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The State of Zion's Walls

IT must be acknowledged that the Visible Church is today in a very weakened state. If we compare it to a city, as Scripture does, then its walls are largely broken down. As the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day were lying in heaps of rubble, and the city depopulated, so the Church as a whole today is very much weakened and deserted.

Some will question such an assertion, but even a cursory look at our national Churches should leave us in no doubt that Biblical religion is in a low state. When leading churchmen in the Church of England have, for example, publicly denied the virgin birth of Christ, and an ex-moderator of the Church of Scotland has expressed support for these views, we are forced to conclude that the walls and bulwarks have crumbled. The pure doctrines of the faith are a principal defence of the Church, a wall and bulwark of Zion. Have they not crumbled when these doctrines are not maintained and proclaimed as they once were? The watchword of the Reformation, Scripture Alone, is regarded as an irrelevance by many ministers, and is cast into the dustbin of history. The basic principle that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the *only* rule to direct us what we are to believe and how we should live, is discarded.

The fact that ministers and office bearers in various Churches can speak and live contrary to the Scriptures in a variety of ways without fearing that they will be dealt with by church courts, shows that another bulwark has crumbled. When Scriptural discipline according to the requirement of the divine Head of the church will not, or cannot, be exercised, a principal bulwark is demolished. The Church that throws aside "the keys of the kingdom" need not be surprised when it finds itself unable to control subversive elements within it. Many professing Christians think that Church censures are an outdated and offensive imposition, but, as Robert Shaw says in his commentary on *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, "Church censures are necessary for vindicating the honour of Christ and His religion; maintaining the purity of His worship; reclaiming offenders; deterring others from like offences; removing contagions from the Church; and preventing the wrath of God, which

might justly fall upon the Church if they should suffer the seals of His covenant to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders." Behind the departing of the glory from Israel in the days of Eli, the high priest, was his failure to discipline his wicked sons, and his allowing them to continue in the priesthood. How great was the fall of the walls of the Church of that day.

If we have a warm heart and a kind eye for the cause of Christ, we will have many a sigh and cry when it is low. If the fact of the broken-down walls of Jerusalem caused godly Nehemiah to weep and pray and fast, much more should the crumbling defences of our Churches cause us to cry to the God of heaven. And as Jerusalem was no less dear to Nehemiah on account of its ruined condition, but rather the reverse, so the cause of Christ is not despised by the godly when it is in a weakened and ruined state, but rather is more in their thoughts than ever. It is very significant, as Psalm 102:14 shows, that even the stones and dust of Zion were precious to the godly:

"For in her rubbish and her stones
thy servants pleasure take;
Yea, they the very dust thereof
do favour for her sake."

And there is no clearer way of showing our love for Zion than praying for it – praying that the Lord will build up His Zion. The wonderful promise is that the Lord will yet build up His Church and manifest His majesty. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory," Psalm 102:16. But prayer is connected with the promise, as the next verse shows; "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." Well does the Lord know the low state of His Church, but he has directed us to come to Him with our complaints about it, and our petitions for it. "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," Ezekiel 36:37. What will He do for them? The previous verse tells us, "Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord *build the ruined places*." Prayer, above everything else, is the duty laid on believers.

Of course, God uses men as His instruments for building the Church. That wise master builder, the Apostle Paul, did a building work by preaching the truth and maintaining order in the Churches. While it is necessary to pray, it is not enough to pray. The Lord's servants are sure that their duty to cry to the Lord in no way diminishes their responsibility to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord" in other ways. Again and again Nehemiah prayed to the Lord, but he also pressed on with building of the wall; and he urged others, "Come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." May we have the same response as those whom Nehemiah addressed: "Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." Nehemiah 2:18.

We can be certain that our endeavours to further “this good work” will meet with opposition, as surely as did the efforts of Nehemiah and his companions. But despite all their troubles at the hands of their enemies they persevered and succeeded. The wall was built “even in troublous times”.

But when all is said and done, the builders of Zion’s walls have to say, as it were, “Except the Lord build the walls, they labour in vain who build them.” And so we are brought back to the precious fact that the building of the walls is essentially the doing of the Lord. “The *Lord* doth build up Jerusalem: *he* gathereth together the outcasts of Israel,” Psalm 147:2. It has been a sweet, consoling truth to the godly down through the ages that the divine Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, has pledged His power for the building and preservation of His Church. “Upon this rock I will build my church,” He declares, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Therefore, as we sadly look upon the crumbling walls and demolished bulwarks, we must also expectantly look unto the Lord; and to Him we must earnestly cry as David did:

“Shew kindness, and do good, O Lord,
to Sion, thine own hill;
The walls of thy Jerusalem
build up of thy good will.” (Metrical Psalm 51:18)



Sermon Glorious Grace

*Jonathan Edwards**

(Slightly edited to obviate some obscurities in punctuation, vocabulary and syntax. – Editor)

“ . . . And he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shouting, crying, Grace, Grace unto it!” *Zechariah 4:7*

THE mercy of God is that attribute which we, the fallen, sinful race of Adam, stand in greatest need of, and God has been pleased, according to our needs, more gloriously to manifest this attribute than any other. The wonders of divine grace are the greatest of all wonders. The wonders of divine power and wisdom in the making of this great world are marvellous; other wonders of His justice in punishing sin are wonderful; many wonderful things have happened since the creation of the world, but none like the wonders of grace. “Grace, grace!” is the sound with which the gospel rings. “Grace, grace!” will be that shout which will ring in heaven forever. And perhaps what the angels sung at the

* See footnote on next page

birth of Christ – of God's good will towards men – is the highest theme that ever they entered upon.

In order to understand the words of our text, we are to take notice that the scope and design of the chapter is to comfort and encourage the children of Israel, now returned out of their Babylonish captivity, in the building of Jerusalem and the temple. It seems they were very much disheartened by reason of the opposition they met with in the work, and the want of the external glory of the former temple before the captivity. The priests and the Levites, and the chief of the fathers, wept aloud as the rest shouted at the sight, as you may see in Ezra 3: 12, "But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy." You may see a full account of their great oppositions and discouragements in the fourth and fifth chapters.

The prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, were sent on this occasion to comfort them under those discouragements by foretelling the glories of the gospel that should be displayed in this latter house; glories far beyond the glories of the former, notwithstanding the former far exceeded in external glory. "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Haggai 2:3 - 9.

See also, in the third chapter of this book of Zechariah, at the eighth verse, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee:

* Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) became pastor at Northampton, Massachusetts in 1727. An awakening began in his congregation in 1735. Because he insisted that conversion was a necessary qualification for partaking of the Lord's Supper, he was dismissed from his pastorate in 1750 after a two year contest with those who opposed him. He became the pastor of a small congregation at Stockbridge, and a missionary to the Housatonic Indians. At Stockbridge he wrote his famous treatises on the Will and Original Sin, among others. He was installed as President of the College of New Jersey, at Princeton, in 1758, but died of smallpox some three months later. See the issue of November 1996 for a biographical sketch of this eminent servant of Christ.

for they are men wondered at: for behold, I will bring forth my servant, the BRANCH." And the same subject is continued in this chapter, even the glorious grace of the gospel, which was to be manifested by Christ in this temple.

More particularly, it is continued in our text: "And they shall bring forth the headstone with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it." The headstone is that which entirely crowns and finishes the whole work, signifying that the entire gospel dispensation was to be finished in mere grace. This stone was to be brought with repeated shouting or rejoicings at the grace of God, signifying the admirableness and gloriousness of this grace.

The **doctrine** of our text is that *the gospel dispensation is finished wholly and entirely in free and glorious grace*. There is glorious grace in it; grace shines in every part of the work of redemption; the foundation is laid in grace, the superstructure is reared in grace, and the whole is finished in glorious grace.

