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Our Free Presbyterian Heritage

*Rev. Donald Beaton**

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Part 1 - What it is, and what it cost

AS a Church we are small in numbers compared with others. Many in the religious life of the world have never heard of us, and of those who know of our existence there are few who understand our position. We have been misrepresented and misunderstood so that to many we are but "the offscouring of all things" and not worth taking notice of except in order to ridicule us. In view of this we have not a very bright prospect from the point of view of worldly favour, but we have a priceless heritage; a heritage which we ought to do our utmost to hand down undefiled to coming generations. There are four things in particular which we ought always to have before our minds with regard to this heritage. I. What it is. II. What it cost. III. How it is endangered. IV. Our duty towards it.

I. In our Free Presbyterian heritage there is an open Bible and a whole Bible at that. The creed of our Church is that the Bible is the inspired, infallible and unerring Word of the living God, and that it is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy Him. We have no place for the mutilated Bible of the so-called Higher Critics, and have never accepted them as guides to tell us what is the Word of God and what is not. It is inconsistent with our heritage to teach

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for doctrines the commandments of men, or to make our people follow slavishly that which is built on the sandy foundation of speculation.

It is our heritage to have a full-orbed gospel, which emphasises man's ruin by the fall of Adam, redemption through the blood of Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. In the preaching of that gospel there is a declaration of the whole counsel of God in respect of the misery of all who reject the glorious remedy provided to meet with man's lost and ruined condition, and in respect of the unspeakable glory of all who accept that remedy. Where such preaching is faithfully done there is a single eye to the glory of God and the good of immortal souls. There is no pandering to the desires of the flesh, and no suppressing of facts for fear of displeasing men and women who may be important in their own estimation. The preacher realises full well that he is under the all-seeing eye of that God to whom he must render an account, and to give that account with joy he must quit himself as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Together with an eye to the glory of God there is zeal for the souls of his hearers and this should cause a preacher to preach each time as if it was the last time on earth he was to do so. It is not a small part of our heritage as a church to have such preachers.

In our heritage there is a separating of the precious from the vile as regards a profession of religion. Kirk-sessions throughout the whole Church exercise their functions in examining those who seek to partake of the sacraments. It is well that this should be so, for otherwise many with a boldness which is not from grace would presume to make a public profession. Not only do the Kirk-sessions perform their duty in this respect but each minister before dispensing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper does it in what is popularly called "fencing the table." This has been done in the Church in Scotland in its best days. In the Directory for Public Worship agreed upon by the Westminster Assembly of Divines and ratified in 1645 both by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and by the Scottish Parliament, we read in connection with this duty: "Next, he (the minister) 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 judgment unto himself: and, on the other part, he 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." It is no small part of the preciousness of our heritage, in these days of indiscriminate admission to the Lord's Table, that this duty is yet faithfully carried out among us.

II. This priceless heritage is not ours without great cost. It was handed to us at the expense of much labour, sweat and blood. To see the truth of this we do not need to go beyond our native land. Who has not heard of John Knox, George Wishart, Andrew Melville, and Alexander Henderson and a host of others too numerous to be mentioned? Their life and their struggles on behalf of true religion is bound up with the history of Scotland in such a way that no one can read the history of our native land without realising the important part they played in handing us our religious heritage. This is why Romanists and pro-Romanists are doing their utmost to falsify Scottish history, and cast a slur on the memory of those God-honoured witnesses for the truth. It is ordinarily looked upon among men as a despicable thing for one to traduce the memory of any one who is no longer in a position to defend himself but evidently it is quite allowable to deal thus with our Reformers and Covenanters. Was it for personal gain that these Reformers and Covenanters suffered all the trials which they endured during their lifetime and ran the risk of being execrated after their death? One glance at their lives should be sufficient to enable one to answer that question in the negative, for their actions clearly proved that they were actuated by zeal for the glory of God, and a holy desire to hand the pure Word of God to coming generations. Through much labour, sweat and blood they were able to hand us a priceless heritage, and in doing so shook the very foundations of the Church of Rome. Hence the assiduity of the emissaries of that apostate church in their endeavours to cast aspersions on our Reformers.

Not only did our heritage cost much at the First and Second Reformation, but it also cost a great deal at the Disruption. The duty of the civil magistrate is to protect the Church of God and not to arrogate to himself any of the powers which belong to the Church. The history of the Church of Scotland may be said to be one long series of conflicts on this very point. The civil magistrate time and again encroached on the sphere which properly belonged to the Church till at last these conflicts culminated in the Disruption. Was this step, taken to vindicate the Crown Rights of the Redeemer, without cost to those who took part in it? The annals of that time will bear ample testimony to what it cost, and how cheerfully the cost was faced. The Most High, however, made up for His witnesses all the loss they endured by giving them much of His presence in the midst of their trials. Not only was it made up for them in spiritual matters but He who has for His possession the earth "and the fullness thereof" supplied all their temporal needs, so that they had churches and manses in place of those they had to leave for conscience sake, and proved to them also that the silver and gold of the earth are His. What God gave that generation of His temporal mercies they left to the generations that followed.

To the generations that followed the men of the Disruption the words of

Christ might be applied, "Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours," and they gave one of the clearest possible proofs of how ruined man, when left to himself, will abuse God's gifts. The funds which God gave for the support of His Cause were used for the dissemination of infidel views in her colleges and among her ministers so that they forgot God and rebelled against Him. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." It was not, however, God's purpose to leave Himself without a witness in Scotland, and when the once glorious Free Church of Scotland, by an Act of her Assembly constitutionally passed through the Barrier Act, cut herself adrift from a belief in an infallible Bible and adherence to the subordinate standards based on it, and refused by a large majority to rescind that God-dishonouring and wrath-provoking Act, one voice, and one voice only, was heard in her Assembly raising a testimony for God and His Word, and purposing, in the strength of grace, to bequeath the heritage of the First and Second Reformations, and of the Disruption, to generations to come. The raising of that solitary voice in the Assembly of 1893 started an exodus from the Declaratory Act Free Church, which though not accompanied by outward pomp, and of which the world took no notice but to deride, was the means of preserving the Church of Christ in Scotland to this day.

What was the cost? The one who raised that voice and all who supported him were turned out of churches and manses which they and their forefathers helped to build, and had to worship God on the hillside, where the local schools were not convenient to hold them, and even in the latter case, their former friends who used to be loud in their denunciations of the Declaratory Act, often used their position as members of School Boards in order to deprive them of any protection against the elements when engaged in the solemn act of worshipping God. With the vast majority the movement was unpopular and all who supported it were reckoned as fit objects of scoffing and persecution. Not the least part of the trial was separation from former friends. There were those whom one learned to look to as men who would stand for the Cause of Christ when a crisis would come, and whose warnings to their fellow-creatures gave enough ground for such expectations, but who proved to be men of words more than men of actions. Those who bequeathed our heritage to us had to look away from such men, and God fulfilled His promise to them. "And every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Synod Sermon

by the Rev James R. Tallach, Retiring Moderator

Preached at the opening of the meeting of Synod on Tuesday, 20th May, 1997

Isaiah 27:12, “. . . and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.”

AS enabled I would like to draw your attention to these words, coming as they do from the great Head of the Church to His people in this world. There are three main parts in this chapter. The first six verses speak of the Lord's work in establishing and caring for His church. “In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it.” Verses 7 to 11 speak of the Lord cleansing His Church by chastisements. “He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.” Verses 12 and 13 speak of the Lord's determination to gather His people to Himself. “And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel”

There are three matters I should like to bring before you: **first**, the Person speaking, and who gathers; **secondly**, the people who are gathered; and **thirdly**, the great end and purpose of that gathering.

First, we shall consider the Person who is speaking, and who gathers.

It is the LORD. Note, first, that He is *an all-powerful God*. His “great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.” The “serpent” was a term for Egypt. It was there that the Lord's people were in slavery and bondage to Pharaoh. It was from there that the Lord brought His people out, and it was by successive displays of His strength in the ten plagues culminating in the sword in the hand of the angel of death that His people were delivered. His “great and strong sword” punished Egypt that day and brought its might to nothing.

