

The Free Presbyterian Magazine and Monthly Record

Vol 102

October 1997

No 10

Signs of Our National Spiritual Darkness

THE further Britain moves away from the Christian faith, the greater is the spiritual ignorance of the population. The more “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” is despised, the deeper the darkness grows. The growing darkness is very much evidenced, for instance, by many thousands of people looking to astrologers, fortune-tellers and mediums for guidance about their future. A recent survey by the University of Leeds showed that “organised religion, in particular Christianity, is losing a battle against alternative religions and non-religious belief systems.”

Another indication of spiritual darkness was the reaction of most people to the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales. We do not refer to the sense of shock and sorrow. “There perhaps never was an occasion on which the nation more sincerely or more generally lamented the loss of any of its Princes, or felt more disposed to participate in the sorrows of the Royal Family” – these words were written by Thomas M’Crie after the death and funeral of Princess Charlotte of Wales, in 1817, but they are quite as descriptive of recent public mourning at the death of Princess Diana. We ourselves, like others, were saddened and solemnised by the awful suddenness and the horrifying circumstances of her departure, at an early age, from this world. We felt, and do feel, deep sympathy for the grieving, motherless sons, Prince William and Prince Harry. Our prayer is that they and other mourning members of the Royal Family may experience the comfort which comes from God, “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3), and that the sore loss of a beloved mother may be blessed to the young Princes so that they would truly seek, know, fear, love and serve the Lord. However, we are bound to say that many things said and done during the days following the death of the Princess showed a dismal lack of spiritual understanding among the people.

It was significant that most inscriptions on floral tributes and in books of condolences spoke not *of* the dead Princess but *to* her. Similarly, during the

funeral service the Dean of Westminster, when supposedly commending her soul to God, addressed not God but the deceased, saying, "Diana, our companion in faith and sister in Christ, . . ." Likewise, Earl Spencer in his tribute to his departed sister, spoke to her directly. Addressing the dead as if they are yet alive has its roots in the Romish superstition of addressing and praying to the saints, and often indicates a reluctance to accept that the deceased person is gone forever. It is one way of trying to minimise the stark and solemn reality of death and the separation of the soul from the body, and certainly is a clear indication of spiritual ignorance.

The finality of death as far as having further opportunities to be at peace with God are concerned, is something that we are not naturally disposed to accept, but true believers are convinced of it. They know from the unerring Word of God that at the moment of death the soul goes immediately to heaven or hell, to remain there eternally, and that the body returns to the dust from which it came, to remain there until the resurrection of the dead. When Anglican clergymen pray for the souls of the deceased, it is little wonder if many people besides Roman Catholics think that somehow or other there is hope of salvation after they die. At the funeral of the Princess, the Dean said, "We are gathered here to . . . to commend her soul to almighty God." He also said, "Let us commend our sister Diana to the mercy of God, . . ." And the choir sang, "Give rest O Lord to your handmaid, who has fallen asleep." When death comes it is utterly futile to pray for the person who has died. Praying for the dead betrays the most abysmal spiritual darkness. It is impossible for any change in our spiritual state to occur after we die, for as Ecclesiastes 11:3 reminds us, as the tree falls, so shall it lie. The unchangeableness of that state is shown also in Revelation 22:11, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

Yet it seems that it was taken for granted by clergy and people that the soul of the Princess entered heaven. The Dean described her as "one with all the faithful, living and dead". But what warrant did he have for coming to this conclusion? The great day of judgement alone will reveal without any shadow of doubt who are the righteous servants of God and who are not, for it will be a day when God will not only make up His jewels but also when we shall all clearly "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Malachi 3:18). Meantime we are to note the insistent teaching of the Scriptures: that only they who have been "born again" are in the kingdom of God in this world, and will be found in the kingdom of God above at last (John 3:3). Christ says, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of

heaven," Matthew 18:3. The Word of God plainly shows us that those who opt for the hollow happiness of this world and live in forgetfulness of God cannot be classed as regenerate, righteous, and godly, whatever good works they may do or however much they may be praised for the charitable work they may engage in.

Our national spiritual darkness was indicated also by the idolising of the Princess in numerous tributes. To show proper civil respect at the death of those of high status is one thing; to speak of them as if they were to be worshipped is deplorable. After the funeral of Princess Charlotte of Wales, M'Crie wrote, "The recent religious service avowedly called for a tribute of respect to the memory of the illustrious personage deceased. And was there not every reason to think that multitudes who engaged in it had no higher or sacred end in view? Amiable as the Princess undoubtedly was, and severe as is the loss sustained by her premature and sudden death, was there no danger of extravagant, and even impious adulation being offered to her memory, in addresses to God, and in addresses to the people in the name of God?" Again, his words are applicable. Princess Diana, at her death, was frequently spoken of in terms that were more than adulatory; they were in fact of quite a religious nature. Some people described her as a "patron saint", "a light for the world" and an "icon", while others spoke of gathering for her funeral as a "pilgrimage".

It was striking that in the reported expressions of grief on the part of the general public, acknowledgement of the God of heaven was conspicuous by its absence. It is true, of course, that the name of God was used frequently during the funeral. But while the occasion was professedly one for worshipping God it had more of the nature of a worldly concert than of the true worship of God which is to be "in spirit and in truth", and "with reverence and godly fear". How offensive, to say the least, was the inclusion in the service of a worldly song extolling the Princess, sung by a singer whose immorality is public knowledge. But such is the spiritual darkness that pervades the country that the singer was, as the press put it, "centre stage during the funeral", and records of the song are selling in unprecedented numbers. Those who think that such worship is acceptable to the Majesty of heaven are under a grave delusion indeed.

The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, has focussed the thoughts of many on topics such as the future of the Royal Family, and the intrusion of the media. The question is, How many have thought, "God is speaking to us as a nation not only by the Scriptures but also by His providence in suddenly taking away the mother of an heir to the throne"? Not only is God saying that we, individually, are to prepare to meet Him, but also that we, nationally, are to return to Him in repentance. May He enlighten us in our darkness, and lead us to give the highest place to Christ who says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). □

The Old and the New Man in Believers

*Rev. Thomas Boston**

A sermon preached on a sacramental occasion, at Maxton, in 1729. (Recently edited version).

Text: "*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin,*" Romans 6:6.

THE sanctification of believers is no less a mystery than their justification. The former, as well as the latter, springs from the cross of Christ to them, through the intervention of faith knitting them to a crucified Christ. Hence the Apostle, having asserted the certainty of the sanctification of believers (that they shall certainly walk in "newness of life", verse 4; and in "the likeness of Christ's resurrection", verse 5, that is, in a new manner, just as during the forty days after His resurrection Christ lived in the world after a manner different from that before His death), now draws the ground of their sanctification from the cross of Christ, in the words of the text.

In the text we have the *ground* which ensures holiness of life in believers: "Our old man is crucified with him." This secures their holiness of life, as the drying up of the fountain causes the drying up of its streams.

The state of the old man in believers is crucifixion: "Our old man is crucified with him," that is, with Christ. This supposes that Christ was crucified. It also supposes that in believers there is a twofold man, an old man, and a new. When he says "our old man", he intimates that the old man is not the whole man, as it is in the unregenerate. The new man is the new creation of grace in the believer, or the believer as renewed. The old man is the corruption remaining within the believer, and is the fountain of sin in his heart and life.

Now, the state of the old man is a state of crucifixion; it is nailed to the cross, which is a state of death. And its crucifixion is a crucifixion with Christ: "I am crucified with Christ," Galatians 2:20. In so far as the believer is by faith united to Christ, his old man is nailed to the cross of Christ.

The *issue* of this crucified state of the old man is twofold. First, the final issue: "That the body of sin might be destroyed." The old man or body of sin, being a compound of the several sinful lusts in opposition to the holy law, the final issue of its crucifixion is its destruction and utter ruin. It is true that crucifixion is not death at once, but it is death sure and certain.

The intermediate issue of the crucifixion of the old man is this: "That henceforth we should not serve sin." From the moment of our union with Christ

* Thomas Boston (1676-1732), was ordained to Simprin in 1699; and translated to Ettrick, another country parish, in 1707. His ministry there was eventually so blessed that it "shaped the religious life of the parish for generations". His most influential work was his *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, of which Jonathan Edwards said that it "shows Mr Boston to have been a truly great divine".

we should not serve sin any more nor voluntarily live in it, as we did before. The old man may live long on the cross before he be destroyed: but his hands and feet cannot serve him as they did before; there are nails driven through them; he may move them, but then it is with pain and difficulty.

Secondly, there is in the text the *certainly* concerning the ground which ensures holiness of life; that is, the certainty of the old man being crucified with Christ, for the Apostle says, "Knowing this." It is not an uncertain hope, but known for truth. It could not be known by sense; nor could one know it by rational deduction from natural principles; for the whole mystery of Christ is supernatural. Therefore it is known by faith upon divine testimony. It is a conclusion of faith for invigorating us in all our endeavours after holiness of life; it is to be firmly held to and stuck by in all our struggles with the old man, if we would make headway against him.