If Adam had persevered in obedience, he would have been made happy by mere bounty and goodness; for God was not obliged to reward Adam for his perfect obedience any otherwise than by covenant, for Adam by standing would not have merited happiness. But yet this grace would not have been such as the grace of the gospel, for he would have been saved upon the account of what he himself did, but the salvation of the gospel is given altogether freely. "And if by grace, then it is no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Romans 11:6.

That we may give you as full explication of this doctrine as we can, we shall: **First**, show that free grace shines forth in the distinct parts of this wondrous work of redemption; **Second**, speak a little of the gloriousness of this grace.

I. As to the first, that every part of this great work of redemption was performed of mere grace, notice:

First, it was of free grace that God had any thoughts or designs of rescuing mankind after the Fall. If there had not been an immense fountain of goodness in God, He would never have entertained any thoughts at all of ever redeeming us after our defection. Man was happy enough at first, and might have continued so to all eternity, if he would; he was not compelled to fall. If he had not willfully and sinfully rebelled against God, he would never have been driven forth like an unworthy wretch, as he was. But although God had been so overflowing in His bounty to him as to make him head over the lower creation and ruler of all other creatures, and had planted a garden on purpose for his delight, and would have fixed him in an eternal happiness only on the reasonable condition of his obeying the easy commands of His Maker; but yet notwithstanding all, he rebelled and turned over from God to the devil, out of a

wicked ambition of being a god himself, not content in that happy state that he was in as man. And so he rebelled against God's authority.

Now who, but God of boundless grace, would not have been provoked after this to leave man as he was, in the miserable state into which he had brought himself by his disobedience; resolving to help him no more; leaving him to himself and to the punishment he had deserved; leaving him in the devil's hands where he had thrown himself when he was not contented in the arms of his Creator? Who, but One of boundless grace, would ever have entertained any thoughts of finding out a way for his recovery?

God had no need of us, or of our praises. He has enough in Himself for Himself, and neither needs nor desires any additions of happiness. And if He did need the worship of His creatures, He had thousands and ten thousands of angels; and if He had not enough, He could create more. Or, He could have glorified His justice in man's eternal ruin, and have with infinite ease created other beings, more perfect and glorious than man, eternally to sing His praises.

Second, as to every part of redemption being performed of free grace, *it was especially of rich and boundless grace that He gave His only Son for our restoration.* By our fall, we are cast down so low into sin and misery, so deeply plunged into a most miserable and sinful condition, that it may truly be said, although all things are infinitely easy to God with respect to His omnipotency, yet with respect to God's holiness and justice, God Himself could not redeem us without a great deal of cost, no, not without infinite cost; that is, not without the presence of that which is of infinite value, even the blood of His Son.

This was absolutely necessary in order to our redemption, because there was no other way of satisfying God's justice. When we were alienated, it was come to this: either we must die eternally, or the Son of God must spill His blood; either we, or God's own Son must suffer God's wrath; one of the two: either miserable worms of the dust that had deserved it, or the glorious, amiable, beautiful, and innocent Son of God. The fall of man brought it to this; it must be determined one way or the other, and it was determined by the strangely free and boundless grace of God, that His own Son should die that the offending worms might be freed, and set at liberty from their punishment, and that they might be made happy. Here is grace indeed; well may we shout, "Grace, grace!" at this.

The heathens used to reckon that an only son slain in sacrifice was the greatest gift that could be offered to the gods. This they used sometimes to offer in times of great distress. But we have a stranger thing than that declared to us in the gospel; not that men sacrificed their only sons to God, but that God gave His only Son to be slain, a sacrifice for man. God once commanded Abraham to offer his only son to Him, and perhaps the faith and love of Abraham may be looked upon as wonderful: that he was willing to perform it. There are few that would do it in

these days; but if you wonder at that, how wonderful it is that, instead of Abraham offering his only son to God, God should give His only Son to be offered for Abraham, and for every child of Abraham. Certainly, you will acknowledge this to be a wonder not to be paralleled.

And besides, God did not do this for friends, but for enemies and haters of Him. He did not do it for loyal subjects, but for rebels; He did not do it for those that were His children, but for the children of the devil; He did not do it for those that were excellent, but for those that were more hateful than toads or vipers; He did not do it for those that could be any way profitable or advantageous to Him, but for those that were so weak, that instead of profiting God, they were not able in the least to help themselves.

God has given even fallen man such a gift that He has left nothing for man to do that he may be happy, but only to receive what is given him. Though man has sinned, yet God requires no amends to be made by him; He requires of him no restoration; He requires no penance in order that men be forgiven. If they will receive His Son of Him, He requires neither money nor price. What God offers, He offers freely. God offers man eternal happiness upon far more gracious terms since he is fallen than before. Before, he was to do something himself for his happiness; he was to obey the law: but since man is fallen, God offers to save him for nothing, only if he will receive salvation as it is offered; that is, freely through Christ, by faith in Him.

Thirdly, it was of mere grace that the Son was so freely willing to undertake our salvation. How cheerfully, yea how joyfully, did He undertake it, although He Himself was the very person that was to suffer for man. Though He Himself was to bear his sin and be made sin for him, yet how cheerfully doth He speak: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." Psalm 40:7,8. He says, in Proverbs 8:31, that His "delights were with the sons of men," for so much did He love them that He Himself was willing to die in their room, rather than that they should be miserable. He freely undertook this out of mere love and pity, for He never was, and never will be, repaid by them for His blood.

Fourth, the application of the redemption of the gospel, by the Holy Spirit, is of mere grace. Although God the Father has provided a Saviour for us, and Christ has come and died, and there is nothing wanting but our willing and hearty reception of Christ; yet we shall eternally perish if God is not gracious to us, and does not make application of Christ's benefits to our souls. We are dependent on free grace, even for ability to lay hold on Christ already offered, so entirely is the gospel dispensation of mere grace. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8 That is, we shall be saved freely and for nothing if we will but accept of Christ.

But we are not able to do that of ourselves; it is the free gift of God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:9,10.

II. We shall briefly speak to the gloriousness of this grace.

As the grace of the gospel is altogether free, so it is *glorious*. The angels stoop down, with eyes full of wonder and joy, to look into it, and to shout for gladness and admiration at the sight of it. How did the multitudes of heavenly hosts shout at the birth of Christ, crying, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and good will toward men!" Well may the top stone of this house be brought forth with shouting, crying, "Grace! Grace!" to it.

All the attributes of God do illustriously shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ: His *wisdom* in so contriving His power in conquering death and the devil, and the hard and rocky hearts of depraved men; His *justice* in punishing sins of men rather upon His own dear Son, than let them go unpunished; but more especially in His *grace*, that sweet attribute, He has magnified His mercy above all His names.

The grace of God, exhibited in the gospel, is *glorious* because,

First, of the greatness of it. Every circumstance of the gospel, grace surprisingly heightens it; let us look on what part we will, we shall see enough to fill us and all the angels in heaven with admiration forever. If we consider it as the grace of God the Father, and consider His greatness, His holiness, His power and justice, immensity and eternity; if we diligently consider how great a being He is, who took such pity and compassion on mankind, it is enough to astonish us. Or, if we consider ourselves, on whom this great God has bestowed this grace, we are nothing but worms, yea less than worms, before God; and not only so, but sinful worms, worms swollen with enmity against God. If we consider Him by whom we receive grace, the Son of God who made heaven and earth by His almighty power, and is equal with the Father; if we consider the greatness of what He did when He died most ignominiously and painfully in our nature; it all infinitely heightens the grace of the gospel.

Second, the grace of God, exhibited in the gospel, is *glorious* because of its glorious fruit. No less than salvation and eternal glory are the fruits of this grace of the gospel; adoption, union with Christ, communion with God, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly happiness, the pleasure of the eternal paradise, the new Jerusalem, the glorious and triumphant resurrection of the body, an everlasting reign with Christ in the height of glory. And pleasure and happiness, no less than these fruits, are the effects of this marvellous grace.

