Other passages on the same theme are 49: 1-4 and 59: 16-19. A study of these will show that Christ came to serve God by glorifying His righteousness. Christ would redeem and save the elect in a way that would display the infinite rectitude of the divine government. The Saviour has made it evident that God is just when He justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus.

How low the Son of God stooped when He became man! "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2: 7,8): thus He says now to the disciples, "But I am among you as he that serveth." That evening washing feet and patiently instructing ignorant disciples; the next day dying an accursed death in full agreement with the requirements of His Father's love for guilty, vile sinners and the unshakeable principles of divine government.

That service had its reward, however; "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2: 9,10). So, what disciples have to learn, we as well as they, is that in God's kingdom, pride and self-exaltation have no place. Instead, the qualities approved and rewarded are trust, love, humility, goodness, righteousness, truth and others.

The only way that sinners can acquire such qualities is through spiritual union with Christ, entered into by faith in His great name as the only Saviour. Have we done so, and are we learning meekness, humility and love, and some ability to serve God and men after the manner of Christ's example? ●

An Address for Fencing of the Lord's Table *

By Rev. E. A. Rayner

Given after the action sermon and immediately prior to the administration of the Lord's Supper, on Sabbath, 26th January, 1997, at the communion in the Gisborne F. P. Congregation, New Zealand.

WE now come to the more solemn part of the service, the commemoration of the death of Christ, and partaking of the Lord's Supper at the Lord's table. When the Lord's table is for believers, and for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, we condemn the modern practice of passing around the bread and wine in the pews without discrimination. We heard of a clergyman in Gisborne Hospital who took the symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood and gave them indiscriminately to those who were in the hospital beds. Well, this is a very solemn matter because some of these people were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and did not love Him, as was shown by their never going to church. In partaking of the elements they were eating and drinking judgement to themselves, as the words of institution for the Lord's Supper show us. So we have to try to distinguish between those who are eligible to sit at the Lord's table and those who are not.

Sometimes, in fencing the table we go through the Commandments, and examine ourselves with regard to them, but at present we shall think about the sum of the Ten Commandments, that is, loving the Lord our God.

We therefore say that those who do not love the Lord cannot come to His table. If we love not the Lord Jesus Christ we are under the wrath and curse of God. On the other hand we invite to the Lord's table all those who love the Lord. The question is, Do we love the Lord? No doubt it is a question even among the truly godly, as it was with John Newton when he wrote:

Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His or am I not?

* The "fencing of the Lord's table" is the Scottish description of the scriptural practice required by *The Directory for the Public Worship of God*, in its section dealing with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There, it states that the minister, immediately before administering the sacrament, is, "in the name of Christ, on the one part to warn all such as are ignorant, scandalous, profane, or that live in any sin or offence against their knowledge or conscience, that they presume not to come to that holy table; showing them that he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgement to himself: and, on the other part, he [the minister] is in an especial manner to invite and encourage all that labour under the sense of the burden of their sins, and fear of wrath, and desire to reach out unto a greater progress in grace than yet they can attain unto, to come to the Lord's table; assuring them, in the same name, of ease, refreshing, and strength to their weak and wearied souls." *Editor*

This may be the question of the Lord's people here this morning, and they may be having difficulty with it. Maybe it is a question which is keeping them from the Lord's table, although it should not do so. It should not do so because:

"He the soul that longing is,
doth fully satisfy;
With goodness he the hungry soul
doth fill abundantly." (Psl. 107:9, metrical)

If we hunger and thirst after righteousness we shall be filled according to His promise. Beware of Satan, who makes the most use of our fears.

Those who love the Lord have learned their lostness on account of sin. Others have never learned that they are lost despite the fact that they may have a knowledge of the gospel, and may even make regular, diligent use of the means of grace. Because they have never had any true knowledge of their sins, they have never fled from the wrath to come. But someone who loves the Lord may be saying, "I never had any *deep* convictions of sin". That may be true; but you are not to stay away from the Lord's table because you did not pass through the same depth of conviction as some experienced. Some believers, after their conversion, had a greater depth of conviction than they had at first; but the fact is that all the Lord's people have come out of the City of Destruction (as we have it in *The Pilgrim's Progress*). We cannot be convicted sinners and remain in the City of Destruction.

Christ, the divine Physician, has not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Those who are taught by the Lord are not at ease when they see the disease of sin in themselves. If we have never learned our need of the cleansing, healing blood of Christ, how can we remember His death? If we do not think about the value of the remedy He has procured; if we have never been brought to acknowledge that here is the only remedy, the only way of salvation, how can we commemorate His death?

We would also say that those who have peace, without having the peace of Christ, are forbidden to come to the Lord's table. In the legacy that Christ has given to His church He has said, "Peace I leave with you." Now, we can be very much at peace with ourselves and with the world because things are going pretty well with us, as far as temporal things are concerned, and we may not be really weighed down by any other concerns. We can have the Laodicean attitude that we are "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"; that sin is not a plague and burden to us, and we see no need of going for peace to Christ, the Prince of Peace. Surely it is as we have a knowledge of ourselves as sinners that we, like Paul, will say, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death," and will look to Christ for deliverance. Well, this is the experience of God's people: that they are not left to the peace which is found

only in worldly things. We need a greater peace than that. We need the peace which comes from the application to our souls of the peace-speaking blood. If we have never gone to Christ to speak peace to us, we ought not to come to the Lord's table. The exercise of God's people is, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak;" and one thing they want to hear is God speaking peace to them through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Those who desire to hear what God speaks, are at least waiting upon Him, knowing that from Him alone comes peace between themselves and Him

We also forbid from the Lord's table all those that have a merely legal outlook with regard to their souls. That is, you are well enough pleased with your attendance in church. You may also have some religion in your home, asking a blessing at meals maybe, even having family worship. But if you are relying on the mere outward performance of duties to appease God, who is holy and just and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, you are no better than the Pharisees who went about to establish their own righteousness. Those who think that nothing more than the mere ritual of performing religious duties is necessary, and who are not relying completely upon the blood of Christ and His righteousness, ought not to come to the Lord's table.

Also, all those who are careless about the cause of Christ are forbidden to come to His table. You see, if we love the Lord, we will have a regard for the cause of Christ, because the church itself is "one body in Christ". We must remember this. The cause of Christ, as expressed in the church of Christ, is the body of Christ. Well, if we have no real interest in the body of Christ, how can we have a real love for Christ, who is "the Head of the body, the church"? If we have a regard for the body of Christ, which is the Church, then we will make diligent use of the means of grace publicly, as well as privately.

When we see, in the day in which live, the cause of Christ to be languishing, weak and very low, surely, if we love the Lord, we will rise up for its support. We see the situation becoming serious as far as the witness of the Church is concerned. The people of God are becoming fewer and the question has to be asked, "Who is on the Lord's side?" We invite to the table those who are seeking to stand up on the Lord's side, and striving to give His cause full-hearted support. If we are not endeavouring to do this, how can we say that we love the Lord, and love what He has appointed?

