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Enduring to the End

PAUL said to the believers in Galatia, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" True believers desire so to conduct themselves that they will not deserve so solemn a rebuke. They know that only he who endures to the end shall be saved, and their prayerful determination is to persevere in the narrow way to life eternal.

However, they have to learn many hard lessons about the opposition they have to overcome, if they are to win through to the end and obtain the prize. Christian, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was making good progress in his pilgrimage until Apollyon attacked him, "and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that, Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, 'I am sure of thee now'." But Christian overcame his enemy. As Bunyan graphically says, Christian "made at him again, saying, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us'. And with that Apollyon . . . sped him away." So Christian continued his pilgrimage, endured to the end, and entered the Celestial City.

The Lord's pilgrims today have the same enemy to contend with. Satan comes at them with his lying accusations, fiery darts, subtle temptations, and even uses Scripture itself to achieve his ends. As Gurnall says, "The devil sometimes borrows God's bow to shoot his arrows from." They who are truly running the race heavenwards will not be ignorant of the devil's devices. But it is their high privilege to have none less than the divine Leader and Commander of the church — He who is stronger than the strong man armed — as their defender, as their shield and their strength. Shall they not then overcome?

There is another kind of opposition. How many who profess the name of Christ, we may ask, really regard the world as an enemy which is to be overcome if they are to arrive in heaven? It is one of the signs of the times that in the professing church there are many who are walking arm in arm with the world, living for what good John Trapp calls the "worldling's trinity" — "pleasure, profit, preferment." The Rev. John Kennedy,

preaching in 1881 at Fearn, said that one of the indications of divine judgement coming upon the church would be a spirit of worldliness filling the minds of the people, and that the worldliness entering in would grieve the Most High, and cause His Holy Spirit to be withheld. Has this not come upon us already? And how can they "who mind earthly things" be described as ascending to the Celestial City? On the other hand we can be sure that the person who has turned his back on the world and set his "affection on things above", is on his way to this glorious destination. He who is watching and praying as he strives to advance in the way of holiness, and is heeding the warning. "If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him", may entertain the hope of persevering to the end. He has learned that "nothing more unbecomes a heavenly hope than an earthly heart."

Persevering to the end often results in persecution, for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution". Some believers, having begun to "run the race", suffer persecution in the family circle, or from ungodly neighbours, or colleagues at work. Some of those who endure to the end have at times to suffer, like the persecuted Hebrew believers of long ago, "a great fight of afflictions", but they pray to be kept from being like the children of Ephraim, who "turned back in the day of battle." The godly man is not like those who, although they receive the word with gladness, "have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended," Mark 4:17.

Of course, the believer will often be painfully aware of another kind of opposition — the sinfulness he finds within himself. What is this great business of proceeding along the narrow way but "dying unto sin and living unto righteousness," as the Shorter Catechism describes the work of sanctification? But sanctification is not the work of a day, let alone of a moment. It is a comforting truth that the justification of the believer — his being pardoned and accepted by God — is an act which is done in a moment by God. Not so sanctification. It is a process; ordinarily a protracted process. As Ralph Erskine has written with regard to justification and sanctification:

The former's instantaneous,

The moment that I first believe:

The latter is, as Heaven allows,

Progressive while on earth I live.

Just as it takes some time, maybe a very long time, for foul air to clear from a room when the window has been opened, so it takes nothing less than the whole of the believer's life after conversion for the remaining inward corruption of sin to be removed. Meantime he must battle against that corruption; he must "mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts."

At the same time the weary pilgrim gets comfort from the promise: "He

which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "This perseverance of the saints," says *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, "depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth the certainty and infallibility thereof." It cannot be otherwise when their divine Head and never-failing Intercessor, has prayed, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." They shall endure to the end.

"But I fear," says a tempted child of God, "that I shall yet sustain such a fall as will debar me from heaven." "I have gone back so shamefully," says a backslidden believer, "that I fear there will be no enduring to the end for me." "And what are we conclude," asks another, "from, for example, the solemn words of Hebrews 6:4-6, which say that 'it is impossible for those who were once enlightened . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance'?"

It is sadly true, as again our Confession states, that believers may, "through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein . . ." But the falls of some of the saints, and the doubts of others, can never disannul the divine promise to preserve them to the end, nor thwart the divine purpose that nothing shall separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And with regard to such passages as Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29 (which says that there is no more sacrifice for sins if we sin wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth), and 2 Peter 2:20-22 (which speaks of the awful end of those who have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ, but have been overcome by them again), we cannot but conclude that they speak of those, who although they had attained to much in the sphere of religion, did not have the root of the matter in them and "did not close in with Christ on gospel terms," as Plumer says. "The best they did in fruitfulness," he continues, "was to bring forth thorns and briers," Hebrews 6:8. And in any case, the passage in Hebrews 6 goes on to speak to others — to those who are truly the subjects of saving grace; it says, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation," that is, not only salvation commenced but also salvation brought to its glorious climax and consummation. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." And, most certainly, "the path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more, unto the perfect day." He shall endure the end.

Notes of a Sermon

Preached by the *Rev. Malcolm Gillies*,* Stornoway

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TEXT: "*And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say unto thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.*" 1 Kings 13: 21 and 22.

IN considering this passage of Scripture as we may be enabled, let us notice three things: First: the faithfulness of the prophet sent to Bethel; secondly: the unfaithfulness of this prophet who had been faithful; and thirdly: the way taken by God to vindicate His own glory.

First: we shall consider the prophet's faithfulness.

As we see, Bethel was the scene of the incidents set before us in this chapter. This place is mentioned early in the Word of God'; it was called Luz at first, but came to bear the name, Bethel, signifying 'the house of God', where God made himself known. This was the place to which Jacob came as a lonely, fleeing fugitive, with the intense feeling that heaven and earth were against him. It was his spiritual birthplace. There the Lord appeared to him as the Covenant God of Abraham and Isaac and made a covenant with him. God found him in Bethel and turned his mourning into joy and peace.

Bethel was the place also where Jacob's espousals were renewed, after he returned to Padanaram. Though he tarried long at Shechem and deferred the fulfilling of his vow to the God of Bethel who had directed him to return, we find him saying to his household: "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel." In going back to that place, he had the Lord reveal Himself to him and this was to his soul as the latter rain upon the earth. Bethel was again made to him the House of God where he was revived and quickened, and his

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soul fed in communion with God.

Bethel was also the place where God's instituted worship was set up. Jacob had formerly set up the stone for a pillar and had poured oil upon it. He now built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord. Thus, in connection with this place, we have the substance of all that the Church is to God's people in every generation of time.

But Scripture makes evident that purity of worship did not remain in Bethel. There are many indications given about the declension of true worship there, so that we find the name of the place changed by the Spirit of God speaking through the prophet, from Bethel ('the house of God') to Bethaven ('the house of iniquity' or 'the house of vanity'). This was emphatically the case in the days of Jeroboam, who filled the cup of his iniquity by setting up open idolatry.

When the Lord gave ten of the tribes of Israel to Jeroboam and made him king over them, He promised to make him a sure house if he would keep God's Commandments. Jeroboam, however, turned his back on God's counsel and gave himself over to worldly policy, which was in direct opposition to the commands and will of God. The fear of losing the people, if they should continue to go up to worship at Jerusalem, took possession of him, and he took steps to prevent this. Though Bethel was only a few miles from the Temple where God had put his name, Jeroboam introduced there the calf worship which he had probably learned from the Egyptians, and passed this counterfeit worship as the true worship of Jehovah. Did he keep the people by this carnal and God-dishonouring device? No, and neither will men in this generation keep the people by imposing on them their own will-worship in place of the worship commanded in God's Word.