What a vast difference is there between a poor, miserable sinner who is full of

sin and condemned to hellfire, and a saint shining forth in robes of glory, and crowned with a crown of victory and triumph. But it is no less a difference than this that is made in the same man, by the grace of God in Christ.

Application.

Hence we learn, *first, how they dishonour God and the gospel, who depend on anything else but mere grace.* The gospel is far the most glorious manifestation of God's glory that ever was made to man, and the glory of the gospel is free grace and mere mercy. Now those that will not depend on this free grace, they do what they can to deprive the gospel of this glory and sully the glory of God therein shining forth. They take away the praise, glory, and honour, that is due to God by His free grace and mercy to men, and set up themselves as the objects of it, as if their salvation, at least partly, was owing to what they have done.

This must needs be very provoking and highly affronting to God. When miserable sinners, having fallen into such a miserable estate that it is impossible they should be saved by any other means than by pure grace, and when God is so gloriously rich in His goodness as to offer this free grace unto them out of pity to them; how provoking must it be to God when these miserable, helpless wretches attribute any part of their salvation to themselves.

It is not an opportunity to buy and procure our own salvation that God offers, but an opportunity to lay hold on that salvation which is already bought and procured, and offered to us; neither are we able to do this of ourselves; it is the gift of God.

There are some who hope to be saved in quite another way than ever the gospel proposed; that is, by their own righteousness; by being so good and doing so well as that God shall take their goodness as sufficient to counterbalance their sin that they have committed, and thereby they make their own goodness to be of equal value with Christ's blood. This conceit is very apt to creep into the proud heart of man.

Some openly profess to be able to merit salvation, as papists. Others hold that they are able to prepare and fit themselves for salvation already merited, or at least are able to do something towards it of themselves, and it is to be feared that many that do not openly profess either their own righteousness or their own strength, do very much depend upon both. By this doctrine, how much they dishonour the free grace of the gospel!

Secondly, let all be exhorted to accept the grace of the gospel. One would think that there should be no need of such exhortations as this, but alas, such is the dreadful wickedness and the horrible ingratitude of man's heart that he needs abundance of persuading and entreating to accept of God's kindness when it is

offered to him. We should count it horrible ingratitude in a poor, necessitous creature, to refuse our help and kindness when we, out of mere pity to him, offer to relieve and help him. If you should see a man in extremity of distress, and in a perishing necessity of help and relief, and you should lay out yourself with much labour and cost, out of compassion to him, that he might be relieved, how would you take it of him if he should proudly and spitefully refuse it and snuff at it, instead of thanking you for it? Would you not look upon it as a very ungrateful, unreasonable, base thing? And why has not God a thousand times more cause to look upon you as base and ungrateful, if you refuse His glorious grace in the gospel that He offers you? When God saw mankind in a most necessitous condition, in the greatest and extremest distress, being exposed to hellfire and eternal death, from which it was impossible he should ever deliver himself, or that ever he should be delivered by any other means, He took pity on them, and brought them from the jaws of destruction by His own blood. Now, what great ingratitude is it for them to refuse such grace as this.

But so it is: multitudes will not accept a free gift at the hands of the King of the world. They have the daring, horrible presumption to refuse a kindness offered by God Himself, and not to accept a gift at the hands of Jehovah, nor of His own Son equal with himself. Yea, they will not accept of Him though He died a most tormenting death, though He died that they may be delivered from hell, and that they may have heaven. They will not accept of this gift, though they are in such necessity of it, and must be miserable forever without it. Yea, although God the Father invites and importunes them, they will not accept of it. Though the Son of God Himself knocks and calls at their door till His head is wet with the dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, arguing and pleading with them to accept of Him for their own sakes; though He makes so many glorious promises; though He holds forth so many precious benefits to draw them to happiness, perhaps for many years together; yet they obstinately refuse all. Was ever such ingratitude heard of, or can greater be conceived of?

What would you have God do for you, that you may accept of it? Is the gift that He offers too small? Do you think it too little for you to accept? Does not God offer you His Son, and what could God offer more? Yea, we may say, God Himself has not a greater gift to offer. Did not the Son of God do enough? Did He not die, and what could he do more? Yea, we may say that the Son of God could not do a greater thing for man. Do you refuse because you want to be invited and wooed? You may hear him, from day to day, inviting you, if you will but hearken. Or is it because you don't stand in need of God's grace? You need it so much as that you must either receive it or be damned to all eternity; and what greater need can there possibly be?

Alas, miserable creatures that we are, instead of the gift of God offered in the

gospel not being great enough for us, it is that we are not worthy of anything at all. We are not worthy of the least of all God's mercies; not worthy of the least crumb of bread, the least drop of water, or the least ray of light. Instead of Christ not having done enough by His dying in such pain and ignominy, it is that we are not worthy that He should so much as look on us. Instead of Christ so long urging of us to be eternally happy, we are not worthy that He should once make an offer of the least benefit.

Whoever continues to refuse Christ will find hereafter that instead of his having no need of Him, the least drop of His blood would have been more worth to them, than all the world. Wherefore, let none be so ungrateful to God and so unwise for themselves, as to refuse the glorious grace of the gospel.

Thirdly, let those who have been made partakers of this free and glorious grace of God, spend their lives much in praises and hallelujahs to God, for the wonders of His mercy in their redemption. To you, O redeemed of the Lord, doth this doctrine most directly apply itself. You have been made partakers of all this glorious grace of which you have now heard. It is you that God entertained thoughts of restoring from your miserable fall into dreadful depravity and corruption, and from danger of the dreadful misery that unavoidably follows upon it. It is for you that God gave His Son, yea, His only Son, and sent Him into the world. It is for you that the Son of God so freely gave Himself; it is for you that He was born, died, rose again and ascended, and intercedes. It is to you that the free application of the fruit of these things is made: all this is done perfectly and altogether freely, without any of your desert, without any of your righteousness or strength. Wherefore, let your life be spent in praises to God. When you praise Him in prayer, let it not be with coldness and indifference; when you praise Him in your closet, let your whole soul be active therein. When you praise Him in singing, do not barely make a noise without any stirring of affection in the heart, without any internal melody. Surely, you have reason to shout, to cry, "Grace, grace, be the top stone of the temple!" Certainly, you do not lack mercy and bounty for which to praise God; you only need a heart and lively affections to praise Him with.

Surely, if the angels are so astonished at God's mercy to you, and do even shout with joy and admiration at the sight of God's grace to you, you yourself, on whom this grace is bestowed, have much more reason to shout.

Consider that a great part of your happiness in heaven to all eternity will consist in this: in praising of God for His free and glorious grace in redeeming you. And if you would spend more time about it on earth, you would find this world would be much more of a heaven to you than it is. Wherefore, do nothing while you are alive but speak and think and live God's praises. ●

A Catechism for the Instruction of Communicants

*Andrew Thomson, D.D.**

Questions 1 to 28

1. Q. *What parts of the New Testament give us an account of the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper?*

A. Matthew 26: 26; Mark 14: 22; Luke 22: 19; 1 Corinthians 11: 23.

2. Q. *By whom was this sacrament instituted?*

A. By Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world.

3. Q. *When did He institute it?*

A. The same night in which Judas betrayed Him into the hands of His enemies.

4. Q. *By what names is it usually known?*

A. It is usually called the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, or the Communion.

5. Q. *Why is it called the Lord's Supper?*

A. Because it was instituted by Christ immediately after He had eaten the Paschal Supper, with His disciples, and it is to be regarded by Christians as a feast in honour of their Lord.

6. Q. *Why is it called the Eucharist?*

A. Because it is an occasion of special and solemn thanksgiving to God for His goodness in giving up His own Son to death for our salvation – the term Eucharist being derived from a word which signifies thanksgiving.