The Lord has appointed "one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to Himself," and with regard to that, the late Reverend William MacLean* used to ask, "How can we love the Lord and commemorate His death, if we do not love the Lord's Day which is the commemoration of His resurrection?" It cannot be

* See foot of next page.

said that we love the Lord if we do not observe what He has said: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Well, if we have love to the Lord, we will love His cause. When the church of Christ is in a low and languishing condition, those that love the Lord will be seeking that He will raise it up and establish a witness on the side of truth. They will try to do their utmost to be supportive and to be the greatest help in every way possible. We live in very discouraging times; terribly discouraging times. If we have a heart interest in Christ and His cause, we will be trying to give every possible support and encouragement.

In our day and generation people are taken up too much with temporal things. In the days of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Haggai said to the people, who were not getting on with building the house of God, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" So, if we find that the cause of Christ among us is low, and that there is a very great need, we should seek in the strength of God to do what we can to help. The problem in the days of Haggai was that the people were busy with all their worldly responsibilities, spending their money on their houses and businesses, while the house of God was lying waste and no money being given for the building of it. Well, if you love the Lord, you will seek to be doing your part for the advancement of His cause, however small that part may be; and we invite you to the His table.

In the time of the prophet Malachi, the cause of God was in a very low state, the people were not bringing in the tithes to the temple storehouse, and there was a lack of the blessing of God. Rev. William MacLean used to refer to this very often in my hearing when we were young people, and when there was a good work of reviving among us here in Gisborne in those days. He used to quote from Malachi, chapter 3, "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,

* Rev. William MacLean (1907-85) became the minister of the Ness congregation in Lewis in 1948. He was translated to the Gisborne congregation in New Zealand in 1962, to the Grafton congregation in Australia in 1973, and re-inducted to the Ness congregation in 1976, where he remained until his death. Under the pen-name of Ergatees he wrote *Arminianism - Another Gospel; Christ or Antichrist - Facts for Enquirers*; and several other useful pamphlets, published by Westminster Standard Publications. See *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 90, No.12, December 1985, page 378.

that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Bring all the tithes into the storehouse! Well, I think there is a message for us here! If we love the Lord, and see the need of Christ's cause among us, we will do what we can to help, and you who seek to do so are welcome to His table. It may not be within your power to do much to alleviate the situation because you have not the wherewithal to do so, but you will be willingly doing what you can: and the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Mr. MacLean used to say, and I quote him again, "When the Lord has opened the heart, the purse is opened."

On the other hand, we forbid coming to the Lord's table those who don't care what happens to the cause of Christ; who don't care if the church in Gisborne goes bankrupt; who don't care if all the old people just die out. One of the pillars of the church [the late Mr Jim MacPherson, an elder in the Gisborne Congregation] has been taken away from our midst. Godly, diligent people, who were doing everything they possibly could, using every ounce of their energy and often burdened with cares about the cause of Christ, have been taken away. Are you among those who simply say, "We don't care if the church in Gisborne goes out of existence." You are forbidden to partake of the Lord's Supper if you also don't care about being diligent in your attendance upon the means of grace, if you don't care if there is anything left of what God set up in our midst so wonderfully and so graciously in the past, if you don't care if you have a minister anymore, and if you don't care what the financial state of the church is.

My dear young friends here, it is time for you to think seriously about the future of the cause of Christ among us. The older people have devoted their hearts and their lives to it because they loved Christ. What about yourselves? Well, if you do not have a heart or mind for these things, it means simply that you are breaking God's commandments. You are being idolatrous in putting other things before Christ, the altogether lovely One. He is most precious! If you are giving yourself to idolatry, you are not fit to come to the Lord's table.

It is all very well for ministers to give a general invitation, as is done in many churches today, "All who love the Lord, come to the Lord's table," but how many love the Lord? Where is the evidence that they love the Lord? Where is their respect to the commandments of the Lord? These are the real, practical issues with which we are confronted. We are trying to see the difference between those who love the Lord and those who are just nominal in their profession.

Well, a division is being made here this morning between those who love the Lord and those who do not love the Lord. If you do not love the Lord, and cannot come to His table, you are in a very solemn situation. If we are not fit to come to the Lord's table, we are not fit to die! We are not ready to stand before

the Judge. It is of no use being careless or indifferent about these matters, saying, "Maybe sometime or another I will give attention to them." We are brought face to face with the reality that a division is being made now. And we cannot tell how soon the final division between the living and the dead will be made with regard to ourselves. We cannot say that we are going to have another year, or another week, or even another tomorrow. So we must always be ready; we must not be indifferent; we must not have the careless attitude of those in the parable who said that their Lord was gone and delayed his return, and that therefore they could do what they liked. If you are saying, "God is sparing me, so I am just going on as I was for a little bit longer," you are not fit for the Lord's table and you are not ready for eternity. You are still unconverted and you do not love the Lord. You are still under the curse of God.

My friends, this is something that we should lay to heart on this special occasion this morning. Oh, that the young people would have their hearts exercised about these things. If they be not converted, and do not begin to love and serve the Lord, there will be no witness left here. There will be no minister. There will be no Church as we know it today. It is time to consider these matters as we think of the difference between those who are invited to the table of the Lord and those who are forbidden, and as we commemorate the Lord's death.

Finally, we invite to the Lord's table all who know their folly; all who confess with the Psalmist, "My wounds do stink and are corrupt, my folly makes it so:" all who have been brought to acknowledge, "Christ is all my salvation and all my desire." We invite all those who feel themselves to be guilty, saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," and who employ the language of the penitent prodigal and the penitent publican. Come to His table, all you who have learned that in Christ alone you have righteousness. You may not be able to say, "I can come happily with assurance;" but can you say with trembling, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Well, if you can say so from the heart, even though you are lacking that confidence and assurance that you would like to have, you are invited to the Lord's table, because just as the man who prayed that prayer was justified, so are you. We invite all those who see themselves filthy and full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, having some knowledge that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who seek cleansing by the precious blood of Christ and in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; who cry to the Lord to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within them.

Perhaps you cannot see the way ahead; the way is dark; but still you must go on, leaning upon the arm of the Beloved, trusting in the only Saviour. Therefore you are invited to the Lord's table. Are you finding yourself in darkness, and yet you are waiting upon the Lord to send forth His light and His truth? Well, you are invited to the Lord's table. ●

The Beast of Revelation

Rev. J. van Dorp

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority, Revelation 13: 1 and 2.

THE Puritans in their preaching and teaching clearly identified the Antichrist in the Scriptures as the Papacy. Thomas Manton stated that the "doctrine of Antichrist is a profitable doctrine, and a point very necessary to be preached and known". In eighteen sermons he expounds the revelation of this great apostasy under names and titles such as "man of sin" and "son of perdition", and shows that he is not a single person but rather a succession of men. The Antichrist, he says, is opposed to Christ, mainly in respect of pride; exalts himself above all mankind and above all that is "reverenced"; usurps divine honours; and grew to a monstrous height in the Roman Pontiff, Boniface III. "This spiritual usurped power... grew to its monstrous excess and height by degrees, as to ecclesiastical dominion, in Boniface III, who obtained from Phocas the title of universal bishop."

So alarmed were the Jesuits by the Reformers having accurately and scripturally described the antichristian beast that they put the Counter-Reformation machine into high gear to deflect attention from the Papacy. The duty of producing a different interpretation of Scripture for dissemination in the Protestant camp fell to two able Jesuit scholars, Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) and Francisco Ribera (1537-1591), both Spaniards. They took careful note that the Reformers based their views on the usual historical interpretation of the Book of Revelation, according to the opening statement of the Book: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John," (Rev. 1:1).

