

The Free Presbyterian Magazine and Monthly Record

Vol 102

August 1997

No 8

Our Free Presbyterian Heritage

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An editorial of continuing relevance reprinted from *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, January 1941

Part 2 – How it is endangered, and our duty to it

Note: In Part 1 (in the last issue) the author stated, "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." We now give the concluding half of the article, containing points III and IV.

III. The third point we notice is that this heritage is in danger.

It is in danger from without when it is persecuted. In an age when much is spoken and written concerning toleration, one would hardly expect to find persecution, but, nevertheless, this monster will put forth its ugly head in ways and in places where one would least expect it. Let a local committee be given the opportunity of choosing from a short list a man to fill a vacancy in one of the professions. The man may come with excellent credentials. His qualifications for his work are more numerous than any of the others who apply for the post but he is rejected; representations adverse to him have been made to the body responsible for filling the vacancy. Why? His fault is that he is a Free Presbyterian, and the committee naturally conclude that if he is a true Free Presbyterian he will not be one of the ringleaders of their concerts and dances, and so of no use to them.

Further, this heritage is in danger from without when instead of persecution there is plausibility. Certain individuals, clerical and lay, make it their business to associate with adherents and members of the Free Presbyterian Church. They speak of their great regard for our Church, and give us credit for adhering to the old paths. They sometimes attend public worship in our congregations, and none appear to listen more attentively, but it is all done in order to create a good

* See page 193 in the previous issue for a biographical footnote about the Rev. Donald Beaton.

impression, and as a means to an end. They even go to the length of shedding crocodile tears over the ecclesiastical divisions among us and piously sigh for the day when these divisions will be healed. The hollow hypocrisy of such play-acting ought to be apparent if one would remember that these same individuals never raise their voices within the pale of their own church against the cause of these divisions. Let Free Presbyterians beware of such plausible creatures.

There is danger from within when we become lukewarm towards the testimony which our church raises against error. This constitutes a real danger to our heritage, for it manifests that we are not alive as we should be to the ruin which heretical doctrines will bring upon the soul. Those who raised a testimony on behalf of the truth in 1893 did not look with a complacent eye on heresy. They realised only too well how it militates against the glory of God and the highest interests of the soul, and treated it as a poisonous viper which they were duty bound, as the professed friends of Christ, to put forth all their power to crush, and to apply the Gospel antidote in order to counteract the baneful effects of its poison. Was there not a great difference between them and us in this respect? Have we not reasons to smite upon our breasts and confess that we are not so vigilant, and our voice is not so often heard, as was the case with them, against Arminianism, Antinomianism, and Romanism? Have these "three unclean spirits like frogs" which "come out of the mouth of the dragon" become less harmful in our day than they were in their day? Is the reason for our comparative silence not to be found in our lukewarmness, and, therefore, it must be a guilty silence, which will be bitter to us some day?

Our heritage is in danger from within when we show signs of being ashamed of it. It has become fashionable with the majority to look upon us as old-fashioned and behind the times, and as an "impracticable element." It is contrary to nature not to be perturbed by having these things cast at one, with the result that many, when in certain company, hide and even deny the fact that they were brought up in the Free Presbyterian Church. This is often the case with some when they remove to localities where they are not known, for though there may be a congregation of our Church within a short distance of their homes they will not go near it, but instead will go to places where their very conscience tells them that they will not hear the pure gospel. In that way they manifest unfaithfulness of the most glaring kind to the cause of Christ. We are well aware also that many efforts are put forth to draw our young people away from us, and when those who put forth these efforts are successful with any individual, very often that individual becomes more hostile to us than those who seduced him. We cannot but conclude that these seducers come under the terrible denunciation of the Saviour when He says, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make

him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.”

There is also a danger to our heritage when people place more value on the things of the world than on the legacy that has been bequeathed to us. In God's Word we read that Esau, “for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright,” and one can find no better comparison for young women, brought up in the Free Presbyterian Church, when they marry men from other churches and go away with them to these churches. Such women ought to remember that they have not married their consciences to any man, and that it is wrong for them to follow any man into a Church where the Word of God and their conscience tells them they should not go. We have heard of husbands who insist that their wives follow them into such churches, but they are doing what neither the law of God nor the law of man permits them to do. This, along with the exercise of discipline in a scriptural manner, has caused many to forsake the Word of God, and embrace what may well be described as a counterfeit of Satan.

IV. The fourth point that falls to be noticed in connection with our heritage is our duty towards it.

It is our duty to hold fast to the Word of God, and to the doctrines contained in it, which have been handed down to us at such great cost. The Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, says, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” Thus he would have Timothy be careful of that priceless heritage that was bequeathed to him, and not only Timothy but us also, “for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.”

Let us consider the testimony that had been raised in 1893. It was raised in order to hand down to us entire an inspired and infallible Bible, given of God to be the only rule of faith and conduct. It was not raised by men who occupied an influential position in the professing Church. It is true that some of these said great things beforehand as to what they were going to do, but when the testing time came they were like “the children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.” The testimony was raised by weak men whom the world despised, but whose action was owned by God, and though their action was characterised by former friends as a “storm in a teacup” we believe their work will continue to the Millennium.

Further, it is our duty to keep a vigilant eye on attempts made to injure our heritage, and in doing so we should be on our guard against actions, by ourselves or others, which have selfish and self-justifying ends in view. These actions always tend to the breaking down of the walls of our Zion and will give no delight to a true child of God, but will strengthen, encourage and delight that class of people who are Sabbath-breakers, fornicators, drunkards and fugitives

from church discipline generally. Therefore, in every line of action which we take we ought to ask ourselves if we have the approbation of that class of people, or the approbation of God. Our duty, therefore, is to seek grace to obey the exhortation which says, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," and in our endeavours on behalf of our heritage to seek a single eye to the glory of God. In spite of the endeavours of some and the wishes of many that heritage is still preserved for us; therefore in all humility we can say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." ●

Sermon

The Humble Soul the Peculiar Favourite of Heaven

*Rev Ebenezer Erskine**

Preached on the fast-day before the administration of the Lord's Supper at Orwell, on 27th July, 1721.

Concluded from page 172

TEXT: Psalm 138:6, "*Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off.*"

In the first part of the sermon, in the last issue, the preacher stated: "The doctrine of the text is that the lowly and humble soul is the peculiar favourite of the high God. Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly'.

"This truth is so evidently founded on the text, that I shall not consume time in adducing other texts of Scripture to confirm it; many that I might name will be cited in expounding the doctrine. Through grace, I shall attempt to:

"First: Give some account of this lowliness and humility, and shew wherein it consists;

"Second: Prove, that the humble and lowly soul is the peculiar favourite of heaven;

"Third: Show why God has such respect to the lowly;

"Fourth: Lay before you some marks or characters of the lowly and humble soul;

"Fifth: Offer some motives pressing you to seek after it;

"Sixth: Offer a few directions and advices how it may be attained."

Having given the first three heads in the June issue, we now give the remainder. -Editor.

THE fourth principal thing proposed was to lay before you some marks by which you might try whether you be among the humble and lowly, to whom God has such a regard.

You have especially need to try this now, when you are to make a solemn approach to God at His table. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." If you lack this lowly frame of spirit, you cannot be welcome guests at the supper of the great King.

Now, for your examining yourselves, I shall suggest these following marks:

* See page 164 of the June issue for a biographical note about Ebenezer Erskine.

First, the lowly soul is one who is many times *ashamed to look up to heaven under a sense of his own vileness and unworthiness*; as we see in the poor publican, and also in David when he said, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." Psalm 40:12. It is true that when by faith the lowly soul looks to his surety: to Christ's everlasting righteousness, and His mediation and intercession, he has boldness to come to the throne of grace. I say, when he looks to Christ, he is not ashamed; as in Psalm 34, verse 5, "They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed." But when he looks to himself, as he is in himself, he is even ashamed and confounded before the Lord, and ready to cry out with the prophet, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips," Isaiah 6:5. He says as it were, "How shall I speak unto the King, the Lord of hosts? or how shall I appear before Him?"