* *The Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* informs us that Andrew Thomson (1779-1831), a leading Evangelical in the Church of Scotland, was editor of the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, which served to foster the growth of the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland from a fairly small minority in the General Assembly to a majority. He was minister first of Sprouston (1802), then was translated to the East Church, Perth in 1808, to New Greyfriars, Edinburgh in 1810, and to St George's, Edinburgh in 1814. There he remained until his death. He was the great champion of the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland in his day, and was described by Thomas Chalmers as a man of "colossal mind". He was a most skillful teacher of the young. He wrote the above catechism, under the title, *A Catechism for the Instruction of Communicants in the Nature and Uses of the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper*, for prospective communicants.

7. Q. *Why is it called communion?*

A. Either because it is a communion with Christ the Saviour, or because it is a communion with one another as disciples of Christ.

8. Q. *Was it intended to be of perpetual obligation in the Church?*

A. Yes.

9. Q. *Why do you think so?*

A. Because the Apostle Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 11: 26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come:" and because the Christians of the first ages, who enjoyed the best means of information, had this opinion of it, and continued to celebrate it after the disciples and Apostles had left the world.

10. Q. *How often should it be observed?*

A. Scripture gives us no particular instruction on that point; but certainly we may conclude from its nature and purposes, that we should observe it as often as opportunities occur, and circumstances permit.

11. Q. *What are the elements made use of in the Sacrament?*

A. Bread and wine.

12. Q. *What did our Saviour do before He distributed the bread and wine?*

A. He gave thanks and blessed them.

13. Q. *What does this teach us?*

A. To express our gratitude to God for His great and tender mercy before we partake of the ordinance, and to depend upon His blessing as that which alone can make it useful.

14. Q. *What do the bread and wine made use of in the Lord's Supper represent?*

A. The bread that is broken, and the wine that is poured out, represent the broken body and shed blood of Christ; or, more properly speaking, they represent that atoning sacrifice of Himself which Christ offered up for sin, when His body was broken, and His blood was shed upon the cross.

15. Q. *Whence does this appear?*

A. From the words of the institution. When our Saviour gave the bread to His disciples, He said, "This is my body, which is given for you;" and when He gave the cup, He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

16. Q. *What do you mean by Christ's offering Himself up a sacrifice for sin?*

A. I mean His submitting in our room and stead to that wrath and curse of God which was due to us for transgressing the divine law.

17. Q. *Did Christ actually offer Himself up a sacrifice for sin?*

A. Yes: we are told so in Scripture as plainly and distinctly as language can express it.

18. Q. *What is the language of Scripture on this point?*

A. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God..." (Ephesians 5:2). "Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:" (1 Corinthians 5:7.). "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh," (1 Peter 3:18). "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" (Hebrews 10:11,12).

19. Q. *Is this sacrifice, which is represented in the Lord's Supper, to be trusted in as perfectly sufficient to answer the ends for which it was offered up?*

A. Yes: it is so, both because it was appointed, and because it has been accepted of by God.

20. Q. *How do you know that it was appointed by God?*

A. From such passages of Scripture as these: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). "The LORD hath laid on him [that is, on Christ] the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6). "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth [or ordained] to be a propitiation." (Romans 3:24,25).

21. Q. *How do you know that God hath accepted of the sacrifice that Christ offered?*

A. I discover this from the whole tenor of the gospel, as contained in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, and particularly from such declarations as the following: "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Romans 5:11). "He [that is, Christ] humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also [that is, in token of His approbation] hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:" (Philippians 2:8,9). "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

22. Q. *Is the death or offering up of Christ upon the cross, to be considered as any thing more than an atonement for sin?*

A. Yes: it is also to be considered as the finishing part of that obedience to the law of God which Christ undertook to render as "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6) and as He was then in a suffering state, it is usually called His passive [or suffering] obedience; as His fulfilment of the precepts of the law during His life is called His active obedience.

23. Q. *Is not the death of Christ, therefore, held out in Scripture, as the great meritorious cause of all the blessings communicated through the gospel?*

A. Yes: the Apostle Paul says, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." (1 Thessalonians 5:9,10).

24. Q. *Is the pardon of sin ascribed to the death or sacrifice of Christ?*

A. Yes: "In whom [that is, Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Ephesians 1:7).

25. Q. *Is peace and reconciliation with God ascribed to the same cause?*

A. Yes: "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace," (Ephesians 2:13,14), and, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." (Romans 5:10).

26. Q. *Is the gift of eternal life ascribed to the same cause?*

A. Yes: for the Saviour Himself says, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood," – that is, whoso confideth in the merits of my death – "hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:54).

27. Q. *Is a meetness for heaven ascribed to the same cause?*

A. Yes: "The blood of Jesus Christ ...cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7). "By the which will [that is, God's] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:10) "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:14).

28. Q. *Are not all these blessings, then, set before us in the holy Sacrament of the Supper?*

A. Yes: in that ordinance Jesus Christ is held out to us, and we see Him by faith, as our salvation, in the most extensive sense of the word, as, "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30).

A Tribute to The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)

Elijah Thomas Chacko

The leaflet bearing this title has been published recently by The Westminster Tradition, an organisation in Singapore which stands "for the advancement of the Reformed Faith". By kind permission we reproduce the leaflet here in a slightly edited form. Pastor Chacko, with some of his congregation, visited New Zealand in 1994 and attended some of our church services there. —Editor

WHILE we acknowledge that Scriptural creeds and confessions cannot take the place of the Holy Scriptures as the pre-eminent, final and entirely complete rule of faith and life for all men, yet it would be utter folly to undermine their vital role and diminish their value in the Church. The value of creeds and confessions was particularly underlined by the pivotal function they played in the battle for the historic Christian faith.

Of all the creeds and confessions, those formulated during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries, are without doubt the most outstanding in the annals of church history. One predominant reason for this was that the battle against apostasy came to a climax during this period. The Antichrist, that is, the Papacy, was convincingly defeated, and exposed for what it is. The Reformed creeds and confessions were formulated not only to summarise the doctrines of Scripture but also to refute the false teachings propounded by the Roman Catholic Church and her offspring churches.

The most famous of these confessions is *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, the product of the collective learning and wisdom of some of the ablest and most spiritual men in England and Scotland in any generation. They possessed almost unrivalled acumen and judgement. The *Confession of Faith* was drawn up in the first half of the 17th century, during the reign of Charles I. It was completed in 1646. In comparison to other credal works, the *Confession of Faith* is matchless in terms of accuracy, cogency, clarity and comprehensiveness. It is theology compressed into a compendium, and the incredible thing is that it is crafted so eloquently. Notwithstanding its conciseness, none of the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith are omitted. It contains the whole range of Reformation teaching, and is Calvinism in its quintessence. Without doubt, it is an excellent exposition of the historic Christian faith.

Now, I aver again, the essence of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* is Calvinism, that system of theology formulated by John Calvin, a Frenchman who

laboured in Geneva, making it the Reformation capital of the world at that time. While John Calvin, being its ablest and strongest proponent, rightly deserves the honour of having his name used to identify this particular system of interpreting the Holy Scriptures, he is by no means its sole exponent. He was preceded by other illustrious men, some of them way back to the time of the pristine New Testament church. Augustine (354 - 430 AD) was a renowned teacher of much of what later was known as Calvinism. It was practical Calvinism that motivated the Separatists, the Puritans, the Pilgrim Fathers, the English Non-Conformists, the Scottish Covenanters, the French Huguenots, and the American Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Hence it is no surprise that most of them embraced *The Westminster Confession of Faith* as their subordinate standard, firstly, for the interpretation of the Bible, and secondly, as the declaration of their doctrinal stance, (though some of the others adopted a modified form).

We affirm that Calvinism is the only true and proper interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; and there can be no other. With the avalanche of wrong teachings (such as Arminianism, Higher Criticism, Dispensationalism, Charismatism, and Pentecostalism) having been conceived in the womb of apostasy, and spawned in Christendom with alarming rapidity, the necessity for creeds becomes imperative. We are therefore immeasurably indebted to God for the fact that we have inherited Calvinism, with its pastoral implications. By the grace of God, we refuse to condone all other modes of interpretation. The body of teaching found in Calvinism, also known as the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God, was bequeathed to us because our godly forbears stood steadfast for the truth, despite the fierce persecutions and martyrdom they had to suffer. It is our firm view that this glorious legacy called Calvinism is in full bloom in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*.