That I may show the several purposes of this text, I shall present them under several doctrines to be briefly handled.

I. THE FIRST DOCTRINE is that there is in believers, being united to Christ, *a new man or holy principle; and also an old man or fountain of sin.*

1. Why are they called men? Why is the holy principle in the believer called the new *man*, and the corrupt nature in the believer called the old *man*?

They are called *men*, because each of them possesses the whole man, though not wholly. There are, by their means, two "I's" in every believer: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I," Romans 7:15. There is not one part of the man that is in Christ but grace has a part of it and corruption has a part of it: as in the twilight there is light over all, and darkness over all too, the darkness being mixed in every part with the light. So my renewed part is "I", a man having an understanding enlightened, a will renewed, affections spiritualised, and using my body conformably: but my unrenewed part is "I" too, having an understanding darkened, a will rebellious, affections corrupted, and using my body accordingly.

They are called *new* and *old* men for two reasons: first, because the new nature is brought in after and upon the corrupt principle, which was the first possessor of the person. The corrupt nature is of the same standing with ourselves from our conception and birth, and possessed us till our union with Christ. And only then came in the new nature, and that made the former old.

They are called the new and old men because also of their different originals; the one has been in us from the corrupt first Adam, the other from the holy second Adam. So the believer, looking on the corruption of his nature, may regard fallen Adam as father; and on the new creature being in him, he may regard Christ as father. The second Adam coming after the first, made the first old: so the product of them in us is the old and new man accordingly.

2. How did the believer come to be thus *split into two men*? This is done by virtue of his union with Christ, from whence ariseth a communication of grace to him from Christ: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Corinthians 1:30; concerning which two things are to be noted.

First, we note that in the moment of one's union with Christ by faith, there is communicated to one, out of the fulness of grace in the man Christ, *a measure of every grace* in Him, as the wax impressed receives every point in the seal. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John 1:16. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Ephesians 4:13. And thus is the new creature formed, being a new man entirely, having all its members, no grace totally wanting. Hence it is that the new man is formed according to Christ's image, so that it is the very picture of the man Christ, as Eve was of Adam. Therefore the forming of the new man is said to be the forming of Christ in the believer: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," Galatians 4:19.

Secondly, we note that there is not communicated to the believer then, nor during this life, a *full* measure of any grace: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part," 1 Cor. 13: 9. So all the graces being imperfect, though they remove sin as far as they go, they cannot yet fill up all the room in the mind, will or affections. And thus there is an old man left in the believer still, ("For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin," Romans 7:14), which is the image of the first Adam, from whom its corruption is derived.

See from this doctrine of two men being in the believer that the believer's life while here cannot but be a struggling life: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Galatians 5:17. As Rebekah had the children struggle together within her, and like the two armies in the Shulamite, so the believer has two men struggle in him.

See also from this doctrine the peace and easy life most men have. The flesh in them has no competitor. In the state of glory, grace has all, so there is perfect peace. In the state of nature, corruption has all; so there is peace there too, (except when it is marred by the struggle between the flesh in one part lusting, and the flesh in another part fearing, as in Baalam, "Who loved the wages of unrighteousness," 2 Peter 2:15, but was compelled to say, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more," Numbers 22:18). But the struggle in the believer is between the flesh and Spirit, each exercising its will within the believer, and each doing so according to its own nature, Romans 7:15,16.

II. THE SECOND DOCTRINE is that *the old man in believers is a body of sin*, an entire body, lacking none of its members, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. This appears from the description of it already given. As we derive every grace from the second Adam in our regeneration, so we have derived every corruption from the first Adam in our natural generation.

This doctrine may serve to humble believers, when they are at their best. There is an entire body of sin in them while they are here. Do they excel in any grace? Yet there is in them a member of the old man opposite to it, as passion in meek Moses. Have they every grace in them? They have every corruption too, though every one does not appear, no more than every grace does appear. Therefore they need to watch against all sin; for there is never a snare but there is a member of the old man ready to fall into it. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry," Colossians 3:5.

This doctrine shows that it is no wonder the believer groans being burdened, having a whole body of sin to carry about with him. And they who do not groan under a body of sin and death are certainly all flesh; there is no new man in them. If you belong to Christ you will be going to Him for sanctification. You have a body of sin to lay before Him, which He alone can destroy.

III. THE THIRD DOCTRINE is that *the old man in believers is crucified with Christ*. This teaches two things: Christ was crucified, and the old man in believers is crucified together with Him.

First, *Christ was crucified*. He died the cursed, painful, shameful, lingering death on the tree of the cross (which death we are met to commemorate) so that the first sin that let all sin into the world might be the more clearly read in the punishment. When you consider the awful and tremendous event of the Son of God, the second Adam, hanging naked on a tree, and dying slowly and in exquisite pain, can you miss seeing the fiery wrath of God against the sin of Adam and Eve, in their taking pleasure in eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, and in an instant defacing the image of God in them?

And Christ was put to this awful death for us, rather than another kind of death, so that the whole world might see what a low and miserable state Christ took on Himself, in putting Himself in our stead. We were bondmen under the curse, and Christ took on Him our state of servitude and became a bond-man for us under the curse. He "took upon him the form of a servant," Philippians 2:7, of which His death on the cross was the sign and badge, such a death being the punishment of slaves, and accursed under the law. And to make way for this circumstance of His death, the Jews were subjected to the Roman Empire.

Therefore, believers, remember a *crucified* Christ; enter this night deep into

the thought of the Son of God hanging, groaning, dying on a cross for us. Admire the matchless love in it. See in it the severity of divine justice against sin. Prize the salvation so dearly bought, and receive it with thankfulness.

Also, think it not strange, if you have a crucified life in the world. You who are Christians, followers of Jesus, why should you think it strange to be thus conformed to your head?

Secondly, we enquire *how* the old man in believers is crucified with Christ. The believer being crucified with Him includes the following particulars:

First, Christ hung on the cross as a public person, the representative of His spiritual seed; for He was the second Adam suffering, as the other Adam was the first Adam sinning. As believers sinned in Adam, so they suffered in Christ; the law having them all on the cross in Christ, their representative: "I am crucified with Christ," Galatians 2:20.

Secondly, Christ hanging on the cross had the body of all their sins upon Him, your old man, and my old man. They were upon Him by the imputation of the guilt of them, though not inherent in Him; "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Corinthians 5:21. Therefore our old man is said to be crucified, not *in* him, but *with* Him.

Thirdly, while He was hanging on the cross, He was meritoriously doing away the guilt of their sins, and consequently the power, pollution, and very being thereof; inasmuch as the guilt being removed, these must cease of course. For the strength of sin is the law, whereby it stakes down the sinner under the curse, 1 Corinthians 15:56.

Fourthly, the sinner being united to Christ by faith, the merit and virtue of Christ's suffering on the cross is actually applied to him. So that, his guilt being removed, there is a reigning principle of grace planted in him, going through the whole man, whereby the dominion of sin is broken, Romans 6:14, and the pollution removed, Titus 3:5. Therefore the believer, being crucified with Christ, is an image of Christ on the cross: full of grace which is found in Him, and of sin which was laid upon Him; but the former working off the latter.

See then, O communicants, that the crucifying of the old man, the body of sin in you, depends entirely on your uniting with Christ by faith. The sacrament is appointed to seal and strengthen that union. Therefore your great business at the table should be, closely to knit with a crucified Christ. The more of that, the more will the death of sin be hastened on. And they that aim not at the destruction of sin in their communicating, while they pretend to remember a crucified Saviour, forget the end of His crucifixion: that the body of sin, being crucified with Him, might be destroyed.

See also that the old man in believers is in a state of death, though not dead

outright. It is crucified with Christ. It will move and stir in them, and vehement struggles it may make, as a dying man struggling with the mortal disease: but whatever efforts it makes, it is on the cross, from where it shall not come down till it breathe out its last.

Learn also that the practice of religion is painful work; and Christians must not think it strange that they are often pained to the heart in it. The saints in glory have no pain in their work; for the old man is destroyed in them: but the saints here have an unrenewed part; and that is on the cross, and cannot but pain them. There are right eyes in them to be plucked out; the man has a painful struggle in denying himself, wrestling against his own flesh and blood. Providence thrusts a spear into the old man's side, by piercing trials and troubles; it breaks his legs by cutting disappointments from many directions, to forward his death. This cannot be but painful.

Observe that the old man is long in dying; for crucifying is a lingering death. There must be the exercise of patience in the Christian course, for there may be many a battle before complete victory be gained. Many a wound the old man will take before he falls; and again and again, when he is put to the worse, he gets up and renews the battle, till he get the final stroke from the Lord's hand.