The Lord who is zealous for His glory and warns the sinner to turn from his wickedness, sent this prophet from Judah to witness against this false worship. His work was to deal with this perversion and mockery which was being constituted in the name of religion. Arriving at Bethel as Jeroboam was just consecrating the altar and worship, the prophet ignored the person of the king and treated him as a mere nonentity. Instead of addressing him, he cried against the altar, solemnly pronouncing the curse of God upon it and declaring that a king of the House of David, Josiah by name, would be raised up, who would sacrifice the priests of that altar upon the altar itself and burn men's bones upon it. This prophecy was fulfilled in the spirit and in the letter by King Josiah, about three hundred and fifty years after it was spoken. The prophet also gave a sign for the certainty of its fulfilment, even that the altar would be rent immediately and the ashes thereon poured out.

Exasperated by the boldness of the prophet in his presence and the contempt cast upon his lewd religion, Jeroboam stretched out his hand to

order the arrest of the prophet. By the judicial power of God, the king's hand became paralysed and powerless and the sign given by the prophet was immediately fulfilled upon his idolatrous altar. There is nothing that will bring down the pride and pomp of man like the correcting hand of God upon him. Men will puff up and swell, when it is only their fellow mortals who withstand them. It is otherwise when the Lord lays His hand upon man with rebukes; his beauty wastes away like a moth. It was thus with Jeroboam.

He now becomes a suppliant, asking that his hand be restored. There was nothing in his prayer in the way of confessing his wrongdoing and of turning back to the ways of God. He now tries to win the prophet by flattery and by a promise of reward. The servant of God, in obedience to God, refused both food and presents. He had the Lord's express command for so doing: "Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest." Would he be entertained where his God was dishonoured and His word flouted? Would he eat their bread who were placing their abominations before the Lord? Would he turn back by the same way, when there were no signs of the people turning back by repentance and obedience to the truth? The prophet had a work from the Lord to do, and right nobly and faithfully did he act to the glory of God, both in the letter and in the spirit of his commission. He thus showed how separate he was from this wicked and shameful apostasy.

Secondly, let us consider the unfaithfulness of him that had been faithful.

We are told further how the fine gold became dim and defiled; how the prophet, who at first showed himself obedient and faithful, came to perform an act of disobedience which brought about his own ruin and the weakening of the cause of God. There was in Bethel an old prophet. The fact that he was known as a prophet made him a power for good or for evil. Unhappily his influence was for evil. He was like many in our day, a man of peace, of such peace as would allow king and people to trample God's Word and worship underfoot without raising a public testimony against their sin. As a prophet, he was a trustee over the things of God, over his Word and worship. To him, as a professed servant of God, were committed the oracles of God. We do not know to what extent he was a trustee over the funds and property of the Church.

There are times when one is called to forsake houses and lands and other temporal things for the sake of God's cause and glory. There never will be a time when ministers, office-bearers, and members will be held guiltless in neglecting their duty as trustees for the truth in order to retain their trusteeship over money and property. There were women in persecuting times who died a martyr's death as trustees of truth committed to them, while they handed over the trustee-ship of the babes sucking their breasts to

the care of others and to the Lord whose witnesses they were.

The old prophet did not go to the idolatrous worship himself, but he allowed his sons to attend there. It was no grief to him that they should accustom themselves to the modern, God-dishonouring way of worshipping God which was fast becoming so very popular. Parents who are not concerned about their children frequenting places of worship where the whole truth is not honoured have become unfaithful themselves, and the fruits of such carelessness and indifference about their children's best interests must result in grief and misery in this world and, if grace prevents not, in eternity.

The old prophet's sons told him all that happened and how the truth of God had prevailed that day over the lying inventions of men. No sooner did he grasp the meaning of the details given him than it became his fixed purpose to do all he could to cause the faithful servant of God to become one like himself. Ascertaining the direction taken by the prophet from Judah, he goes after him and overtakes him as he sits weary and faint for lack of food. He invited him back to Bethel to rest with him in his house and refresh himself with food. He thus tempted him to a double act of disobedience: first, to going back to the place he had set his back upon; and secondly, to having his portion—to eating and drinking with those among whom he was forbidden to eat and drink.

The prophet from Judah refused the old prophet but not with the vehemence with which he refused the king. "I will not go," was the form he then used; now it was: "I may not go." However, he repeated once more his warrant from God for refusing to have friendly dealings with the truth-forsaking Bethelites. His destroyer now deals with him as Satan does when he transforms himself into an angel of light. He emphasizes his own prophetic character and maintains that there is no difference between them. Not only was he a prophet, he said, but he had God's word to give him to prove that the prophet from Judah must now do the very thing which he said formerly he ought not to do, and would not do. The word from the Lord, said the old prophet, now was: "Bring him back with thee into thy house that he may eat bread and drink water," but he lied. And it was not long until the prophet from Judah came to lie to himself about his duty. I note two things about this temptation. First, it was presented as the very mind and will of God. Secondly, it fitted in with the prophet's present condition: for he was wearied out, and the change presented to him seemed to afford gratification, and also he hungered and thirsted after the very things held out to him. In complying with this invitation he saw that in it were the things he desired for himself. When he set out from Judah to go to Bethel, self was out of sight and the glory and truth of God were everything to him. But he is no longer single-eyed with regard to the glory of God. His desire for self-gratification

blinded him to the imposition practised upon him, and thus he came to impose upon himself.

We have here a solemn lesson for every generation and for every individual, and it was never needed more than it is needed in our day. We see men who were like this prophet in zeal, in singleness of purpose, despising the honours, comforts and preferments that their gifts and abilities might bring them, and wholly devoted to the vindication of God's cause in a backsliding day. We see also some of them turning back and having their portion contentedly in a place where they declared they would never be found, as long as men there continued in their froward way. What has happened? These men, like the prophet from Judah, have been imposed upon and they have imposed upon themselves.

There were two questions which, if the prophet had asked and weighed well, would have kept his feet from falling, as they kept the feet of many, in many a generation, from falling. First, have the people in Bethel, king and subjects, honestly and sincerely given up their idolatry; have they wholeheartedly turned back to the obedience of the truth? Secondly, can God change His Word when men have not changed their ways? The will of God as He reveals it to His servants is like Himself, unchangeable: and it is unchangeable when He calls upon them to take up a certain position in relation to others with whom He has a controversy. Nothing less than the ending of that controversy by repentance towards God and before men, will afford those, to whom God's will has been revealed, a reason to alter their attitude towards those disobedient ones.

The prophet from Judah went back with his seducer, and thus made himself a spectacle to friends and enemies as a man who went back on God's word to him. We are not told whether his feelings were sad or joyful. Feelings have little place in such matters as these — matters which are simply matters concerning what is right and what is wrong. Various opinions are held concerning the question: Was the old prophet a man who truly feared God? Some think that he was, on the ground that God spoke through him, but that reason is by no means conclusive. We do not believe that any true child of grace will father a lie on the God of truth. Such a sin comes very near, if it does not touch, the sin against the Holy Ghost. His lie was deliberate; it was a word given as the truth of God, knowing well that God never gave it. The child of God may be left to commit many a grievous sin through ignorance and also against light, but it is difficult to conclude that such wrongdoing as this could be committed by one whom the Lord had made witness to His authoritative Word.

Thirdly and last, consider the way taken by God to vindicate His own glory.

The prophet from Judah was not left long without being made to see that he had committed himself to a course which practically nullified his former

obedience. There was this mercy to himself: that he should not remain deceived; and his being undeceived was to the glory of Him who had sent him as His ambassador. We see that the lying prophet is made to tell the truth and to denounce him for his waywardness, even while the bread of disobedience is still in his mouth. "And it came to pass," we read in verse 20, "as they sat at the table, the Word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back. And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah saying, Thus saith the Lord, 'Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of the which the Lord did say unto thee, Eat no bread and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers'."

If the disobedient prophet was thinking that he was still in the path of duty, he was now given a sudden and rude awakening out of his delusion. Still, it was good for him to be corrected in the act of disobedience; much better to be corrected, then than to have the horrors of an accusing conscience on a deathbed, as many before and since have had, or to be condemned with the world at last. In all probability, he had a miniature Day of Judgement in his conscience, as he sadly mounted the ass provided by the old prophet and resumed his interrupted journey homeward.