Before concluding, it is needful for me to comment on a very serious matter. We are adopting the original version (1646) of the *Confession* as our official creed, and in doing so we are categorically renouncing all other amended versions, including the 1903 revision. The latter, among other things, precludes the Establishment Principle. We now affirm this principle, thanks to the godly influence wielded by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The refutation of the Establishment Principle wrests from Christ Jesus His rightful sovereignty over the nations (Psalm 2 and Psalm 110). In recording in the second Psalm the crowning of Christ as King, the Psalmist did not confine the scope of His royal sceptre to Zion alone but to all the nations of the world. Difficulties in comprehending how the doctrine could be practically implemented in many parts of the world should not in any way prevent us from embracing it by faith. Our conviction of the tenets of our faith is never dependent on their feasibility

from the perspective of human logic. Those who advocate Voluntaryism stand grossly guilty of denying Christ His claim of dominion over all nations, and thereby are inclined to depose our Lord from the rightful realm of His reign.

Apart from the deletion of the Establishment Principle, another salient point that has been obliterated from the 1903 version of the *Confession* is the statement of the fact that the Romish papacy is the Antichrist. This statement of the identity of Antichrist has been the consistent position of almost all the renowned Reformers (including Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox), and the Puritans. However, the 1903 version of the *Confession* literally expunges this statement, reflecting the spiritual declension of those in Princeton Seminary who advocated the amendment at the turn of the century. It is our conviction that the denial of the Pope as the Antichrist effectually paves the way for Protestant churches to be amalgamated with Rome. One ought to be wary of the stance of Princeton at around that time and since then, for in significant aspects it had defected from conservative, reformed thinking. We do not rule out the possibility of the involvement of the Jesuits in this matter. How enormous is the power exerted by Rome when even a Reformed citadel like Princeton should capitulate!

In any case, our espousal of the original version of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* marks another watershed in the process of reformation in our churches. We here, in our churches in Singapore and Malaysia, are very grateful for the grace of God in enabling us to subscribe to *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and to its ancillary documents, *The Larger Catechism* and *The Shorter Catechism*, in their original versions.

Obituary

James MacPherson, Elder, Gisborne, New Zealand

ON 24th September last year, the sad news reached us of the death of James MacPherson, Gisborne, at the age of 74 years. It was the end of many years of conflict with heart disease, to which at last his body succumbed. However, it was also the end of many years of Christian warfare in which we have good reason to believe that our late friend was victorious. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life," (Rev. 2:10).

This Christian warfare was preceded by a godly upbringing in the truly pious home of his parents. Jim was the second oldest in the family of Mr and Mrs Murdo MacPherson and grew up in comparative isolation about 100 kilometres

north of Gisborne. This isolated situation was unavoidable as his father farmed a sheep farm, and the family home necessarily had to be in the country. That situation, however, was not without its advantages. It meant less exposure to the influences of a society and culture that were increasingly removing the Bible from its daily diet.

One of the great privileges our late friend enjoyed in the days of his youth was exposure to the Holy Scriptures throughout his formative years. Although it was not possible to attend public church services because of the apostasy of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, the family had formal worship services conducted weekly in the home, in addition to ordinary family worship and catechising. These influences kept Jim from much temptation when later he had to leave home and do his duty to his country in the Second World War. For several years he was away from New Zealand during active service that took him to North Africa and Italy.

After returning home from the war he took a job not far from Invercargill in the South Island, where he continued for several years. It is not known what caused him to be exercised about solemn spiritual realities, and led him to seek for salvation. A telegram he received on the 27th January 1949, his 27th birthday, must have had a deep effect on him. It proved to contain the sad tidings of the death of his younger brother Duncan at the young age of 22 years. After his return home he evidently lost all desire to go back to an employment sphere that had taken him away from the pious influences of a godly home environment.

The truth however was to have a more profound effect when by the grace of God he was effectually called out of the power of darkness into God's marvellous light. After years of conviction of sin he came to the liberty of the gospel under a sermon preached by the Rev William MacLean. This was when Mr MacLean was out in New Zealand as a church deputy in 1959 accompanied by John MacKenzie, elder. They had been empowered by the Synod to act as a Kirk Session to receive members into the communion of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Jim was among the members received at that time in Gisborne and sat for the first time at the Lord's table on the last Sabbath of February 1959. It was the beginning of nearly 38 years of usefulness in the church militant.

At the first election of office-bearers in the Gisborne Congregation he was elected an elder, and he acted in that capacity till the day of his death. Throughout his years as an office-bearer he was a valued member of the various Free Presbyterian Church courts and very clearly appreciated the need for a separate witness. Consequently he was a member of the church court which in 1968 adopted a strong protest against the acquittal, by the Presbyterian Church of New

Zealand, of Professor Lloyd Geering of a charge of heresy. The following is a small extract of the Protest: "...In the light of the base treachery shown to the Divine Redeemer by the decision of the General Assembly, the Kirk Session are of the opinion that the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand can no longer be regarded as a branch of Christ's visible church on earth, but apostate from the faith once delivered to the saints, and that to those within her pale, the exhortation also applies, And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues'."

This clause of the protest now applies even more because the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand has officially distanced herself from the Confessional statement that the Pope is the Antichrist. It is not surprising therefore that this denomination has entered close ecumenical relationships with the Roman apostasy through membership of the Conference of Churches of which the Roman Church is a member.

On several occasions Jim travelled to Scotland to take part in the meetings of Synod. The last occasion he undertook the long journey to Scotland was in 1989 to take part in the Synod proceedings in connection with the MacKay case. He was thankful that discipline was upheld by the Synod but saddened that the Church was rent asunder and that the subsequent split also made havoc of the congregations in New Zealand. Jim was a man for unity. He loved the whole truth and therefore exerted himself for an unmutilated Bible and an unmutilated Westminster Confession of Faith. This is what led him to set up the New Zealand auxiliary of the Trinitarian Bible Society in 1987. At the inaugurating meeting on 1st June 1987 in Auckland he was elected chairman, and he continued in that capacity until the day of his lamented death.

The last occasion that he set out for Britain was in April 1993. It was his desire to join with his fellow believers in Edinburgh in thanksgiving for the testimony that was raised in 1893 and that led to the constitution and witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. He had to abandon this attempt on reaching Auckland as severe attacks of angina forced him to return to Gisborne. He was enabled to continue his labours in the Church, the church courts and the Trinitarian Bible Society for a further three and a half years.

We have reason therefore for thanksgiving that in spite of failing health he was preserved for usefulness in the cause of Christ for so many years. To his grieving widow and family we extend our sincere sympathy.

(Rev.) Johannes van Dorp

Heaven Hard to be Won

A letter from *Samuel Rutherford* in 1637, when he was confined in exile in Aberdeen for the gospel, to one of his parishioners, John Gordon, at Rusco.

(See page 150 for a Review of *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*)

Dear Brother,

I earnestly desire to know the case of your soul and to understand that you have made sure work of heaven and salvation.

1. Remember that salvation is one of Christ's dainties which He giveth but to a few.

2. Remember that it is violent sweating and striving that taketh heaven.

3. That it cost Christ's blood to purchase that house to sinners, and to set mankind down as the King's free tenants and freeholders.

4. That many make a start toward heaven who fall on their back and win not up to the top of the mount. It plucketh heart and legs from them, and they sit down and give it over, because the devil setteth a sweet-smelled flower to their nose (this fair busked* world) wherewith they are bewitched, and so forget or refuse to go forward.