A second mark is that he is one who is *many times put to wonder that God has not destroyed him*. He wonders that God has kept him out of hell so long, or that He has not let loose His hand, and made an utter end of him; and therefore he is much in the exercise of adoring God's mercy and long-suffering patience with the church. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not," Lamentations 3:22.

Thirdly, the lowly soul is one who is *most abased under the receipt of the greatest mercies and sweetest manifestations*. We see this in the instance of David, when God promised to build him a sure house, and gave him a promise of the Messiah to come from his loins: the man is not lifted up, but, on the contrary, is filled with wonder that God should stoop so far toward the like of him. "Who am I," said he, "that thou hast brought me hitherto?" The nearer that the humble soul is admitted unto God, and the higher that he is lifted up to the mount of enjoyments, the lower and lower he falls in his own esteem. Abraham, when admitted to plead with God on the behalf of Sodom, sinks into nothing in his own eyes? "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes," Genesis 18.

Fourth, the humble man *renounces the law as a covenant, and disclaims all pretensions to righteousness from that direction*. "I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." "O," says the man when he looks upon the law of God in its spirituality and extent, "what can I expect from it but wrath and ruin? Indeed, I am condemned already by the law; and if God mark iniquity, according to the tenor of it, I am undone for ever. 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?'" Psalm 130:3. So try yourselves by this: has a discovery of the law of God, in its spirituality, made you acknowledge that all your own righteousnesses are but filthy rags, dung, and loss?

Fifth, the lowly soul is one that *has high, raised, and admiring thoughts of*

Christ, and of His righteousness. As for the person of Christ, O, the humble soul admires this. The lower that he falls in his own esteem, the higher does Christ rise in his esteem. In Psalm 73, Asaph is so laid low in his own eyes that he cries, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." Well, while it is so with him, what are his thoughts of Christ? See them in verses 25 and 26, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And as for the righteousness of Christ, O how does his soul admire that, and clasp it! "O," says he, "I have no works, no righteousness of my own, to commend me to God, or wherewith to stand before him: but he is 'the Lord my righteousness.' I will go on in His strength, making mention of His righteousness, even of His only."

Sixth, the lowly soul is one that *looks on sin as his greatest burden.* He says with David, "'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me;' and particularly indwelling corruption, the fountain of sin." How he mourns and groans under that, saying with Paul, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," Romans 6:24.

Seventh, he is one that *values himself least, when others value him most.* "O," says he, "others see only my outside; but if they saw the swarms of abominations that I see and feel in my own heart, I would be a terror unto them." When the multitude is crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," we see that Christ is meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Eighth, the meek soul is *not puffed up with the falls of others*, (like those in 1 Corinthians 5:2); but rather, the falls of others contribute to humble and empty him the more of himself. He sees, from the breaking out of sin in others, what is in his own heart, and how much he is obliged to God for restraining grace. "If the bridle were but laid on my neck," the humble soul will say, "I would be soon carried into the same excess of riot with others."

Ninth, the lowly soul is one that is *thankful for little*; he will not despise the day of small things. Like the woman of Canaan, he is content with the crumbs that fall from the children's table. The humble soul is content with a bare word from the Lord. "O," says David, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." He thinks much of a single word from the Lord's mouth, and waits for it, as the servants of Benhadad, that caught at every word that dropped from the mouth of the king of Israel.

Tenth, the humble soul is *content and desirous to know what is God's will, that he may do it.* Paul is no sooner humbled, but he cries, "'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Give grace to obey: and command what Thou wilt."

V. The fifth matter proposed was, to offer some motives to press upon you and recommend this lowliness and humility of spirit.

The first motive shall be drawn from *the excellence of the grace of humility*.

This excellency appears in two things especially:

1. *It assimilates the soul to Christ*. Men are inclined to imitate the example of the great ones of the earth; but here is the most noble pattern that ever was, even an incarnate Deity, saying, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly."

2. The excellence of humility appears also in that *it is the distinguishing character of a Christian*. The people of God are ordinarily called the humble and meek of the earth. A proud Christian is a contradiction; for pride is just an opposite to true religion. O what a difference did it put between the Pharisee and the publican. The proud Pharisee brags to God, as it were, about his good works. "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." But the poor publican stands afar off, as if the Majesty of Heaven were about to strike him dead; and yet, the publican is the one who goes home to his house justified, while the other is rejected.

The second motive is this: consider *how reasonable this lowliness and humility of soul is*, whether we view ourselves singly, or, as together in connection with the evils of the land and of our day.

First, begin with this view: a view of *yourself alone*, man or woman, and you shall find reason for humiliation, and how reasonable lowliness is.

And in viewing yourself, see, first, that you are *a creature*: a creature sprung of earth, whose foundation is in the dust of the earth. Hence, the exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." You are earth in your original, earth as to the supports of nature, and to the earth you shall return in the end.

Also, you are not only a creature, but a *frail* creature, whose breath is in your nostrils. You stand continually upon the brink of an endless eternity. And as but a few years have passed since we arose out of the dust, so before long, death will sweep us off the stage. Then all our beauty, strength, stature, and other bodily excellencies, will be covered with rottenness. In Isaiah, chapter 40, you see it is the cry both of heaven and earth that "all flesh is grass." Solomon, giving a description of the life of man, sums it all up in two short phrases: "There is a time to be born, and a time to die." He leaps over the intermediate distance between man's birth and his burial, as a thing that was not worthy of his notice. He is born, and then he dies. He says, as it were, "The moment of time between the womb and the tomb is so short that it does not deserve to be named."

Furthermore, you are not only a frail creature, but also a *sinful* creature, wholly overrun with that loathsome leprosy of sin, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. O, what reason we have to be humble, who have defaced the image of God, cast dirt on all the divine attributes, trampled His law and authority under our feet. The sinner has swallowed a cup of deadly poison,

which will infallibly destroy him, if infinite mercy and free grace prevent not. What ground has he then to be proud? "O," says the prodigal, "I have sinned against heaven, and therefore am no more worthy to be called thy son."

You are not only a sinful creature but also an *impotent* creature, that can do nothing in order to your own help and relief. If God had not laid help upon One that is mighty, we had been all of us this day sinking under the fiery mountains of eternal vengeance and wrath. Such an impotent creature is sinful man, that as to natural things, he cannot make one hair of his head white or black, or add one cubit to his stature. And so helpless is he, as to spiritual and eternal concerns, that he can no more change the wicked habits of his heart, or the wicked ways of his life, than the Ethiopian can change his colour, or the leopard his spots.

Again, you are a *variable, changeable, and inconstant* creature: liable to many alterations, both as to your outward lot and your inward frame. The man that is in greatest esteem today, may have his reputation ruined by the envenomed tongue of calumny tomorrow. Your health may soon be changed into sickness, your riches into poverty, your strength into weakness, your beauty into ugly deformity. And as for you, believer, though your state be firm like the mountains, yet your frame is but a changeable thing. Perhaps you may be saying with David one day, "By thy favour my mountain stands strong;" and the next day be crying out, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I am troubled." Although perhaps the candle of the Lord may be shining on your tabernacle, yet in a little time you may be going mourning without the sun.

Secondly, this lowly frame of spirit is highly reasonable, if we consider *ourselves not only singly, but also as together, in connection with the evils of the land and of the day wherein we live*. Look at the world, and particularly the land wherein we live.

O what great cause of deep humiliation all of us have this day before the Lord, when we take a view of the *abounding profanity* of our day! All ranks have corrupted their ways; a flood of atheism and wickedness, Jordan-like, has broken down all its banks.

Have we not reason to be humbled for the *barrenness* that is found among us under the glorious gospel? The Lord says to us, as he said to His vineyard, "I planted thee in a fruitful soil; I took all imaginable pains upon thee, by ordinances, by the rod, by mercies and crosses; yet, after all, when I looked that they should bring forth grapes, behold, they brought forth wild grapes."