If a prophet on whom the Lord has bestowed intelligence and grace will not carry out instructions, God will find among the most ferocious and untameable of the brute creation, an agent which will render exact and perfect obedience. God's messenger sent to meet the prophet was now a lion, a messenger that would not fail in his work nor exceed it. Coming upon him in the way, the lion dragged him off the ass and slew him, but in such a way as to offer little indignity to the body by mutilation. We are told that the flesh of an ass is deemed a choice portion by a lion and in ordinary circumstances, the ass would become the lion's victim. But in this case, an unseen Hand restrained the brute from going beyond its commission. Men passed by, but the lion's business was not with them, and they were allowed to go unscathed. He had to stand guard over the body of one of God's servants, disobedient as he had been, and over the ass that was to carry him to his burial. The beast remained at his post till the old prophet arrived, permitted him to handle the body in order to carry it back to the city, and, relieved by Him whose obedient servant he had been, went his way and was seen no more.

The old prophet carried the body back to Bethel and buried it in his own grave. They mourned over his violent death but there is no indication that they laid to heart the part they had in bringing this misery on him and on themselves. Whether the old prophet had the true fear of God or not we cannot say, but there was much of the spirit of Baalam about him. He would

like to die the death of the righteous and to have his latter end to be like his. He believed that nothing which the prophet from Judah had spoken would fall to the ground and this was the reason for the directions he gave to his sons. His conscience made him fear, and not without just cause, that Josiah, in fulfilling God's word would count him among the idolaters, and he cunningly made provision so that his old bones should not be burned. "Bury me," he said, "in the sepulchre where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: for the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria shall surely come to pass," verse 31. We find the prophet Hosea using words to the same purpose: "The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven; for the people thereof shall mourn over it and the priests that rejoiced on it . . . The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: The thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us," Hosea 10:5 and 8.

These prophecies were amply fulfilled in the days of godly King Josiah when he was raised up to make a thorough reformation throughout all the land of Judah. We are told that "there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him," 2 Kings 23:25. While engaged in destroying all the high places along with the altar at Bethel, he gave orders that the bones in the sepulchres should be burned upon the altar to pollute it. Noticing a title on one of these sepulchres he asked whose grave was that. Learning that it was the sepulchre of the prophet from Judah who had uttered the prophecy that was being then fulfilled, he spared his sepulchre, thus making the ruse of the old prophet, who is said to have come out of Samaria, completely successful.

One would think that such clear indications of the displeasure of God, as were given that day when the prophet from Judah cried against the altar, would have brought Jeroboam and his people to a better mind. We are told that it did not bring about the least reformation. When men are set upon their idols, neither the Word of God nor Providence will turn them from their evil ways. God gave the king and his people over to hardness of heart and they continued in their false worship and wicked ways till they were cut off, and the house of Jeroboam destroyed from off the face of the earth.

We would do well to ponder over this passage of God's truth and cognate passages, and try to lay to heart the ways by which men forsake God and the awful consequences which follow a departure from Him. The call of God's Word is a call to repent and return to God. ●

Referendum — 'Yes' or 'No'?

Rev. John MacLeod, Stornoway

THE Government White Paper on devolution, outlining the arrangements for the setting up of a Scottish Parliament, has been published, and those of us living north of the Tweed are now expected to ponder carefully the issues involved and either accept or reject the proposals in the coming Referendum. It is accepted on every hand that this is a major constitutional change and that — if it is implemented — the consequences will be far-reaching, not only as affecting the future of Scotland, but also that of the United Kingdom as a whole.

In seeking to make up our minds on whether or not the establishment of a Scottish Parliament (which many regard as the first step towards the breaking up of the United Kingdom) would be advantageous, it might be helpful to draw attention to the principal events which led up to the dissolution of the last Scottish Parliament in 1707. It is clear that the Church of Scotland, at the time, was generally opposed to the Union of Parliaments, and no doubt for good and valid reasons. Almost seventy years had elapsed from the signing of the National Covenant and less than twenty since the times of persecution had ended. Those who suffered had long memories.

With the flight of James II all the plans and schemes of the House of Stuart, cunningly devised with the help of Jesuit counsellors, were brought to nothing. Popery was not to be restored. The Scots, unlike the English, lost no time in declaring that "by his unconstitutional and evil deeds," the fugitive king had forfeited all right to the crown of Scotland, and they immediately made a tender of it to William and Mary. This offer was accompanied with a declaration of the rights and liberties of the subject, which, it is claimed, for precision and clarity, was not matched by the English Parliament. "These were the very principles for which they had been contending and suffering during twenty-eight years of fierce persecution, and which, therefore, they understood too well and valued too highly to neglect in the present emergency."¹ The new king was a Presbyterian himself and it was not too much for the Scottish Church to expect that all its rights would be restored but they were destined to discover that William was not only a king; he was also a politician.

With a view to effecting the restoration of all the liberties which the Church had previously enjoyed, the Scottish Parliament, in 1690, passed several important resolutions. Presbyterianism was legally established, the Confession of Faith was ratified, Prelacy was condemned as that "great and unsupportable grievance" in Scotland which had been "reformed from

¹ *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton*, p. 304

popery by presbyters", and patronage was condemned and abrogated. Needless to say, these measures were opposed and resisted by those whose interests were adversely affected and the king, unwisely seeking to please all the parties, acted in so arbitrary a fashion that he came into conflict with the Presbyterians, the very people to whom he was most indebted for his place on the throne. With the demise of William and the accession of Anne, efforts to make the Church of Scotland Erastian, in line with the prelatic Church of England, were intensified. In 1703, the royal letter addressed to the General Assembly spoke of the Presbyterian government of the Scottish Church as merely that which was "acceptable to the inclinations of the people, and established by the laws of the kingdom." In reply, the Assembly emphatically declared it to be that which was "settled as agreeable to the Word of God, and most conducive to the advancement of true piety and godliness, and the establishment of peace and tranquillity; and therefore to be the only government of Christ's church within this kingdom."

On the political front, the union of the two Protestant nations was regarded as expedient in order to bring intestine strife to an end and also prevent foreign powers from exploiting any differences which might arise between them while separate. Many, however, regarded the Union as bringing Scotland — a nation which had nobly fought for its independence — into a state of vassalage by the stroke of a pen and without the stroke of a sword. Some of the godly feared the worst. "Episcopacy," they said, "will become predominant, either by force of law, where the bulk of the Parliament are members, and the bishops sit as legislators, or by the natural ascendancy of bishoped England, in which the wealth and the political influence of the whole island will be naturally concentrated."² Feelings ran so high at the time that it appeared as if it would be necessary to postpone the Union indefinitely. But the Church was propitiated by the inclusion of the Act of Security by which the "the true Protestant religion as presently professed", the Confession of Faith, and the Presbyterian form of Church government, were declared to be confirmed and established to all future generations "without any alteration thereof, or derogation thereto, in any sort, forever." "This, and this alone," we are told, "was declared to be the basis of the Treaty, without which no union between the kingdoms was compatible."

The people, however, still felt that the clergy had not done their duty in resisting and averting what was widely regarded as a "national calamity." To them, the Union, "glozed over by whatever terms, was nothing more than a base compromise and hateful vassalage to the overbearing predominance of England." Such fears were not groundless; within five years the Westminster Parliament had reimposed patronage and shortly afterwards the

² Ibid. p.314

Act of Toleration was passed permitting the Jacobites — who still held on to their popish superstitions, continued to believe in the divine right of kings, and did their utmost to have Stuart kings restored — “to set up their chapels under the express sanction of law.” At the same time, adding insult to injury, it was enacted as part of the oath of abjuration that the successor to the British crown must belong to the Church of England.