Great though that victory over Egypt was, it was but a picture of the victory that Jesus Christ gained over Satan. Satan had gained the victory over Adam in the Garden of Eden, and all of Adam's race became slaves to sin, were led about by Satan at his will, and made subject to him “that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” (Hebrews 2:14). That power of Satan was broken by the death of Christ, as the Paschal Lamb slain for His people outside the gates of Jerusalem. Notice that it was as the Surety for His people that He wrought this victory on the cross. The Second Person of the Godhead had already defeated Satan and all his hosts and cast them out of heaven, and a bottomless pit had already been prepared for them. It was for His people, and in order that they might bruise Satan under their heel shortly, that He passed through the darkness of that dark

night of Calvary: the very hour and power of darkness. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). He is an all-powerful Lord.

This God is a *merciful God*. The Israelites were frequently like sheep going astray from God. They murmured against Him in the wilderness and rebelled against Moses and Aaron. In the Promised Land they learned the ways of the heathen and worshipped their gods so that the Lord at last drove them into exile for 70 years. But with all those provocations the prophet asks, "Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him?" Did God deal with Israel as He dealt with the Egyptian army, all of whom drowned in the Red Sea? No. "But in measure"; by way of chastisement, not judgment. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind." He will punish them by sending them into exile but he will gather them from thence, and His purpose in all of this is a purpose of mercy. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged."

"I'll visit then their faults with rods,
their sins with chastisements,
Yet I'll not take my love from Him
nor false my promise make," (Psalm 89:32-33).

And His promise concerning them is a promise of mercy. He is a merciful God.

This God is a *covenant God*. When the Lord brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai and taught them His law. Sacrifices were offered and the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled on the book of the law and on the people. The Lord thus brought Israel into a covenantal, redeemed relationship with Himself. He deals with His people by way of a covenant still. We read in Jeremiah 31:31 and 33, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel: and with the house of Judah.... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." The human race, all of Adam's natural children, were lost and ruined by the Fall, and death passed upon all men for all had sinned. But the Father, in infinite mercy, gave a number that no man can number of our fallen race to His Son; and the Son, delighting to do the will of the Father and loving His people with an everlasting love, entered into a covenant with His Father to do the part of a Redeemer and Surety for them. This is the God who brings His people, in time, into the bond of that eternal covenant.

This is the covenant which Jesus speaks of in John 17:6, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." He sealed this covenant with His own blood which was represented by the sacramental wine in the upper room on the night on which He was betrayed. "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," Matthew 26:28. This is the basis of the certainty which Jesus goes on to express concerning His disciples being in

heaven with Him at last. "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom," Matthew 28:29. The unfailing certainty of their being gathered, expressed in these words, "when I drink it with you," rests upon an unfailing covenant, "ordered in all things and sure", because it is sealed with the blood of Christ. This blood alone and entirely meets all the awful demands of the covenant engagement of Jesus.

So it is clear that God speaks as a covenant God when He says, "and ye shall be gathered one by one; O ye children of Israel."

In the second place, then, what do we learn here of the people addressed and who are gathered?

They were a people "ready to perish in the land of Assyria". Their national sin and rebellion led to their being in captivity in Babylon. The fear of God was not in Babylon, but idolatry and the fear of man.

They are also described as "the outcasts in the land of Egypt." Some of the people had remained in Israel after the beginning of the Captivity. They had been told by the Lord through His prophets to remain where they were. But they, fearing for their safety and consulting their own wisdom, went down to Egypt for protection. They were there quite contrary to God's plain command.

We have in these two phrases, "outcasts" and "ready to perish", a lively description of the situation in which the Gospel finds the sinner. Paul says of the Ephesians (2:12), "That at that time ye were without Christ,... having no hope, and without God in the world." And Jesus speaks of the lost coin, the lost sheep ready to stumble on the dark mountains, and the Prodigal Son who was "ready to perish" in the far country. All the elect of God were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, and far off from God by wicked works, and outcasts by reason of their own lawlessness.

Again, they are *separated* "one by one". The figure at the beginning of the verse is of a threshing floor and the word translated "beat" may also be translated "thresh" or "separate". As was the custom in those lands, the wheat would be brought in from the fields and a heap formed on the threshing floor. The heap would then be repeatedly beaten in order to separate the kernel from the husk. It is this corn of wheat that was valuable to the farmer, and useful for bread and for seed corn for a coming year. Applying this figure of the threshing floor and the corn of wheat to the Israelites in captivity, there were those among them who grieved over the loss of spiritual privileges and had to say,

"If thee Jerusalem I forget,

skill part from my right hand," (Psalm 137:5).

Or, like Daniel, they opened their windows three times a day as they prayed towards Jerusalem. And when the time of return came they arose and returned

from their captivity, while others were content to remain where they were.

There was a separation made between the corn of wheat and the husk, and so it is still where the Word is blessed. The Lord gathers a sinner to Himself by His Word, for "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God," (Romans 10:17). Notice the gracious term used: "Ye shall be gathered." When the Lord was praying for His disciples, as we read in John 14, He said, "Other sheep I have,... them also I must bring." At that very time Saul of Tarsus was building up the fires of pride and persecution yet the Lord would gather him with that rebuke, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The sinners in Corinth were at that very time sunk in immorality, idolatry and sin; yet the Lord would gather them with the gracious invitations of the Gospel, so that it could be said, "...and such were some of you but ye are washed but ye are sanctified," (1 Corinthians 6:11). And all who are called by His grace can look back and say with David, "Thy kindness made me grow," (Psalm 18:35).

Notice the *individual and sovereign* nature of this call: "Ye shall be gathered one by one." This is not the result of well-tried psychological methods affecting a crowd. This is not the result of the ebb and flow of political opinion. Moses says of Israel (in Deuteronomy 7:7), "The Lord did not set his love upon you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you." They were to be a special people to Him above all people on the face of the earth. And the Lord says to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," (John 15:16). There were many people in Ur of the Chaldees but God called only Abraham to be a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth and to be an inheritor of the "city which hath foundations". Joshua, standing before the Lord, is a brand plucked from the burning: the hand of the Lord is upon him personally, (Zechariah 3:2). There were many around Jesus on the day that He passed through Jericho, but it was Zacchaeus to whom He spoke; He came to the foot of the sycamore tree and said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at thy house," (Luke 19:5). There were others with Saul when he was travelling down to Damascus; they heard a sound but no distinguishing voice such as came to Saul: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). "Ye shall be gathered one by one." This is distinguishing and sovereign grace.

Notice the *means* by which they shall be gathered: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria..." As far as the captives in Assyria were concerned, "that day" was the day that Cyrus declared that they were free to return to Israel. And as far as the round of the ceremonial law was concerned it was the day when the sound of the jubilee trumpet announced the beginning of the year of release for slaves and debtors. And when Jesus began to preach He

took as His text, Isaiah 61:1, which speaks of "liberty to the captives" and preaching "the acceptable year of the Lord". The sound of the great trumpet is the preaching of the everlasting Gospel sent down from heaven. Jesus, before His ascension, charged His disciples with this mission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," (Mark 16:15, 16). This trumpet sound is good news because it tells of the Son of God taking our nature to Himself and in that nature dying for the ungodly. When the Greeks came to the feast saying to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus," (John 12:21), Jesus used the same figure of Himself as He uses of His people here: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The Children of Israel were taught the necessity of the death and the shedding of the blood of the paschal lamb. They escaped out of Egypt and came to God in Mount Sinai under the blood of the paschal lamb. There, they were taught that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. They needed this every day, as they were sinners daily in thought, word and deed; this is why the institution of the sacrifice of the morning and the evening lamb was set up. They needed that death and that blood as they, in the person of their high priest, could only draw near to God by the blood of the sacrifice being taken into the holy of holies and sprinkled upon the mercy seat. And now Jesus, as the Lamb of God, had come, and His blood was shed upon the cross, He suffered and died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," (1 Peter 3:18). And the good news preached was ever of this nature, whether in the wilderness by Moses when he proclaimed, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life," (Deut. 30:19); or by Paul at Antioch, when he said that God "raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus", and that "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," (Acts 13:38). Now this is the great trumpet by which the Lord has ordained that His people, "ready to perish in the land of Assyria", and "outcasts in the land of Egypt", shall be gathered and shall be blessed. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ," (Ephesians 2:13).