It is a grave question, Why does the Lord allow the old man of sin to dwell in His people after their conversion? Why is not sin quite expelled at the first entry of grace? Our text affords one weighty reason for it: that the members may be conformed to the Head. Christ did not put off the body of our sins, that lay on Him by imputation, at His very first encounter with it. He had a grievous struggle with it for three hours on the cross, till He Himself got the first fall, dying by its hand on the cross. If we reckon rightly, it lay heavy on Him the space of thirty-three years; only upon the cross was the heat of the battle, which ended in His death and burial, whereby He put it off altogether. So, since imputed sin was on Christ, the Head, all His life, inherent sin is left in believers, the members, all their life. The old man is crucified with him.

IV. THE FOURTH DOCTRINE is that by virtue of the cross of Christ, *the old man in believers shall certainly be destroyed at length.*

Here we may inquire, *What destruction is it that is certainly waiting for the old man in believers?* It is an utter destruction of it, of all the effects of it, of all marks and vestiges of it, and of all belonging to the old Adam.

The old man himself shall be destroyed, utterly destroyed, from out of all them that belong to Christ. Though the old man, like a victor on the field of battle, has many a time trode on them, there shall not be the least print of his feet discerned on them, for they shall be "the spirits of just men made perfect," Hebrews 12:23. The day will come, when there shall not be the least sin on them, to draw a frown from their Father's face against them. "The people that

dwelt therein shall be forgiven their iniquity," Isaiah 33:24, and it shall have no power at all to prevail over them; it shall no more have the least indwelling in them; but shall be utterly cast forth as an abominable thing. So the new man shall be without a competitor for ever.

Also, the sinful body of flesh derived from old Adam, which brought the old man down from Adam to us, Psalm 51:5, and continues to the end the best friend that the old man has in believers, shall be destroyed. The sinful flesh, separated from the soul, shall at last be carried to the grave, where it shall return to the dust again, so as not the least lineament of old Adam's likeness shall be discerned on it. And Christ, the second Adam, will take the same dust thus purified, and form it anew after His own likeness. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," Philippians 3:21.

And the visible heavens that covered the old man, and this earth that bore him and furnished fuel to his lusts, shall for his sake be reduced to ashes. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," 2 Peter 3:10. Compare this with the word, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," Gen. 3:17. So it shall no more be said, "This is the earth where the old man once lived, and this the heavens that gave him light and air." But Christ will make new heavens and a new earth for the new man, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Peter 3:13.

Lastly, all that shall remain of the old man shall be buried in hell: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire," Revelations 20:14. Old Adam brought the old man into the world, and he spread his poisonous efficacy over all: so that look where you will, you shall not see in all this world anything in which there is no sin, or some effect of sin. But then, at last, all of the old man shall be taken from off believers, and from off the now groaning creation, and cast into the lake of fire; so that there shall not be the least sin, nor effect of sin, outside the boundaries of hell.

We also inquire, *When will the old man be thus destroyed?* You will perceive, from what is said already, that destruction will have two periods.

First, at the death of the believer, and not till then. Till then the child of God must wrestle with the old man; for so did Christ wrestle with it, as imputed to Him, till death set Him free. It is a grave question: How come that believers die although they are freed from the curse of the covenant of works? I answer: They die in conformity to Christ their Head; that as death came in by sin, sin may go off by death. It is not dying that does it indeed; for the sin of the unbeliever is not affected by his death, nor does death, for all it can do, remove sin from him. But at the death of the believer, Christ gives the separating stroke betwixt the

new and old man, and kills the old man outright. And He does it, by letting in a full measure of every grace from Himself into the believer, which takes up the whole man wholly; and so the old man is gone in a moment, as the darkness upon the sun's displaying his beams over all.

The old man shall be destroyed not only at the death of the believer but also at the end of the world. Then comes the utter abolition of all vestiges of the old man outside of hell.

We further inquire, *How certain is the death of the old man?* It is as sure as the death of Christ is the cause of its destruction, and as the purpose of His death cannot be frustrated. It is as certain as Christ rose again from the dead, free from the sin that was imputed to Him, and sits in heaven today.

Let the saints then take courage, and renew the battle vigorously with the old man; for the victory will undoubtedly be theirs. And as for you who are still for keeping the old man hale and hearty, you desire none of Christ's cross, and therefore you have no saving interest in it.

V. THE FIFTH DOCTRINE is that in the meantime, till the old man be destroyed entirely by virtue of the cross of Christ, *the believer shall not be a servant to the old man any more*, by virtue of the same cross. That is the degree of freedom from the old man that the believer has now.

The believer has heartily given him up as a master. At one time he said, "I love my master, . . . I will not go out free," as in Exodus 21:5. But now he hates the old man and desires to be altogether free, saying, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. Just being in the same house with the old man is a burden to the believer.

The believer will do no work, but forced work, for the old man: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I," Romans 7: 15. He will not yield his members to the old man voluntarily, as before. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," Romans 6:13. He will never do work for the old man any longer with whole good will, but with half will at most.

This fact that the believer shall not be a servant to the old man any longer proclaims death to such as have given their hand to Christ at His table, but are ready to go back into the service of their lusts. If you have not entered into a life of struggling against sin, you have not felt the virtue of Christ's cross.

VI. THE SIXTH DOCTRINE is that believers in going against the old man in acts of holiness, *should believe that he is a crucified man*. Believe that your old man is crucified with Christ, and in this belief bestir yourself against him in the use of appointed means. If you believe it not, how can your hands be strong, having all to do yourself alone? But believe it firmly, and it will make you as a giant refreshed with wine. ●

On Dancing

THE following article was written seventy five years ago by the Rev William Parks, an Anglican clergyman and a faithful preacher of the truth in his day. Its subject matter is as relevant to Christian behaviour today as it was at the time when the writer took up his pen. It has now become fashionable for some ministers, office-bearers and members in the Free Church and the APC to take to the dance floor at weddings. Recently, for instance, on the Island of Lewis, where the Free Church is regarded as being most conservative, one of its elders was on a Friday night, resplendent in Highland dress, cavorting on the dance floor; on the Sabbath night he was leading the praise in his church! – *Rev. J. MacLeod*

The article, as now published, is an abridged and edited version of the original. –*Editor*

A dancing Christian! What an anomaly! At a ball last night and at church this morning? In the waltz and at the Lord's Supper within the space of a few hours! What! Is this Christianity? Does Christian liberty justify indulgence in the pleasures of the world under any circumstances? As a minister of the Christian religion, I unhesitatingly say, No. Ah! dancing Christians, either give up your profession or your practice; for be assured you are a laughing stock to infidels and to devils; the one detect your glaring inconsistency, the other gloat over your delusion. Maybe you think my views are melancholy; but let me ask, Who that knows anything, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, of the terrors of sin, or of the blessings of salvation, could for a moment feel happy in frivolous, worldly, dancing company?

Perhaps some of you fancy you have Scripture to refute me, and to warrant your proceedings. The saying of Solomon may occur to you, "There is a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3: 4); but let me tell you that such dancing as Solomon alludes to is not the dancing of the ballroom; is not the dance movements learnt with care and exhibited with pride; but the exuberant thankfulness of the heart, for blessings bestowed and grace manifested.

I assert that dancing, as it is practised, is sinful. One Scripture alone proves it to be so, namely, "Do all to the glory of God," for who in a dance ever thinks of giving glory to God? Who in a dance ever thinks of God at all? Will it be said, "Oh, this is stretching the cord too tight; would you have us always to be thinking about God? Shall we have no relaxation?" Ah! my objecting friend, your very objection plainly manifests the state of your heart. You want pastime, do you? And you confess it is a pastime to be relieved from thoughts of God? I read this of the wicked in the tenth Psalm – God is not in "all his thoughts."

But perhaps you say that it does not necessarily follow that because you dance, you cannot do it to God's glory. In refutation of this objection, I would ask and answer these four questions: 1. What sort of company do you meet at dances? 2. For what purpose do you dance? 3. What preparations do you make for the dance? 4. What are your thoughts and feelings after the dance?

In reply to the first question, "What sort of company do you meet at dances?", I say (and I know it to be true), The frivolous, the empty-headed, the vain, the silly, the dissipated, and the dissolute, both men and women. Those, in short, whose hearts are wrapped up in the world and its amusements, its vanities and joys. I read in my Bible an awful assertion about association with such persons: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God!" (James 4:4). Oh! my young friends – you who have been led away by worldly companions to rank yourselves, even for a single night, among the antagonists of God – pause over this tremendous declaration! In your association with your worldly partners in the dance you have avowed yourselves the friends of the enemies of the living God! Oh! may you be separated from the world, and constrained to see that there is no possibility of keeping friends with Him and it!