But all that was two hundred and eighty five years ago! Much has happened in the interval, and the circumstances in which we find ourselves today, and in the midst of which we have to make up our minds as to whether or not this constitutional change should take place, bear no comparison to those prevailing in 1707.

While the proposed devolved Parliament is to be limited as far as its sovereignty is concerned, it will still have sufficient legislative powers to enact laws which will affect our daily lives. That being so, it is obvious that, if it is ever constituted, much will depend upon its composition. If a strong Scottish Nationalist element is present, then clearly the movement towards total separation and the break up of the United Kingdom will gain momentum. The Government in its White Paper goes out of its way to reassure voters that its proposals do not pose any threat to the integrity of the Union but we remain unconvinced. It is clear to us now, with the benefit of hindsight, that the Union of Parliaments in 1707 was not after all the “national calamity” that some feared it would be. We believe that they are correct who maintain that the material benefits which flowed to Scotland as a result of the Union have been great, and that these benefits have, over the years, more than compensated for the loss of sovereignty which was sustained at the time. In the spiritual sphere it is, we believe, significant that the great revivals of religion north and south of the border took place in the 18th and 19th centuries after the Union and when the two nations were at peace with one another.

As already noted, the Church of Scotland, with William Carstairs a prominent leader, played a very important role in the drawing up of the Articles of Union in 1707. The present Church of that name is not likely to take anything other than a ‘political’ interest in the present proposals. It is most unlikely to give voice to any warning that they pose a threat to our Protestant constitution. But we believe they do, and as the true representatives of the Revolution Church we regard it as our duty to sound the alarm. We do not expect to reach the ears of many of our fellow-countrymen but we sound it nevertheless.

Patronage has long since ceased to be an issue; the fact of bishops sitting in the House of Lords is now largely an irrelevance; under the present regime we have full liberty to worship God and our civil and religious liberties are guaranteed. Why should we then support any change which might well tend

towards altering this state of affairs?

If, as some experienced political observers believe, devolution is the beginning of "a relentless slide to separation", we have every reason to be concerned. The written part of the British Constitution was mostly drawn up at the time of the Glorious Revolution and every Protestant worthy of the name will view with alarm any constitutional move which might result in the removal of the safeguards enshrined, for instance, in the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement. The framers of these proposals will tell us that this is not an issue and we shall, as usual, be branded as bigoted and sectarian for suggesting that it is. Since 1707 the wheel has almost turned full circle as far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned. Subscribers of the National Covenant declared: "We abhor and detest all contrary religion and doctrine; but chiefly all kind of Papistry in general and in particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the Word of God and the Kirk of Scotland." Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish Nationalist Party, and one who would no doubt be a leading light in a new Scottish Parliament, was suggesting not so long ago that the Roman Catholic grotto at Carfin should be made a national shrine! Rome's power and influence in Scotland is now such that any new constitution drawn up would not contain anything prejudicial to her interests and aspirations. Since 1707, what is now the Republic of Ireland has been detached from the union by Jesuit craft and, as we all know, the Church of Rome is using every artifice in pursuing the present campaign which has as its aim the removing of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom. Scottish devolution, leading to separation, would, we believe, suit her well. The influx of Irish immigrants in the nineteenth century has led to a concentration of Roman Catholics in the central belt and that accounts for the disproportionate number of Roman Catholic MPs returned from Scotland to Westminster, election after election. It is no secret that the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland with its wily and politically astute leadership curries the favour of political leaders and exerts an influence in the political world that is out of all proportion to its numerical strength. The population distribution is such that the majority of members in a Scottish Parliament would be drawn from the central belt, and the fact that they would be largely responsible for determining the economic policies to be followed makes us apprehensive. The deplorable situation which arose in Monklands as a result of religious bias and nepotism, to which Donald Finlay, QC, referred at the launch of the "Think Twice" campaign, confirms the view that Scotland would be far better off with her affairs in the hands of the Westminster Parliament rather than have them handled in Edinburgh in a Parliament dominated by central-belt Romanist members. The only high-profile figure in the Scottish Labour Party vehemently opposing the setting up of a Scottish Parliament is Tam Dalyell, MP. His raising of the so-called 'West Lothian question' may yet prove to

be the very rock on which this devolution barque will founder.

Our Scottish Reformers cherished the hope that there would come a time when there would be uniformity of worship and Church government throughout the United Kingdom which, in their day, included the whole of Ireland, north and south. The Solemn League and Covenant was drawn up as a means to this end. *The Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* tells us: "It was first of all a religious covenant. After noting that they had one king and one Reformed religion and expressing their concern about the estate of both Church and kingdom in England and Scotland, the signatories swear to preserve 'the Reformed Religion in the Church of Scotland' and the Reformation of religion in England and to bring the churches to the 'nearest Conjunction and Uniformity in Religion', confession, government and worship. . . The English Parliament made some alterations to the draft before approving it, particularly in a desire to avoid a commitment to use the Scottish Presbyterian model in reforming the Church of England. They also included Ireland in a document which had previously referred to Scotland and England. . ." Wales was, of course, embraced with England. The Reformers' ideal has not yet been realised, but we believe that it will be, in due time. The question is: will the setting up of a Scottish Parliament tend to the hastening or hindering of its realisation? In our view, the closer the union between the constituent parts of the British Isles, the better prepared we shall be for the coming of better days and the promised outpouring of the Spirit of God which shall usher in the Millennium. For that reason alone we should vote for the *status quo*. "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change."

A Catechism for the Instruction of Communicants

By Andrew Thomson, DD.

Continued from page 175 in the last issue

Questions Nos. 94 to 122 (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 love. 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." (See the May issue for a biographical footnote about Andrew Thomson).

94. *Q. To whom is our love to be exercised?*

A. To God, to Jesus, and to our fellow men.

95. *Q. Why should we love God?*

A. Because He is possessed of all amiable perfections, and because "he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

96. *Q. Why should we love Jesus?*

A. Because He is "the brightness of the Father's glory" (Hebrews 1: 3), and because He gave Himself for us to the cursed death of the cross.

97. *Q. Should not you love your God and Saviour supremely?*

A. Yes: "with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

98. *Q. What is the best proof of your love to God?*

A. "Keeping His commandments" is the only substantial and satisfying proof that I can give.

99. *Q. Why should you have this love to God and Jesus in order to your worthily partaking of the Lord's Supper?*

A. Because the want of it shows that I am not properly acquainted with the divine character, that I have not a just sense of the value of my Redeemer's sacrifice, and that I am not qualified for holding "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1: 3), whose love to the Church is commemorated in this ordinance.

100. *Q. Why should we love our fellow men?*

A. Because they are under the same dispensation of grace, and because we are expressly commanded to do so by our Saviour.

101. *Q. Should you love all your fellow men alike?*

A. No: I must have a particular affection for those who are of "the household of faith"; for those who have the image of God renewed in their hearts, who believe in Christ, and obey His Gospel.

102. *Q. But must you not love the rest of mankind also with a sincere affection?*

A. Yes: whatever be their name, their kindred, their character, or their circumstances, I must feel towards them sentiments of kindness and liberality; I must refrain from doing them any injury; I must relieve their distresses, when I can; I must do them all the good that lies in my power.

103. *Q. Is not particular stress laid in Scripture on that branch of love or charity which is usually termed forgiveness of injuries?*

A. Yes: our Saviour has said, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14, 15).

104. *Q. What do you particularly conclude from this at present?*

A. I conclude that it is peculiarly unbecoming to go to the Lord's Table with a spirit of revenge because our Saviour has said, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5: 23, 24).

105. *Q. Must not your love to men be chiefly expressed in endeavours to promote their spiritual and eternal welfare?*

A. Certainly: their souls are infinitely more precious than their bodies, and their eternal than their temporal interests: if, therefore, I love them at all, I must be principally concerned, as far as my instructions, my example, and my prayers will go, to make them "wise unto salvation."