It is a great and an amazing truth that Christ draws nigh to sinners in the preaching of the Word. What great condescension it was in Christ that He walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, those churches in Asia where His gospel was preached, and said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me," (Revelation 3:20).

But this also is revealed: that by the preaching of the gospel Christ searches out His own in this world. He is like the householder, in the parable of the lost coin, who searched the house until she found what she had lost. He is the good

Shepherd who Himself passes through the wilderness till He finds the sheep that was lost and he puts it on His shoulder and returns rejoicing. Christ looks out, by way of the Word, for the returning prodigal and it is in His embrace that the returning penitent finds rest. "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," (John 6:37). I think it was Lachlan Mackenzie who made the supposition that if the Lord saw that one of His own was missing at last, He would sieve the universe to find that one. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," (Malachi 3:17). "Ye shall be gathered one by one."

Finally, the great end and purpose of this gathering is this: "and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem", (verse 13).

One of the basic meanings of the word "worship" is *abasement before the Lord*. This is expressed in Psalm 95, verse 6,

"O come, and let us worship him,
let us bow down withal,
And on our knees before the Lord
our Maker let us fall."

The returning Israelites came all that long and dangerous journey from Assyria and abased themselves before the Lord at Jerusalem. This was evidence of the "right spirit" that David was praying for in Psalm 51, verse 10,

"Create a clean heart, Lord, renew
a right spirit me within."

Pride is the mark of fallen man. At the Fall we imbibed something of the pride of Satan himself. No mere outward privileges from God will change that spirit of pride apart from a work of grace in the soul. The proud Pharisee spoken of in Luke 18:10-12, had received the Word of God, and in the temple was surrounded by evidences of the mercy of God by way of a sacrifice. Yet he stands by himself; he does not abase himself, but prays, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, . . ." Such a proud Pharisee was Saul of Tarsus, but he obtained mercy and became a new creation in Christ Jesus. By saving faith in his heart he was looking to Christ and saying, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," (1 Timothy 1:15).

So the worship of the freed captives in the holy mount at Jerusalem was in the spirit of abasing themselves before the Lord in godly sorrow for sin, with reverence and godly fear, and thankfulness to God for His goodness and mercy to them. Their sins had carried them away, as Isaiah said, "like the wind". And now that they had been brought back to the Lord they came in the spirit of the

Prodigal Son, "Father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight," (Luke 15:18). They appear before God in the manner of the publican in the temple who stood afar off, not lifting so much as his eyes to heaven, but smiting on his breast and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," (Luke 18:13). They abased themselves in the spirit of penitence. Solomon abased himself before God in reverence and godly fear at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem. Peter had something of that same spirit when he saw a little of the Lord's power and glory in the miracle of the fishes, and he fell at Jesus' knees saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," (Luke 5:8).

With what *thankfulness* also the gathered outcasts worshipped before the Lord in Jerusalem, and all the reasons for that thankfulness were to be found in God alone. It was He who had heard their prayer and recalled their bondage. He had fulfilled His promises after all these long years of exile. He had turned the heart of Cyrus to open the door for their return. And in their thankfulness there was self-abasement; they took a low place, saying:

"Not unto us, Lord, not to us,
but do thou glory take
Unto thy name, even for thy truth,
and for thy mercy's sake," (Psalm 115:1).

And when Paul has considered the great matter of justification by faith, whereby God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, he goes on to say, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded," (Romans 3:27). They are gathered, one by one, to worship the Lord.

Two points of application by way of conclusion: what an unspeakably great blessing is that blessing which is promised to God's children: that they shall be gathered in order to worship Him in the beauty of holiness, upon His holy mountain, and to sing, for example, Psalm 45 in truth,

"My heart brings forth a goodly thing
my words that I indite
Concern the king..."

What a blessing it is to be brought to sing what the angels in heaven cannot sing:

"He took me from a fearful pit,
and from the miry clay,
And on a rock he set my feet,
establishing my way," (Psalm 40:2).

How great the blessing when enabled to engage in prayer as David did:

"Lord, thou shalt early hear my voice:
I early will direct
My prayer to thee; and, looking up,
an answer will expect," (Psalm 5:3).

And what a blessing it is to receive the Word of God, in public or in private, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God," (1 Thes. 2:13).

This is the inheritance that the Lord has chosen for His people. Let us seek after it, pray for it, and wait for it. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence," (Isaiah 62:6).

Secondly, we have a basis here for the free offer of the gospel to sinners. This is an occasion when the concerns of the church at large are particularly before us; and this is right and proper, as everything has its own time and place. But the time for the free offer of the gospel is ever with us. The Lord Jesus Christ joined the covenant and the free offer in His preaching: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," (John 6:37).

It is plain from the words of our text that the Lord does all. He covenants; He calls; He brings His people from Assyria and Egypt, and He does not leave off or give over this work until they are worshipping in His "holy mount in Jerusalem." "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel."

The immediate application of this to you, my unconverted friend, is this: if you had to pay one penny of the ransom required by divine justice then there could be no offer of salvation for you. If you had to bring money or price to the table of the gospel to secure the milk and wine of the gospel then this would be no gospel to you; but God has done all. Therefore you have to come and shelter under the blood of the covenant. You are invited to take of the water of life freely. It is all there, upon the table of the gospel: grace and glory; goodness and mercy here all the days of your life, and a place in the house of the Lord forever hereafter: and it is all free. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

May the Lord add His blessing.

Subordinate Gatherers

THERE are subordinate gatherers, which God employs; particularly ministers of the gospel, whose greatest work lies in winning souls, and gathering people to Christ; therefore they are called, "workers together with God," 2 Corinthians 6:1. Their principal business is to sound the trumpet, and gather the people to Shiloh. They are to preach Christ, to proclaim Christ, to offer Christ, to invite sinners to Christ – and that is all they can do. They may cast down the gospel net, but they will take nothing, unless the Lord Himself gather in the fish: "Except the Lord build the city, the builders build in vain." The gospel is the power of God to salvation, that is, the instrument of His power by the ministration of the Spirit: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Seek then, that His power may accompany the preaching of the word, otherwise it will not be a gathering word.

From the sermon, *The Great Gathering of the People to Shiloh*, by Ralph Erskine

Darwin's Black Box

Rev. K. D. Macleod

WRITING in 1887, C H Spurgeon believed that the theory of evolution was "a monstrous error in philosophy" which would be "a theme for ridicule before another 20 years" had passed. He was wildly over-optimistic. For another 90 years this theory, with all its implications for the integrity of the Christian religion, has held sway in the scientific world and indeed throughout society.

Yet in recent years a number of books pinpointing the defects of evolution have come from the press, written by men whose motivation has nothing to do with religion. The authors have recognised that these defects are so serious as to make it plain to any unprejudiced observer that the theory so long associated with the name of Charles Darwin is fatally flawed. The latest of these books is Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, published last year. Basic to Behe's argument is a quotation: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down." It comes from Darwin's volume of 1859, *The Origin of Species*, which was so successful in persuading the world to accept that all living creatures have evolved from primitive forms of life. Behe summarises his argument thus: "To Darwin, the cell was a 'black box' – its inner workings were utterly mysterious to him. Now, the black box has been opened up and we know how it works. Applying Darwin's test to the ultra-complex world of molecular machinery and cellular systems that have been discovered over the past 40 years, we can say that Darwin's theory has 'absolutely broken down'."