I now answer the second question, "For what purpose do you dance?" Is it for health? No; for if you required exercise you would take it in the open air, and not in a close room. Is it to exhibit your joy for God's blessings? No! for if this were your motive you would choose other company in which to manifest your joy. Is it for the purpose of exhilarating your spirits? No! for those in low spirits cannot dance. I will tell you what you dance for. You dance for the purpose of exhibiting your skill, or letting people observe your fine figure, your graceful movements, or your dress. And you dance for mere sensual enjoyment. The real motive may be concealed beneath a very modest appearance; but that it is not for the glory of God you dance is abundantly evident.

We come to our third question, "What preparation do you make for the dance?" There are various articles of dress got together: including perhaps that disgrace to a virtuous woman, the low-bodied dress, and all arrayed and gazed upon long before the dance begins. Then there is staring in the mirror in order to see how you will look or what you be thought of in the dance: a sort of rehearsal of the vanity show that is to take place by and by. And there are such questions as, "Does my hair suit me; do I look nice?" Those of the opposite sex are quite as vainglorious. Young men clothe themselves in the fashions of the day. They often run into reckless expense in gratifying their passion for the dance. In short, the preparation made for the dance tends to anything but "the glory of God," but everything to the glory of self, the vanity of the world, "the lust of the eye," and the "pride of life!"

One other question remains to be answered: "What are your thoughts and feelings after the dance?" Are they those of a Christian who is about to retire for the night? Are they placid, calm, holy? Are they fixed upon God and occupied in communion with God? Has the veil of night shut out all objects from view but God and Christ and the Holy Ghost? Ah, no. I know it well. The feelings

are excited, the pulse beats quick, and the brain throbs; the world has just had its revel in the heart! There is the remembrance of the bright lights, the many people, the winning smile, the agreeable small talk, the flattering compliment, all floating in the head, all glorifying self, but not a thought, not a feeling enlisted on the side of God! No! No relish for prayer, no prostration of spirit before the throne, not a knee bent (except in formalism or mockery or delusion), not a sincere breath wafted on high by any soul engaged in the dance.

Tell me, how can such a practice, tending to such sins of omission and commission, be countenanced, much less encouraged, by any child of God or minister of God? Surely the whole proceeding, from first to last, has the stamp of Satan upon it! Yes, I unhesitatingly say that the ball and the dance, their consequences and concomitants, are devices and amusements of the devil, by which he effects his purposes against many of his incredulous victims! I should like to ask the fashionable devotee of the ballroom: "When your presence graces the gay circle, or you whirl through the maze of worldlings, or sink exhausted on a seat, or wander forth in the cool air to calm your excited mind, how could you then give an account of your stewardship? Were Christ to speak to you there, could you answer Him? Were death to summon you, could you calmly follow Him from the ballroom to the grave: from the worldling's gaze to the presence of your Maker?" Awful, terrible thought! Yet, believe me, such things have been. Many is the victim who has been launched into eternity whilst his heart has been throbbing with delight in that which God has cursed!

I shall now notice a few attempts at argument in justification of the practice of dancing. It has been asserted that "we have Scripture examples to warrant our engaging in the dance." The devil (as somebody has quaintly said) never goes out without his Bible under his arm! Satan has Scripture at his fingers' ends, but he sometimes mutilates and mangles it. Ah, my young friends, let me warn you against the sophistical practice of falling back upon Scripture to justify ungodly and worldly actions! It is by such a practice that the pleasure loving clergyman justifies himself in his association with the world. It is his plea, in defence of his conduct, that Jesus Christ never shrank from dining with Pharisees and unbelieving Jews; but he thinks proper to forget the purpose which Jesus had in view, and that He never failed to teach, to rebuke and to exhort His host and fellow-guests, whoever they were. Jesus Christ, although meek and unobtrusive, never suffered the rank, the hospitality, or peculiar views of any man to deter Him from His grand purpose of "doing good" and maintaining truth inviolate. If those who quote Scripture in support of their adopted errors and sinful courses would but submit to the Word of God as a whole, they would soon cease to make such uses of the inspired volume.

Also, it is said that David danced, that Miriam danced, and that the daughter

of Jephtha danced, and that, consequently, you may dance. It is quite true that David, Miriam and Jephtha's daughter danced; but let us see why and how they danced. I read in 2 Samuel, chapter six, that David employed himself in bringing the ark into Zion, and that he was so overjoyed at the successful issue of the work that he actually flung aside his dignity for a time – forgot himself, in a manner – and danced and leaped before the Lord. He was overpowered by religious joy on this occasion, which broke out in boisterous movements; and mark you, it was "before the Lord" (verse 21). He danced for the sheer purpose of giving glory to God. And note that the Bible tells us that when David danced he took off his imperial robe and clothed himself in a plain linen ephod. But young men in the dance today put on fine clothes; and what David danced for, they never think of. And now, with this plain interpretation of this passage, will any man or woman, any lady or gentleman, aver that there is a justification here for their dancing? Is your motive religious joy? I think not. So there is an end to any prospect of justification for your practice from the case of David.

Let me now examine the case of Miriam. She danced, and therefore you say you may dance. Just meditate a moment upon the passage in which the fact of Miriam's dancing is alluded to: "And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her, with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15: 20,21). Do you read that Miriam led off the dance with a man? Is there any mention of male partners with the damsels who followed her? No. Here was a company of godly women praising Jehovah for His recent wonderful deliverance of them from the power of Pharaoh. The men were otherwise engaged. The women only danced, and danced alone too.

Now, when you dance, is the name of the Lord upon your lips? Is it for the purpose of glorifying Jesus that you dance? Ah! my friends, is it not a fact that if the word "Jesus" were to escape from your lips in praise or commendation of Him, in the dance, you would be sneered at? Would not the name "which is above every name" be the signal for mockery? If you were to sing out to the Lord and say, "Praise His name in the dance," would you not be laughed to scorn? If you object, "Oh, there is a time for all things; what have we to do with Jesus in the dance?" I reply in the words already quoted, "Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." The one who has nothing to do with Jesus in the dance has nothing to do with Him at all. But may the Lord have pity upon such, so that Jesus may be enthroned, and have His name glorified, in whatsoever company they may be! There is no parallel, then, between you and Miriam; no warrant from her dancing for your sort of dancing. The two are as essentially different as a loose immoral song is from a psalm of praise to Jehovah.

Will you plead the case of Jephtha's daughter? She danced, certainly, but it was a dance of filial love – love which induced her to come and congratulate her father upon his victory over the enemies of God. There is no analogy whatever between this case and the dancing of a modern ballroom. I may express a wish, in passing, that daughters who are devoted to the sinful practice of modern dancing, and who are ever ready to seize upon the instance of Jephtha's beloved child's dancing as a warrant for theirs, were as amiable and dutiful and religious as she! Suffice it to say, that the dancing noticed in Scripture, from which you profess to take your warrant for the modern practice, was invariably the expression of religious joy, and was totally different and distinct from modern dancing, and consequently can afford you no authority whatever for your present tastes and practices.

I admit there is in Scripture dancing of another sort than that I have just been noticing, but I take it for granted that you would not for a moment acknowledge the horrible sin of idolatry and its associated dancing (Exodus 32: 6, 19), nor the dancing in which the world and the profligate amongst the Jews indulged. You will not confess that you take your warrant for dancing from the voluptuous performances of Herodias's daughter. The Scriptures leave you altogether unsupported and unequivocally condemned. Remember that it is written, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

I now notice a few objections to dancing, and reply to them. *Objection:* People might do a deal worse than dance. *Answer:* True; people might be profligates; but does the possibility of deeper degradation warrant any degradation? If dancing is sinful, objectors do a great deal worse than dance, for they lessen the sin or extenuate it. *Obj:* But Solomon has said, "There is a time to dance." *Ans:* Dancing here and elsewhere in Scripture is put as a general expression for joy. "Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing" (Psalm 30: 18), exclaimed the Psalmist, evidently meaning joy of heart, not physical play of the limbs. *Obj:* It is better to dance than to join a clique in speaking scandal about one's neighbours. *Ans:* This is begging the question. We have no right to do either. The gossip and the dancer are on a par. I am certain that much sinful conversation takes place amongst religious professors; but surely a man is not justified in sinning because he knows of the existence of hypocrites or of the abuse of privileges. *Obj:* Young people will dance, and to prevent their going to objectionable places to learn, it is better to allow the thing and provide them with the means of learning in a quiet way. *Ans:* This is advocating that we "do evil that good may come," a maxim abhorrent to the Apostle Paul, and which ought to be repudiated by all moralists, though they never profess Christianity.