De Alcazar developed the preterist system of interpretation. This system proposed that the events recorded in the Book of Revelation had their fulfilment entirely in the pagan Roman empire and that Nero was the beast of Revelation. According to this view of events, all the predictions recorded in the Apocalypse would have been fulfilled well before the Reformation.

Ribera took a different direction altogether. He developed the idea that the Antichrist is a single future figure and who was yet to come. Having advanced the theory that most of the Book of Revelation refers to future events, his system is referred to as the Futurist School of interpretation.

Both these perversions of the truth have become widely accepted in what is called Protestant religion, that is, most non-Roman Catholic denominations. Very few modern Protestants understand the significance of the term

"Protestant", and of those who do, very few are prepared now to recognise the need of the distinction. This attitude is clearly demonstrated in the Presbyterian Church of Australia and New Zealand (PCANZ), by its 1986 Assembly resolution which officially distanced the denomination from terms in the Westminster Confession of Faith that might be offensive to the Papacy. Thus the good old wine of the Reformation has become so diluted that one cannot any more speak of a Protestant, or even a Reformed, position with regard to many Reformed and Protestant denominations. The Reformation banner has made way for the white flag of surrender.

There is a denomination here in New Zealand that has the term Reformed in her name: the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. As the name suggests it is a confederation of churches. The membership is largely of Dutch origin and consequently is often referred to as the Dutch Reformed Church. Many of the members have their roots in the denomination in the Netherlands founded by Abraham Kuyper. It is not surprising that this church is very weak in respect of Protestant principles, because less than a hundred years ago Kuyper, then Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905), was responsible for increased co-operation with the Church of Rome and for popularising the view in his large denomination in the Netherlands that the Papacy was not to be identified with the Antichrist of Scripture.

A book circulating in English-speaking countries, *The Beast of Revelation*, by Dr Kenneth Gentry who holds a degree from the Reformed Theological Seminary in the USA, has done not a little to spread these erroneous views lately. The foreword to the book, being by Dr Gary North who is a scholar with the Reformed label, promotes its wide circulation. Do these scholars know that their views were spawned by the Jesuit, De Alcazar, under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation? Possibly they do know, for the opinion of the neo-Protestants is that the Church of Rome can and does produce true Christians.

Other professing Christians who have swallowed the poisonous Jesuitical brew are the pre-millennialists. Their appetite is satisfied by the futurist concoction of Ribera. Oswald Ellis, in his book *Prophecy and the Church*, makes the comment that this "acceptance by the Brethren was not due of course to any objection to the 'Protestant' interpretation as such, but to the fact that their literal interpretation of prophecy and their refusal to admit that predicted events were to precede the rapture made their acceptance of this system of interpretation inevitable."

The consequence of all this is that the Jesuitical, Counter-Reformation interpretations of the Antichrist by the Church of Rome have prospered beyond the wildest dreams of the Spaniards, De Alcazar and Ribera, to the detriment of believing prayer being offered up for the destruction of the Antichrist.

At present, when the Roman Antichrist is so popular and powerful, there is more need than ever for prayer to be made for its destruction. That event cannot be far off. At least it is nearer now than ever before, and God's promise is: "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," (2 Thes. 2:8). ●

Why Psalms Only?

Rev G. G. Hutton

A lecture given on New Year's Day, 1997, at Struan Free Presbyterian Church

Part Two

Continued from page 77 of the last issue. In the last part, the regulative principle of worship, defined thus in the Westminster Confession of Faith, "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture," was given as the principal reason for using the Psalms only in praising God, and was enlarged upon. Then these reasons were given for exclusive Psalmody: 1. In the Psalms we have a portion of the divinely inspired Scriptures which is written poetically in order that the words and expressions would be used for singing praise to God. 2. The Book of Psalms is a perfect manual of praise and therefore fully sufficient for the purpose.

Editor

ANOTHER reason which we advance in defence of exclusive Psalmody is that *the contents of the Book of Psalms are full of Christ*, who is the very heart and substance of the church's praise. If we go to John's visions of the glorified church in the Book of The Revelation, we get a clear view of the saints in their purest state, engaged in singing the most perfect praise conceivable. What is the great theme of their praise? It is the blessed Saviour, and His work of redemption. That praise to Him begins on earth. May the great Teacher, who opened the eyes of His disciples on the road to Emmaus to see Himself in the Psalms, be opening our eyes to see Him more and more in the Psalms as the "chiefest among ten thousand," and "the altogether lovely one."

Let us also remember that God the Son, as the perfect man "made like unto His brethren", used the Psalms as the godly Jews in His day used them in worshipping of God. He used them as a fit vehicle by which He could convey to His Father the innermost feelings of His soul, as a man. Can we believe for a moment, that the One who instituted certain necessary changes in the ordinances of the Church, in its transition from the Old Testament dispensation to the New Testament dispensation, would have failed in the course of His personal experiences in worship to detect any shortcoming in the manual of praise which He used, and not have remedied the matter? The fact is that the Saviour made use of the manual of praise which you and I use and never gave even the least suggestion that it needed replacing in whole or in part. Does the twentieth century believer think that he or she is more informed, more knowledgeable, more exercised in soul, more concerned about pleasing God in worship, than is Christ, the Head of the church; or that he or she needs, in worship, to express needs, feelings, or desires that the Saviour knew nothing about? Who could possibly imagine such a thing?

In referring to the matter of exclusive Psalmody, and of Christ in the Psalms, Dr. Henry Cooke, one of the most outstanding contenders in Ireland in the 19th century for the principles of the Reformed Faith, wrote in 1861: 'I cannot fail to pity those who can find, as they assert, so little of Christ in the inspired psalmody of the Bible, that they must seek and employ an uninspired psalmody as exhibiting Him more fully. Our Lord Himself found Himself in the Psalms (Luke 24: 44, 45) and thereby "opened His disciples' understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Surely what was the clearest light to *their* eyes, should be light to *ours*. And, truly, I believe, there is one view of Christ — and that not the least important to the tried and troubled believer — that can be discovered only in the Book of Psalms: I mean His inward life. No eye-witness of the outward man, though an inspired evangelist, could penetrate the heart. But the Spirit who "searcheth the deep things of God," has, in the Psalms, laid open the inmost thoughts, sorrows, and conflicts of our Lord. The Evangelists faithfully and intelligently depict the sinless Man; the Psalms alone lay open the heart of "the Man of sorrows." The most pious productions of uninspired men are a shallow stream — the Psalms an unfathomable and shoreless ocean.'