106. *Q. Why must you love especially your brethren "of the household of faith", in order to partake worthily of the Lord's Supper?*

A. Because this ordinance is only for the disciples of Christ, and He has made brotherly love the very test of our discipleship to Him. "By this," says He, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). And, besides, there is a great absurdity, as well as gross presumption, in professing to celebrate the memorials of His love to us, at the very time our hearts are burning with hatred, or cold with indifference, towards any of those for whom He died.

107. *Q. What do you understand by new obedience?*

A. Such a pious and holy deportment, such an abstinence from what is sinful, and such a pursuit of what is good and praiseworthy, as is prescribed in the Word of God, and as the graces of faith, repentance and love are naturally fitted to produce in the case of those in whom these graces have been really and effectually wrought.

108. *Q. Why is this obedience called new obedience?*

A. Because it is the obedience which the true Christian is enabled to yield in consequence of his being regenerated, or becoming what is termed in Scripture, "a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

109. *Q. Is regeneration a doctrine of Scripture?*

A. Yes: our Saviour said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), and Paul says, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:4).

110. *Q. What is the moral state of man previously to his being regenerated?*

A. He is backward to good and prone to evil: his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, (Jeremiah 17:9); in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, (Romans 7:18); he is dead in trespasses and sins, (Ephesians 2:1); etc.

111. *Q. What is the general change that takes place when he is brought from this state of corruption?*

A. It is described by Paul in these words, addressed to the Ephesians, "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

112. *Q. By whom is this change wrought?*

A. It is wrought by the Holy Spirit of God.

113. *Q. Is the manner of His operation known to us?*

A. No: but that is no reason for doubting of the fact, which is clearly stated in the Scriptures, and is evidenced by the effects which are produced; as our Saviour Himself argued with Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth," [where it will] "and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

114. *Q. Are not all the graces of the divine life ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit?*

A. Yes: both their formation and their improvement are ascribed to Him; and hence we read not only of the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," but also of the, "sanctification of the Spirit" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

115. *Q. What is the conduct of those who have experienced this change, and are said to yield new obedience?*

A. They are "dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:13). "They exercise themselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men" (Acts 24:16). They are righteous before God, seeking to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless (Luke 1:6). They strive to be "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12), etc.

116. *Q. Must not your obedience to God be the obedience of the heart, as well as of the external conduct?*

A. Undoubtedly: according to the uniform language of Scripture, it is the heart which God principally requires, and if that be withheld from Him, everything else is vain and worthless in His sight.

117. *Q. Must not your obedience be yielded from right principles and motives?*

A. Yes: if my principles and motives are worldly, impure, or condemned in Scripture, it is evident that the actions flowing from them cannot be acceptable to God. My obedience must proceed, not from a desire to "be

seen of men," or to "make gain of godliness," but from a profound regard to the authority and glory of God, from a sincere attachment to my Lord and Saviour, from a serious view to the rewards and punishments of a future state, and from other considerations of a similar kind.

118. *Q. Must not your obedience be universal?*

A. Yes: the divine law being the only rule by which I ought to regulate my thoughts and actions, and that law admitting of no sinful indulgence and no neglect of duty, I must study to "cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1), and to be made "perfect in every good work to do the will of God" (Hebrews 13:21).

119. *Q. Must not your obedience be constant and progressive?*

A. Yes: I must be "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58); and be in the path which "is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

120. *Q. In order to partake worthily of the Lord's Supper, is it necessary to have your obedience in that state of perfection in which you have now described it?*

A. No: I should, indeed, study always to obey God as perfectly as His law requires; but as the Lord's Supper is itself an appointed and most important mean for enabling me to yield that obedience, I must partake of it with a view to the attainment of that very end. It is a privilege which belongs to those who are "weak" as well as to those who are "strong in the faith" — to those who are "babes" as well as to those who are "perfect men in Christ Jesus."

121. *Q. How far then is new obedience necessary in this case?*

A. It is necessary thus far: I must be conscious of a dislike to what is sinful, and an earnest wish to forsake it; I must feel a hearty desire to be reconciled to God in Christ, and in Him to be created again unto good works; and I must have formed a sincere resolution, in a humble dependence on divine grace, to be henceforth faithful and conscientious in the discharge of all my various duties.

122. *Q. Why are these sentiments necessary for communicating worthily?*

A. Because the want of them would be most inconsistent with my professed design in partaking of the ordinance of the Supper, which is not only to commemorate, but also to declare my reliance on, the death of Christ, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

How We Are to View and Apprehend Christ

Edward Pearse

(From his work, *The Best Match or The Soul's Espousal to Christ*, which is reviewed on page 280).

VIEW and apprehend Him in His Godhead and divine nature. The gospel reveals Him in His divinity. It propounds Him to our faith as God, the true God, the great God, the mighty God, God over all. And thus should faith view and apprehend Him. Thus Thomas's faith apprehended Him when he said, "My Lord and my God." Indeed, nothing but a Godhead — an infinite, eternal, unchangeable Godhead — is a foundation strong enough for faith to build upon.

View and apprehend Him in His personal relation, not only as God, but also as God the Son, and so as distinguished from the Father. Thus, the gospel reveals and propounds Him to our faith, and thus also should our faith view and apprehend Him. Thus Peter's faith, with the rest in whose name he spoke, eyed and apprehended Him: "We believe and are sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God," John 6: 69. There is a distinct honour due to every person in the sacred Trinity. And the more distinctly our faith views and apprehends Christ in His personal relation as Son, the more complete it is and the more it gives Him the honour of that relation.

View and apprehend Him in His humanity, or as the Son of God incarnate. The gospel reveals and propounds Christ as the object of faith to us, not simply as God, and as God the Son, but as God the Son incarnate, as the Word made flesh, John 1: 14; or, as God manifested in the flesh, 1 Timothy 3:16; as having taken human nature into personal union with Himself, and so being both God and man in one person. And thus also should faith view and apprehend Him. "You believe in God," says He, "believe also in Me," John 14:1. Hence also He speaks so often of believers eating His flesh and drinking His blood, of His giving His flesh for the life of the world. And withal He tells us that His flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed. By all which He signifies to us that our faith must respect and apprehend Him as man as well as God, as the Son incarnate: and indeed, thus He is the next and most immediate object of faith. The Godhead or divinity is the ultimate object of faith, but Christ the Son incarnate is the next and most immediate object of faith. Hence we are said by Him to believe in God. Faith first eyes Christ as man, or the Son incarnate, and by Him comes ultimately to focus itself upon God. The humanity is a gate to the divinity; that by which our faith passes to the Godhead. As one divine says, "He that comes not to Christ as man shall never come to Him as God." The truth is, faith cannot deal with God immediately but as God clothed with our nature.

View and apprehend Him in His office of Mediator. The gospel reveals and propounds Christ to our faith in His office. It propounds and reveals Him as Christ, as the true Messiah and Saviour of the world, as one

sealed, sent, and anointed by the Father for the redemption of lost souls. And thus also should faith eye and apprehend Him. So also did Peter's faith apprehend Him: "Thou art the Christ," said he, "the Son of the living God." Hence we read of "believing that Jesus is the Christ." Hence also Christ tells the Jews, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." "If ye believe not that I am He," that is, the Messiah, the Christ, the Saviour that was promised. Oh! faith is short of the view it should have of Christ unless it views Him in His office.

View Him and apprehend Him in His infinite ability and sufficiency for the discharge of His office. The gospel reveals and propounds Him to our faith as one able to save to the very uttermost; and our faith should eye and apprehend Him accordingly. It reveals Him indeed both as an only and all-sufficient Saviour. As an only Saviour: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isaiah 45: 22. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts 4: 12. And as an all-sufficient Saviour: "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, and he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." It reveals Him in the infinite virtue of His blood, the inexhaustible fulness of His grace, the completeness of His obedience, the excellency of His righteousness, the perfection of His satisfaction, and the like. And thus should our faith eye and apprehend Him. O labour for such an understanding and apprehension of Christ as this, if ever you would believe aright, and be indeed espoused to Christ! Labour for a sound, clear, distinct knowledge of Him as the great object of faith. Pray much for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. That was the Apostle's prayer for the Ephesians, and let it be yours for yourselves. ●

History of the Halkirk and Wick Congregation

Rev. D. M. Boyd

IN May 1893 the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland was formed when a number of ministers, elders and people protested against the passing of a Declaratory Act by the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland which modified the Free Church's adherence to its principal subordinate standard, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. This Confession was the principal subordinate standard of most of the Presbyterian churches worldwide.