By this time I fear I have quite tired my readers, but I must say two or three words more: You who feel yourselves condemned will conclude that my

religion extinguishes all amusements, but you wrong me. My religion teaches me to give up the world with its vanities and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. My religion teaches me to avoid the ballroom, the concert-room, and the theatre. My religion teaches me that if I do anything over which I cannot ask God's blessing, it is sin; it is forbidden! My religion teaches me that the world's practices and God's requirements are totally at variance: that it is impossible to "serve two masters" (Matthew 6: 24). I thank God for having enabled me to come out from the world. My hopes, my desires, my longings, are all centred in Christ; and though I feel and know that I am a miserable sinner, I have the happiness to possess Scriptural evidence of my call by God. Yea, I am convinced that no one can have sound and satisfactory reason to believe in his or her personal interest in Christ's atonement until such repudiation of the world, its joys and its amusements, has been accomplished: not, mind you, by self-power, but by supernatural power. Yet, notwithstanding all, I feel that I am not debarred from innocent games and harmless amusements, nor that I am compelled to be of a sorrowful countenance. As for harmless games and amusements, however few: modern dancing is indubitably not one of them; neither is any pastime which brings the opposite sexes into too close contact reckoned among them.

Dancing by adults has been proved by experience and by Scripture to be injurious to the soul, and against the command of God. I shall never cease to warn against the folly and sin of it. Let serious readers meditate upon the following texts of Scripture: Psalm 1:1; 90:12; 119:37; Proverbs 4:14, 15; Matthew 6:13, 24; 16:24; Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31; 15:33; Ephesians 5:8, 16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; and 1 John 2:15.

An African Elder

A sketch of the life of E. S. Mnkandla

Rev. A. N. Ndebele

MR Elisha Silonsini Mnkandla was born in the late 1870's at Emambanjeni. He was a twin. He told me that his twin brother was not allowed to live, as was the cruel custom in those days. When figuring out the time of his birth he spoke of some well known historical events like the death of Lotshe. Lotshe was closely related to King Lobengula but was killed at the King's command because he had advised the King to allow white people to settle in his country, saying that efforts to fight them could not succeed. Mnkandla remembered the incident, which he saw as a boy when he was herding his father's cattle.

As a youth Mnkandla worked as a "kitchen boy" in Bulawayo when that

place consisted of only a few iron huts. But when he reached manhood he advanced to the then important job of ox-driver and worked for Mr Fynn, whose farm bordered the Ntabazindune Tribal Trust Land. He later worked for Morven Mine, and then as an experienced ox-driver for the Zeederberg Transport Organisation, which operated before the railway was laid between South Africa and Matabeleland.

It was when Mnkandla was involved in transporting wood to Lonely Mine that he first met with the gospel. A London Missionary Society man, Hlabangane, read the Bible to Mnkandla and his friends, the wagon drivers, and a desire was there and then generated in Mnkandla's heart to be able to read so that he could read the Bible for himself.

Among the team of wagon-drivers was a man, Jonase to name, who came from South Africa with the Zeederberg Transport Organisation, and it was he who taught Mnkandla to read. At a later date, when Mnkandla went home to Ntabazindune Tribal Trust Land, or Ntabazindune Reserve as it was later called, his neighbour Ntongana Mthamo persuaded him to buy a Bible. This he did, and he and Mthamo went to the nearby Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland at Ingwenya, to hear the late Rev. John Tallach preach. Mnkandla's reading of the Scriptures and his attendance on the preaching of the truth generated in his soul a love for the Word, and we believe for the Lord of the Word also.

Some time after Mnkandla became a member in full communion with the Church he was asked to conduct services at the church at Morven, and there he preached for many years in the 1930's. In 1939 he was asked to move to one of the Ingwenya Mission outstations called Vidza. The area in which it is situated was known as the Nkai African Tribal Trust Land, and in it were two older preaching outstations, Nukwa and Mlizane. A communion season was held at each of these three stations, turn about, and the missionaries from Ingwenya, Rev. John Tallach and Rev. Dr R. MacDonald, preached on these occasions. Elders Samuel Sithole and E. Sithole supervised the Nukwa congregation, while Philemon Ndebele supervised the Mlizane congregation.

In 1945 the Government ordered that the Africans be removed from the European owned lands on which the three stations were situated. The three congregations were therefore scattered by the complete removing of Africans from those lands: so that the Sitholes settled at Sonsa, Ndebele settled at Zenka, and Mnkandla settled at Katasa, where he built up a congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland under the Zenka Kirk Session.

Mnkandla was one of the last of the old elders who were known for their mighty prayers. At Kirk Sessions he had authority of an unusual kind. When the Call to Rev B.B. Dube to the pastorate of the Zenka congregation was being organised he was very lively for such a very old man. And he travelled by bus a

distance of over 70 miles, with the rest of the Zenka congregation, to Ingwenya for the Ordination and Induction to Zenka of their young minister. On the day of the Ordination, Mnkandla was remarkably bright, so much so that many people commented on his fresh attitude to life and the Lord's work.

At the end of that happy occasion at Ingwenya, Mnkandla took transport to Katasa and to Mr William Mpofu's home at Zenka. During the night, on Friday, 13th October, 1978, and at about the great age of 100 years, Elisha Silonsini Mnkandla peacefully passed away from this world of sorrow, afflictions and sin into the world of spirits, to be, we believe, forever with Christ, which is far better. May the Lord raise up young believers to take the places of these servants whom He takes away from the spiritual battlefield here to glory above.

The Trinitarian Bible Society in 1996

IN the 166th Annual Report of the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS), the General Secretary, Mr Paul Rowlands, said that "although the Society had to curtail some of its proposed activities for 1996 because of financial restrictions, it was enabled to send out more Bibles, in many different languages, than in any of the previous 165 years of its history. . .

"Our Constitution specifies that the edition of the Bible in English to be published by the Society shall be the Authorised Version (AV). Although the number of versions continues to multiply, the AV remains . . . unparalleled for its reliability and faithfulness to the preserved editions of the inspired Hebrew and Greek texts. It is for this reason that the General Committee of the Society has not recommended a change to the Society's Constitution to allow the adoption of any of the new versions to replace the AV as the English Bible circulated by the Society. "Considerable resources have been expended during the year analysing, checking, correcting and giving technical, linguistic and theological assistance to those working with us as they revise and translate the Word of God in a wide range of languages. It may be comparatively easy to ascertain the deficiencies of Bibles but it is a very difficult, painstaking and lengthy task to improve existing versions or to undertake completely new translations.

"Revision work continues on a number of Bibles that are based on impoverished texts, or have translational, doctrinal or orthographic deficiencies, to bring them closer to the standard of excellence towards which we are always striving. Translation work is also being undertaken in a number of languages for peoples who as yet have no access to the Word of God in their own tongues."

One matter which caused the Society great concern during 1996, was its differences with its now former branch in Canada. The general Secretary reports: "For many years there have been tensions between the personnel overseeing the work of The Trinitarian Bible Society (Canada) and the General

Committee of the Society in London. Most regrettably, these difficulties were brought to a head early in 1996. Although many attempts were made by ourselves to resolve the issues, we were finally left with no option than to state publicly to our friends in Canada that the General Committee no longer had confidence in the Executive Committee and General Director of TBS (Canada). It was therefore suspending its relationship with them and recommencing its operation in Canada with a new branch Society based in British Columbia.

"During this period, TBS (Canada) had threatened legal action against us and had taken steps to obtain the right to the exclusive use of the Society's name in Canada. This regrettably necessitated our taking action in order that we might continue our activities in Canada and to prevent confusion by the misuse of our name by our former Canadian branch amongst our contacts in different parts of the world.

"Notwithstanding further attempts by ourselves to resolve the problems, towards the end of December, TBS (Canada) commenced an action naming the Society and two of its employees as defendants. TBS (Canada) has claimed damages in the amount of Can\$6,000,000 and other relief! The Society was required to file a Statement of Defence and has made a Counterclaim for damages and other relief in respect of losses incurred by the Society as a result of the conduct of TBS (Canada). The Society has been active in Canada since 1832 and had supporters and auxiliaries throughout Canada for many years prior to 1968, the year the General Committee in London arranged for the formation of the Canadian branch of the Society.

"Members and friends of the Society will appreciate that we have no wish to be involved in litigation or indeed to be in any way diverted from our spiritual objectives. It is hoped that a settlement will be reached before the case gets to trial. The prayers of all are sought that this most unhappy business may be brought swiftly to a just conclusion."

The Editorial Manager, Mr Anderson, reports that as well as continuing with various Bible production projects, the Editorial Department is also publishing in other languages a number of the Society's pamphlets about Bible translation principles. He says, "Countries which belonged to the former Soviet Union have been the object of much interest in Bible translation. The United Bible Societies are seeking to provide Good News Bible-type translations based on a faulty Greek New Testament to people in many of these and other countries. This creates a difficulty: most believers are unaware of, and unprepared for, the problems associated with these types of translations and the textual base from which they are translated. Therefore, we have sought to translate several of our articles into languages for people who need to know why they must have a faithful and reliable translation of the Bible. Articles are being prepared in Russian and Hungarian to meet this need."