There is what I consider to be another important point to note regarding the Saviour's use of the Psalms. While it is true that the Book of Psalms is often referred to as the "Psalms of David," it should be remembered that there were about twenty different authors involved, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the production of the Psalms. David was but one of these, although of course he, the "sweet psalmist of Israel," penned the majority of them. In addition to these spiritual songs there are a number of other songs recorded in the Scriptures; for example, the Song of Moses, composed when the Israelites had passed safely through the Red Sea; the song of Deborah and Barak after the defeat of Sisera; and the song of Hannah when she came to present her son Samuel before the Lord at Shiloh, and others which we need not mention. What we mentioned is sufficient to prove that all the songs recorded in the Old Testament were not included in the divinely appointed manual of praise. Some of the divinely inspired songs in Scripture were included in the manual of praise but others were not; so it is natural to inquire why such a distinction should be made. The answer surely must be that the collection of the Psalms into *one book*, must have been the work of divine inspiration, as much as was their actual composition. The Saviour, by using the Psalms in their original form (which is, of course, their present form) sanctioned not only their use as the appointed manual of praise but approved their sufficiency.

Many of the opponents of exclusive Psalmody argue that the fact that there are other songs recorded in the Old Testament but not included in the Book of

Psalms, establishes a precedent for the Church's composing and using other songs in addition to the Psalms. We insist however that the Holy Spirit, by not including in the Book of Psalms all the songs recorded in Scripture, established the precedent for all time that the Church should make use only of those particular compositions which He sovereignly ordained to be included in that manual. God could have included in the Book of Psalms every song in Scripture, had it been His mind to do so, but He chose not to. By this act He established His authority in the selection of what was to be used by His people when they appear before Him to offer up praise.

Obviously then, the design for which the Psalms were collected into one Book of Psalms was not to preserve in it, for the use of the Church, all the songs composed by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, otherwise all of them would have been included. We must remember that the other songs recorded in the Bible were just as inspired as those which are in the Book of Psalms even though they are not included there. This is far from being an insignificant point. It focuses upon the fact that if God will not have all divinely inspired songs to be made use of in praising Him in public worship, how much less will He accept the interference of men who introduce their novel, uninspired productions into His worship.

Another reason which we put forward in defence of "Psalms only" is that the Book of Psalms is the only book of praise to be found in the whole canon of Scripture. You may well say, This is so obvious to everyone; why bother to mention it? My reply is that because it is so obvious, it is altogether inexcusable for anyone to either fail or refuse to take cognizance of its significance. I think it is fair to say that those who consider themselves to be Evangelicals hold the view that the Bible is complete in itself. It is God's full revelation of His will to men. This completeness must of course include the completeness of both Testaments in themselves. The Old Testament is complete in itself as a Testament, including its book of sacred songs. Likewise the New Testament is complete in itself as a Testament but without such a book of songs. Just as there are exhortations and encouragements in the Old Testament to sing and praise God, so we have the same in the New Testament. The Apostle James writes, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Paul, when writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians, chapter 14), to the Ephesians (in chapter 5), and to the Colossians (in chapter 3), makes reference to singing and praise, and yet there is no New Testament book of praise. The New Testament is complete, as God intended it to be, with its requirements and exhortations to sing and praise, yet without including a new book of praise. The only logical conclusion we can draw from this is that the Holy Spirit was of the mind, when inspiring the Apostles to write the contents of the New Testament, that the volume of praise already given to the Old

Testament church was sufficient for the New Testament church, both churches of course being one.

There are those, as you know, who attempt to argue from Paul's reference to "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," (in Colossians 3:16), that he alludes to compositions *additional* to the book of Psalms. Even without a knowledge of the precise meaning, in the original language in which Paul wrote, of the three categories of song, the Apostle's meaning is clear from the context. He is referring to, "the word of Christ," which must dwell richly in believers and by which they may teach and admonish one another. The "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" are part of the "word of Christ". What other source of information does anyone imagine Paul would direct the Colossians to, as suitable for such an exercise, but the word of God? And in speaking of that book of songs in the Scriptures he refers to it by the categories of "psalms", "hymns" and "spiritual songs". It is evident also that he applied the term "spiritual" not only to the "songs" but also to the "psalms" and "hymns", and that he meant that they all are not only spiritual in their nature but also in their origin; that is, they are the product of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Should anyone insist that Paul was writing about other compositions which were known to the Colossians (in addition to the Psalms) but which are unknown to us, and that this sets a precedent for the Church to compose further songs, we draw their attention to a decisive point. In the Old Testament we are informed of several other literary works with which the Hebrews were obviously familiar, but which never had a place in the Scriptures. We read of the "Books of the wars of the Lord" (Numbers 21:14), the "Book of Jasher" (Joshua 10:13), the "Book of Nathan" (1 Chronicles 29:29 and 2 Chronicles 9:29), the "Book of Gad" (1 Chronicles 29:29), and the "Book of Jehu the son of Hanani" (2 Chronicles 20:34) to name some of them. In addition to these books there were 1005 songs by Solomon. We read this about him in 1 Kings 4:29-32, "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and *his songs were a thousand and five.*"

The fact is that God would have us know that other books were written but that He would not have them preserved within His inscripturated word. He would have us understand that He gave Solomon wisdom far exceeding that of other men — and I think we may assume that it exceeded, in a sense, even that of other writers of books and songs in the Bible. By drawing our attention to these facts, He is emphasizing to us that the only books included in the

Scriptures are those which He *purposed* to include. It is not difficult to imagine how interesting and edifying these one thousand and five songs of Solomon might have been even for ourselves but the fact is that God did not include them in His Word or in the church's praise, even though He gave Solomon the wisdom to compose them. The point we make is that under the New Testament, if the Apostles or any other believers had written hymns or songs, these would have no more authority or place in the worship of the Lord than Solomon's one thousand and five songs had in the Book of Psalms. God decided what books were to be included in the canon of Scripture and God decided what songs were to be permanently used by Christians in singing His praise.

Nowhere in the Scriptures can we find any evidence to support the opinion that the Church is at liberty to compose or select her own songs of praise. Why, may I ask, should anyone expect to discover any? The sufficiency of the Psalms has been amply proven throughout the history of the Church and in the experiences of the saints. John Calvin, as he expressed his personal appreciation of the Psalms, wrote that which a multitude of godly souls throughout history would have subscribed to: "I may truly call this book an anatomy of all the part of the soul, for no one can feel a movement of the spirit which is not reflected in this mirror. All the sorrows, troubles, fears, doubts, hopes, pains, perplexities, stormy outbreaks by which the hearts of men are tossed, have been here depicted by the Holy Spirit to the very life."

Where would the Church be today, we may ask, had it not been for the Psalms? Out of the Psalms, the Reformers drew encouragement in the face of relentless persecution, the Covenanters acquired boldness to contend against their fierce foes for the Crown Rights of the Redeemer, the martyrs received strength to endure imprisonment, banishment, torture, the gallows and the stake for the cause of Truth. Men today have their great singing rallies; churches profess liveliness in their praise; while the young are impressed with the frivolous compositions from the carnal minds of vain glory-seekers. This suffices as long as the world and the church walk hand in hand, but in days when the church bore the reproach of her Lord, in the path of duty, such trifles would have failed her. Bearing the heat and toil of the day, something more substantial was needed and God in divine mercy had provided it. The Psalms were the anchor that held fast in the fiercest of storms: and how many a soul was preserved because of them, only eternity will reveal. If we go to the suffering church in the past and enquire, Why Psalms only? we will hear the French Huguenots, the persecuted Waldenses of the Alps, the suffering Covenanters from Scotland and Ireland, and many others, give their unhesitating answer with one voice, as David said to Ahimelech concerning the sword of Goliath; "There is none like that; give it me." Why Psalms only? The answer is clear. There is no substitute. ●

Obituary

Mrs. Johanna MacKay, Valtos, Uig

FROM earliest New Testament times the Church of God in the world has had its "honourable women" whose lives were noted for their godliness and whose memory the people of God cherish even in the darkest days. One such was Mrs. Johanna MacKay of Valtos, Uig, Isle of Lewis who passed away on the 20th October 1995, just short of her 99th birthday, after a long and eventful life.