Again, have all of us not reason to be humbled for the lamentable *divisions* that are found among us? "Ephraim against Manasseh, Manasseh against Ephraim, and both they together against Israel." "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart," Judges 5:15. Church and State are divided. And we are likely to have a new division among us with regard to doctrine. There is a handful of ministers who have lately put in a petition to our General

Assembly, in favour of some of the pure and precious truths of the gospel, which they conceive to be injured by an Act of Assembly. There is a mighty cry raised against them, both in pulpits and in common conversation, as if they were the "troublers of Israel", "Antinomians", and what not. Many strange errors are fathered upon them, which they never once thought of. I shall be far from bringing a railing accusation against those who try to wound their reputation and to mar the success of their ministry, for I look on many of them as great and good men. But if they whom they cry against be helped to bear reproach for the name of Christ and for the cause of His truths, with humility and lowliness of mind, the Lord in His own time will find out a way to bring them forth to the light, so as they shall behold His righteousness. And although their reputation should sink for ever in the world, under the load of calumny that is cast upon them, I hope they think it but a small sacrifice for the least truth of God, which is of more worth than heaven and earth. However, I say this is a cause of humiliation in our day: that any of the precious truths of Christ should be under a cloud, and that we should be divided in our sentiments about them. Have we not reason to be deeply humbled for our woeful defections and backsliding, which are the ground of our divisions? We are departed from the Lord, and the Lord is in a great measure departed from us. What a woeful withering wind has blown upon God's vineyard in the land! We are fallen from our first love, our former zeal for God and His precious truths, and the royalties of our Redeemer's crown. And is there not a lamentable decay as to the power and life of godliness, which has dwindled away into an empty form with the most? In Scotland, it is not with the nobles, gentry, ministers and people as it once was. And the worst of it is, that though it be so, though grey hairs are here and there upon us, yet we do not perceive it. We make our faces harder than a rock, and refuse to return to the Lord. But I hasten to a close.

The third motive to press us to this lowliness is *the noble patterns of humility that are set before us for our imitation*. Take a view of them.

The *saints militant* are patterns of it. Consider Abraham, the father of the faithful, in the 18th chapter of Genesis. With what humility does he address himself to God? "Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." And his grandson, Jacob, follows his footsteps. "I am not worthy," says he, "of the least of all thy mercies." In Job, David, Isaiah, Paul, and all the cloud of witnesses, we have a copy of humility.

Again, the *saints triumphant* are a pattern of this grace. They take their crowns off their heads, and cast them down at the Mediator's feet, ascribing the glory of all unto Him, saying, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen," Revelation 1:5.

Also, *angels* are patterns of humility. They do not look on it as a

disparagement to be ministering spirits unto the heirs of glory. And with what humility do they cover their faces with their wings in the presence of God.

Again, *Christ* is a blessed pattern of lowliness. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Though He was the high God, yet he "took upon him the form of a servant." And therefore "let the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Even the infinite Jehovah, the eternal God, gives us a pattern of humility; for "he humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth." And, as you see in our text, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." And are not all these patterns worthy of our very highest imitation?

If this will not prevail, I offer *a fourth motive*. Consider *the evil and danger of the sin of pride*, that is directly opposite to humility and lowliness.

First: pride is *loathsome* in the sight of God; He cannot endure to look on it; He beholds it afar off. It is set in the very front of those sins that the Lord hates: "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him:" and the first of them is a proud look, Proverbs 6:16. God hates every sin, but he proclaims open war and hostility against pride.

The evil and loathsomeness of it appears in that it is *a sign of a rotten heart within*. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him," Habakkuk 2:4. As humility and sincerity go hand in hand, so do pride and hypocrisy.

Again, pride is loathsome because *it is the fertile womb of many other evils*. It is the spring of division. "Only by pride cometh contention," Proverbs 13:10. As I was saying just now, there are a great many divisions amongst us at this day. Church and State are divided, congregations and families are divided, ministers and people are divided. What is the matter? Pride lies at the bottom. If our proud hearts were but so far humbled as to confess our faults one to another, our divisions would soon come to an end.

Pride is also *the mother of error and heresy*; a root of bitterness that is troubling our Israel at this day. When men, especially clergymen, who have an air of infallibility about them, have asserted anything that is amiss in point of doctrine, their pride will not allow them to retract. Truth itself must rather fall as a sacrifice than their reputation sink. Pride of reason is the soul of Socinianism, and pride of will the soul of Arminian errors, and pride of self-righteousness is the source of that legal spirit that so much prevails in our day.

Again, is not pride loathsome when it is *the spring and root of apostasy*? Solomon says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Peter's pride was the immediate forerunner of his denying his Master.

But *secondly*, pride is not only loathsome in God's sight, but also He has a *particular quarrel* with it. He has threatened to "scatter the proud, in the imagination of their own hearts." You may read of God's controversy with the

proud in Isaiah, chapter 2, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down.... The day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low... The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." And, O, what ruin has the sin of pride brought along with it!

See how it *turned angels into devils*, and threw them from heaven into hell; being lifted up with pride, they fell into condemnation, as the Apostle insinuates. God could not endure pride to dwell so near Him; and therefore He cast them down from heaven, and laid them under chains of eternal darkness.

It was pride that *has ruined all mankind*, when it crept out of the higher into the lower Paradise. "Ye shall be as gods," said the serpent; and immediately the bait was taken; though in the event it made them like the devil, not as gods.

We might see God's particular quarrel with pride also in the story of what *ruin it hath brought with it upon the ungodly world*. Pharaoh refuses to bow so far to the command of God as to let Israel go, saying, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" Therefore he and his host were to "sink like lead in the mighty waters." Haman's pride brought him to an ignominious end: though he was his prince's greatest favourite today, he was hanged tomorrow on the gallows which he had set up for poor Mordecai. Nebuchadnezzar proudly vaunts himself of his royal palace, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Immediately he is turned out from the society of men, and made to eat grass with the oxen. Herod, after his fine oration, receives that applause from the people without any check, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man;" and immediately the angel of the Lord smites him, and he is eaten of worms.

As God has punished pride in the wicked, so He has shown His resentment against it *in His own children*. And escape who will, His children shall not miss the stroke of the rod, if their hearts be lifted up within them. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." David's pride prompted him to number Israel, that he might make his boast that he was king over so many thousands; and thereupon a raging pestilence, in three days' time, swept away seventy thousand of Israel. Hezekiah's pride made him shew his treasure of precious things to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, and therefore his posterity and his treasures must be carried away to Babylon. In a word, though you were as the signet on God's right hand, you shall not escape a stroke of fatherly wrath and anger, if you allow pride to lodge in your hearts. This threatening shall surely take place, both among friends and enemies: "A man's pride shall bring him low," Proverbs 29: 23. And if it miss his person, it shall fall heavy on his family: "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud," Proverbs 15:25.

VI. The sixth and last principle thing I proposed was, to offer a few advices, in order to your attaining this lowly frame and temper of soul, which the high God so much regards.

First, *go to the law as a schoolmaster*. Read the Commandments, and Christ's spiritual commentary on them in Matthew 5. View the law of God in its spirituality and extent, for it is exceeding broad. This should make the proudest heart to lie in the dust. Paul said, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The feathers of his pride and legal righteousness soon fell, when the law in its spirituality was set before his eyes.

Secondly: *get Christ to dwell in your heart by faith*; for the reigning power of this evil of pride is never broken till Christ come by the power of His Spirit, bringing down the towering imaginations of the heart, and erect His throne there. The more of Christ, the more humility; and the less of Christ, the more pride. When the Spirit of Christ enters into the heart, He stamps the likeness and image of Christ there. O then, if you would have this humility and lowliness of spirit, "lift up the everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in." He brings a glorious retinue of graces with Him, whereof humility is one of the first.

Thirdly, *be much in viewing the glorious perfections of the Majesty of heaven*, as they are displayed in the works of creation and providence; but especially as they shine in the face of Jesus Christ, and the glorious work of redemption through him. When the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filling the temple, he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." Job also said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job 42:5, 6.

Fourthly, *be much in viewing "the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged"*; I mean your original corruption and depravity; how you were conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. And O, how much of this cleaves even to believers themselves, while they are on this side of eternity! There is a law in the members continually warring against the law of the mind. This laid the great apostle Paul in the dust, notwithstanding his high standards.