Mr Anderson also announced that the TBS “now has a webpage on the World Wide Web of the Internet. This enables us to have potential access to millions of Internet users who are not familiar with the Society. Our website contains listings of all of the material currently published by the Society. . . We trust that the Lord will be pleased to use this new medium in the lives of many people who need to hear about the work of the Society.” The Internet address of the site is as follows: <http://biz.ukonline.co.uk/trinitarian.bible.society/contents.htm>

The Society’s accountant, Mr David Cooke, reports, “Last year we cogitated on the implications of a continued downward trend in legacy income. We are thankful that the income from this source improved substantially throughout 1996, and we are very grateful to those who have shown such thoughtfulness in remembering us in this way. . . Due to the large deficit the previous year, the Society cut back somewhat on the expenditure on direct charitable activity. It is hoped that in the present year, 1997, we will be able again to increase the amount of Scriptures distributed as free grants. . . It is our earnest desire to see the work expand greatly in the years ahead, and we value your prayerful and practical support to this end.”

The General Secretary concluded: “The need for the Word of God remains truly great. Hundreds of languages are still without translations of the Bible and thousands of Christians have no copies of their own. Millions are under the influence of false religions. The menace of Islam is spreading. The power of Rome is subtly re-emerging. Indeed, the darkness of the dominion of Satan throughout the world is only too evident. May the Lord be pleased to continue to grant His blessing on the work of the Society and the Scriptures it distributes. May His Word, by the effectual power of the Holy Spirit, be used to enlighten the minds and open the hearts of many, that they might be brought to humble themselves in repentance before the Lord and behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Indeed, may the Lord hasten the day when “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Book Review

John Calvin’s Sermons on Galatians, translated by *Kathy Childress*.

Published by the Banner of Truth Trust. Hardback, 683 pages, price £21.95, but obtainable at £18.95 from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.

THESE 43 sermons were preached by the great Reformer of Geneva morning and evening, Sabbath by Sabbath, from November 1557 to May 1558. He brings out clearly the meaning of the text before him, usually a few verses of the Epistle, and he continually makes application of it to the circumstances of his hearers. As the translator points out, certain doctrines occur again and again: human depravity,

justification by faith alone, law and grace, and holiness. And Calvin himself says at one point, "We are first brought low in order that we might perceive the curse that we are under, before we can rejoice that we have been purchased at such inestimable cost. This has been our theme throughout our study."

Because Calvin always had an eye to the situation of his hearers, the list of subjects given by Mrs Childress includes a further item: "the errors of the Church of Rome". For instance, when he has pointed out how the Judaisers "claimed to accept the authority of God by saying that the law must be upheld, and that was their apparent excuse," he adds, "The Papists, however, have no such foundation, for all their rituals have arisen according to the will of men. Yes, they have woven in a little Judaism here and there, but now they have such a mixture that it is not clear which sources they have relied upon the most." And again, "The superstitions which abound in Popery today did not originally contain the same degree of devil-inspired blasphemy when first conceived as they do now. For their ceremonies, which are considered necessary for God's service, are idolatrous, and are deceptions inspired by Satan himself. In short, they are all abominable in God's sight. Why is this? Because they suppose these things are necessary for salvation, and that men can redeem themselves through such means and acquire remission of sins. Worse than this, these ceremonies obscure the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace which He has brought us." Such remarks are still relevant today.

Even in the first paragraph of his first sermon, Calvin emphasises human weakness: "Since we have no strength of our own, we need to draw it from another source" – and that source must be God Himself. Calvin draws attention to the situation in Galatia when the Epistle was written: Paul had "only just turned around to leave Galatia when Satan rushed in, seeking to ruin everything and to bring desolation to the entire area." And Calvin adds: "Should not such a situation cause us to bow our heads and acknowledge that God is exhorting us to take refuge in Him?" Shortly afterwards he warns: "We must remember the true condition of man in this world; we must not believe everything we are told, nor allow ourselves to be 'driven with the wind and tossed'. For if we do not determine to persevere in the doctrine that has been revealed to us (once we are sure that it is the pure truth of God), then we too will go the way of the Galatians." He sums up perhaps the whole argument of the Epistle when he says, "To keep the ceremonies as if we are living under the law is to detract from the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . We ought to realise that we enjoy a better and a more privileged condition today than our fathers of old, since our Lord Jesus Christ has been given to us and in Him we have all that was prefigured in former days." Again he describes the main purpose of the shadows of the Old Testament: "to point to the grace which has now been showered upon us in the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom our souls must entirely rest." Calvin puts the matter

as strongly as this, but not more strongly than Paul himself: "If we attribute to ourselves even a little merit, we are robbing and spoiling God of what rightfully belongs to Him. . . . To believe that we can obtain salvation by our works is to enter the very mouth of hell, for we annul the death and passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all our righteousness is found."

To whet the appetite of the reader, some more quotations are given below.

Mrs Childress has succeeded in rendering these sermons, originally preached in French, into good, readable English. She has the necessary academic background; her University degree was in Renaissance French. In her translation she consistently uses the Authorised Version, except for a few occasions when one assumes that Calvin himself quoted the Scriptures loosely then the translation is much less satisfactory. That apart, we are grateful to have in our hands another specimen of the preaching of one of the greatest of God's gifts to His Church. The volume is attractively produced with a larger than normal size of print.

Another edition of this book was published a little earlier in America by Old Paths Publications, who used the translation by Arthur Golding originally published in the 1550s, but with modern spelling. Such duplication of effort is a pity, but perhaps unavoidable in the absence of some form of cooperation between reformed publishers.

—Rev. K. D. MacLeod

Quotations from Calvin

Extracted from *John Calvin's Sermons on Galatians*. See review above.

"THE devil sometimes uses apparently small, subtle issues to distance us from the gospel, without our even perceiving it."

"The only true source of happiness is in the knowledge that God loves us and that we are his children."

"When we speak of God, everything else must pale into insignificance."

"Whenever God bestows his grace on a person, even if it enriches him beyond measure, he must not exalt himself but ensure that the praise is given to whom it belongs, and to whom it is due. Thus, let us hold on to this principle of humility. Let us not seek to be noticed, or to be esteemed above our neighbours, despite any gifts that God may have given us."

"Our most vital study in God's school, second only to glorifying God, is how a person is saved."

"The way to glorify God is by esteeming his Word and his promises so highly that nothing we see in this world might hinder us from seeking him, reaching out to him, and desiring him with all our hearts."

"The law presupposes that if we fulfil what God requires of us we will be found good servants and he will give us the reward he has promised; faith, on the

other hand, presupposes that we are poor, lost, condemned souls and that we are to find in Jesus Christ what we so desperately need."

"Faith is a belief in things which our minds cannot comprehend; faith is forsaking this world and seeking the kingdom of God; faith is esteem for the pure and simple Word which proceeds from the mouth of God, and disregard for what we see around us."

"All gospel doctrine is designed to make us forsake the world and cleave to God."

"Our moderation should be such that we prove that we are not given over to the things of this world, although we live here. It should be like a strange land to us, because we are pressing towards our heavenly rest."

"We are born in sin and, therefore, can do nothing else; we continually offend God until he sets us free by his Holy Spirit and grants us his liberty."

"Should it please [God] to exalt us, let us, nevertheless, remain bridled by modesty and sobriety, knowing that we have nothing of our own, and that all that God has given us he must preserve in us moment by moment."

"Before God we must either stand condemned or free, not according to whether we are better or worse than others, but according to the rule of our Judge, that is, his Word."

"A man will never be led to true repentance, and will never acknowledge his sins without hypocrisy, unless he is able to close his eyes to all that others are doing, and ask, 'Now, what does my God require of me? How will I fare before his judgement throne? How will he judge me?' According to his Word. This will fill us with true reverence for God, and also make us uncomfortable in our sin and subsequently humble us." ●

Protestant View

The Pope is petitioned to declare Mary to be Co-Redemptrix

MORE than four million Roman Catholics in the USA have petitioned the Pope to pronounce Mary, the mother of Christ, "Co-Redemptrix, Medatrix of all graces and Advocate for the people of God", again making her equal with Jesus Christ. The petition has the support of Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, who has made his views known to a Vatican commission. It appears that the Pope, an ardent devotee of Mary, favours the petition.

The blasphemous teaching of Rome about Mary already is that "she . . . by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation . . . Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*). This is altogether contrary to the truth that the only advocate with God the Father is "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1), and that there is "one

mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

To proclaim Mary to be co-redeemer with Christ would be further great blasphemy. Rome already teaches that the redemption which Christ wrought out is insufficient and our works must be added to it, and that Christ Himself is too remote and must be approached through a mediatrix. We need not be surprised if Rome takes another step and rejects the Biblical truth that Christ is the only Redeemer, and pronounces Mary to be "Co-Redemptrix".