She was born in Valtos in November 1896, the daughter of Malcolm Matheson and his wife Mary, who was herself a noted Christian in her day. It was of Mrs. Matheson that Rev. William MacLean wrote, "Grace made Mrs. Matheson what she was: a mother in Israel. She was a woman of a natural dignity and bearing and endowed with strong spiritual gifts. . . It is her unfeigned zeal, however, for the Cause of Christ, and that it would be kept pure and entire, for which Mrs. Matheson will be remembered by all who were privileged to know her. She prayed and wrestled for the extension of Messiah's kingdom not only in Uig but to the ends of the earth." (Foreword to *Memoir and Sermons of Rev. Alexander MacLeod*). Indeed, this quotation about Mrs Matheson presents a thumb-nail sketch of her daughter, the subject of this obituary.

Privileged as she was in having the example of vital godliness in her home, Mrs. MacKay was much influenced also by the preaching and instruction of the late Rev. Alan MacKenzie, who was the minister of the Free Presbyterian congregation in Inverness before he joined the Church of Scotland and was called to Uig where he had a fruitful ministry. While still a young girl Johanna worked as a maid in Mr MacKenzie's manse at Balnacille, and her time there seems to have made a lasting impression on her. The features of life in the Balnacille Manse she spoke of most often were the gatherings of the family and staff for family worship, morning and evening, and the preparation for, and observance of, the Sabbath. She lived to see these observances almost passing out of memory. Uig was indeed a different place then, for there were still those who knew, and had fellowship with, those who were the fruit of the revival in the parish in the days of the Rev. Alexander MacLeod.

Whatever impressions were made on young Johanna, and we believe they were of a permanent nature, it was to be many years before she could say, "I know whom I have believed." The God who calls His people from death to life is sovereign in all His dealings with them, and for Mrs. MacKay the right road by which the Lord led her was to be a long one, at times difficult, at times lonely, before He used His own word in the mouth of His servant to bring her to the liberty of the gospel. It was at a prayer meeting in Valtos, as the Rev. L. MacLeod, then minister of the Uig congregation, spoke from the words, "My

grace is sufficient for thee", that she got the light and assurance she sought. Soon afterwards she took her place with the Lord's people at the Lord's Table. By grace she was called, and by grace she was kept to the end of her earthly pilgrimage.

In any generation Mrs. MacKay would have been a remarkable woman. She was blessed with an active mind, a firm grasp of Reformed doctrine and an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of the spiritual history of Uig. She had a large fund of anecdotes from the lives of the godly in Uig and neighbouring parishes which she had heard from her mother, her grandmother and their contemporaries. In this way she was a unique link with the past and it is a cause of regret that so little of this precious record of God's grace is written or remembered. In those days the god-fearing in Uig, men and women, spoke "often one to another" and theirs was no mere religious talk. The experiences of believers were recounted, compared with Scripture, and combed for true marks of grace. Believers were very conscious of the need of laying hold on the Saviour as the sure foundation, and of the duty of so living that they did not contradict their profession. The things of the Spirit of God took up their waking hours, whether at work, or alone, or in company. No wonder they were so much in prayer. Such believers are the gold thread in the fabric of any community and it was so in Uig. Mrs. MacKay was the last of that line and a true product of it.

Mrs. MacKay was a true mother in Israel, blessed with rare discernment and much of the spirit of prayer. Her frequent overheard petitions were, "Have mercy on sinners in this village;" "Have mercy on this parish where thy work was once so manifest;" "Keep the testimony and witness of our Church;" and, "Have mercy on my soul." She was no stranger to spiritual trials. As one whose privilege it was to shine brightly, she experienced severe assaults from the wicked one, but like others she overcame "by the blood of the Lamb".

She was confined to the house for some years before her death and was lovingly cared for by her son, daughter-in-law and daughter. She was mentally alert to the last and had a prayerful interest in the cause of Christ, especially within the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. She kept remarkably up to date with communion seasons in the various congregations within the church, and the journeyings of Church deputies abroad. We believe she prayerfully upheld the hands of the ministers of the gospel and for this alone she is missed.

One of the brightest lights in Uig in this generation has gone out. It was our privilege to know her for a season as she ripened for glory. In the ever increasing darkness what can we do but cry, "Help, Lord"? To her son, daughter-in-law and daughters, and to her only surviving sister, we again extend our sincerest sympathy.

(Rev.) *D. J. MacDonald*, Dornoch

God Revealed Through the Man, Christ Jesus

An extract from *Romans 8*¹ by Thomas Jacomb²

(The piece has been slightly edited to aid comprehension)

WITH regard to the doctrine of Christ being sent in the flesh, Jacomb says: "There is this in it for the strengthening of faith and the heightening of joy: that God is now knowable and accessible. Some may say, Beyond all contradiction, it is a blessed thing to know God, but who can know Him? Can any see God and live? Can a finite eye take a view of such an infinite majesty, the least ray of which outshines the sun in its greatest brightness? What! man to know God? Alas! poor creature! his weak faculties will not bear the beholding of so glorious an object. To which I answer: All this, in such a sense, is very true, yet let not humble souls be discouraged; for notwithstanding this, they may yet know God savingly and comfortably, though not perfectly.

"In and by Christ in the flesh, the great God is knowable; partly as He is *most clearly manifested* by Christ in the flesh. In the Christ God-man we have the brightest objective manifestation of God. By the creation, much may be known of God, as you read in Romans 1:20; but the whole creation makes no such discoveries of Him to the soul as Christ doth. Therefore He is said to be "the brightness of his Father's glory", Hebrews 1:3; (for this is one explication which the words will very well bear), and hence some style Him *Speculum Patris*, the glass wherein the Father in the most clear and lively manner is represented. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," John 14: 9; and the apostle speaks of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face", that is, in and by the manhood "of Jesus Christ", 2 Corinthians 4:6.