The Free Presbyterians formed themselves into a separate Church professing to hold to the original constitution of the Free Church of Scotland which they claimed had now been vitiated by the passing of the Declaratory Act.

In Caithness, there was strong support for the Free Presbyterian Church. There were two principal congregations formed — the Halkirk-Thurso-

Strathy congregation and the Wick congregation. There were separate ministries in these two congregations for most of the 20th century.

On Wednesday 14th July 1897 the Halkirk Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland building was officially opened for public worship with a service conducted by the Rev. John Robertson Mackay, Gairloch, (a native of Strathy and later to become Professor Mackay of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh). The following day the communion season commenced, at which Mr Mackay was assisted by the Rev. James Steven Sinclair, Glasgow, (who was born in Pulteneytown, Wick, and who was the editor of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* for 25 years). The Lord's Supper was commemorated on the third Sabbath of July, which continued to be the annual date for the observing of the sacrament in the congregation for many years.

At that time, the Halkirk church building was the first and only Free Presbyterian church in Caithness, which had congregations in Wick, Lybster, Dunbeath, Keiss and Halkirk. It cost £410. The internal structure has altered since it was first built. Initially the pulpit was in the centre of the right hand wall upon entering the front door of the church, but now the pulpit faces the door.

From a manuscript by the Rev. William Grant, minister of the Halkirk Congregation from 1926 until 1964, it appears that the congregation was joined to the Helmsdale Free Presbyterian congregation so that the Rev. D. S. Cameron could be settled as the first minister in November 1901. The manuscript reads:

HELMSDALE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND CONGREGATION

THIS congregation is the direct continuation of the old Free Church of Scotland in Helmsdale ministered to by the eminent Rev John Macdonald who died in 1854.

The passing of the Declaratory Act in 1893 resulted in the formation of this Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland congregation which has continued loyal to the Reformation principles upheld by the Disruption of 1843.

Services were held in the premises of Mr Donald Sutherland, Fishcurer, Shore St, and continued until the present church was built in 1928. In 1901 Helmsdale and Halkirk congregations were united as one charge. Gaelic services were held regularly but ceased some years ago when the Gaelic speaking element died.

Among the early preachers were students and laymen. Later the Revs D Cameron, N Matheson and M Gillies ministered to the joint congregation. The present ministry, that of the Rev Wm Grant, began in 1926 and thus extends over 26 years.

The practice of no instrumental music and the singing of Psalms only in the worship of God is adhered to. Many notable men and women highly respected in the community were members of this small congregation.

Laymen continue to give much helpful assistance in conducting services.

The Helmsdale church building was opened on Wednesday, 16th May 1928.

In May 1983 the Synod approved the union of Strathy with the Halkirk and Thurso Congregation and reduced Helmsdale to a preaching station. The Northern Presbytery, on 21st June 1983, disjoined the Helmsdale preaching station from the congregation and joined it to the Dornoch, Rogart, Lairg and Bonar Congregation. The Helmsdale Church is no longer used for services.

In May 1989 the Caithness congregations suffered from a secession by the only Free Presbyterian minister and by the only elder in Caithness. They joined the Associated Presbyterian Churches with most of the two congregations and forcibly occupied the Free Presbyterian churches in Wick, Thurso and Strathy. They also took with them all the congregational records, so that the present writer has not had the benefit of their use. Only one church, the Halkirk Church, with the accompanying manse, remains in Free Presbyterian hands.

A group of loyal Free Presbyterians gathered from Strathy, Thurso, Halkirk and Wick each Sabbath to maintain the worship of God according to the worship, doctrine and practice of the Church of the Scottish Reformation. Although deprived overnight of office-bearers, this small congregation regrouped and began to regrow.

The Northern Presbytery, at its meeting on 6th June 1989, appointed the Lairg Kirk-Session to oversee the Caithness congregations. On 25th June 1991 the Presbytery confirmed that the Halkirk Congregation would continue as a separate pastoral charge with its own Kirk-Session, having the oversight of the Wick Congregation, and in 1992 the two congregations were formally joined by the Synod into one, known as the Halkirk and Wick Congregation.

There were no communion seasons in Caithness for the first two years after the split, but eventually one was arranged for September 1991. A communion season has been held each year since, and there have been encouragements at these seasons, with additions to the congregation and the communion roll.

On 16th September 1995 Mr Lorence D. Couper was ordained and inducted as a Deacon in the congregation.

On 14th July 1997 the congregation celebrated the centenary of the opening of the Halkirk church with a service of thanksgiving to the Most High for preserving in this area a faithful witness to the biblical truths recovered at the Scottish Reformation.

THE above account is taken from *Halkirk Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1897 1997*, an 11 page booklet which also contains footnotes, list of pastors, illustrations, maps, extracts from *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and other information, and which may be obtained from the Interim Moderator, Rev. D M Boyd, 11 Auldcastle Road, Inverness, IV2 3PZ, price £2.50, including postage.

The Great Benefit of the Lord's Day

John Owen (1616-83)

LET men in whose hearts are the ways of God, seriously consider the use that hath been made, under the blessing of God, of the conscientious observation of the Lord's Day, in the past and present ages, unto the promotion of holiness, righteousness, and religion universally, in the power of it. If they are not under invincible prejudices, it will be very difficult for them to judge that it is a plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted.

For my part, I must not only say but plead whilst I live in this world, and leave this testimony to the present and future ages if these papers see the light and do survive, that if I have ever seen anything in the ways and worship of God wherein the power of religion or godliness hath been expressed, anything that hath represented the holiness of the gospel and the Author of it, anything that hath looked like a prelude to the everlasting Sabbath and rest with God, which we aim through grace to come unto, it hath been there and with them where and amongst whom the Lord's day hath been had in highest esteem, and a strict observation of it attended unto, as an ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The remembrance of their ministry, their walk and conversation, their faith and love, who in this nation have most zealously pleaded for, and have been, in their persons, families, and churches or parishes, the most strict observers of this day, will be precious with them that fear the Lord whilst the sun and moon endure. Their doctrine also in this matter, with the blessing that attended it, was that which multitudes now at rest do bless God for, and many that are yet alive do greatly rejoice in. Let these things be despised by those who are otherwise minded; to me they are of great weight and importance.

From Vol 19 of the Works of John Owen, 1862.

Book Review

THE BEST MATCH or *The Soul's Espousal to Christ* by *Edward Pearse*.

Published by *Soli Deo Gloria*, 1994, hardback, 205 pages, price £15.95, but available at £13.55 from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

EDWARD Pearse, an English non-conformist minister who pastored St. Margaret's, Westminster, died in 1673, aged about 40 years. His contemporaries said he was an "affectionate and useful preacher." When he discovered that he was dying from tuberculosis, he resolved to write something that "might be useful after his decease." This book is one of the fruits of that resolution.

Using the illustration of marriage he deals with the union between Christ and the believer. The manner of his dealing with the subject may be gathered from his opening words: "A covenant relation to Christ is certainly a concern of the greatest weight and highest importance to the sons of men of any in the world: it is what lies at the foundation of all true happiness, both in time and eternity."

He traces the soul's union to Christ in five particulars: 1, free and cordial donation; 2, near and intimate union; 3, sweet and lasting communion; 4, strong and ardent affection; 5, mutual rest and complacency for ever. On the first of these, he says, "In this spiritual espousal or marriage relation between Christ and His people, there is a giving of themselves each to the other. Christ on the one hand gives Himself unto the soul. 'I will be yours,' He says to the soul, 'yours to love you, to save you, to make you happy in me and with me. I with all my riches and treasures will be fully and forever yours'." This quotation gives something of the flavour of this excellent volume.