Millions throughout the world are being blinded by such soul-destroying teaching and therefore do not look to the omnipotent Saviour of whom Scripture says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10). □

The difference between the saints of Rome and the saints of Scripture

Someone whom Diana, Princess of Wales, greatly admired, died on the eve of the Princess's funeral. We refer to Gonxha Bojaxhiu, the Roman Catholic nun known as Mother Teresa. Although much praised for work among the poor in Calcutta, she was in fact a deluded devotee of Romanism who believed that her charity work would earn her a place in heaven. We are not suggesting that she did not feel for the destitute, but for her it was not the Biblical teaching of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone, but the Romish idea of salvation by works.

Were it not for Malcolm Muggeridge, who later became a Roman Catholic, she would never have become famous. In 1968 the BBC asked him "to find an Indian female, a nun of sorts, someone doing good works in Calcutta to feature in a documentary". He found Mother Teresa, and as a result she found international fame and received vastly increased financial support for her charity.

Pressure is now building up within the Roman Catholic hierarchy for her to be canonised through "popular acclamation". The Pope wants to speed up the procedure for her canonisation; Cardinal O'Connor, New York, "is certain that she is already in heaven", (no purgatory for her evidently); Cardinal Hume said that he will be asking her to intercede for him; and some senior bishops have suggested that because she is "obviously already a saint" she should be beatified (the first stage in canonisation) and canonised immediately. Romanism has certainly gained enormously from the favourable media attention given to her, and we suspect that Rome will devise a way of speedily canonising her.

How deceived Roman Catholics are when they think that only a few people can be saints, and then only by having extraordinary qualifications including working of miracles, and even then only after going through purgatory (that invention of Rome by which it has generated vast income through the centuries). Happy indeed are those people who are convinced of their sins, and led by the Holy Spirit to believe only on Jesus Christ for salvation. Immediately they believe they become saints in the Biblical sense. All of them without exception are "saints of God" now and for ever. □

Praise from the press for the Pope in Paris

IN an adulatory editorial, *The Daily Telegraph* praised the Pope for adhering "to traditional teaching" and for triumphing in Poland "over tyranny by positing God's truth against the amorality of communism." This is yet another example of people being blind to the errors and duplicity of Rome because it holds some orthodox truths. The occasion of such ill-informed praise was the Pope's visit to Paris to celebrate a mass, which was attended by more than a million people, on 24th August, the 425th anniversary of the massacre of St Bartholomew.

On that fearful night in 1572, and in the days that followed, at least 74,000 Protestants were murdered in France by the Church of Rome operating through the secular powers, with Charles IX at their head, and with the willing aid of the Roman Catholic population.

The Pope, when in Paris, is reported to have apologised for the massacre. But, as the *English Churchman* points out, the apology is nothing new. Rome has already conceded, through the Catholic Truth Society in 1893, that "the St Bartholomew massacre was a great crime committed by persons professing the Catholic faith." But her concession is only apparent. Rome's explanation is that first, the massacre was inspired by political, not religious motives; second, that it was of 'very short premeditation', if not a sudden impulse; and third, that the 'holy see' was in no way responsible for, or accomplices in, the slaughter.

Like so much of the truth of the Catholic Truth Society, this explanation also is a figment of the imagination and a wicked attempt at whitewashing. Even secular historians with no axe to grind have shown that the massacre was inspired, carefully planned, and executed by Rome, albeit by using the secular powers. Let no one be taken in by the Pope's so-called apology. □

Winning refused a prominent place at the funeral of the Princess of Wales

THE growing arrogance of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Scotland was shown at the time of the death and funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales. The office of Cardinal Thomas Winning had the boldness to make approaches to the Westminster Abbey authorities and the Lord Chamberlain's office with the request that he be given a place beside British church leaders at the Princess's funeral. However, the Dean of the Abbey "ruled that there was 'no precedent' for the cardinal's inclusion in the small party".

However, this setback will not deter the Cardinal from continuing to ratchet up his influence in the life of Scotland, helped no doubt by the vote for devolution, and the hope of independence for Scotland. Considering that a disproportionate number of Roman Catholics already wield political power in Scotland, one does not have to be a political analyst to see that an independent Scotland would have a disproportionate number of Roman Catholics at the helm. □

Notes and Comments

The Free Church Defence Association

THE Free Church Defence Association has published the first issue of its magazine, *Free Church Foundations*. The Association is “distressed and concerned that cherished Biblical principles and practices are being broken down and swept aside” in the Free Church of Scotland. “We would emphasise,” it says, “that the issues at stake are far greater than Free Church distinctives, important though they be. At stake are the very foundations of Christianity: the Bible, truth, honesty, fairness, justice, morality and the gospel.”

In tracing past contending in the Free Church, one article in the magazine speaks about the infamous Declaratory Act of 1892 which made it no longer necessary for ministers to accept all the teachings of the Confession. Having mentioned the Act, the article then leaps forward to the rescinding of the Act in 1906. Not a word is breathed about the opposition to the Act by the Rev. Donald Macfarlane and others during 1892, his efforts to preserve the testimony of the Free Church, his endeavours to have the Act rescinded, his Protest against it in 1893, and his departure from the Free Church, with the result that thousands of people left the Free Church and formed the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. One would think that “truth, honesty, fairness [and] justice” which the Association says is at stake in the Free Church would have induced the writer to at least acknowledge what was a most significant defence of the truth.

The same less than honest ignoring of historical facts is seen on the Free Church website on the Internet. Referring to the late nineteenth-century movement for the union of Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, it says that “union was found to be possible only on the basis of compromise – an agreement to adopt a confession of faith sufficiently vague and elastic as to allow those holding different views to subscribe to it with good conscience” (a reference, we presume, to the Declaratory Act of 1892). “When the Free Church was confronted with this dilemma, a minority took the view that the doctrines which were being treated as open questions were so vital to the faith that the duty of Christian unity had to yield to the higher duty of fidelity to the truth.” The minority he refers to is not Mr Macfarlane and others in 1893, but the minority of ministers and elders who claimed to continue as the true Free Church, when the Free Church entered the union of 1900 to form the United Free Church.

The fact is, that those who were opposing the Declaratory Act, but who continued in the Free Church after 1893, when Mr Macfarlane separated, were under the Act although they argued otherwise. In *One hundred Years of Witness*, we read on page 53, “While it is true that the post 1900 Free Church did ultimately rescind the Declaratory Act she did not, as far as can be ascertained, resile from her claim that she was never under the Act. By implication this claim

cast aspersions on the rightfulness of the Free Presbyterian separation from the Declaratory Act Free Church and constituted an insurmountable barrier to union so long as it was maintained. Perhaps there is an element of truth in the verdict of Drummond and Bulloch [in *The Church in Late Victorian Scotland*] regarding those who remained in the Declaratory Act Free Church: 'Deeply unhappy, they felt in their hearts that the Free Presbyterians had been right and that they had allowed themselves to remain in a Free Church which had slipped its moorings and was adrift in uncharted seas'." □

Another study of the punishment of children

The issue of the punishment of children has again come to the fore with the publication of a study by, among others, American sociologist Murray Strauss. They conclude that "when parents use corporal punishment to reduce [antisocial behaviour], the long-term effect tends to be the opposite". Therefore, they suggest, if you spare the rod you will help reduce the overall level of violence in American society.

Appearing in the journal *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, and including careful analysis of the data gathered in their research, this study sounds persuasive, especially at a time when there is so much concern about the physical abuse of children. However, it has been pointed out that the study is seriously flawed. The source of their information was a series of telephone interviews conducted with 807 mothers of children between the ages of 6 and 9, but these mothers were confined to the age-range 14 to 21 – scarcely a representative selection. Yet too often it is flawed studies such as this which attract attention and sometimes influence whole generations for the worse. Now that a second look has been taken at the research methods of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, it is easily seen that the foundations of his God-dishonouring theories were far more shaky than anyone realised.

Certainly the unwillingness of many parents to apply moderate physical punishment to their children has given us a thoroughly violent generation. And it is a generation which stands convicted of no small degree of abuse – physical and worse – of children, some of them shockingly young.

This most recent study has come out against the spanking of children, but other "experts" support the moderate use of chastisement, at least for young children. According to one American paediatrician, more sophisticated studies have consistently shown that corporal punishment is effective, and not harmful to long-term development, if it is confined to youngsters between 18 months and 6 years. But let us go beyond the experts of this world to the wisdom of inspiration: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15).

K.D.M.

African Mission News

Kenya

WE are thankful to report that the Church deputies who visited the Sengera Mission for about three weeks, Rev John MacLeod and Rev James Tallach, Convener and Clerk respectively of the Foreign Missions Committee, returned safely to Scotland on 25th September. We pray that the blessing of the Lord will follow their work there.