"Again, in and by Christ in the flesh, the great God is knowable, partly as Christ in our flesh is *a fit medium* to transmit God, as knowable, to us. Indeed God, as considered absolutely and in Himself, is so infinitely above us, that we cannot here immediately behold Him. His glory, His immense and infinite perfections, should they be let out upon us, would soon reduce us to our first nothing. But... mediately, through Christ, we can look upon Him; see Him and live. In this way the majesty of God is, as it were, so refracted, tempered, and qualified, that the poor dim eye of the creature may behold it. As we cannot immediately look upon the sun because its splendour and intense light presently

¹ Reviewed on page 118 of this issue

² Thomas Jacomb (1622-87), a native of Leicestershire, came from Cambridge, where he served as a Fellow of Trinity College, to London in 1647, to be chaplain to the Countess of Exeter. In 1650 he became minister of St. Martin's Church, Ludgate, and was one of the Puritan leaders in the city. When ejected in 1662, he continued to preach in the home of the Countess, and it was there that his sermons on Roman 8 were preached. Although little is known of him it is recorded that he was "a learned man, an able divine, a serious and affectionate preacher, of unspotted morals..." He died at the age of 65.

dazzles us; yet we can look upon it reflected in a pail of water. So here, we cannot immediately behold God in the brightness of His glory – a finite faculty must needs be dazzled by an infinite majesty – yet take Him in the flesh and manhood of Christ, and there His glory is so brought down to us that we can see Him and know Him to our comfort. The Christ-man interposes not only between us and God's anger, to screen us from it, that we be not thereby consumed, but also between us and God's majesty that we may not be overwhelmed by it. He lets it out as our capacity will bear, and so by Him, God becomes knowable. He both carries us up to God, and also brings down God to us.

"Oh study God much! but be sure you study him in Christ incarnate. In that way you may come to know Him. Augustine says, "By the hypostatical union of the human nature with the divine, there is such a collyrium or eye salve made for us, that we may with these very eyes almost see the Deity." How should we rejoice in the manhood of Christ! By that flesh in which the Godhead was sometimes hid, it is now revealed; that which was once a veil to cover it, is now a glass to represent it. Do but know Christ, and you will know God." ●

Book Reviews

ROMANS 8 (Verses 1-4) by *Thomas Jacomb*

Published by the Banner of Truth Trust. Hard back, 373 pages, £12.95. Obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE

WE are deeply indebted to the Banner of Truth Trust for this excellent and attractively bound reprint from the pen of a worthy Puritan preacher of the 17th century, in which he most ably expounds the opening four verses of Romans, chapter eight. In the preface, we are treated to a brief and very interesting sketch of the author's life and labours.

Every literary production is, to a certain extent, coloured by the age and circumstances in which it was written, and this one is no exception. Let no prospective reader be adversely influenced by the frequency of footnotes, generally in Latin or Greek, or of the occasional foreign phrase used in the exposition of the various passages. The understanding of these, though useful, is not necessary to the enjoyment and appreciation of the volume.

This book is remarkably readable, and thoroughly edifying. The author's spiritual delight in the subject is almost infectious. Here is preaching, not lecturing. With heartwarming earnestness the various topics are articulated in language adapted to the ability of his auditors, or readers, as the case may be.

Jacomb simply grips our heart and understanding. Another merit is the beautifully balanced blend of doctrine, experience and practice.

Each chapter is preceded by a sectional summary of the contents, which greatly facilitates the finding of a quotation, which otherwise could be so frustrating and time consuming in a volume of this size. Typical of the Puritans is the pithy sentence and the polemical note, for example, "As joy for sin will end in sorrow, so sorrow for sin will end in joy".

The errors of the Papacy and Antinomianism are among the heresies exposed and condemned in the pure light of the Word. "There is nothing but honey in this hive," writes the author about the portion of Scripture he expounds. With this verdict we agree most cordially, and we add that the same is true of his own exposition, whether in its exegetical or homiletical parts.

This precious book would enhance the library of any pastor or believer. We wish it a wide circulation. It has only one fault; it is too bulky. We suggest that one day it be printed in paper back form, minus the foot notes.

(Rev.) F. MacDonald, Portree

Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism by *Iain H Murray*

Published by the Banner of Truth Trust. Paperback, 160 pages, £2.95. Obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE

IN his first book, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, Mr Murray devoted a chapter to Spurgeon's 1855 conflict with Hyper-Calvinism. In this new book, subtitled *The Battle for Gospel Preaching*, he returns to the theme but considers Spurgeon's convictions and statements on this subject throughout his ministry.

The author asks, Is Christ to be proclaimed as the Saviour in whom all are called to trust? Hyper-Calvinism denies the free offer of the gospel, in spite of the evidence in the Scriptures that prophets, apostles and Christ Himself called on all and sundry to turn from their sins to embrace the salvation which was being set before them. John Duncan is quoted: "The gospel does not say, 'There is a Saviour, if you wish to be saved;' but, 'Sir, you have no right to go to hell – you can't go there without trampling on the Son of God.'" So Spurgeon, in a sermon on the text, "Compel them to come in," declared, "As I stand before my Judge at last I feel that I should not make full proof of my ministry unless I entreat with many tears that ye would be saved, that ye would look to Jesus Christ and receive His glorious salvation."

After two introductory chapters which outline Spurgeon's life and ministry, Mr Murray records some of the criticisms of Spurgeon's preaching which appeared in periodicals such as *The Earthen Vessel*, and he follows this with Spurgeon's responses in his published sermons. The author points out that

Hyper-Calvinism, denying that all are called in the gospel to come to Christ, "claims, instead, that Scripture only addresses invitations to specific people – to the penitent, the 'heavy laden', to the convicted, to the sensible sinner and so on. Under such preaching, gospel hearers must first find some warrant within themselves for thinking that Christ's invitations are addressed to them personally." The Hyper-Calvinist's difficulty lies in the "view that to preach a universal warrant is to deny that redemption is definite and particular. . . Hyper-Calvinism errs with Arminianism in thinking that a knowledge of the extent of the atonement is necessary if true faith is to be exercised. . . This still does not answer the question, How can sinners be offered a salvation which Christ did not fulfil on their behalf? Spurgeon set the question aside as something which God has not chosen to explain."

This well-produced book concludes with some pages of material on these themes from other writers, including the Covenanter John Brown of Wamphray, and extracts from two of Spurgeon's sermons.

(Rev.) K. D. Macleod, Leverburgh

Protestant View

Rome's Errors about Works and Prayer

IN the letter below, *Rev. James R. Tallach* answers a question of a correspondent.

Dear Friend,

In the second part of your letter you say that the position of the Roman Catholic Church on works puzzles you, especially as Mother Teresa has said, "Prayer without works is wasted, and works without prayer are dead".

The Roman Catholic Church is full of contradictions from top to bottom and rather reminds me of a house in which I once stayed. The foundation of this house was cracked and therefore a crack could be seen running up through the wall of the house to the roof. The Roman Catholic Church claims to be founded on the atonement of Christ. Its statement, "Christ by his sufferings and death rendered vicarious atonement to God", sounds orthodox, but a little later we read, "The blessed virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, grieving exceedingly with her only-begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with his sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, which she herself had brought forth. Mary's title to Mediatrix-in-atonement rests on the pain she freely underwent in union with her Son", (*The Catholic Catechism*, Hardon S.J., p.168). In other words, the Roman Catholic Church teaches at one and the same time that Christ's atonement is

sufficient and that Mary is Mediatrix-in-atonement. When such confusion characterises the foundation, it is little wonder that confusion exists in the teachings (e.g. on works and prayer) built upon it.

Interestingly enough there was an article in *The Independent* recently, based on complaints by a worker with Mother Teresa, about the way in which the children under her care were being denied basic care. Part of the problem was that the children were being left in the care of unqualified staff while senior staff went off to pray. A refresher course for the staff consisted of three elements: Prayer, Prayer and Prayer.