5. Remember that many go far on and reform many things, and can find tears, as Esau did; and suffer hunger for truth, as Judas did; and wish and desire the end of the righteous, as Balaam did; and profess fair, and fight for the Lord, as Saul did; and desire the saints of God to pray for them, as Pharaoh and Simon Magus did; and prophesy and speak of Christ, as Caiaphas did; and walk softly and mourn for fear of judgements, as Ahab did; and put away gross sins and idolatry, as Jehu did; and hear the Word of God gladly, and reform their life in many things according to the Word, as Herod did; and say to Christ, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," as the man who offered to be Christ's servant did (Matt. 8:19). And many may taste of the virtues of the life to come, and be partaker of the wonderful gifts of the Holy Ghost, and taste of the good Word of God, as did the apostates who sin against the Holy Ghost (Heb. 6). And yet all these are but like gold in clink and colour, and watered brass, and base metal. These are written that we should try ourselves, and not rest till we be a step nearer Christ than sunburnt and withering professors can come.

6. Consider that it is impossible that your idol-sins and you can go to heaven together, and that they who will not part with these can, indeed, love Christ at the bottom, but only in word and show, which will not do the business.

*Adorned

7. Remember how swiftly God's post time flieth away, and that your forenoon is already spent, your afternoon will come, and then your evening, and at last night, when you cannot see to work. Let your heart be set upon finishing of your journey and summing and laying your accounts with your Lord. O how blessed shall you be to have a joyful welcome of your Lord at night! How blessed are they who, in time take sure course with their souls! Bless His great name for what you possess in goods and children, ease and worldly contentment, that He hath given you; and seek to be like Christ in humility and lowliness of mind. And be not great and entire with the world. Make it not your god, nor your lover that you trust unto, for it will deceive you.

I recommend Christ and His love to you, in all things. Let Him have the flower of your heart and your love. Set a low price upon all things but Christ, and cry down in your thoughts clay and dirt, that will not comfort you when you get summons to remove, and appear before your Judge to answer for all the deeds done in the body. The Lord give you wisdom in all things. I beseech you sanctify God in your speaking, for holy and reverend is His name; and be temperate and sober. Keeping company with the bad is a sin that holdeth many out of heaven.

I will not believe that you will receive the ministry of a stranger, who will preach a new and uncouth doctrine to you. Let my salvation stand for it, if I delivered not the plain and whole counsel of God to you in His Word.

Read this letter to your wife, and remember my love to her, and request her to take heed to do what I write to you. I pray for you and yours. Remember me in your prayers to our Lord, that He would be pleased to send me amongst you again. Grace be with you.

Your lawful and loving pastor.

S. R.

Book Reviews

Letters of Samuel Rutherford

The Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 206 pages, £2.50. Obtainable from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD became minister of "fair Anworth by the Solway" in 1627 and there he showed his people, as an English merchant put it, "the loveliness of Christ". In August 1636 he was exiled to Aberdeen because he would not bow to the demands of the bishops. It is from there that most of his surviving correspondence was written. In this book we have a well-chosen

selection of these Christ-exalting letters, though some of them were written in later years – one just before his death in 1661.

Painful though it was to think of being separated from preaching the gospel to his people in Anworth, he could write, with exile in view, “Sweet, sweet is the Lord’s cross. . . . My Bridegroom’s love-blinks fatten my weary soul. I soon go to my King’s palace in Aberdeen.” After reaching there he exclaimed in a letter to Robert Blair, another persecuted minister, “Courage, courage! Joy, joy for evermore! O joy unspeakable and glorious! O for help to set my crowned King on high! O for love to Him who is altogether lovely – that love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown!”

From Aberdeen he warned John Gordon of Cardoness, “I beseech you, sir, by the salvation of your precious soul and the mercies of God, to make a good and sure work of your salvation and try upon what ground-stone you have builded. . . . O for the Lord’s sake look narrowly to the work.”

To a young convert he wrote, “I rejoice to hear Christ hath run away with your young love, and that you are, so early in the morning, matched with such a Lord; for a young man is often a dressed lodging for the devil to dwell in. Be humble and thankful for grace, and judge it not so much by weight, as by its truth. Christ will not cast water on your smoking coal; He never yet put out a dim candle that was lighted at the Sun of Righteousness.”

It was out of a strong love for Christ, his “crowned King”, that he wrote. And from that love flowed the concern for individual souls and for the Cause of Christ in Scotland which is so often expressed in these letters. In the same spirit he rejoiced with those of the Lord’s children who rejoiced, and wept with those who wept. Today’s readers, in their varying conditions of soul and their differing circumstances, should also derive real benefit from reading these thoroughly spiritual letters.

Footnotes explain references to people and events and give the meaning of obscure words. At the end of the book there are brief notes on those to whom the letters are addressed and a list of the main events in Rutherford’s life.

And if the appetite of readers is whetted by this selection we hope that they will go on to the volume which contains all 365 of Rutherford’s letters which have survived the ravages of time. As this larger volume is again out of print, we hope that the publishers will make it available once more. Meanwhile we are glad to see this paperback in print again, at such a reasonable price.

A Catechism on Praise by *Alexander Blaikie*

Published by The James Begg Society. Large booklet, 24 pages, 90p, or 60p per copy for ten or more. Obtainable from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.

THIS *Catechism on Praise*, by a pastor of what used to be the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, in Boston, USA, was first published in 1849, and was commended by various reputable Christian periodicals of the day. We also heartily recommend it.

It has three sections or "chapters" Chapter I *Praise; the Nature and Duty of it* (which contains six questions); Chapter II *The Matter of Praise* (35 questions); and Chapter III *The Manner of Praise* (23 questions). Both the questions and answers are clear and should leave the unprejudiced reader in no doubt that exclusive psalmody is God's requirement for praising Him, and that the use of instrumental music in the public worship of God has no sanction whatsoever from the Scriptures. An appendix by William Romaine forcefully defends the use of the Psalms for praising God, and denounces the "sacrilege" of replacing "a chief part" of God's Word by the compositions of "our hymnmongers".

In the next edition it would be helpful if the publishers, (1) numbered the questions consecutively, (rather than 1 to 6, then 1 to 35, and then 1 to 23); (2) gave the Scripture proofs in full in small type; (3) printed the abbreviations for the Books of the Bible in the conventional form rather than all in capital letters; and (4) omitted the quotation from Burns' *The Cottar's Saturday Night*. Despite the sympathetic picture of family worship in that poem, Burns strongly disliked Calvinism and scoffed at the truly godly.

We hope that this welcome *Catechism on Praise* will bring many to understand and accept the divine requirement of exclusive Psalmody. In the ongoing debate on purity of worship it is good to read material which presents the Scriptural and Reformed view of this important subject. We wish it a wide circulation. □

Protestant View

Who is the Antichrist?

IT is useful to keep in mind that the term 'antichrist', from the Greek term 'antichristos', means 'instead of Christ', and indicates one who assumes a likeness to Christ and takes His place. Of course, the term 'antichrist' can also mean 'against Christ'. Combining the two meanings, we may say that the

Antichrist is that person or system which, while appearing to be like Christ and taking His place, is opposed to Him.

Therefore the answer to the question, Who is the Antichrist? must take these meanings into account, as does the following answer by Dr. J. A. Wylie.

"The materials for a right decision on the question before us lie close at hand. The Apostle John, speaking of the great apostasy to arise in Christendom, calls it the 'Antichrist'. And the Pope has taken to himself, as the name that best describes his office, the title 'Vicar of Christ'. All we shall ask as the basis of our argument are these two accepted facts, namely that John styles the apostasy 'the Antichrist', and that the head of the Roman system styles himself 'Christ's Vicar'. The Papacy holds in this title the key of its meaning. We shall make use of that key in unlocking its mystery and true character. The Papacy cannot complain when we adopt this line of interpretation. We do nothing more than use the key it has put into our hands.