Fifthly, *be much in viewing the vanity of the creature, and all things below*. "Vanity and vexation of spirit," is written in legible characters upon all things under the sun. "The fashion of this world is passing away." Be much in viewing the bed of the grave, where you must lie down shortly, and where corruption shall cover you. Like Job, say "to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." View an awful tribunal, and an endless eternity, that is to follow on the back of death, where you and I shortly shall stand trial, and receive a sentence from the righteous Judge, which shall determine our state for ever.

Lastly, *be much in eyeing these patterns of lowliness and humility which I already mentioned.* God, angels, and saints have cast you a pattern of it. But especially be much in viewing the humility and humiliation of the Son of God, as these are proposed as the great pattern in these words: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Philippians 2:5-8. ●

The General Assemblies

The Church of Scotland General Assembly

WE looked in vain in the secular and Christian press for any reports which might indicate that there were calls by at least some Assembly members for a return to Biblical truth and practice in our Scottish national Church.

In his sermon, the Moderator, the Right Rev. Sandy MacDonald, did exhort the Church to make a fresh start. But he did not mean the fresh start of whole-hearted commitment to the Scriptures but rather what he called "new patterns of ministry, of worship,... new co-operation between denominations... Maybe even a new understanding and interpretation of the Bible."

The Queen's representative at the Assembly, Lord Macfarlane, the Lord High Commissioner, not only called on the Church to "continue to devote time and attention to how best we can persuade people to worship with us," but also on political parties to work more closely with the Churches for "the greater good of Scotland". However, "the greater good" he was thinking of was not spiritual benefit but the resolving of "social problems".

It will not be for the good of the Church if it goes down the road recommended by the Rev. Duncan McClements, Convener of the Committee on Ecumenical Affairs, when he urged the Church to consider the appointment of bishops. His call reflected the statement made earlier to the Assembly by the Anglican Bishop of York, who said that he hoped "it may not be too long before we begin to see a more serious and perhaps more formal way with which to enter into conversations with yourselves." It is no exaggeration to say that the ultimate end of the ecumenical road is submission to the Papacy – and that is not our view alone. In addressing the Assembly on the issue of inter-communion, the Roman Catholic delegate said, "It is a question of, at the end of the day, accepting the ministry of another's church. I think we have to acknowledge that acceptance of Roman Catholic ministry involves also in some way facing the question of the ministry of the Bishop of Rome." Even the report of the Church's Committee on Ecumenical Affairs itself acknowledges that the 1995 papal Encyclical *Ut Unum*

Sint (that they may be one) is emphatic "that the fulness of communion is only within the Roman Catholic Church," and that "the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is the key to the fulness of communion with God."

With regard to social problems, the Assembly expressed its concern about increasing alcohol abuse among teenagers, condemned "alcopops" (sweetened alcohol drinks which are aimed at younger people), and supported the steps being taken by the Government to curb the sales of these drinks.

However, the Assembly also decided to request "that a Royal Commission be appointed to consider and make recommendations on the issues involved in the legalisation of cannabis." This has provoked fears, and rightly so, that the Church could be seen as condoning drug use. Indeed, one member of Assembly, a woman minister by the name of Shirley Blair, (speaking outside the Assembly) said that she would favour legalisation of cannabis not only for medicinal purposes but for everyone, claiming that it is not addictive.

On the domestic front, a disturbing state of affairs was revealed when the Assembly had to admit that wife-battering took place in some manses, and decided to set up a 24-hour confidential hot-line for ministers' wives who are victims of violence and abuse behind the closed doors of manses. It was claimed by one speaker that the Church has "tended to ignore, marginalise, blame, patronise or exclude victims." No doubt, this shameful problem has grown, and this solution of using a hot-line is employed, because Church courts, on the whole, have failed to discipline offenders.

With regard to the National Lottery, the Assembly spoke from both sides of its mouth. On the one hand it adhered to its policy of condemnation of the National Lottery, but on the other hand appointed a commission to give further "consideration to the Church's policy on the National Lottery and its effect [loss of Lottery funding] on the work being carried out [repair and maintenance of certain historic church buildings] in partnership with others." No doubt, the Very Rev. David Steel echoed the thoughts of those in favour of using Lottery funding when he said that the Church would have to temper its attitude toward the Lottery with a degree of realism – deplorable words for a man who by his office professes to believe in the God of providence.

The Assembly, however, disapproved of any steps to clone human beings. It "expressed its strongest opposition to the cloning of humans and urged the Government to press for an international treaty enforcing a global ban."

Strange to say, the bizarre phenomenon, the "Toronto blessing", in which worshippers fall over, shake, and emit animal noises, was not condemned. In its report the Panel of Doctrine adopted "a sitting on the fence" posture. The Assembly, in approving the report, did no more than request Presbyteries to monitor the effect of the phenomenon on church life.

What is sorely needed in the Church of Scotland is a very decided proclamation of the whole truth of Scripture. Only when the trumpet gives a definite sound can we look for betterment in that Church which was once renowned for its Reformed stance but has slidden far away from it.

The Free Church General Assembly

THE retiring Moderator, the Rev. Neil MacDonald, Fearn, preached a sermon on 1 Kings 19:11-13, which ends with the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He spoke first on "The dejection of the Prophet," and then on "The sovereignty of God," and stressed in conclusion that "the doctrine of His sovereignty is no excuse for inaction. It is indeed the belief that He is mighty to save that is our great incentive to preach the gospel which is His power unto salvation..."

The new Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Donald MacDonald, in his address to the Assembly, gave three answers to the question, "What is the church for?" In his third answer, "The church is for the people", he stated that the first duty of the church is "to tell them the good news of Jesus", but at the same time "to seek the welfare of the people at every level, moral, material and social, as well as spiritual." Two issues cry out for a Christian lead, he said: the sanctity of human life and social justice, and the two most striking areas in which the sanctity of human life is being attacked in this country are abortion and euthanasia.

The matters which dominated the Assembly were those relating to the case of Professor Donald Macleod. The lengthy debate was over two reports from the Training of the Ministry Committee: the Minority Report, by those members of the Committee who were not satisfied with how the Church has dealt with the case, and the Supplementary Report. "The Minority Report, signed by Prof. Hugh Cartwright, Rev. Angus Smith, and Dr Murdo Murchison," says *The Monthly Record*, "claimed that documents (letters and the booklet published and circulated by Iain H. Murray) [in which serious charges were made against Prof. Macleod] before the Training of the Ministry Committee had not received adequate treatment, and had been summarily dealt with in terms of the 1995 Assembly that declared the case against Prof. Macleod closed. The Report asked the Assembly to set up a Special Committee, made up of people who had not been on the Training of the Ministry or Finance, Law and Advisory Committees to look at these documents and report back."

The Supplementary Report argued against the Minority Report and recommended the censuring of its signatories and their removal from committees. The Assembly adopted this report, declared the Minority Report to be in contempt of the findings of the 1995 General Assembly and of the Commission of Assembly of 31st October 1996, censured its signatories and removed them from membership of Group II Committees. Despite the

Assembly stating that the term censure was not used in the technical sense of disciplinary censure but as expressing "strong displeasure", and that the removal of the signatories from these committees was not a punishment, the perception in the press and other quarters is that they have indeed been punished.

In the debate prior to this decision Rev. Alex MacDonald implied that the signatories were "hounds of death". "It is high time for the Assembly to call those hounds to heel," he added. Prof. Cartwright, in a statement read to the Assembly (he was absent due to illness) said, "I am not a bitter foe or hound of death . . . I am not a member of an anti-Macleod faction . . . But I am a duly appointed member of a responsible official body to which complaints were made and which was obliged to take cognisance of these complaints."

A report on Theonomy (the belief that mankind is required by God to keep not only the moral law but also all the civil and judicial laws which were given to Israel in Old Testament times), was discussed. It was right, said Dr Eric MacKay, that the Assembly should address this issue because "letters in *The Monthly Record* had shown that theonomy was forthrightly espoused and preached." The Assembly adopted the report and its recommendation that "the Assembly declare that the teachings known as Theonomy or Reconstructionism contradict the Confession of Faith and are inconsistent with Biblical doctrine."