The following two comments indicate some errors about prayer in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church:

1. This prayer is frequently offered to Mary or other saints in heaven "by whose intercession they (the people of God on earth) are supported", (Can. 1186, *Code of Canon Law*, p. 197). Roman Catholics make a difference between adoration which is due to God alone, and veneration which is due to Mary and the saints in heaven. The Bible knows nothing of this distinction and all the apostolic prayers in the New Testament are directed to God alone. To pray to Mary and the saint is simply idolatry. (Boetner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 196).

2. This prayer is frequently in the form of "vain repetitions", which are expressly condemned by Christ, (Boetner, p. 364). The Rosary, which has ten prayers to Mary to one to the Father and none to Christ, is used as a way of gaining merit. The more such prayers are said the more merit is stored up in heaven, (Boetner, p. 365). Prayer then becomes a work, and one is back under the covenant of works and salvation by works. But the Bible says that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags", (Isa. 64:6), and "when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do", (Lk 17:10).

I hope these comments are of help . . . etc.

Notes and Comments

Attitudes to cohabitation and marriage in today's society

COHABITATION is increasingly taking the place of marriage in Western society. A recent survey has shown that a startling 50 per cent of couples born after 1960 live with each other before marriage. Even more startling is the change in attitudes; this survey reveals that two thirds of people in their sixties found it acceptable for unmarried couples to live together.

Yet family matters remained of the utmost importance to those who were questioned: which sounds like a cry for the stability that marriage gives to society, while there is no understanding of the roots of that stability.

Marriage is a divine institution and demonstrates the perfection of the situation in which mankind was placed at creation in the kindness of God. Every other such relationship except this life-long commitment between man and woman – one man and one woman – and regularised according to the laws of the society in which they live, is forbidden by the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

God knows how necessary it is for the intimacies of the marriage relationship to be restricted to husband and wife, and so He makes plain: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,” Hebrews 13:4. When the all-wise God has spoken, everyone is to listen – and to obey. So when our generation refuses to listen, the Most High demonstrates anew that unaided human wisdom is no wisdom. As it was said of old: “Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?” Jeremiah 9:9.

The divorces and the separations of today reflect an unwillingness on the part of at least one of the parties to accept the constraints imposed by the fact that marriage is a life-long relationship. And the ease with which divorce can be obtained creates attitudes which militate against a sense of the permanence of the marriage bond and the continuing authority of marriage vows.

Yet there remains a hankering for the family values of another generation. But the benefits will follow only if both partners in a marriage are prepared to commit themselves to each other in love for the whole period of time that God is to spare them together in this world. It should be no surprise that family breakdown is so prevalent in a generation which is throwing off the restraints of God’s law to the extent that few people feel the need to take the Creator into account in any part of their life.

K. D. M.

Concerns about cloning

THE news that a sheep has been bred which is genetically identical to its genetic mother, has resulted in several magazine and newspaper articles about cloning human beings. The scientists involved say that with further work the same technique could be used to produce a human clone. Already homosexual groups in America are saying that it is their right to use this technique if they wish.

No doubt the technique has useful applications, but the idea of cloning a human being is abhorrent. Scripture demands that human procreation take place only between a man and his wife. Cloning of humans is therefore immoral. It is

good that some leaders in science and politics in various countries have spoken in support of banning research into human cloning.

We all start off from very nearly the same genetic position in any event, (any two unrelated males from anywhere around the globe have 99.9 per cent of their genetic material in common), while physical and social environment play a significant part in what sort of persons we turn out to be. This detracts not at all from the fact that we are sinners, and that the Spirit of God is able to make sinners "new creatures in Christ Jesus", who therefore ultimately "shall be like Him" when they "shall see Him as He is", 1 John 3:2. J. R. T.

The Church and the world (1)

The Church of England has taken its advertising programme to the television screens. What strikes one particularly is the worldly nature of the adverts, which are sponsored by the dioceses of Lichfield and Birmingham. A number of people are shown in various situations and the viewer is informed, "These people are doing what has never been done in a TV commercial. They're praying."

Some of the situations are perfectly innocent: a retired man pushing his grand-niece on a swing or two sisters watching their clothes being washed at a laundrette. But to include among them a disc jockey standing with his eyes closed, supposedly in prayer, during dancing at a nightclub is incredible – at least it should be incredible.

Worldly religion of this kind can do no good to anyone. True Christianity issues the call to separation from worldliness. "Love not the world," we are told, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John 2:15.

A spokeswoman for the diocese of Birmingham remarked complacently about the content of the advertisements, "It is not condescending or preachy." No one could commend what is condescending, but her comment misses the point: preaching is the divinely-appointed means for bringing sinners to Christ. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Until the primacy of preaching is restored to the churches, what hope can we have that the churches will make any impact on the world? Nor can we hope for better things until that preaching is firmly based on the holy oracles of God, and worldliness is firmly rejected. K. D. M.

The Church and the world (2)

Last month's issue of *The Free Church Record* carried a news item which began: "On Wednesday, 7 August, over 120 people from the community and

further afield met in Helmsdale Community Centre to bid farewell to Rev Duncan and Mrs Morag MacLeod and family. Chaired by Rev Neil MacLean of Dornoch Free Church, the meeting began with the singing of Psalm 40 followed by Prayer. Mr MacLean paid tribute to Duncan's ministry in Helmsdale for almost 13 years."

After detailing various gifts from the congregation, the local Fishermans' Hall Fellowship and Church of Scotland congregation, the report went on, "After a sumptuous tea, the company was entertained by Andrew John Innes on the Bagpipes, and the Rev Alex MacDonald, Edinburgh who sang and accompanied himself on the guitar. The Promise of Joshua Chapter 1 verse 9 was the text on the specially decorated cake. A memorable evening was brought to a close by the singing of Psalm 23, and Prayer and Benediction by Rev David Paterson."

The mixture of religious worship and worldliness described in the last paragraph, and given a degree of official sanction by appearing in the Free Church's denominational magazine, confirms the fact that the level of spirituality within the Church is far from what it ought to be.

K. D. M.

African Mission News

Kenya

It is interesting to hear again, from letters from friends at Sengeru Mission, Kenya, of the work of the Gospel there. The weekly routine is being maintained. There is daily worship on the Clinic verandah for all the people in the compound (hospital staff, mission workers, some patients and visitors), the Sabbath morning Catechism class and service in the church, the short service at the Clinic on Sabbath afternoon, and a Bible study class and a psalmody class held during the week.

At the Sabbath-School on Sabbath afternoon there are about 180 children in four classes. Many of them are very attentive and learn their lessons well, and the children in the most senior class are memorising a question and answer in English from the Shorter Catechism every week. We pray that the seed sown among them will bring forth fruit to the glory of God.

The European staff, when learning Eke-gusii, the local language, found it useful to learn something also of the customs and culture of the people. Mrs Goldby and Sisters Truus and Celia are now learning Swahili, the national language of Kenya.

AIDS and consequent deaths are on the increase. It is not easy for the missionaries to visit the homes of those affected. There is ignorance of the disease, and there is a general desire to hide their illness, the wife from her husband, the husband from his wife, and each from the community for fear of being abandoned. How sad! Dr. de Jong gave two addresses on the subject to

the people in the village. About 200 people attended each meeting and many useful questions were asked. The missionaries ask for the prayers of the Lord's people that they may be given guidance and discretion in dealing with this serious and tragic problem.