"The Apostle John, we have said, speaking of the apostasy, the coming of which he predicts, styles it the 'Antichrist'. And we have also said that the Papacy, speaking through its representative and head, calls itself the 'Vicar of Christ'. The first term, 'Antichrist', is a Greek word, the second, 'Vicar', is an English word, but the two are one in reality, for both words have the same meaning. 'Antichrist' translated into English is 'Vice-Christ', or 'Vicar of Christ'; and 'Vicar of Christ' rendered into Greek is 'Antichrist'—*Antichristos*. If we can establish this – and the ordinary use of the word by those to whom the Greek was a vernacular is decisive on the point – we shall have no difficulty in showing that this is the meaning of the word 'Antichrist' – even a Vice-Christ. And if so, then every time the Pope claims to be the Vicar of Christ, he pleads at the bar of the world that he is the Antichrist. . .

"Let it be noted that if 'Antichrist' signifies a 'Vice-Christ', that is, one who comes in the room of Christ, then *deception*, *dissimulation* or *counterfeit*, must be an essential element in his character. In whatever persons or systems this fundamental characteristic is lacking, there we fail to find the Antichrist, whatever may be their general opposition to Christ and to Christianity, or whatever other features of the Antichrist they may bear. They may have every other characteristic by which prophecy has described this noted adversary of Christ and His gospel, yet, lacking this fundamental one, *counterfeit*, their claim to this pre-eminently evil distinction of being the Antichrist cannot be admitted.

"This enables us to dismiss at once a host of antichrists which have been conjured up by persons who have drawn upon their imagination, rather than followed any sound principle of prophetic interpretation. The cause of the Papacy is served by the false glosses and mistaken interpretations of Scripture which

interpose a pseudo-antichrist betwixt it and prophecy, which unfolds against it so black a record, and suspends above it so terrible a doom. . . .

"We must trace the parallelism between the two systems, Christianity and Popery, and between their respective chiefs, Christ and the Pope, along the entire line of their career. In this parallelism lies the essence of Antichristianism. It is this counterfeit, so exact and complete, which has misled the world into the belief that this [that is, Roman Catholicism] is Christianity, to the waste of ages not a few, the unsettling and overthrow of kingdoms, the stunting of understanding, and the loss of millions of immortal souls."

The above piece is from Wylie's *The Papacy is the Antichrist – A Demonstration*. Wylie goes on to show that because the Antichrist, in essence, is a counterfeit Christ and apes Christianity, then Atheism or Communism can never be said to be the Antichrist. As Scripture teaches and as Wylie demonstrates, the Papacy is indeed the Antichrist. □

Notes and Comments

Kirk report calls for liberal approach to cannabis smoking

FOLLOWING a two-year study, the Church of Scotland has issued a report which calls for a liberal approach to smoking cannabis, according to the press. We find it almost incredible that the Rev. J. Cowie, who led the study, should say, "We do not believe that the consumption of cannabis is unduly detrimental to people's health or to society." We have not found any reason to doubt the testimony of those directly involved in helping addicts, that smoking cannabis was the first step into the nightmare world of addiction for a large proportion of those addicted to other drugs.

Considering that a recent poll, by the national drug information group Crew 2000, has found that 96 per cent of young people who attend raves have been taking drugs on the dance floor, and that the large majority of these have been engaging in "high risk behaviour" while under the influence of drugs, indicates to our mind that the legislation which prohibits the smoking of cannabis should not be removed. □

Religion and science – the religious attitudes of scientists

TWO American academics have recently publicized their survey of the religious views of 600 prominent scientists. The most significant finding is that almost 40 per cent believe there is a God. What has provoked most comment in the press is that this is remarkably close to what was found in a similar survey carried out in

1916 when a leading researcher discovered that only slightly more than 40 per cent of American scientists believed in the existence of God.

This suggests that the great change in religious attitudes had already taken place before the First World War. The big swing away from accepting the authority of God took place in the years immediately after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. If man evolved from more primitive species and if, as the theories declared with greater and greater confidence, the whole universe came into its present state by gradual changes over an almost indefinitely long period stretching out over billions of years, then, people irresponsibly assumed, there was no need to believe in God. The thought that there is no God was very welcome for many – they could feel much more comfortable in their unbelief and in their disobedience to God's laws.

However a Cambridge astronomer, Professor Antony Hewish, has commented that “now with modern quantum theory and relativity one sees that science is deeper and rather more mysterious than one imagined” in 1916. More recent discoveries have shown that science is much more complex and less easily understood by the human mind, and it is much less likely that mankind will ever get to the bottom of things. “Accepting that this is true for science,” Professor Hewish went on, “probably makes people ready to accept other mysteries.” And so it should. If nature is turning out to be as complex as it actually is – and in all probability it is far more complex than we yet know – how much more unlikely that evolution can explain anything about the origins of the universe, and of the human race in particular!

The fact is, of course, that we are not dependent on scientific probabilities for our knowledge of how everything began. We have a revelation from God Himself in the Scriptures, a revelation which is totally reliable. So we should beware of the philosophy expounded by Professor Lewis Wolpert of University College, London: “It is perfectly reasonable to be both deeply religious, as Newton was, and a brilliant scientist, *so long as you don't let one influence the other*” (italics mine). It is significant that one of the authors of the report on scientists' religious beliefs can point out that most of those surveyed regarded the issues of faith as a private matter. But our knowledge of God and of His revelation and will should be fundamental to our thinking and actions *in the whole of our lives*. It is not possible to separate the seen and the temporal from what is unseen and eternal. Man was not so created. We were created to glorify God in all we do, say and think. And that includes scientific thinking as well as every other area of thought.

In the end there can be no conflict between Scripture and the *facts* about the universe and about everything in it. Scientists' understanding of origins may be in conflict with the testimony of Scripture, but only because of the way they *understand* the evidence and the presuppositions on which their theories are

based. But both the Bible and the universe have come from the hand of God, so one must be perfectly consistent with the other.

Most brazen of all is the argument that "it is not possible to believe in gods and be a true scientist." People may say what they like about *false* gods, but to try to define God out of His creation in this way is one of the most blatant forms of unbelief that has ever been dreamed up. Dr Denis Alexander, a biologist, has commented on this from a better perspective: "Christian believers have a strong motivation for wanting to tell the truth about God's world." Indeed it is very questionable if the modern scientific movement would ever have spring up were it not for the impetus given by the belief that, because it is God's world, it can be subjected to rational investigation.

Possibly by 1916 the watchword *God has spoken* had been replaced by *Science has spoken*. More recently there has been a reaction against science. Manifestly science does not have all the answers to the questions of life, and there has been a retreat into the irrational, including systems of New Age thought. To anyone with ordinary common sense, the irrational can provide no satisfying answers to the pressing questions of life: those more vital questions than, What shall we eat? and, What shall we drink? and, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Only when scientists and non-scientists return to the watchword *God has spoken*, can we get satisfying and reliable answers to our questions about the meaning of life and the significance of death and of what is beyond it. And in that precious Book in which God has spoken we will find directions to guide us safely through life, through death and beyond, throughout eternity.

We ought not to be satisfied with an outward acceptance that God exists. We are duty-bound to value every word that God has spoken. If we do so, we will cast ourselves unreservedly as lost sinners on His mercy made known in Jesus Christ. Whatever else we may know or not know, one thing above everything else is necessary: to know Him for ourselves. K. D. M.

Mass suicide by cult members

THE mass suicide by 39 people of the Heaven's Gate cult in California shows yet again the propensity of some people to be deluded by bizarre and devilish beliefs. They were evidently people of high intelligence, yet they swallowed the claim of their leader Marshall Applewhite, known to them as John Do, that he was from a higher level of existence, that he had been brought down to earth in a spaceship, and that he was their extraterrestrial shepherd who would lead them to a higher life. They believed that by dying they would link up with a UFO behind the Hale-Bopp comet and begin their new elevated existence.

This awful event is another manifestation of the increasing interest in the paranormal which is the result of the widespread departure from Biblical

Christianity. It is believed by cult experts that there are as many as 3500 groups in the United States which promote beliefs in unidentified flying objects (UFOs), astrology, eastern transcendentalism, white supremacy, the power of crystals and the intelligence of plant life.