In the Youth Report debate, Rev. J. J. Murray expressed his concern about the Church losing its young people. This is due to the fact, he said, that they had lost catechetical teaching, acquaintance with Free Church principles, family worship and the keeping of the Lord's Day. He spoke of "Christian events for young people that were no different to concerts and events in the world, and which eroded the distinction between the church and the world." Looking from the outside one can see that his remarks are true with regard to the Free Church today. □

"Why Did the English Stop Going to Church?"

Rev. K. D. Macleod

THIS is the title of a thought-provoking lecture* delivered by Dr Michael Watts, a historian in the University of Nottingham. The statistics he quotes are stark enough. The 1851 census included a question on religious observance. This showed that 39.1% of the adult population in England attended church on a particular Sabbath. A survey conducted in 1989 revealed that the figure had dropped to just 9.6%. Significantly, and further emphasising the drop in attendance at Protestant places of worship, the 1851 figure included Roman Catholics at 1.7% of the population, but by 1989 it had doubled to 3.4%.

* Published as a booklet by Dr Williams's Library, 14 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG and available for £2.26 post free.

In his lecture Dr Watts concentrated on nonconformist churches, where the decline has been most serious – especially among Presbyterians and Congregationalists, whose combined figure in 1989 (having united to become the United Reform Church) was only one-fourteenth of what it was in 1851. He does claim, however, that church attendance in 1851 was at an all-time high. He quotes for instance a William Harrison, who in 1614 "observed that for every person who attended church there were many hundreds who listened and danced to pipers on village greens".

As a result of his own research into 670 accounts of Nonconformist conversion experiences, Dr Watts has come to the conclusion that the most significant factor in bringing about this greater rate of church attendance in the eighteenth century was the fear of hell. He suggests that "the Church of England laid the foundations for the Evangelical revival and for the expansion of Dissent by instilling into men and women, and especially into boys and girls, the necessity of adhering to a strict moral code, breaches of which would be punished by eternal damnation".

From the results of various surveys conducted by contemporary religious periodicals, Dr Watts concludes that the decline in church attendance dates from the 1880s. From this point on, the churches were failing to hold the rising generations of young adults. He claims this failure was not so much the increasing acceptance of evolution and higher criticism, but the publication of the book *Essays and Reviews*, a manifesto of English liberal scholars first published in 1860. Its significance, he tells us, "lay not so much in the fact that it revealed, for the first time to many English readers, the doubts that German scholars were casting on the accuracy of parts of the Old Testament, but in the evidence that there were clergymen in the Church of England who were reinterpreting if not rejecting the orthodox doctrine of future punishment". And this was the issue which had caused the most impassioned debate during the 1860s and 1870s.

Large sections of the English Churches reacted dishonourably to the claim that eternal punishment was a stumbling-block for many who would otherwise embrace Christianity. To quote Dr Watts' again: "Increasingly Christianity was seen, not primarily as a preparation for life after death, but as a means of living a fuller life here on earth; it was seen, not as a religion which separated the saved sheep from the damned goats, but as a religion which proclaimed the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God." He concludes that "English Christians, and especially English Nonconformists, jettisoned what had been, in the first half of the nineteenth century, their most effective argument in the winning of converts. The liberalisation of Christianity was intended to make the faith relevant to the men and women of the modern world. It had instead the

effect of making the churches irrelevant to the needs of twentieth-century men and women."

Whether Dr Watts' analysis is totally accurate or not, he has pointed to an important point which may have been somewhat neglected. There is no doubt that the Protestant Church as a whole has over the past 150 years failed to react scripturally to the changing trends of human thought. There are tides in human thought, and the Church cannot avoid these tides when they affect the spiritual wellbeing of men and women. But how is she to react? Her duty is, as far as possible, to assess the trends in human thought, to point out the fallacies in whatever theories become current and direct her people in a more scriptural direction. Which is not to say that every office-bearer within the Church has the intellectual capacity to engage in the kind of thinking which is necessary to oppose the particular theories which may raise their heads in a particular age.

But it is the absolute duty of every preacher of the gospel to proclaim the whole counsel of God – and to do so in the absolute confidence that the Word of God is totally trustworthy. This is what the Church has for many years signally failed to do. Certainly, the doctrine of a lost eternity is a particularly solemn part of that *whole counsel*. But the Church has no right to ask, Do congregations like it? Far less may she ask, Does the world like it? She has been given her message from heaven; her duty is to proclaim it faithfully. So Ezekiel was told, "Go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.*" The response of Ezekiel's hearers could not affect the message he was to proclaim; he must declare the message which God gave him. And preachers in every generation have exactly the same responsibility.

Yet if the Church in the nineteenth century had been more convinced of the truth, the reliability and the authority of the Scriptures, she would never have felt free to deny the doctrine of hell. To this extent at least, Dr Watts may be correct. The Church gave up warning about the reality of a lost eternity because she had lost her grip of the authority of the Scriptures. When the Church lost her grip of the authority of the Scriptures, she was at the mercy of the ebbs and flows of human opinion. Then, as Dr Watts clearly indicates, the vast majority of ordinary people were left without any compelling reason for coming to church. Preaching without real authority behind it, giving a message which is uncertain – which may be true or may not be true – will not in the long term hold the attention of the multitudes. True preaching must proclaim the holiness and justice of Almighty God; it must point to the seriousness of man's position as a sinner who has consistently offended this holy God, who therefore stands under God's condemnation – and who must continue in that position for ever unless

God Himself will do what is necessary to bring the sinner into a state of reconciliation. But when preachers cease to stir up the conscience, and when they can give no more convincing an answer to the serious questions of life than secular commentators, then the Church is doomed to failure. The steepness of the decline in church attendance should come as no surprise when conditions within the churches are as disastrous as they are.

But what of those churches which still proclaim the truth? Should they not be immune from declining attendance? Sadly, this is not so. Whole generations have been imbued with the thought that the eternal world is of no consequence and it is a thought which is highly congenial to the natural heart. Too often the path of least resistance is to follow the world, even although it means continuing on the broad way, which leads to everlasting destruction. Never perhaps is the blindness of the natural heart better illustrated than when those who have been in contact with sound preaching, and may even have felt its power in their own consciences, drift away from church attendance or wander towards churches where the message is more congenial to their fallen natures.

The principle announced to Eli still holds good: "Them that honour me I will honour", but we must recognise that God is sovereign in the way He applies it. Some have faithfully presented the message of God to their hearers and have been honoured in seeing multitudes blessed for eternity as a result. Others have not been thus honoured, although they have been no less faithful. No one can question the fact that Jeremiah honoured the Lord in bringing to his rebellious people exactly the message that he was given – unpalatable though it was. It is less easy to see how God honoured Jeremiah. But whether or not it is easy to see how God honoured him in this world, there can be no doubt about the honour he was given when he entered the eternal world and it was said to him, "Well done, thou good and *faithful* servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Where does this leave the Church of God today? Where, in particular, does it leave the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland? We cannot but be conscious of our weakness and our apparent inability to exert influence over today's society. But our duty is plain – continued faithfulness to the revealed will of God in doctrine, worship and practice. It is easy to become despondent when the Church of Christ seems to be in retreat. Yet we are to go on in the knowledge that there will be at last, around the throne of God, "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations". The Church, as well as individuals, may take the comfort once given to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The Church must go on proclaiming the whole counsel of God in spite of her weakness, but in total dependence on God to bless His Word in the way and to the extent that

He sees fit. And she is to do so with the weapon of "all-prayer".

The duty of prayer for the prosperity of the Cause of Christ is one which falls on all who fear God. And preachers of the gospel would still echo Paul's heartfelt and urgent cry to his fellow-believers, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith." When that prayer is answered, the Word of God will in due course be blessed, as multitudes who attend on a purely-preached gospel will flee from the wrath to come, and the Church will be greatly strengthened in England and elsewhere. May the Lord hasten it in His time! ●

A Catechism for the Instruction of Communicants

*By Andrew Thomson, D.D.**

Continued from page 211 in the last issue

Questions Nos. 72 to 93 (some of which have been edited)

NOTE: This instalment, in continuing to deal with the qualifications which one ought to possess in order to partake of the Lord's Supper, now deals with the qualification of faith. As the answer to Question No. 63 shows, these qualifications "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."