A researcher in Biochemistry at an American university, Behe has looked at the accumulating knowledge about the inner workings of the cell, the basic building block of all living structures, and has come up with the concept of *irreducible complexity*. "When I say that something is irreducibly complex," Behe explains, as reported in *Christianity Today*, "I simply mean that it is a system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning." A less complex system would not meet the requirements of the situation; it just would not work. The simple example of an irreducibly complex structure is a mousetrap. Behe will point to the five components of a mousetrap and explain, "You need all the parts to catch a mouse. You can't catch a few mice with a platform, then add the spring and catch a few more, and then add the hammer and improve its function. All the parts must be there to have any function at all. The mousetrap is irreducibly complex."

He then takes his audience back to think of the cell and declares, "The cell is no longer a mysterious black box as it was for Darwin. We now know precisely how it works at the molecular level. And the cell is chock full of systems . . . that are irreducibly complex." In the light of this observation he concludes that here is evidence which suggests that these systems were directly designed by an intelligent agent. In other words, every cell has a multitude of systems which could not function unless they were complete; they could not possibly have evolved stage by useful stage into their present condition. They must have had a creator. Behe accepts that the intelligent designer is indeed God, but he does not describe himself as a creationist, in the sense of being a believer in a recent six-day creation as understood from a straight-forward reading of Genesis.

Behe recalls a conversation on evolution with a fellow-researcher nearly 20 years ago. The question arose: "If the first life did arise by random naturalistic processes from a chemical soup, as all the textbooks are saying, what exactly are the minimum requirements that are required for life?" He and his colleague made a substantial list of these minimum requirements. Then they looked at each other and simultaneously realised that there were "too many systems; it couldn't have happened by chance". Behe's thinking was further stimulated by Michael Denton's 1985 critique: *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Denton, also not a creationist, had concluded, "The Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the Twentieth Century." Behe became convinced that the power of natural selection (the assumed mechanism of evolution) was mostly bluff – a largely unwarranted inference not well supported by the available evidence.

The significance of Behe's book is not that a highly qualified scientist has vindicated the Biblical account of creation, for he has not gone as far as that. What he has done is examine the power of evolution to explain the existence of the basic building block of all living structures. And he has found evolution wanting – completely wanting. When he started to write his book he began to search for references in textbooks and technical journals which would give, from the Darwinian point of view, an explanation of the evolution of complex systems. He expected not to find many such references. In fact, he found absolutely none. Behe comments, "Many of these systems have been fully understood for 40 years or more, and not one explanation has been published offering a plausible scenario by which they could have evolved. Any science which claims to have explained something, when in fact they have published no explanation at all, should be brought to account." This is what Behe has attempted to do. And a lot of attention is being paid to him. The prestigious *New York Times Book Review* noted: "He argues that the origin of intracellular processes underlying the foundation of life cannot be explained by natural

selection or by any other mechanism based purely on chance. When examined with the powerful tools of modern biology, but not with its modern prejudices, life on a biochemical level can be a product . . . only of intelligent design. Coming from a practising scientist . . . this proposition is close to heretical."

Heresy or not, David Berlinski, a noted American philosopher has pointed to the fact that "scepticism regarding Darwinian orthodoxy has now exploded out of its evangelical Protestant ghetto". "No one", says Berlinski, "in the evolutionary camp can propose to defend Darwin without meeting the challenges that Behe has set out in his book – it's really quite compelling."

It is encouraging to see compelling criticism of evolutionary theory coming from leading scientists. If the present trickle of such books turns into a flood, it would seem unlikely that the foundations of Darwinism can survive. The question arises, What will take its place? The only alternative is belief in an intelligent designer. Put more scripturally, there is no alternative to belief in God as creator and sustainer of the whole universe. Yet without God providing the means of presenting to the masses the basic message of the Bible – law and gospel – one hesitates to be overly optimistic about a return to a more reasonable view of how life came about in this world.

There is no doubt that Satan's hold on this generation has been immensely strengthened by the almost universal belief in evolution. People have been persuaded that the Bible's explanation of the origins of life has been discredited by science and so it is very difficult to convince them of the truth of any of the other doctrines of Scripture. They assume that the Christian religion is, from start to finish, utterly unreasonable. On the other hand, if scientists who are respected in their own sphere demolish the creaking foundations of evolutionary theory, a great obstacle to the success of the gospel is removed at a stroke. We must not deceive ourselves that the refutation of evolutionary theories will of itself bring about a revival of true religion. Of course not. But we may look to the God who works by means to make the theory of evolution as incredible in the eyes of the majority as the doctrine of creation is at present. And we must look to Him to give an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to apply to the souls of multitudes the Word preached throughout the world.

Yet there arises in one's mind a set of niggling questions: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Yet, if the Lord were to hear the cry of His Church beseeching Him to send out labourers into the harvest, we would have reason to hope that all the fortifications of Satan's kingdom would be swept away before the power of His Word preached world-wide with divine power.

Spurgeon may have been over-optimistic in expecting the pretensions of

evolutionary theory to have been exploded within 20 years. Yet it is not too hard for the Lord to transform the whole outlook of our generation so that within 20 years, not only would the theory of evolution be everywhere regarded as a spent force, but the whole world be in a completely different condition spiritually. May the Lord grant it! ●

A Catechism for the Instruction of Communicants

By Andrew Thomson, D.D.

(See the May issue for a biographical footnote about Andrew Thomson).

Questions Nos. 49 to 55 (some of which have been edited)

49. Q. *In what respect do Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ?*

A. Baptism is to be administered but once; the Lord's Supper frequently. The former is a sign of our regeneration and "putting on Christ"; the latter is a sign of the spiritual nourishment that we derive from Him. The former may be administered to infants; the latter to such only as are able to "examine themselves". By the former we are admitted, or initiated, into the visible Church of Christ; by the latter we profess our willing continuance in the Church, and our adherence to its doctrines and laws.

50. Q. *In what respect do these two ordinances agree?*

A. They are both of divine appointment: they both represent Christ and the benefits of His redemption; they are both seals of the same covenant; they both lay us under peculiar obligations to holiness in heart and life; and they are both to be continued in the Church till Christ's second coming.

51. Q. *What is your next reason for partaking of the Lord's Supper?*

A. It is an open testimony of our communion and fellowship with Christ; as we learn from the words of the Apostle Paul, when he is dissuading the Corinthians from idolatry, of, "having fellowship with devils," on the ground that they were already "partakers of the Lord's Table;" and in this way had declared their fellowship with Christ. (1 Corinthians 10: 20, 21).

52. Q. *Have you any other reason beside those you have already mentioned?*

A. There is one more, and it is this: the Lord's Supper is an opportunity of holding communion with one another, as believers in Christ; since by eating and drinking the memorials of His death at the same table, we declare our willing

participation in all the blessings which His death has secured for us, and our Christian union and friendship, as members of His body, which is the Church.

53. Q. *From what passage of Scripture does this appear?*

A. From the following: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17).

54. Q. *Since there are so many strong reasons for partaking of the Lord's Supper, are not those culpable who wilfully neglect this ordinance?*

A. Yes: because the ordinance is so positively enjoined by Christ; is such a becoming expression of our attachment to Him; and is so well fitted to promote our spiritual improvement.

55. Q. *Are all persons, whatever be their principles and character, entitled to partake of this ordinance?*

A. No: it is necessary for us to possess certain qualifications, in order to partake of it with propriety and advantage.

56. Q. *What are the duties of those who are conscious that they do not possess these qualifications?*

A. It is their duty to endeavour immediately and earnestly to acquire the requisite qualifications, and then to take the first opportunity of communicating that occurs.

57. Q. *What is the unworthy communicating of which the Apostle Paul speaks in the eleventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians?*

A. It is partaking of the Lord's Supper as if it were a common meal, and eating and drinking at it even to excess.

58. Q. *What was the consequence of the Corinthians acting in this manner?*

A. We are told that visible judgments were inflicted on them: "for this cause," said Paul, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" that is, are dead.

59. Q. *Are we liable to the same crime for which the Corinthians were so remarkably punished?*

A. No: the manner in which the ordinance is conducted among us prevents eating and drinking unworthily, in the same sense in which they are said to have done so.