This alarming trend is a result, in part, of the teaching of the Christian church being, to a large extent, "an uncertain sound" or worse. Many people look to it in vain for light about the momentous spiritual issues facing them. It is all the more urgent therefore that the true church of Christ redouble its efforts to disseminate the truth, looking to the God of truth to bless His word to the multitudes who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. □

Women wearing men's clothing – the teaching of Scripture

At a recent meeting in the local High School, I was asked the following question and thought that the answer might be of interest to a wider audience. The question was, "Why do we hold that the law in Deuteronomy 22: 5, 'The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all that do so are an abomination to the Lord thy God,' is held to be still of force; while the law in verse 11 of the same chapter, 'Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together,' is held to have been of only temporary authority.

These laws are not part of either the moral law, or of the Old Testament ceremonial law, but of the body of Old Testament civil laws which were given by God for ruling the nation and the ordering of society. There are two principles upon which such laws are held to be valid in New Testament times.

First, such a law is held to be valid where it is tied to a fact which is of continuing relevance to us. Thus the law in Genesis 9:6 which requires capital punishment is based on the fact that man is made in the image of God. Since man continues to bear the image of God today, as he did in Noah's day, the law is equally valid for us, and is still binding upon us. Secondly, such a law is held to be valid where the law is specifically quoted in the New Testament.

Applying the first principle to the law in Deuteronomy 22:5, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment," it is obvious that the distinction between men and women, which this law is intended to preserve, is still with us, and that therefore the law has continuing authority.

The law relating to the mixing of wool and linen in one garment is not based on any such continuing fact. The reasons for this law were practical and symbolic and related to Old Testament times.

So it is clear that although the law prohibiting women from wearing men's clothing (and vice versa) is not quoted in the New Testament, it is still binding

because God requires that a manifest distinction be maintained between men and women. It is significant and solemn that this law is one of those which specifically states that disobedience to it is an abomination to the Lord. *J.R.T.*

The Church of Scotland and the National Lottery

It was a relief to many when the 1995 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland endorsed the view of its Board of Social Responsibility "that participation in the National Lottery would be contrary to the Church's opposition to all forms of gambling."

However, there is the danger that this decision may yet be overturned. The report of the Church's Board of Procedure and Practice is calling for the establishment of a commission to reconsider the Assembly's ban on Church congregations and organisations receiving lottery funding.

Added to this is the disgraceful fact, according to the Rev George Cowie of Kirkcaldy, that Kirk elders, members and ministers are among those in the 95 per cent of households who participate in the lottery.

Those in the Church who are opposed to gambling are having an increasingly stiff fight on their hands. □

African Mission News

Zimbabwe

THE Rev A. Ndebele's health is continuing to slowly improve. He has been able to take some short services at Insiza and Gadade outstations, and one service at Ingwenya. We hope and pray that the improvement will steadily continue.

It is expected that Rev. P. Mzamo and Mr L. Ndlovu will attend the annual Synod in Inverness in May, God willing, as the representatives of the Zimbabwean Presbytery, after they have visited Holland.

The new classroom for commercial subjects is now complete and all that remains to be done is the installation of equipment and furniture. □

Kenya

IT was with the greatest relief that the people in Sengera saw the rain come at the beginning of April. No longer will they have to transport water: the tanks on the compound are filling steadily. So torrential has been the downpour that the tanks at the homes of Mr Goldby and Dr de Jong filled within four days.

The staff are looking forward to the arrival, on 23rd April, of Mr George MacAskill, Inverness, a qualified mechanic who is to spend four weeks at Sengera doing maintenance work on the Mission vehicles on a voluntary basis. □

Eastern Europe Mission News

THE journey of Rev Donald Ross and Mr Edward Ross from this country to Kiev went well, apart from having to travel through a snowstorm in Ukraine for 250 kilometres. They were able to conduct services, as was hoped, in Borispol on Sabbath 30th March and in Odessa on Sabbath 6th April.

However, they had a very difficult time at the hands of the Customs officials in Kiev. Evidently, the customs regulations have been changed yet again, a fact they were not informed of by the Ukrainian Embassy in London although it was fully appraised of their purpose in visiting Ukraine. The Kiev Customs Service made the unprecedented demand that they pay a very large amount of tax on the humanitarian goods. After nine days and many meetings with government officials, the demand for tax was waived and they were able to distribute the Bibles, literature, medicines and clothing.

The return journey through Ukraine to Hungary was far from easy. Not only did they have some mechanical trouble but also the roads were covered by hard-packed snow and were very slippery. Numerous trucks were stuck along the way. At the time of writing (9th April) they are safely into Hungary, weather conditions are now good, and they are proceeding homewards.

May the Lord bless our efforts to render help, especially of a spiritual nature, to those who are very much less favoured than we are. □

Church Information

Meeting of Synod

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will meet, God willing, within the Free Presbyterian Church, Inverness, on Tuesday, the 20th day of May, 1997, at 6.30 pm, when the Retiring Moderator, the Rev. J. R. Tallach, Raasay, will conduct public worship.

Meetings of Presbyteries (D.V.)

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

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 24th June, at 3.00 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.

Acknowledgements of Donations

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

Eastern Europe: Anon, London, £40; Psalm 60 v 4, £100; A friend, £50; R.M.L., £30; A. G., £50; Anon, £70.

Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund: Anon, Canada (March), Can \$100; *Ingwenya dormitory repairs*, Mr. W. J. S. Bennet, N. Ireland, £20; *Mbuma Mission Hospital*, Psalm 116 v 14, £55 per Charities Aid Foundation; *Zimbabwe*, A friend, £100; *Zimbabwe*, Psalm 60 v 4, £30; *Kenya*, Psalm 60 v 4, £35; *Kenya*, A friend, £100.

CONGREGATIONAL TREASURERS acknowledge the following donations with sincere thanks:

Bracadale & Strath: *Struan Church Repairs*, envelope in plate, £20 per D.G.B.

Dingwall & Beauy: *Eastern Europe Fund*, towards purchase of new vehicle, a friend, £250 per Rev. N. M. R.

Larne: *Communion expenses*, Anon, £30; *Where most needed*, Anon, £30; *Where most needed*, Anon, £40; *Manse expenses*, Anon, £10; *Manse expenses*, Anon, £30; *Manse telephone*, Anon, £5; *Gift for special envelopes*, Anon, £300; *For Kenya Mission*, Anon, £100; *For poor in Missions*, Anon, £100; all per J.A.F.

North Harris: *Communion expenses*: Friend, Leacklee, £40, per envelope in plate; M.M. Cluer, £10, per J. M. L.; Friend, Tarbert, £10, per envelope in plate; *Where most needed*: MacQueen Street, £10, per envelope in plate; *Bus Fund*: M.M., Cluer, £10, per J. M. L.; *Church Funds*: Friends, Kyles, (Morrison family), £25, per J. N.

North Uist: *Communion expenses*, Anon, £20; *Where most needed*, Friend, Inverness, £20, per Rev. A.M.

Portree: *Where needed*, Ebenezer, £50, per F.M.; D.M.N., £50, per envelope in plate; *Bus Fund*, Anon, £6, per envelope in plate; Anon, £7, per envelope in plate; *Congregational Funds*, Lewis friend, £30, per S.Y.M.; friend Dorset, £50, per F.M.; Lewis friends, £35, £20, £10, £10, per S.Y.M.; *Communion expenses*, Anon, £20, per F. M.; Mrs M.M., £20, per F.M.; Anon, £10, per envelope in plate; *Sustentation Fund*: Lewis friend, £40, per S.Y.M.; Ebenezer, £100, per S.Y.M.

Staffin: *Congregational Fund*, final payment from the will of the late Mrs. Jane MacDonald, £349, per Murray & Company, Solicitors, Portree.