The chapters are divided into useful divisions, many of which could stand on their own as clear expositions of aspects of the glorious relationship between Christ and the believer. Each section would be sufficient for a daily reading for those who cannot give as much time as they wish to reading. Two sections which are particularly useful are, "How we are to view and apprehend Christ" (see page 276 of this issue), and, "Rules to make a Right Choice of Christ." The titles of the chapters accurately reflect their content, for example: Chapter 7, "Which shows what manner of husband Christ is, and how qualified for the endearing of Him to souls, and rendering Him desirable in a conjugal union;" Chapter 8, "Which shows what great things Christ does for His spouse;" and Chapter 10, "Which directs souls and shows them the way to attain to this sweet and blessed espousal to Jesus Christ."

This is a book which we thoroughly recommend, and we compliment the publishers for making it available to present day readers. There are many facets of the Saviour's love displayed in it, and to those who seek a deeper personal insight into this wonderful subject we say, Read it, pray over it, relish it.

Rev. D. J. MacDonald

Protestant View

Some evil results of enforced celibacy

THERE is no doubt that the characteristic of apostasy, of which the Apostle Paul spoke, "Forbidding to marry" (1 Timothy 4:3), is applicable to none so much as to the Roman Catholic Church. One purpose of marriage is to prevent uncleanness (cf 1 Corinthians 7:2), so no one need be surprised that one of the evil consequences of celibacy being enforced on the priests of Rome is that some of them have resorted to fornication and worse.

Following the cases of a number of priests in Britain who have been convicted in past few years of sexual abuse of young boys, and the case of the priest Brendan Smyth who was recently jailed in Dublin for 12 years for the same kind of crime in the Irish Republic, it is now reported that the Roman Catholic diocese of Dallas in Texas has been ordered to pay £80 million in damages to 10 victims of similar abuse.

The Papacy, however, refuses to soften its policy on enforced celibacy. Indeed, it presents celibacy in a glowing light — as a sign of “the undivided love of the priest for God and for God’s people,” as the Pope said in 1992, or, as Cardinal Basil Hume said, “as a fine witness to love. It is a value we have to observe.” And thus Rome further deludes many of its devotees, both men and women.

At the present time, the Roman hierarchy in Scotland, in an attempt to reverse the decline in numbers of those entering the priesthood and convents, is sending teams of priests and nuns into Roman Catholic schools to persuade teenagers to take up a life of celibacy. No doubt many youngsters will be duped by the idealistic sounding prospects presented to them — with further ill consequences for themselves and others. □

Notes and Comments

Further decline in marriage in Scotland

WHAT is painfully obvious to those who have a Biblical perspective of marriage is confirmed by recent statistics: marriage is being increasingly devalued. The Register General’s Annual Report shows that the total number of marriages recorded in Scotland in 1996 is 30,242; that is 421 fewer than in 1995, and the fewest since 1909. A quarter of those who married had been married previously.

One reason for this decrease is that an increasing number of couples are opting for living together: a way of life that is not frowned upon by society, let alone condemned as immoral. In fact, the Director of Marriage Counselling Scotland said earlier this year, “I think that’s a perfectly sensible thing to do.... We don’t talk about married couples, we talk about long-term committed intimate relationships... The way people live their lives is up to them, as long as it does not have an adverse effect on other people. If they want to live together they should do that.” At the same time, an Aberdeen University sociologist, commenting on co-habitation, said, “I don’t think it means that we are a weaker or less moral society.”

Such statements indicate disgraceful ignorance, or defiant rejecting, of the Divine standard. Part of God’s prescription for the welfare of mankind is marriage. It is He who has instituted it, and it is at our peril that we replace it by a lifestyle that is most decidedly immoral by its flagrant breaking of the Seventh Commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Princess Diana and her fortune-teller

PRINCESS DIANA'S recent visit to a medium in the Derbyshire village of Lower Pilsley raises disturbing questions. While she is no longer the wife of the heir to the throne, she has tremendous influence over many people in Britain and beyond. Apparently she was introduced to Rita Rogers, her medium, by the Duchess of York, who has also frequently consulted her. When two women so closely connected with the British royal house are indulging in practices condemned so emphatically by the Word of God, it is a clear indication of how seriously the nation as a whole has departed from giving to God the place that is to due Him as the ruler of providence.

Mrs. Rogers claims to be able to contact the dead. She is said to have passed on messages to Diana from her late father and claims that the Princess has found them "profoundly comforting". But it is profoundly disturbing to find people giving false comfort to those who have suffered the sadness of losing loved ones. In her book, *Reaching for the Children*, Mrs Rogers describes, it is reported, "many moving encounters with the bereaved, desperate to achieve contact with those they have loved and lost". What is certain, however, is that she has had no contact with any human being who has passed through death into eternity.

The words of God to Israel are sufficiently strong and clear to convince everyone to refuse to have anything whatever to do with such an evil and dangerous practice, if they are willing to listen to God: "There shall not be found among you any one that . . . that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [literally, one making enquiries to the dead]. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord" (Deut 18:10): It is obviously no light sin to be involved in such practices.

It seems incredible that anyone would continue to consult a medium who has been so far out in some of her predictions. For instance, the Duchess of York, after an air disaster Orr Long Island, New York, became convinced through talking to Mrs Rogers that a friend of hers was among the dead. In fact, he was 3000 miles away in Los Angeles; he is still alive. Even more seriously, when a friend of the Duchess attempted suicide, this fortune-teller insisted that the friend would repeat the attempt — and succeed. Thankfully this friend is still alive also. Another woman who consulted Mrs Rogers asserted that she was a charlatan and added, "She was off the mark with everything she said."

But the main point is not whether the predictions of someone who claims to be a medium turn out to be accurate. There is always a chance that any forecast may turn out to be accurate, especially if — as is often the case — such predictions are couched in vague terms. Fortune-telling is a work of darkness. The Devil cannot know the future, but he is highly intelligent and can surely make a shrewd assessment of how the future may turn out. We

need not therefore be surprised if a number of these predictions turn out to be correct.

There can only be one response to all manifestations of the occult: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." But it is a sad comment on this generation, that influential figures take decisions on the basis of what they are told by those who are involved in the occult. One is reminded of Elijah's question: "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron?" Rather, in all their perplexities of every kind, everyone is to "come boldly to the throne of grace", where God still hears the prayers of those who cry to Him.

K. D. M.

Mercy killing — a question of intent

LAST month two doctors in England "separately decided to break cover and confess to the mercy killing of terminally ill patients". Their professed aim was to highlight, even at the risk of prosecution, the present situation where, they claim, mercy killing is widespread under the guise of relieving pain.

At present, it is perfectly legal for a doctor to use whatever dose of drugs is required to relieve pain, but illegal to use drugs in any dose where the *intention* is to end life. The British Medical Association, to its credit, maintains that this distinction must be upheld, otherwise the doctor might be seen as an agent of death, and trust be lost.

The point at issue may seem a fine one but if any one is in doubt as to the importance of it one has only to look across the channel to Holland where a Dr Chabot admitted to helping a healthy woman of 51 end her life in 1991. He had agreed that she was hopelessly depressed after the death of her two sons. Dr Chabot was charged with malpractice, but was acquitted after judges accepted that a patient's psychological suffering was as valid a reason for seeking euthanasia as physical suffering.

The question of *intent* ought to be jealously guarded and rigorously reinforced by the law.

"For as he thinketh in his heart so is he," (Proverbs 23:7).