72. Q. *What is faith in Jesus Christ?*

A. "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel." [Quoted from the Assembly's Shorter Catechism].

73. Q. *What reason have you to believe in the mission and doctrine of Christ?*

A. 1. I believe in Christ, because in Him were fulfilled a great variety of prophecies, that were uttered some ages before He appeared; and by Him were wrought many miracles, or wonderful works, which, "no man could do except God were with him," (John 3:2.) This I know on the evidence of testimony more powerful than what was ever employed to establish the truth of any other fact — the testimony of a great number of witnesses, of irreproachable characters; who showed no symptoms of enthusiasm; who were capable of judging of what they saw and heard; whose declarations were consistent, although made at different times, in different languages, and in different circumstances; whose evidence was contrary at once to their strongest prejudices and their worldly interest; who, notwithstanding, gave it boldly and distinctly; who maintained it by a life of

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

danger and suffering; and who (many of them at least) sealed it with their blood, amidst tortures and death.

2. I believe in the religion of Christ, because it is one which it is worthy of God to promulgate, and every way suitable to the nature and circumstances of man; because it contains the sublimest truths and the purest system of morality that were ever taught; and because, with all this excellence, it was published not only at a time when the world around was grossly mistaken with respect to the very first principles of religion and morals, but also by men who had received no education, and who were utterly unqualified of themselves for teaching mankind.

3. I believe in the religion of Christ, because, although it was universally resisted by interested priests and civil rulers, by bigoted Jews and idolatrous mobs; although it opposed the whole current of religious opinion, and condemned the most favourite practices that prevailed in those times; although it was preached by none almost but men of low birth, without learning, and without influence; although the most effectual means that can be imagined were made use of to crush and destroy it: yet, in spite of all these disadvantages, it made such a rapid and triumphant progress, that in the space of thirty years after the death of Christ it was diffused over the greatest part of the then known world; which astonishing success can be reasonably ascribed to nothing else than the power of God accompanying the labours of the Apostles.

4. Lastly, I believe in Christ, because He delivered several prophecies which were afterwards most exactly fulfilled: one, in particular, of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was so circumstantially foretold, and so minutely accomplished, that we should consider the language of our Saviour rather as a history than a prediction of the event, were we not certainly informed of the contrary.

74. Q. *Before you can properly receive or believe in Christ, must not you be sensible of your need of a Saviour?*

A. Yes: I must be sensible that I am guilty before God; that I cannot of myself merit His pardon and favour, and that I am undone for ever, unless some gracious and powerful Redeemer interpose in my behalf.

75. Q. *Must not you be also persuaded that Christ is such a Redeemer as you stand in need of?*

A. Yes: I must be convinced that He is willing to save me; that He is as able as He is willing; that He has been sent of God for this very purpose; and that His mediation and atonement have been accepted as perfect and satisfactory.

76. Q. *Is it not necessary that you receive Christ in all His offices and characters, in order to believe on Him aright?*

A. Yes: it is absolutely necessary that I receive Jesus Christ just as He is offered in the Gospel, and not according to my own private views and inclinations. I must receive Him as my Prophet, as my Priest, and as my King, which are the three great offices that He executes as our Redeemer.

77. Q. *How do you receive Christ as your Prophet?*

A. I am ignorant; and I take Him to instruct me by His word and Spirit in divine things.

78. Q. *How do you receive Him as your Priest?*

A. I am guilty; and I trust in Him as one who has atoned for my guilt, and is making intercession for me at the right hand of God.

79. Q. *How do you receive Him as your King?*

A. I am naturally weak and perverse; and I apply to Him to protect me by His power, and govern me by His laws.

80. Q. *What is faith, considered as the instrument of our justification before God?*

A. It is simply that principle of the heart by which we accept and trust in the righteousness of Christ. For the sake of this righteousness alone God justifies us; that is, pardons our sins and accepts of our persons; in order to which He is graciously pleased to impute it to us, or place it to our account. And faith is, as it were, the hand or instrument with which we receive and hold the meritorious gift.

81. Q. *Is not true faith always a living and practical principle?*

A. Yes: wherever true faith exists, it fails not to "purify the heart," (Acts 15: 9), to "work by love," (Galatians 5: 6), and to "overcome the world," (1 John 5: 4). To think, therefore, that we have saving faith, whilst we are not "careful to maintain good works," (Titus 3: 14) is a gross and fatal error.

82. Q. *Why is faith necessary for partaking worthily of the Lord's Supper?*

A. Because, if I do not believe in Christ as a true messenger from God, I cannot with any propriety do what is designed to keep Him in grateful remembrance; for this would be to commemorate an impostor: if I have not trust in the merits of His death, I cannot with any propriety partake of the sacramental elements; for these represent the perfect sacrifice for sin which He offered up when He died on the cross: if I do not confide in Him as an all-sufficient Saviour, I cannot reasonably expect to receive any blessing from His hand when I approach Him in this ordinance; and therefore my approach would be in vain.

83. Q. *What is the just and simple notion of repentance?*

A. It is turning from sin unto God.

84. Q. *What is the first step of repentance?*

A. The first step of our repentance is entertaining a just view of sin.

85. Q. *What is the view of sin which you should entertain?*

A. I should consider it as that abominable thing which the Lord hates, as that which is contrary to His will, and injurious to His perfections, as that which has introduced all the misery that prevails in the world, as that which dishonours and degrades human nature, and as that which tends directly to the destruction of the soul.

86. Q. *But must not you be sensible or convinced of sin as something attached to yourself?*

A. Yes: I must regard it as something with which my own heart and character are deeply stained; as that which I have committed times without number, in thought, in word, and in deed, and which in my case has been highly aggravated.

87. Q. *What are the proper consequences of having these views of sin?*

A. From these views of sin, I am naturally led to hate it as a most odious quality; I am led to mourn for it with a sincere and godly sorrow; I am led to forsake its ways, and to return to my duty and my God with firm resolutions and earnest endeavours to be henceforth "holy in all manner of conversation," (1 Pet. 1: 15).

88. Q. *Can you return to God without having reason to hope that He will graciously condescend to receive you?*

A. No: if I had no reason to cherish that hope, I could not dare to approach God after having offended Him so much, but would either continue in sin or fall into despair.

89. Q. *Have you reason to cherish that hope?*

A. Yes: great and abundant reason.

90. Q. *What is that reason?*

A. God has sent forth His own Son as a propitiation for sin; and in consideration of the sacrifice which Christ offered up, the memorials of which we partake of at His Table, He has declared His willingness to receive all true penitents to the enjoyment of His mercy and favour. Having this assurance, I am encouraged to forsake my wicked ways, and to return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon

me, and abundantly pardon me. (See Isaiah 55: 7.)

91. Q. *How will your repentance show itself to be sincere and genuine?*

A. By its producing a life and conduct conformable to the will of God, as revealed in the Gospel.

92. Q. *Do you look on repentance as any kind of atonement for the sins which you forsook?*

A. No: it cannot be so in the sight of God. There is no other atonement for sin than the atonement of Christ. Repentance is merely that moral change which a holy God requires of us, and which, by the operation of His grace, we are enabled to make, and is itself acceptable to Him, only through the merits of a Redeemer.

93. Q. *Why is repentance necessary for partaking worthily of the Lord's Supper?*

A. Because this sacrament is a memorial of Christ's "suffering for sin;" and to celebrate that memorial without an abhorrence of sin, and a determination to forsake and to avoid it, is evidently to insult the sufferings of Christ, and to provoke the displeasure of the God of ordinances, who is, "of purer eyes than to look on iniquity," (Habakkuk 1: 13.)