Miss Catherine MacKenzie, Laide, formerly a teacher in Gairloch High School has gone to Sengera Mission as a teacher. She arrived safely at the end of last month and is settling down to her new duties. We trust that she will be divinely upheld and helped in her work. □

August Visit to Eastern Europe

IN the kind providence of God, Mr Alasdair MacRae and Mr Calum MacAskill have returned safely from Moldova. They delivered 2400 Russian Gospels of John, 80 Bibles, 80 New Testaments, and 7500 Scripture calendars in the Romanian language. Also included were Russian Shorter Catechisms, Mother's Catechisms and leaflets exposing the heresy of Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as many other lots of literature. Medicines, clothing, food, and some small pieces of furniture were donated as well. The bulk of the load was safely delivered to an orphanage and to residential homes for the destitute in the city of Kishinev and was gratefully received. There were also some small deliveries of Bibles and calendars to churches in Hungary and Romania.

It was hoped that Mr MacRae and Mr MacAskill might have travelled on to the Ukraine as tourists and visited the small group of believers in Odessa. We were disappointed that this did not materialise, but it is hoped, God willing, that a visit will be made to Odessa in November.

The journey to Moldova proved to be one of the best so far with speedy entrance and exit at borders. Moldovian customs regulations are becoming more burdensome, although much easier than in neighbouring Ukraine.

It is with concern that we view the proposals for a new repressive law in Russia, where the Orthodox Church has called for restrictions on all religious groups apart from Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and some minority groups. Commenting on the probable implementation of such a law, the *Evangelical Times* of September said: "Overnight the law would render illegal thousands of congregations serving millions of believers, leaving them without rights to own property, hold a bank account, undertake business, publish books, establish schools or conduct services in public buildings. The category would

include the thousands of religious groups established since the ending of communist rule in the country. It would also include foreign religious bodies and faiths not regarded as indigenous to Russia. . . . On 22 July the President refused to sign the bill, a victory for those who feared that Russia was about to tumble backwards into totalitarianism. However, he did not veto it completely, but sent it back to the State Duma, Russia's lower house of Parliament, with requested amendments. He stated that Russia needs a law but that the current proposals violated international treaties and would restrict religious minorities."

Enacting such laws in Russia could influence neighbouring countries to do likewise. We pray that there will not be another "iron curtain" barring the way in! Lest that should happen we should work all the more diligently in taking Bibles and Bible-based books into Eastern Europe. The urgent need to spread the Word is highlighted by the following letter, to our Church Bookroom in Glasgow, from Tatar Republic, Russia. It has been translated from Russian.

"Greetings! My name is Irina. I live in Kazan, and love my beautiful city very much. I do not have many friends, but there are some, and these are very good and kind.

"Sometimes things are very difficult and lonely for me in this world. And I don't know why I am here and for what purpose I am alive. I believe in God, but sometimes my faith becomes weaker, and then I turn to God, so that He would strengthen my faith. I would very much like to receive a present of a Bible, so that it would help me to bear stoically the sufferings and trials that befall me. And so that it would also be with me in happy times. I would be very grateful for such a priceless gift. I believe that everything will work out for me, and that heavenly strength will support and strengthen me, and give strength to live in peace and harmony.

"We had a younger brother Sasha, but in October of last year he was taken from this world. He was only 19 years old; a kind, bright and innocent soul, whose life was taken from him, a cruel hand interrupting his path. And now he is no longer with us, and it is still difficult to believe and take in what has happened. And it's so painful; still so painful.

"I would very much like to receive religious literature that would help to surmount and understand everything. What is life? Why do we live? How can we approach a knowledge of God? Why does He send trials, and especially to those whom He loves? Where do our souls go, and what will happen to us afterwards? What does eternal life mean? Will we live on this earth again? And will I recognise myself, that I am me? And why do I not remember the past if I have already lived? I would be very grateful to the Church, if it could help me understand this.

"With much love and blessing, Irina."

In reading letters of this kind, we feel that our privileges as a Church are incalculably precious, and that it would ill become us to keep them to ourselves. We are required by Christ to make these privileges known to others. Sinners are entering the eternal world never having had an answer to such questions as those above because ruling powers arise which prevent answers reaching them, as for example the communism which held sway in Eastern Europe. While the doors are still open to Eastern Europe, it is essential to press on with the work of spreading the Word of God, which has all the answers. "The night cometh, when no man can work". John 9:4.

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 Tuesday, 7th October, at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 4th November, 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.

THEMBISO AND E.S.M. SUPERINTENDENT'S POST

THE post of Superintendent for Thembiso Children's Home and Ebenezer Scripture Mission has been left vacant.

Applications for the post are therefore invited from interested, mature persons, possibly with some teaching and administration experience. An overseas applicant will probably be able to enter the country under the category of 'Church Worker'.

Please include copies of certificates and a *curriculum vitae* with your application. A clean, current driver's licence will be an advantage.

Applications, to be submitted by 30th November, 1997, should be addressed to: **The Mission Administrator, The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Zimbabwe, 9 Robertson Street, Parkview, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.**

BOOKROOM FUND

BY appointment of Synod, the Special Collection, on behalf of the Bookroom Fund, is due to be made in congregations during the month of October, D.V.

R. A. Campbell, General Treasurer

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE GENERAL TREASURER acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library: J.C.A., £50.

Eastern Europe Fund: J.C.A., £200.,

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Canada (Aug), Can\$100.00; Estate of Miss. Margaret Macleod, Inverness, £42,513.22

Legacy Reserve Fund: Estate of Miss Kate Ann Macleod, Callanish, £10,221.49 per Rev. J.M.

Sustentation Fund: E. McL., Fort William, £20.

CONGREGATIONAL TREASURERS acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Barnoldswick: *Manse Fund:* Anon, Dornoch, £10; Anon £10; Anon, £50; Friend, Glasgow, £50; Anon., Belfast, £30; W. & J.P., £100; An O.A.P., Glasgow, £30; Dutch Friends, £50; Dutch Friends, £10; In memory of one who remembered Barnoldswick at the throne of grace, £500; Interested, Inverarish Terrace, Raasay, £50; Anon., Skye, £1000; Anon., Stornoway, £20; A.M., £100.

Bracadale - Strath: *Congregational Funds:* Anon., £100, per envelope in plate.

Dumbarton: *Congregational Funds:* Dutch friend, £10, per E.M.

Glasgow: *Congregational Fund:* Mrs. MacL., Harris, £50; Miss A.N., Gairloch, £100; both per Rev. D.M.; Anon., £20. *Bus Fund:* Anon., £12; Anon., £40. *Eastern Europe and TBS:* Anon., £40; Anon., £40. *Sustentation Fund:* Anon., £25; Anon., £40. *Any Fund:* Anon., £10; Anon., £10. *Barnoldswick Manse Fund:* Anon., Ps 61.5, £20.

Glendale: *Congregational Funds:* Anon., £50; Glendale Friend, £50; both per treasurer.

Inverness: *Tape Fund:* Anon., £10; Mrs. S., £10; Mrs. T., £10; Anon., £5.; *Where Most Needed:* Anon., £100. *Jewish and Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon., £50, per Mr. Schouten; Anon., £50. *Barnoldswick Manse:* Anon., £20. *Trinitarian Bible Society:* Anon., £20; last three per envelope in plate.

Laide: *Congregational Fund:* M. Mack., £20, per Rev. D.A.R., Anon., £50, per collection plate; W.M. (where most needed), £20, per Rev. D.A.R.; Anon., £50, per collection plate; Friend, Inverness (where most needed), £40; F. Mack., £100; last two per Rev. D.A.R. *Eastern Europe for Bibles:* Residents, Isle View Home, £7.10; £9.80; Anon., North Tolsta, £20; all per Rev. D.A.R. *Eastern Europe:* Friend, Laide, £100, per M. M.; D.C., £10; M.C., £10; both per Rev. D.A.R.; Mrs. Sutherland, £20, per A.N.M.; A.N.M., £20; Anon., £50; both per Rev. D.A.R.; Anon., £50, per collection plate; Friend, Ness, £40; F.B.C., £40; Estate of the late Annie Nicholson, Gairloch, £100; all per Rev. D.A.R.; Anon., Edinburgh, £25; F.B.C., £20; Friend, Holland, £1.80; last three per C.R; Friend, Laide, £10; D.K.M., Tasmania, £457.40; both per Rev. D.A.R.

North Harris: *Bus Fund:* Anon., Cluer, £4; £6; R.M.L., Cluer, £4; all per J.M.L.; *Where it is most needed:* Anon., £3,230, per J.N., *Where Most Needed:* Friend, Kyles, £20; per Rev. R.M.

Portree: *Door Collection:* M.M, Shuleshader, £40. *Bus Fund:* Anon., £20; both per collection plate. *Congregational Funds:* Friend, Stornoway, £35. *Manse Telephone:* Ebenezer, £25. *Minister's petrol:* Ebenezer, £25. *Sustentation Fund:* Friend, £20; all per S.Y.M.

Staffin: *Where Most Needed:* Anon., £20, per envelope in plate.