J. R.T.

Associated Presbyterian Churches Update

SINCE their schismatic departure from the 1989 Synod the APCs have gone out of their way to show just how ecumenical and broad-minded they are. Not for them the pattern of Christian behaviour and worship practised by those from whom they parted company! Insistence on women wearing their hair long and refraining from wearing "that which pertaineth unto a man", the wearing of hats by women when engaged in the public worship of God, the exclusive use of the Authorised Version and purity of worship became things of the past as far as many of them were concerned as they now exercise their kind of liberty of conscience. One of their aims in 1989 was to

distance themselves from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and in that at least they have been very successful. They distance themselves from us in practice and worship while at the same time they continue to occupy some of our churches and manses! Even the world sees the inconsistency of that. Recent times reveal that they have now made it to the *avant garde* of the popular evangelism brigade.

Prominent, in the first rank, is the Rev Malcolm MacInnes, the APC minister in Inverness. He, it will be remembered, made his exit from the 1989 Synod in a public and dramatic manner, laying his "protest" on the table, refusing to change it to a dissent, and then marching out to speak into a battery of microphones set up ready for his arrival in the car park outside. "The Church," he said, among many other things derogatory, "has adopted double standards." We are entitled to ask where Mr MacInnes himself now stands? Are he and other APCs not adopting double standards when they profess to hold "tenaciously" to the Westminster Confession of Faith and at the same time join forces with those who preach and practise Arminianism? The "Scotland for Christ" Gospel Rally, organised by him, was held, as advertised, in an Inverness football stadium on Saturday 5th July. At its conclusion, Mr MacInnes, we are informed, first asked those present to raise one hand and then both hands to indicate the measure of their appreciation of the day's proceedings and then brought the Rally to a close in a manner, in our view, so irreverent and dishonouring to Christ that even the duty of drawing attention to it is one from which the writer shrinks. Just as a worldly company might be asked to give "three cheers" for someone whom they admire, so the people gathered were called by Mr MacInnes, we are told, to do likewise with regard to the One whose name is "above every name". We know that some of those present were aghast.

Unholy familiarity and the frequent use of the Divine name are marked features of modern type evangelism. The Saviour's name and person are treated by those engaged in it as if He were one of themselves and He is addressed accordingly. The Third Commandment enjoins the "holy and reverent use of all of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works" and it is in that light that we are to judge the conduct of those present in the Inverness stadium. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Rev Malcolm MacInnes is the Clerk of the Scottish APC Presbytery? Does that Court, we wonder, condone or condemn his conduct? Or will resorting again to double standards be the way out?

J. McL.

African Mission News

ZIMBABWE

AT Ingwenya it is good that at last they have the telephone system installed. It is expected that Mbuma Mission will soon have an equally good service, as the telephone engineers are hard at work there. The staff at Mbuma were in a very isolated situation when their radio communication system was out of order.

The water shortage situation at Ingwenya has eased because of the extra water being now piped from the nearby dam. Meantime, it is being used for washing clothes and cleaning generally, but it is hoped that it will eventually be put through a purifying process and be suitable for all purposes.

Miss Marion Graham is in Scotland on furlough, and we hope she will have a refreshing holiday. Miss Etta MacLennan will be leaving for Zimbabwe about the end of August, if all is well, to give assistance in the John Tallach School while Miss Graham is on holiday.

It was interesting to have news of the Mission and to know that the Rev A. B. Ndebele is in much better health. Ma Donsa, who is probably the oldest member in the Ingwenya congregation, is not able to attend church as regularly as before. Ma Donsa is usually associated with the memory of her grandmother, Ma Mlotshwa, one of the chief wives of the last king of the Matabele, Lobengula. I recollect that Ma Mlotshwa came in contact with our Church when on one occasion, many years ago, she was out walking near her home at Libeni. She came across a small gospel meeting held by one of our elders, and she stopped to listen. After that she made a point of attending these meetings, and also began to attend church. Then she was converted. From being a rather wild, intemperate old lady she became a fine Christian and lived to a good old age. Her last words were, "Receive thou me, O Lord of Glory."

There are five young people from Scotland at present on holiday at Ingwenya, all wishing to be as useful as possible. It is very cheering and helpful for the staff to have them there.

From Mbuma a friend writes: "There was a sad death one night recently. A three year old boy found something to drink in a cupboard at home, which he may have thought was milk, but turned out to be poison from the root of a tree. No doubt there was some specific use for it in the home. He died soon after his arrival in hospital.

"Miss Lia Terlou is making plans for her furlough. She hopes to accompany her parents to Scotland. . . We were hoping we would get a relief nurse in her place but so far nobody is forthcoming. They are very busy in Sengera [Kenya] and need all the hands they have."

J. N.

KENYA — Sengera

Mr Ian MacLean, the administrator at Sengera, says that the clinic — Omorembe Health Centre — is exceedingly busy because of the continuing high incidence of malaria. Many of the people are still having a hard time, not only because of family sickness, but also because of increased poverty due to failure of the corn crop and having to buy medicine.

It has been agreed in principle to develop the basement floor of the Health Centre to provide offices, stores and a laboratory and thus to free space on the upper floor for the provision of an operating theatre.

Church Information

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

THE following Synod Committees will meet in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church as follows, God willing:

Tuesday, 7th October

10.00 am - 11.00 am	Magazines Committee
11.00 am - 1.00 pm	Foreign Missions Committee
2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	Welfare of Youth Committee
2.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Finance Committee
5.00 pm - 6.00 pm	Sabbath Observance Committee
5.00 pm - 6.00 pm	Outreach Committee
6.30 pm - 8.00 pm	Publications Committee
7.00 pm - 8.30 pm	Dominions and Overseas Committee
8.00 pm - 9.30 pm	Bookroom Committee

Wednesday, 2nd October

9.00 am - 11.00 am	Religion and Morals Committee
11.00 am - 1.00 pm	Training of the Ministry Committee

There will be no meeting of the Church Interests Committee.

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 Tuesday, 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.

NURSES FOR MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL

There is an urgent need for nurses at the above hospital. Four vacancies exist for qualified nurses. A qualification in midwifery is desirable but not essential. Applicants should apply in the first instance to the Rev. J. R. Tallach, Clerk of Foreign Missions Committee, F. P. Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB.

CHURCH DEPUTIES TO VISIT AFRICA

It is expected that the Rev John MacLeod, Convener of the Foreign Missions Committee, and the Rev Dr James R. Tallach, will visit our mission in Sengera, Kenya for a period of about three weeks, departing, God willing, on Tuesday, 9th September. It would be much appreciated if the Lord's blessing on the visit, including help in all duties and protection in travelling, would be prayed for. "Brethren, pray for us."

Rev. James R Tallach, Clerk of the Foreign Missions Committee

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS FUND

By appointment of Synod, the Special Collection, on behalf of the Dominions and Overseas Fund, is due to be made in congregations during the month of September, D.V.

R. A. Campbell, General Treasurer

BARNOLDSWICK MANSE FUND APPEAL

Further to the Appeal launched in last month's issue, would interested readers kindly note that cheques should be made payable to "Barnoldswick Presbyterian Church". Contributions should still be sent to Mr C. T. Metcalfe, 23 Coates Lane, Barnoldswick, Lancs., BB8 6HJ.

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

Eastern Europe Fund: Anon, Lancs., £30.

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Canada, \$100 Can.

CONGREGATIONAL TREASURERS acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Inverness: Sustentation Fund: J.D.N., £240; *Church Door Collection:* J.D.N., £100.

Larne: Anon, £100, for the following funds as follows: *Jewish & Foreign Missions:* £25;

Dominions and Overseas Missions: £25; *Home Mission Fund:* £25; *Kenya*

Mission: £25; all per J.A.F.

Portree: *Where most needed:* Anon., £500; *Trinitarian Bible Society:* Anon., £500;

Anon., £200; *Communion Expenses:* Anon., £10; all per collection plate.

Raasay: *Sustentation Fund:* B. Nicolson, £50; *Communion Expenses:* Envelope in Plate, £50; *Where most needed:* Interested, £100, all per Treasurer.