To be continued

Book Review

MAKING SHIPWRECK OF THE FAITH Evangelicals and Roman Catholics Together by *Kevin Reed*

Publishers: Presbyterian Heritage Press. Paperback, 96 pp. Available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE

THIS book is one of a number of responses to the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, produced in 1994 in the USA by a number of prominent Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. Most criticism of this document has focused on the errors of Rome and the dangers posed to Protestants by entering into alliance with Roman Catholics. Kevin Reed does not ignore this aspect of the matter, but he is at pains to point out that there are also significant corresponding errors within those sections of the Protestant Church which claim to be evangelical. For example, after a brief review of the main doctrines of truth

where Rome is in serious error he goes on to mention some "fatal errors of contemporary evangelicals." He makes a fitting comparison: "If Rome is denounced for its doctrine of baptismal regeneration, then contemporary evangelicalism must be criticized for its practice of decisional regeneration."

Unusually for present-day writing, the author contends for the authority of Scripture in the worship of the Church. After an extended exposition of biblical principles he concludes: "Both groups [Evangelicals and Roman Catholics] share the assumption that men have the right to supplement the biblical means of worship." Towards the end of the book he turns the searchlight of Scripture on *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. He highlights one of its statements: "It is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community." In other words, it is wrong to evangelise Roman Catholics, and a waste of time. It is a shocking indication of how far things have gone that prominent Evangelicals can subscribe to this. Mr Reed goes on to give what should be the obvious answer: 'ECT speaks of the obligation to contend against all that opposes Christ and his cause'. Shouldn't that duty include contending against Roman Catholicism, since Rome promulgates a false gospel and idolatry? If 'earnestly contending for the faith' means anything (cf Jude 3), surely it means that true believers must oppose those who corrupt the gospel and worship."

This book gives a very useful and scriptural analysis of the issues at stake. However, one wonders if the author, in his zeal against backsliding within Evangelical Protestantism, has on occasion lost sight of the fact that, in the light of Scripture, Romanism is a uniquely serious departure from the truth. On a more trivial level, he appears to have confused Thomas Manton and Thomas Watson; it is the latter who wrote *A Body of Divinity*.

Rev. K. D. Macleod

Protestant View

Rome's power in Eire

A revealing letter from a Mr Relf appeared in the *English Churchman* recently about Dr Noel Browne, Minister of Health in the Eire government in 1949 and a staunch Roman Catholic. He died in May.

As Minister of Health, Dr Browne published a Bill for a National Health Service in Eire on the lines of the one in the UK, in order to improve matters with regard to the infant mortality rate in Eire, which was about three times that of England and Wales and the worst in the whole of Europe.

"This was vehemently opposed," says Mr Relf, "by the Roman Catholic

Church who said, 'For the state to provide for the health of all children and to educate women in regard to health . . . was entirely contrary to Catholic teaching'."

The Roman hierarchy then set up an Inquisitorial Court and summoned the Minister of Health before them to interrogate him. He, as a Roman Catholic, explained that the Scheme was not contrary to Roman Catholic teaching. The Court dismissed him and then summoned the Prime Minister, Mr John Costello. He informed the House later that the hierarchy condemned the Scheme, and that the Irish government decided to comply with the hierarchy's demand and reject the Mother and Child Service launched by Dr. Browne. "As a Catholic," said the Prime Minister, "I accept the ruling of the hierarchy without question."

Dr. Browne said later, "We took power from Britain and handed it over, effectively, to the other imperial power, Rome." We believe that Rome will never rest until she dominates Northern Ireland also.

Notes and Comments

Princess Diana takes her sons to see "The Devil's Own"

SOME newspaper columnists criticised Princess Diana, rightly in our opinion, for taking her sons, Princes William and Harry to view the film "The Devil's Own", which sympathetically portrays the life and actions of an IRA terrorist and murderer. Not only had she not set a good example to her children, said her critics, but she took them to a film which was not intended by the censors to be viewed by anyone under the age of fifteen; and Prince Harry is only twelve. The Princess later issued an apology "for any distress that had been caused".

One fact about this visit to the cinema which to our knowledge was not criticised or commented on by the press was that it took place on the Lord's Day. That no one was heard to find fault with the Princess for this blatant Sabbath-breaking is a reflection of the nation's low moral state; and as if God had not said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy..." *D. J. McD.*

Homosexual priests in the Church of England

THE Church of England at the meeting of its General Synod in York this month, appears to be positioning itself to ordain sodomites to the ministry of the Word. It is reported that half of the Church's bishops have knowingly licensed, employed or ordained actively gay priests, and that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Carey, has announced the setting up of an international commission to examine the subject.

Geoffrey Locke, chairman of the evangelical group, said that the Archbishop's announcement indicated "complete defeat" for those opposed to

homosexual ordinations. Just such a commission in 1988 prepared the way for the ordination of women.

Although some warn of a massive exodus from the Church of England if the ordination of homosexual clergy goes ahead this seems unlikely, as the same fears raised over the ordination of women did not materialise. Only a few hundred left and some have since returned.

The general law is that the more the Word of God is ignored the easier it is to ignore it the next time round. The whole sad situation (was ever a word as misappropriated as 'gay' in this context?) is given poignancy and point by Isaiah's inspired comment on the grace of God to His true Church, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah," Isaiah 1.9.

J. R. T.

New Labour old sins

WHEN a new government is elected people expected some change for the better in their lives, but it seems that we cannot expect much from the present administration morally. Many were disturbed by the choice of an avowed homosexual Chris Smith, the Heritage Secretary, for a seat in the Cabinet.

The attitude of the Labour Government, led by Tony Blair, was made clear when a "Gay Pride" rally was held in London on Saturday 5th July. According to the BBC Radio Four News, the rally, which was attended by about 150,000 "gays" and "lesbians", was addressed by Chris Smith, and also had a message of support from Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, read out to it.

Some of the "gays", when interviewed, declared that they were "rejoicing in their sexuality". What a deplorable sight in our capital city: sodomites rejoicing in their sodomy, and the Labour government making known its support for them!

But this is not a party political issue. We understand that the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties also voiced their support. And, according to the *Times* newspaper, William Hague is on record as supporting "gay marriages". Need we wonder that, as God's Word says, "the wicked walk on every side" when such men are leaders.

D. J. McD.

Proposal to ban asylum between EU member states

THE principle of a nation giving asylum, even if only temporary, to the persecuted citizen of another country has been generally accepted for many centuries. In the Old Testament times, David, the future King of Israel, found refuge in Gath when persecuted by King Saul. In New Testament times, Joseph, the legal father of the child Jesus was told, "Take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt." At the time of the Counter-Reformation, persecuted Protestants found refuge in Holland.

More recently in Europe the right to political asylum has been guaranteed by international law since 1951. But this may soon cease. The Spanish Government has proposed to the European Union that the Maastricht Treaty be amended "to establish the clear principle that no citizen of a member state of the Union may apply for asylum in another member state." If implemented, a Christian in this country and persecuted by the state, for example, could not look to any EU country for a safe haven. UN protests have been unsuccessful in impeding Spain's progress in pushing the proposal forward. □

The "feel-good factor"

SOME Conservative politicians have attributed their defeat in the General Election to the absence of the "feel-good factor". We understand this to mean that people generally did not have optimistic views of their economic prospects. They feared that the rate of inflation would increase, the cost of living would rise, and they would not have the high standard of living they hoped for.

Is it not obvious that nationally we "mind earthly things", and despise "the things of the Spirit of God"? Clearly, God is being forsaken by the nation when politicians and people give priority to material prosperity, and when they adopt the "feel-good factor" as their yardstick for true happiness.

There is in fact no reason for sinners to feel good, considering they are on the broad path which leads to destruction. Only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit will cause us as a nation to turn from seeking our happiness in "the things which perish with the using", and to know that "one thing is needful", even to have a saving knowledge of Christ. Having that we will have what Scripture calls the "good part which will not be taken away", and then we will have reason indeed to feel good – to be optimistic in the highest and best sense. *D. J. Mc D.*

African Mission News

Zimbabwe

THE Rev. A. B. Ndebele has resumed his work officially, and during the last week of June was officiating with Rev. P. Mzamo at Bulawayo Communion. Mr. Ndebele has largely recovered, but is subject to severe fatigue when the work is especially demanding.