60. Q. *When may we be said to "eat and drink unworthily," and to be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?"*

A. When we go to the Lord's Table with improper motives; when we do not possess

the necessary qualifications; when we attend without suitable preparation; when we engage in the ordinance with an undevout spirit, and in a careless or irreverent manner; or when we do not study or apply it to the purposes for which it is designed.

61. Q. *Is not eating and drinking unworthily both wicked and prejudicial?*

A. Yes: it is wicked, because it is a profanation of that which the Saviour has made sacred, and, therefore, an offence to Him whom it is our first duty to please; and it is prejudicial, because it prevents that spiritual improvement which the ordinance is intended to promote, and which is necessary for our present and our future welfare.

62. Q. *What is the first step to be taken by those who propose to partake of the Lord's Supper?*

A. A serious and impartial self-examination, in order to know whether they are sufficiently qualified, or in what particular graces they are deficient. "Let a man examine himself," says Paul (1 Corinthians 11: 28.) "and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

63. Q. *What are the qualifications which they ought to possess?*

A. They are such as are prescribed in Scripture, or suggested by the nature and ends of the ordinance; and may be reduced under these five heads: Knowledge, Faith, Repentance, Love, and New Obedience.

64. Q. *What is the knowledge that is required?*

A. Knowledge to "discern the Lord's body."

65 Q. *What does the Apostle strictly mean by "discerning the Lord's body."*

A. He means, distinguishing between the sacrament of the Supper and an ordinary feast, which two things the Corinthians had been guilty of confounding.

66. Q. *May not "discerning the Lord's body" be justly taken in a larger sense?*

A. Yes: it may signify being acquainted with the peculiar nature and various uses of the institution; knowing, for instance, that the bread and wine represent Christ as our sacrifice, and that our eating and drinking represent our cordial reception of Christ in that capacity; that this ordinance is a mean appointed by the Saviour, for carrying on the work of sanctification in our souls, and so on.

67. Q. *Is it sufficient to have a knowledge, however great, of this ordinance merely?*

A. No: our knowledge must be much more extensive; it must embrace the various doctrines which we are to believe, and the various duties we have to perform, in order to our attainment of eternal life.

68. Q. *From where is this knowledge to be derived?*

A. From the Bible, which should be frequently and carefully read; from the preaching of the word, and other stated means of instruction; from godly conversation; and from those religious books which may help us to understand the Bible.

69. Q. *Should you not always study to have your knowledge accompanied with understanding?*

A. Yes: although I knew all the facts, and all the doctrines, and all the precepts that are contained in the Bible, yet these are useful to me only in so far as I understand their meaning and application. And, therefore, Paul and Timothy prayed that the Colossians, “might be filled with the knowledge of Christ’s will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” (Colossians 1: 9).

70. *Is knowledge sufficient, then, if it be accompanied with understanding?*

A. No: it is not even then sufficient, unless it is also reduced to practice in our daily life and conversation; for to the passage just now quoted from the Epistle to the Colossians, it is added, as the great use and purpose of knowledge, “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.” In another place (1 Corinthians 13: 2) Paul says, “though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not charity,” [that charity which is the fulfilling of the law] I am nothing.” And the Saviour has said (John 13: 17), “If he know these things, happy are ye if ye do them:” thus making our happiness depend, not so much on our knowledge, as our practice.

71. Q. *Why is knowledge necessary as a qualification for communicating?*

A. Because, if I have remained ignorant with the revelation of God in my hands, I have committed a great sin against Him, in thus, “loving darkness rather than light,” (John 3: 19), and if I have been unable to procure sufficient knowledge, still it would be absurd and dangerous to engage in a religious solemnity without proper motives, which my ignorance of the Gospel would prevent me from having.

To be continued

Mbuma Zending Meeting – 1997

Rev John MacLeod

THE annual Mbuma Zending mission day was held, as usual, on 30th April. About 5700 people assembled at Geldermalsen and the proceedings throughout followed the usual pattern with Ds. Tj. de Jong in the chair. That everything went smoothly from beginning to end bore testimony once again to the dedication, hard work and skill of the organisers – all volunteers. Throughout the year, and largely behind the scenes, Mr H van Vliet, the Mbuma

Zending Secretary, toils away and we believe that is largely through his meticulous planning that these meetings prove to be so successful year after year. Almost all of the members of the Mbumba Zending Board were present and it was a pleasure to meet with them and confer with them about mission matters. Their interest in, and support for, our African missionary activities remain unabated. For instance, at the meeting it was intimated by the Chairman that a lump sum of £25,000 was being specially donated in order that an operating theatre could be added to the Sengeru clinic and the total collection for the day amounted to 108,000 Dutch guilders, which in sterling comes to approximately £34,300. This was about £3500 more than last year. This is indicative of the generosity of our Dutch friends and the level of their support. We are deeply grateful to them.

This year, the Rev Petros Mzamo and Mr Levi Ndlovu were present. They were entertained most hospitably in the home of Ds. And Mrs Tj. De Jong at Staphorst. The writer was under the hospitable roof of Mr and Mrs J Slabbekoom in Dordrecht and he is deeply indebted to them and to Mr and Mrs Van Vliet for all the kindness shown to him.

Address by the Rev John MacLeod at the Mbumba Zending Meeting:

"IT gives me great pleasure to be among you again and I regard it a great privilege that I should be given the opportunity of addressing you.

"I would like to convey to you – our Dutch friends – the greetings of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Foreign Missions' Committee.

"It does not require much spiritual discernment to conclude that our day is indeed a day when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. On every hand it is all too evident that spiritual death is reigning to a fearful extent and that he who is the god of this world, is all too successful in blinding 'the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' Millions upon millions of our fellow-creatures are perishing in their sins – without Christ, without hope – and departing this life to die eternally under the wrath and curse of God. The greatest calamity that can overtake a *sinner* is to be given over by God and to be left to perish in his sins. The greatest calamity that can overtake a *nation* is for it to be forsaken of God and left to go its own way under the influence of the deceiver of the nations. What is the remedy? How is the blinding power of Satan to be counteracted? The answer to that question is clear enough – it is by the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel of Christ is 'the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first but also to the Greek'; it is the great weapon that was placed in the hands of the Apostle Paul when he was commissioned to preach the Gospel to poor

perishing sinners – Jews and Gentiles – lost and ruined on account of their fall in Adam – children of wrath led captive by the devil at his will. He was sent ‘to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God to receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among those sanctified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ’. These words direct attention to man’s need. Dear friends, is that not so? Is it not true of all of us in this vast assembly that, by nature, we are spiritually blind, not realising what we are, where we are, nor where we are going? We need light and direction. The Apostle Paul was to be instrumental in turning many to righteousness; we say *instrumental* because the Lord Jesus made it plain to him, as He makes it plain to every gospel minister, that without Him they can do nothing. For sinners to be saved it is necessary that the Gospel come to them ‘not in word only but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.’ Our labours in Africa are directed towards sowing the seed of the Word in the hearts of sinners – men, women and children – but we are altogether dependent on God, the Holy Spirit, to make it effectual to the salvation of those concerned.

“The presence of a Zimbabwean minister and elder here today is evidence in itself that the Lord has been pleased to bless our endeavours and we believe that there will be many in glory with Christ who will ever praise Him for raising up and sending to darkest Africa the Rev J B Radasi as He did in 1904. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland mission was then established in the hope that the eyes of poor blinded sinners there would be opened and we believe that our continuing-presence there, in the face of many difficulties and unrelenting Satanic opposition, has hitherto proved to be a source of blessing. The greatest blessing of all is the forgiveness of sins – ‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.’ The Saviour spoke of His blood as being ‘shed for many for the remission of sins.’ We are to proclaim as loudly and as widely as possible that Christ is exalted ‘a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins’. The time is short. Eternity is ahead of us; *now* is the ‘accepted time’; *now* is ‘the day of salvation.’ ‘The night cometh, when no man can work.’ Millions in Africa are perishing through the spread of AIDS and this adds urgency to the work.