The long-awaited lorry and Landrover have now arrived from Nairobi, just in time for hauling water from the Ogembo River—a task that is necessary due to there being no rain since the beginning of the year. There has not been such a drought since 1962. The water tanks are dry, the fields are black (ploughed but not planted), and it is expected that the price of maize will double by June.

Mr MacLean was able to visit the group in Kuria again. He conducted a service, a Catechism class, and answered their questions. He was presented with a copy of the newly translated Igikuria New Testament. Until now, the Scriptures have been available to the Kuria people in Swahili only. *J. N.*

Zimbabwe

At Zenka communion, Rev Mzamo had the welcome assistance of Rev John Goldby, who went from Kenya to the Presbytery meeting in Zimbabwe. Mr Goldby also assisted at Ingwenya communion, and has now returned to Kenya.

Mr Mzamo has been mourning the death of two of his elders, Josiah Zikhali of Katash, and Keyi Masins of the Nkayi congregation.

At Mbuma, Nursing Sister Margaret Macaskill is back at work, while Sister Louise Leiper is in Bulawayo to receive some tuition in Sindebele. Sister Anne Zekveld, who has returned to her home in Canada, will be much missed. We shall certainly miss her long interesting newsletters. Sister Jessie Coote has had to return from Mbuma to Kenya at the beginning of March despite many pleas for her to remain a little longer! However, the staff at the hospital are glad to have the help of Sisters Henriette Burgraaf and Hanneke Terloun, who have been transferred from Sengera, Kenya, for three months. *J. N.*

Church Information

Meetings of Presbyteries (D.V.)

NORTHERN: At Dingwall on Tuesday, 17th June, at 2.00 pm.

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 24th June, at 6.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 24th June, at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Tuesday, 24th June, at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 17th June, at 1.00 pm.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND: At Auckland on Friday, 30th May, at 2.30 pm.

ZIMBABWE: At Bulawayo on Tuesday, 10th June, at 11 am.

Zimbabwe Mission Vacancies

Applications are invited for the following vacancies on the Zimbabwe Mission:

1. At John Tallach Secondary School, Ingwenya,
 - (a) Graduate teacher.
 - (b) Nurse, or someone with a business qualification.
 - (c) Maintenance person.
2. At Mbumba Mission Hospital, Nkayi:
 - (a) Nurse.
 - (b) Administrator or nurse with management training.

Application should be made in the first instance to: The Clerk of the Foreign Mission Committee, The Rev J. R. Tallach, Free Presbyterian Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB.

Foreign Mission Committee Statement

THE Foreign Mission Committee wishes to make clear that the mention of ACE in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* of September, 1996, in no way is to be construed as an endorsement of all that is to be found in that course. We regret any misunderstanding which may have arisen.

(Rev.) *James R. Tallach*, Clerk of Committee

Fort William Congregation Communion

THE sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be dispensed in the congregation on the second Sabbath of April, God willing, and the communion services therefore will be held from Thursday 10th April to Monday 14th April, in the Red Cross Hall, Inverlochy, as follows: **Thursday and Friday:** 7.00 pm.

Saturday: 6.00 pm.

Sabbath: 11.00 am and 6.30 pm.

Monday: 7.00 pm.

The Rev. A. McPherson, Perth, Interim Moderator of the congregation, is expected to conduct the services.

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

Deputy's visit to Australia and New Zealand - Wellington communion

THE Rev. George Hutton, Broadford, is presently visiting our congregations in New Zealand and Australia for a period of eight weeks, until 8th May, D.V. The date of the Wellington Congregation communion has therefore been brought forward to the third Sabbath of April so that it will be possible to have Mr. Hutton's assistance at the communion season. The usual services connected with the communion season will commence on Thursday 17th April, D.V.

(Rev.) *J. van Dorp*, Interim Moderator

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE GENERAL TREASURER acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:-

Sustentation Fund: Gift Aid Donation, Glasgow, £300; Gift Aid Donation Caithness, £500.

Bookroom Fund: Gift Aid Donation, Glasgow, £30; C.M.C., £9.05; Y.M.K., £4.10; D.M.M., £6.10; D.M.A., £1.36; J.M., 0.15; all per M.M.M.; Gift Aid donation, English friend, £15.

Eastern Europe Fund: A Friend, Sutherland, £60.

Home Mission Fund: Gift Aid Donation, Glasgow, £100.

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: Gift Aid Donation, Glasgow, £50.

Mbumba Hospital: Old Baptist Church, Chippenham, £250.

Mozambique Hunger Relief: A Friend, Skye, £22.

Sponsor A Blind Child: Gift Aid Donation, Glasgow, £100.

Publications Fund: Gift Aid Donation, Glasgow, £20.

CONGREGATIONAL TREASURERS acknowledge the following donations with sincere thanks:

Bracadale-Strath: *Sustentation Fund:* A friend, Stornoway, £20; A friend, Stornoway, £5; both per Rev. G.G.H.

Dornoch: Church Heating: Anon, £40, per collection plate; *Congregational Fund:* Friend, North Harris, £10; *Car expenses:* Friend, £10; *Church Door Collections,* Anon., Dornoch, £10; last three per Rev. D. J. MacDonald.

Glendale: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon., £680, per Treasurer. *Congregational Fund:* Legacy from estate of the late Mrs MacInnes, £726.76, remitted by executors per Rev. G.G. Hutton; Anon, £20, per envelope in plate. *Door Collection:* Anon., £50, per Mrs. MacPherson.

Kinlochbervie: *Where Most Needed:* "In memory of loved ones", £100.

Laide: *Sustentation Fund:* Friend, Aultbea, £20; Friend, Aultbea, £20; both per Rev. D.A.R. *Where Most Needed:* £100, per M.M.; F. Mack., £50, per I.M. *Congregational Fund:* Friend, Mellon Charles, £10, per C.R.; Malachi 3:10, £50; Anon, £20; both per collection plate; Friend, Inverness, £30, per Rev. D.A.R. *Eastern Europe:* Residents, Isle View Home, £8.50; £8.32; £6.55; £12.80; all per Rev. D.A.R.; J.C., £20; J.A.C., £10; Friend, Port Henderson, £20; Friend, Lewis, £50; all per Rev. D.A.R.; Anon, £30, per collection plate; Residents, Strathburn Home, £78; Anon, Portree, £30; Friend, Gairloch, £20; Friend, Laide, £30; Friend, Lewis, Haggai 1:4, £50; all per Rev. D.A.R.; Friend, Laide, £3, per C.R.; Anon, £20, per collection plate; I.C., Edinburgh, £10, per C.R.

North Uist: *Sustentation Fund:* Mrs. H. Scott, £45, per H. Macdonald. *Communion Expenses:* A friend, £20, per Rev. A. Morrison.

Raasay: *Eastern Europe Fund:* Envelope in Plate, £200, per Treasurer. *Where Most Needed:* B. Nicolson, £40, per Treasurer.

Staffin: *Where Needed:* Anon, £50, per envelope in plate; Envelope, £1000, per N.M.D., *Sustentation Fund:* Friends, Stornoway, £10, per Rev. B. Whear.