The staff in the John Tallach School have been exceptionally busy with the setting and correcting of mid-term exams. The Headmistress, Miss Marion Graham, hopes to go on leave early in August, and will leave the running of the School in the capable hands of Miss Katie Macaulay. Miss Etta MacLennan has agreed to go out to teach there during Miss Graham's absence. We hear that a

young Dutchman, Mr. Benschop, is awaiting a permit to allow him also to go out to teach in the School. We trust a few more teachers, suitably qualified, will offer their services. The school has to implement a new system, set up for secondary schools by the Education Department and known as Performance Appraisal, for the improving of work standards in "five key result areas".

Two of the old staff houses at Ingwenya are being demolished and rebuilt. Both were built in the 1930s and have many memories for those of us who knew the olden days. One of the houses was designed and built under the supervision of the late Rev. D. R. MacDonald, who occupied it with his wife and family for many years. During demolition some interesting old documents (accounts, etc.) dealing with the day to day running of the Mission were found.

It is hoped that Mbuma Hospital staff will have some assistance from overseas in the coming months. It was a wonderful Providence that there were young nurses from Kenya and Holland who came to their assistance during the malaria epidemic last year.

Mr. Ian MacLean, Administrator at Sengera Mission in Kenya, spent three weeks in Zimbabwe supervising the rebuilding of the two staff houses mentioned above. His help and advice were very much appreciated by Mr. Buthi Mziya and Mr. James Mpofu. J.N.

Kenya

"The malaria epidemic has begun in earnest", writes the Rev. John Goldby from our Sengera Mission, "so the hospital is extremely busy with more than 10 patients in at present. The hospital staff are working flat out but they appear to be coping very well. All day long there is a constant stream of people coming into the compound on foot and in matatus [local passenger vehicles] carrying in their sick relations. The hospital verandah and passages are like a tube station at rush hour".

"Another big problem is looming," he says, "in the form of a shortage of maize. The drought is expected to put back the harvesting of maize by three months or so, and the prices have already doubled. The collection money that was set aside for the church floor and seats may well have to be diverted to poor relief. It is hard for the people - many of them are having to pay medical fees because of the malaria epidemic, and in addition, some have no maize".

Mr. Goldby also mentions that he visited Kuria for the first time; and also another community near Sengera. "I was out at a place called Nyabite, near Mogongo (about four miles, as the crow flies, from Sengera)," he says. "Between 30 and 40 people were gathered. They appeared very attentive as I tried to preach on John 3:16. It seems that they have a genuine desire for the gospel, but time will tell". □

Summer Visit to Eastern Europe

THE Dominions and Overseas Committee has decided that a third visit be made to Eastern Europe each year, as well as the two usual visits. One reason for an extra visit is that it is very difficult to include Moldova in the round journey to the Ukraine. The third visit therefore is to Moldova only. Accordingly, it is intended, God willing, that Mr. Alasdair MacRae and Mr. Calum MacAskill, both from Inverness, will undertake this journey, leaving on 11th August.

They will first visit an orphanage in Kishinev, the Director of which is a Christian Jew who is a pastor of a small gathering of Jewish believers in the city. We endeavour from time to time to present the Reformed position to our contacts there. In addition to the usual humanitarian aid for the Orphanage and for certain Homes for the Destitute, we will deliver a few thousand Gospels of John, Bibles, religious literature, and about 10,000 Scripture calendars granted by the Trinitarian Bible Society. The calendars are especially appreciated by the people in the Orphanage and the Homes for the Destitute. In our humble judgement the Trinitarian Bible Society does an excellent work in distributing the Word of God in this manner, and we count it a privilege to be able to take these calendars to where they are received with gratitude and put to good use.

Since our last report we have learned that the goods we brought to Kiev during our last visit, and which were impounded by the Customs authorities in the city, have all been released and distributed, apart from some items of food which were destroyed under supervision by the Customs. Not so long ago, Communist countries in Eastern Europe were destroying Bibles, and we are thankful that the present authorities did not do so on this occasion.

Many of the Russian Bibles we took on our last visit were provided by the children of the Petrus Datheen School in Puttershoek in Holland. This is the second time that they have supplied Bibles. On this second occasion, 62 kg of Bibles, New Testaments, concordances and other items in Russian were donated by them. All this was efficiently organised by the Headmaster, Mr. Adrie Mallegrom, and each class, led by the school prefects, loaded their own boxes onto our vehicle. We were heartened by the enthusiasm of our young friends who have done what they could to spread the Word of God. We hope that they will all yet know the Saviour who is held forth in that Word which they have had a hand in sending to others. All these Bibles have been distributed to the group of believers at Odessa, who in turn distribute them in their area and beyond.

We look to the Lord to give protection and help to Mr. MacRae and Mr. MacAskill in their travels, and we pray that the Lord will give the increase to the sending of the Word of God by the Church. To those who in faith take part in this work, the promise of God is: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." God's promise will never fail.

Rev. D. A. Ross

Church Information

MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY (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, 7th 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.

BARNOLDSWICK MANSE FUND APPEAL

IN recent years the Barnoldswick congregation has shown encouraging signs of growth. In view of the spiritual darkness in England and the consequent scarcity of causes reformed in doctrine, worship and practice, a number of members and adherents are faithfully travelling considerable distances to the public means of grace. The prayerful desire of the congregation is that in due course the Lord might graciously settle a Minister of the gospel over them. Meanwhile, in order that the congregation might have the opportunity to hear the Ministers and any Students of the Church, it is hoped to purchase a suitable Manse property that in the first instance would serve as a base for preaching supply.

The Manse Fund currently stands at approximately £7,000, and the congregation does not qualify for any grants from the Forsyth Bequest, being outside of Scotland. In these circumstances, an appeal for help is made to friends interested in further establishing the cause of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in the north of England. Donations can be sent to Mr C. T. Metcalfe, 23 Coates Lane, Barnoldswick, Lancs., BB8 6HJ.

"Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem" Psalm 51:18.

This appeal has the full support and unanimous endorsement of the Southern Presbytery.

Rev. A. McPherson, Clerk, Southern Presbytery.

ZIMBABWE MISSION

Vacancies at John Tallach Secondary School, Ingwenya.

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.

SERVICES IN TAURANGA, NEW ZEALAND

THE Australia and New Zealand Presbytery granted the petition of members and adherents residing in Tauranga to be recognised as a preaching station. Services are conducted by Mr Dick Vermeulen in the Girl Guide Hall, 17th Avenue, Tauranga each Sabbath at 11 am and 7 pm.

Rev. Johannes van Dorp, Clerk of Presbytery

THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

THE Training of the Ministry Committee regrets that it is not possible to have a Theological Conference this year.

Rev. D. J. MacDonald, Convener

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund: Anon, Canada (June) \$100 (Can); D.A.C. MacQueen, £300, for Kenya Mission.

Outreach Fund: R.J. Saba £82.40 per Miss M.M.M.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Laide: Eastern Europe: Mr. Geddes, £30; Anon, Inverness Postmark, £30; Friend, Harris, £20; N.B.M., £100; Friend, Inverness, £100; all per Rev. D.A.R.

London: Eastern Europe Fund: Anon, £261.58.

North Uist: Sustentation Fund: Ina McD., £100; **Car Fund:** M.B.McD., £50.

Portree: Sustentation Fund: Friend, £10, per F.M. **Mission Children:** Portree Sabbath School, £500, per I.G.M.; **Congregational Fund:** D.N.M., £50, per envelope in plate; **Door collection:** J.F., £7; M.M., £15, both per envelopes in plate.

Staffin: Door collection: Anon., £10; Anon., £10; both per envelope.

Stornoway: Sustentation Fund: Friend, £10; **Congregational Funds:** Mr and Mrs I.M., £40; both per Rev. J. M. Estate of the late Mrs Matilda Kerr, £2000, per Wink and MacKenzie, Solicitors. **Door Collection:** C.M. £10; **Petrol Fund:** Anon., £10; Anon., £10; **Unspecified:** Anon., £7; last four per collection plate.

Uig: Sustentation Fund: B. Buchanan, £27, both per D.A.M.K.; **Church Funds:** Anon., £100. **Communion Expenses:** Anon, £60, Anon, £40, Anon £10, Anon £10, all per church plate