“On behalf of the Foreign Missions’ Committee I desire to thank you most sincerely for your kindness and generosity in supporting our mission in Africa, and we hope that you will continue to do so. Above all, we desire you to pray that the Holy Spirit would bless the work being done there in order that precious never-dying souls may be begotten again and thus become heirs of an inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.’

“ ‘Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen’.”

Address by the Rev Petros Mzamo at Mbumba Zending Meeting:

(Based on Psalm 68:1 and Numbers 10:35)

"IN this psalm the moving of the ark is the type of the Lord Jesus Christ going forth to cast out all His enemies, which are also the enemies of His Church; and to set up His own kingdom which is the kingdom of grace. It is that kingdom of which He says that it is not 'meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' He has stablished His in the hearts of His people, made a 'willing people' in the day of His power. The Lord Jesus sets up His kingdom in the hearts of His people, making them a willing people through the preaching of the gospel of the Son of God and Him crucified. By His death, He conquered all His enemies, even death and the grave.

"This brings joy, happiness and peace when tracing the victories of the Ark through the wilderness in opposition to many enemies until it ascended Mount Sion. The preaching of Christ crucified to the Jews is a stumbling block, to the Greeks it is foolishness. 'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us which are saved it is the power of God.'

"Christ going forth has 'on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.' His enemies from the great to the small strove mightily to destroy the Head of the Church. It was not easy to rescue the souls of the elect from the grasp of Satan and sin; to open the prison house: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' Yes, the Mighty Conqueror. As the Ark ascended Sion's hill, so the Lord Jesus ascended to the heaven of heavens leading captivity captive. The Father welcomes the all-conquering Saviour of sinners.

The true church of God in our day and generation is meeting with many enemies – men and women who have gone out to every land to preach 'another gospel' which is not that of Christ. They are spreading erroneous, damnable teachings in every land destroying themselves and others. Godlessness, worldliness and the powers of darkness are combining in every land to destroy the true teaching of the gospel of Christ. The prayer of Moses should be the prayer of the true church, even in our day: 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.'

"I take this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks and much appreciation to our Dutch friends for the great and wonderful support they give to the mission work in Zimbabwe and in Kenya."

Comfort in Time of Trouble

Quotations from *Gleanings from William Gurnall*. See review on page 216

"THE Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him," (Lamentations 3:24). Hast thou not chosen Him for thy portion? Dost thou not look for a heaven to enjoy Him in for ever? And can any dungeon of outward affliction be so dark, that this hope will not enlighten it? He that hath laid up a portion in heaven for thee, will surely lay out all the expenses thou needest in thy way thither. Remember how often God hath confuted thy fears, and proved thy unbelief a false prophet. Hath He not knocked at thy door with inward comfort and outward deliverance, when thou hadst put out the candle of hope, given over looking for Him, and been ready to lay thyself down on the bed of despair? When the storm of thy fears was so great that the anchor of hope gave way, and left thee to feed with misgiving and despairing thoughts, . . . even then thy God proved them all liars, by an unlooked for surprise of mercy, with which He stole sweetly in upon thee.

HOPE is the handkerchief that God puts into His people's hands, to wipe the tears from their eyes, which their present troubles, and long delay of expected mercies, draw from them. "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end," Jeremiah 31:16, 17.

IF Christ sends His disciples to sea, He means to be with them when they most need His company. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

NONE find such quick answers at the throne of grace as suffering saints. "In the day when I cried," saith David, "thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," (Ps. 138:3). Peter knocked at the gate of those who were assembled to seek God for him, almost as soon as their prayer knocked at heaven's gate in his behalf. There is ever a door more than the Christian sees in his prison, by which Christ can with a turn of His hand open a way for His saint's escape. The devil surely will leave all in the lurch that do his work. But thou need never fear a "Look thou to that" from God's lips, when thy faithfulness to Him hath brought thee into the briers. Be not troubled if thou art cast overboard, like Jonah, before thou seest the provision which God makes for thy safety. It is ever at hand, but sometimes out of sight, like Jonah's whale, which was sent of God to ferry him ashore under water before he knew where he was. That which thou thinkest is come to devour thee, may be the messenger that God sends to bring thee safe to land. ●

Book Review

Gleanings from William Gurnall. Selected by *Hamilton Smith*.

Published by Soli Deo Gloria Publications. Hardback, 147 pages, price £12.95. Available at £10.95 from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE

THIS selection of brief passages and short sayings, from the classic, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, by William Gurnall (1616-79, parish minister in Lavenham, Suffolk), is rich, substantial fare, and its striking illustrations and pithy sayings impinge on the mind. We believe that it will be an aid to preachers and useful for believers, as it proved to be when first published in 1914.

Although the book does not have an index, the quotations are grouped under a dozen heads, such as 'Sin and Guilt', 'Profession and Hypocrisy', 'Faith and Holiness', 'Strife and Contention', 'Reading and Meditation', and 'Patience and Hope'. Under each head, each of the quotations has a title; for example, under Sin and Guilt' are the titles, *The terror of sin*, *The love of sin*, *Secret sins*, *Forsaking sin*, etc. A number of the longer pieces, some as long as one page, can conveniently be broken down into a number of separate quotations by those who wish to use them in preaching and teaching.

The reading of even a few pieces makes the reader realise that Gurnall was a preacher and writer who aimed at the heart and conscience of the believer. "A thorn in the foot will make any way uneasy to a traveller," he says, "and guilt in the conscience will make any condition uncomfortable to the Christian, but most of all a suffering one. O, it is sad, to go with sore and smarting consciences into a suffering condition."

Nor was Gurnall a mere theorist. *The Christian in Complete Armour*, (a work based on Ephesians 6:10-20, "Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, . . .") is intensely practical, and that is seen clearly in this selection. Says Gurnall: "Fall to the work God sets thee about, and thou engagest His strength for thee. 'The way of the Lord is strength.' Run from thy work and thou engagest God's strength against thee; He will send some storm or other to bring home His runaway servant. How oft hath the coward been killed [when hiding] in a ditch or under some hedge, while the valiant soldier that stood his ground and kept his place, got off with safety and honours."

We hope that the perusal of this interesting volume will prove helpful to those who are fighting the good fight of faith, and that it will whet their appetite for the feast to be found in *The Christian in Complete Armour*. □

Note: *The Christian in Complete Armour* by William Gurnall, (Published by The Banner of Truth, hardback, 600 pages, at £21.95) is available from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom at £18.50.

Protestant View

“First maps of Britain chart a Catholic plot”

THE first modern maps of Britain, drawn up by the Scottish cartographer John Elder in 1564, were almost certainly prepared not for administrative reasons, but to help the Roman Catholic countries of Spain and France to invade Britain and overthrow the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I of England. This is the opinion of Dr Peter Barber, deputy map librarian of the British Library, which has recently bought the maps for £700,000. John Elder, a tutor to Lord Darnley, Mary Queen of Scots husband, was a staunch Roman Catholic who was keen to see the overthrow of Elizabeth. The map gives evidence of a Roman plot. Dr Barber, who has researched the subject, says that the map shows in detail the names and areas controlled by Catholic clans in Scotland and Ireland, and many monastic institutions, while more important settlements were left off. “What we have here,” he said, “is not a true map of Elizabethan England, but a map of how Elder saw a Catholic England under Mary Tudor.”

Twenty-four years later, Rome was confident of success, through Philip II of Spain, in invading and subjugating Britain, but the galleons of Philip’s armada met with disaster. “God blew with His winds and they were scattered.” So read the inscription on Elizabeth’s commemorative medal.

Rome has not ceased to plot, in her burning ambition to have Britain as “Mary’s dowry”, and there is no lack of evidence to show that she is making significant progress. Plainly, our duty is to pray for the preservation of our Protestant constitution, for the downfall of the “man of sin”, and for the light of the true gospel to shine upon the multitudes being duped by Rome. □

Cardinal preaches in St Giles, Edinburgh

ANOTHER significant step in Rome’s progress in our land is that Cardinal Thomas Winning preached in St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, at the end of May. This is the first time, to our knowledge, that a Roman Catholic priest has preached in this Reformation landmark. “How is the gold become dim!” And how sad to think that the church where such illustrious men of God as John Knox, Robert Bruce and Alexander Henderson, exercised their ministries, should be given to the Roman hierarchy to use as a platform for its propaganda.

Knox and those other men of God faithfully wrought and fought for the true faith, and against the errors of Rome, to the incalculable spiritual benefit of succeeding generations. But this is a generation which blatantly despises its birthright. May our eyes be opened to realise the dreadful loss we are bringing upon ourselves by succumbing to ecumenicism. □

Commemorating the establishment of Christianity in Britain

WE have been informed repeatedly by the press in recent weeks that it was Augustine who brought Christianity to Britain when he came from Rome to Canterbury 1400 years ago. The fact is that Christianity came to England long before that time and the Christian Celtic Church was established in both England and Scotland when Augustine came to Canterbury.

In any case the religion which Augustine brought to Britain was not Biblical Christianity but the erroneous, superstitious, ritualistic religion of Pope Gregory I, who had sent Augustine (not to be confused with Augustine of Hippo, author of *The City of God*) to these shores in 597.

Augustine's mission was to bring the Celtic Church under Papal dominion, and also to win over the pagans who were not yet Christianised. Sad to say, although the Celtic Church resisted Augustine's imperious demands, it eventually was defeated by Rome – bringing gross darkness upon the people for the long centuries of the Dark Ages.

We are heirs of the bright gospel light which dawned upon the nation at the Reformation. Then there was the wounding of the beast, but we fear that we are seeing the fulfilment of the Scripture: "and his deadly wound was healed," Rev. 13.3. For how long are we to have the light? Let us seek earnestly that it will be preserved among us, and shine out from us. □

Notes and Comments

The Question of Surrogacy

"Surrogate, a person or thing taking the place of another. **Surrogate mother**, a woman who bears a child on behalf of another woman." (*Oxford Dictionary*).

Surrogacy featured in the national press last month over the case of a British woman who agreed to bear a child for a Dutch couple for £12,000 "expenses" (plus money for clothing, travel and insurance). This particular episode ended in disappointment, deceit, tears, accusation and counter accusation, with money featuring to an unhealthy degree. It appears, however, that though payment for surrogate babies was banned 12 years ago, an agency set up to facilitate surrogacy has been operating for 9 years. This agency has 375 couples on its books, and some 40 babies are born each year as a result of introductions arranged by it. Business is booming and profitable.

Consider this practice from the following points of view:

Legally: The "expenses" appear to make a mockery of the present law, while

the question arises: If it is illegal for the surrogate mother to profit from surrogacy, is it right that others who arrange introductions should profit from the transaction? Is it right that there should be trading in babies like goods on a supermarket shelf?

Socially: Is it wise to play around with the family unit in this way? Of course not; the family (the father, mother and their children) is the building block of a nation. Also, we do not know the long term effects on the child born by surrogacy or the surrogate mother who gives up the child. It would be strange if such an unnatural arrangement would not bring difficulties in its train.

Morally: While we have every sympathy with childless couples (and adoption is a perfectly valid option), no one has an absolute right to have a child. It is God who gives life and it is He who takes it away (Job 1:21). God has also made plain that children, who are His heritage (Psalm 127:3) are to be conceived, born and brought up in the setting of the family.

It is our wisdom, in every context, to bow to God's will in His providence and to follow His declared will in His Word.

J. R. T.

Scotland for Christ '97 – APC minister in charge of ecumenical gathering

AN ecumenical event in Inverness has been organised by the local minister of the Associated Presbyterian Churches, the Rev Malcolm MacInnes. The event is called *Scotland for Christ '97*, and Mr MacInnes, who is its chairman, has described it as a Gospel Rally.

In the April 1997 newsletter of *Scotland for Christ*, Mr MacInnes writes: "The event . . . is designed to encourage Christians to come together for an afternoon of praise and fellowship, to provide a unique opportunity to bring along friends who may not be 'church people', and to be a focal point for a wider community to realise that there is an active Christian community in the nation."

The two-hour event will be held in the Caledonian football stadium on Saturday afternoon, 5 July. The advert sfeature "Derick Bingham, Bill Gilvear, Ian White and The Male Voice Gospel Choir". Derick Bingham contributes an article to the newsletter, in which he informs us in laudatory tones that quite recently he was listening to four evenings of sermons in Charlotte, North Carolina, from the Arminian preacher, Billy Graham.

A report in a local newspaper says that "the success of the live TV link to a Billy Graham rally some years ago gives Mr MacInnes cause for optimism, not only for this year's event, but for the future." Mr MacInnes also takes encouragement from the ecumenical open-air meetings which have been held in the summer for the past few years at Ferintosh Burn, on the Black Isle. Another report says that "Ian White, possibly one of the best known composers and Gospel singers in Scotland, will sing some of his now famous music."

In 1983, the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland passed this motion: "The Synod, conscious of the danger to the distinctive witness of the Free Presbyterian Church from interdenominational evangelistic campaigns, call on the ministers, elders, deacons, members and people of the Church to dissociate themselves from such campaigns and adhere to the testimony for truth handed down to them, and patiently wait on the Lord for the revival of His own Cause in our land through a genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the nation. The Synod, at the same time would counsel the people of God in the Church to endeavour humbly, by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ, to witness to the reality of their faith in the Redeemer."

The need for such a statement is now only too obvious. The ability of the APC to join with those who support Arminian doctrine is becoming more and more apparent, and their readiness to overlook aberrant doctrinal teaching is alarming. This doctrinal indifference does not sit well with the scripture: "Buy the truth and sell it not." (Proverbs 23:23). *D. M. B.*

An attempt in Lewis to sell drink on the Sabbath

UNDER the headline, "Island fight for Sunday drinking," a newspaper forecasts "that the wind of change is set to blow away forever the booze-free Sabbath in the Western Isles," because three publicans in Stornoway have applied for licences to sell drink on Sabbath. The usual arguments are brought forward: the provision of licensed facilities on the Sabbath is essential to boost tourism; there is a strong local demand; and, only the Church is against it.

How wrong to say that *only* the Church is against it. The Law of God is against it. God's command is, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy..." (Exodus 20:8). Whatever popular support Sabbath-breakers may have, they are judged by God's law; and they, with all men, will be called to account by God, whose law they are flouting. It is to be hoped that the Western Isles licensing board will resist this attempt to encroach on the Lord's Day. *D. J. McD.*

The Times Preacher of the Year Awards

A short-list of thirty sermons has been chosen for The Times Preacher of the Year Award, and five of these will go forward to a final in a festival of preaching in Durham Cathedral on November 12th.

"Nearly 75,000 sermons are preached each week," says The Times, "but declining church attendance means that they are irrelevant to most people." In the same article, Dr Michael Quicke, Principal of the Spurgeon Theological College, London, is quoted as saying that 89 per cent of the population (in England) no longer attend church. How far we have drifted spiritually when only 11 per cent of the population any longer attend a place of worship.

Another commentator says that "preaching can be damaging to a congregation". Whatever he meant, it is true that many preachers are doing untold damage by preaching "another gospel".

Also quoted are critics who see preaching to be in such a crisis that they question the act of preaching itself. There is something radically wrong with the professing Church when it has lost sight of the scriptural principle that, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". A Church which uses unscriptural "modern" and "alternative" forms of worship, cannot expect to have God's blessing, or to be of benefit to perishing and needy souls. *D. J. McD.*

Release of depraved film

THE godly person is not a cinema-goer, far less a viewer of pornographic films, but he is concerned about the effects of films upon public morality.

It is with the utmost disgust that many right-thinking people have learned that the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) has decided that the film *Crash*, a loathsome and debasing production, can now go on general release to the public. Various film critics have condemned the pornographic film as "vile" and "beyond depravity".

The psycho-babble of Dr. Paul Britton, whose commendation of the film was accepted by the BBFC, will never disguise the fact that vile material corrupts, or, as the Bible says, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." □

Sheriff comments on insolence and impudence among young people

IN a recent Scottish court case, in which it was alleged that a certain group of young people were unpleasant, ill-mannered, impudent, and used swear words, the Sheriff commented, "Young people are not taught manners at home or at school, and people over the age of thirty must make allowances for this."

A spokesman for the Campaign for Courtesy added, "They [young people who use abusive language and behave insolently] take their example from the extremely vulgar sort of pop groups that one sees all over the place. Schools do their best but they are fighting a losing battle, and many parents are in despair."

These comments condemn those parents who, although concerned about their children, are not bringing them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord". Those teenagers who are not taught the basic requirement of the Fifth Commandment, to obey and respect their parents and other superiors, soon throw off the restraints of the other Commandments. One trembles to think what kind of parents they will make. May the God of all grace visit the rising generation with an outpouring of His Holy Spirit.

D. J. McD.

African Mission News

ZIMBABWE

AT the Synod in May, it was interesting and informative to hear the African deputies, Rev. P. Mzamo and Mr L. Ndlovu, present their Mission Reports. Mr Mzamo emphasised the great need that ministers of the gospel, and personnel for other departments of the work, be raised up.

It was good to hear in a letter from Ingwenya that the Form Four examination results in the John Tallach Secondary School were very good, despite the indiscipline of a few at the end of last Session.

Miss Norma MacLean had a welcome visit from her friends, Mr and Mrs. van Praag from Sydney, Australia, but they all had a frightening experience when on a sightseeing run one day, one of the tyres of their car burst, and the car rolled over three times, but mercifully their injuries were not too serious. After hospital treatment they returned to Ingwenya, full of gratitude to the Most High for His goodness and mercy in preserving them.

On the following Sabbath Rev. A. B. Ndebele took as his text, Psalm 124, verse 6, "Blessed be God who gave us not for a prey". He addressed the young people in particular, with reference to the alarming accident which had taken place, and urged them to give earnest thought to the necessity of being prepared for such unforeseen trials.

Saul Ncube, one of the workmen at Ingwenya, and a communicant, had a terrifying experience while cleaning out empty petrol tanks. There was a loud explosion, he was thrown to the ground, and he sustained injuries, including a broken leg. However, after three weeks in hospital he has recovered.

It was sad to hear that the Superintendent of Thembiso Children's Home in Bulawayo, Mr. Edward Sayi Moyo, has recently passed away after surgery. We hope that the Lord will provide a suitable man for this important and very pleasant work. J.N.

KENYA

THE Rev. John Goldby writes that there has been some increase in interest in Ogembo, the village next to Sengera, and that Sabbath services have been resumed there. (Mr Goldby has been conducting a weekday service in the home of one of the families). The people are keen to have the church in a more central location and have begun to build another building equidistant from the homes of the main families. There is a service held each Sabbath morning at 8.30.

Maiga and Magencha outstations have been joined together as they are reasonably close. A service is held in each place on alternate Sabbaths, and some of the people walk from one village to the other for the service each

Sabbath. Between 40 and 60 people gather. In addition, Mr Goldby and the interpreter, Mr James Onwonga, visit Maiga School regularly on a weekday to give religious instruction to both primary and secondary children.

In Sengera, the usual services continue. Some further metrical Psalms have been translated into the Eke-Gusii language and are being proof read. Rianyakwara School, the local primary School sponsored by the Mission, is visited every second Friday by Mr Goldby, when he takes worship with the whole school, and then gives Catechism instruction to standards four to seven.

Mr Ian MacLean, the administrator, is in Zimbabwe for three weeks supervising building works at Ingwenya. Prior to leaving Sengera he was overseeing the building of a new 40,000 gallon underground water tank to replace the underfloor tank at the hospital. The material dug from the enormous hole is being used to repair the road from the hospital to the church.

Mr MacLean was able to visit the group of people in Kuria on 3rd May and conduct a service, at the conclusion of which there was a useful question and answer session, and the opportunity to give further instruction. □

Church Information

Meetings of Presbyteries (D.V.)

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

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 11th November at 3.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 4th November at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Monday, 7222th October, at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 2nd September, at 1.00 pm.

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND: At Auckland on Friday, 23rd January, 1998, at 9.00 am.

ZIMBABWE: At Bulawayo on Tuesday, 14th October, at 11 am.

ZIMBABWE MISSION

VACANCIES AT JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL

1. **One or more University / College Graduates**

Must have subjects suitable for teaching and be willing to teach Bible Knowledge and take part in other school activities.

2. **A Couple** - the husband to be involved in maintenance and other practical work - the wife, if possible, to look after the school dispensary or do office work. They would also be involved in Sabbath School and Bible teaching.

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE GENERAL TREASURER acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:
Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund: Anon, Canada (May), Can \$100.
Sustentation Fund: E.M., £20.

CONGREGATIONAL TREASURERS acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Bracadale & Strath: *Church Funds:* Mrs. Annie Martin, £30, per D.J.M.; Anon, £20, per D.J.M.

Dingwall and Beaully: *Congregational Funds:* From Dutch touring party, £100.

Dundee, Perth & Stirling: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, Communion, £40, envelope in plate.

Edinburgh: *Manse Repairs:* Anon, £100; *Church Funds:* Anon, £60; *Communion Expenses:* Friend, £30; all per D.M. Campbell, Edinburgh; *Upholstery of Hall chair:* Anon, £250, per envelope in plate.

Glasgow, St. Jude's: *Congregational Fund:* Anon, £20; *Communion Expenses:* with every blessing, Anon £10; both per D.R.M. *Communion Expenses:* Miss J.C., £30, per J.F.; *Where Most Needed:* Anon, £10; *T.B.S.:* Estate of the late Mrs S. MacDonald, £5000, per Rev. D.M.; *Eastern Europe and T.B.S.,* Anon, £40; *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £60.

Inverness: *To help with Synod Expenses:* R.M., £20; *Tape Fund:* Anon, £5, per Duncan MacDonald; *Synod Expenses:* Anon, £20; *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £130.

Laide: *Eastern Europe:* N.H.R., £100, per collection plate; J.N., £20, D.A. MacL., £100; Friend, Ullapool, £20; Residents, Isle View Home, £9.30; Friend, £100; all per Rev. D.A.R.; *Eastern Europe Bibles:* S.C., £20; *Eastern Europe Travel Expenses:* S.C., £20; both per Rev. D.J.M.; Friends, Laide, £50; W.M., £10, per Rev. D.A.R.; J.M.B., NZ, £50, per A.B.; Friend, Laide, £10, per Rev. D.A.R.; Anon, £40, per collection plate; Friend, Aultbea, £50; Friend, Gairloch, £10; both per Rev. D.A.R.; Anon, £50, per collection plate. The following should have appeared in the last issue: *Eastern Europe Fund:* £50, per collection plate.

Eastern Europe for Postage: Friend, £10. *Eastern Europe:* Friend, Laide, £20; Friend, Edinburgh, £40; Residents, Isle View Home, £6.80, £8.75; R. Kershaw, £50; all per Rev. D.A.R. Friend, Laide, £14, per collection plate; B.C., £100, per Rev. D.A.R.; Friends, Inverness, £14.77, per A.N.M. *Sustentation Fund:* Mrs. J. Mack, £100, per M.M.

North Harris: *Door Collection:* A Friend in Kyles, £10; Friend, Kyles, £20, per Rev. R.M.L.; *Where Most Needed,* Friend, North Tolsta, £10; Friend, North Tolsta, £10; both per Rev. R.M.L.; "In memory of my mother", friend, Leverburgh, £20, per Rev. R.M.L.; Anon, £10, per envelope in plate; *Bus Fund:* R.M.L., Cluer, £4, per J.M.L.

Portree: *Congregational Purposes:* Friends, London, £20, per F.M.; *Sustentation Fund:* Friend, £10; *Minister's petrol:* Ebenezer, £20; both per S.Y.M.; *Bus Fund:* Anon, £5, per envelope in plate.

Shieldaig: *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £10; Anon £15; Anon, Evanston, £10; Friends, Dingwall, £10; *Where Most Needed:* Inverness Friends, £100, per D.M.C.