

The Free Presbyterian Magazine and Monthly Record

Vol 102

December 1997

No 12

It Is Time to Seek the Lord

LOOKING into the past is sometimes a disturbing experience. As we survey the past year and see the direction in which Britain has been going, we are dismayed and saddened by the evidences of our tremendous spiritual and moral declension. Truly, it is time, and high time, to seek the Lord. No doubt the godly elsewhere feel similarly about their own countries. As we look at various countries with a Christian heritage, we see in them an ebb tide of Biblical religion, and a rising tide of iniquity and false religions.

It is time to seek the Lord when we are guilty of forsaking our Protestant heritage, and giving still more place to Roman Catholicism and its idolatry. For how much longer, we may ask, will the Protestant nature of the British throne and constitution be maintained intact? For the first time, a Roman Catholic, Lord Camoys, has been appointed recently as the Lord Chamberlain. He not only runs the Queen's household but also gives advice to the Royal family on all matters, including protocol. Rome has yet another friend at court.

The idolatrous bent of the nation was seen in the events following the death of Princess Diana. After visiting Kensington Palace to view the scene for himself, the editor of *Protestant Truth* wrote, "I found myself in the midst of a sea of flowery shrines containing mass cards, crucifixes, sacred hearts and prayers for the soul of the deceased, while the aroma of burning candles and incense filled the air. I left the scene vexed and saddened that England could have departed so far from the great truths which the Protestant Reformers upheld and defended even unto death. . . . How much further, one asks, must our country depart from the truth before God's people take it to heart."

If we are really concerned about the great decline of our officially Christian and Protestant country we will be saddened by the ecumenical spirit of the age. We will be grieved about the development of an inclusivist and multi-faith approach to religion on the national level, and alarmed about the concessions made to false religions. Shame on us that we have become ashamed of the uniqueness of the Christian faith and have opted for multi-faith religious

education in our schools. It is time to seek the Lord and to plead that He would bring our land to prize the truth that Christ alone is "the way to the Father".

Another cause of deep concern is the normalising of sodomy. The media projects it as natural, and the public increasingly accepts this. A homosexual is given a place in government, and William Hague and his Conservative Party now look favourably on "gays". Despite the concern expressed about the strong association between homosexuality and paedophilia, and the high incidence of AIDS among homosexuals, it is probable that the age of homosexual consent will be lowered from 18 to 16 when Parliament votes on the issue next spring. Campaigners for this unnatural and exceedingly sinful way of life are vigorously striving to obtain for homosexual couples the rights enjoyed by traditionally married couples. Dare we think that the God of heaven has closed His eyes to our legalising of the sin which brought His righteous indignation upon Sodom? Surely it is time to seek the Lord, and to seek that He would bring us to national repentance for this glaring wickedness.

The legalising of abortion is another great sin that continues to lie at our door. Thirty years ago the Abortion Act was passed, and in that time almost five million abortions have taken carried out – a number that is almost equal to the entire population of Scotland! Only a tiny proportion of these abortions were justifiably carried out – to preserve the life of the mother. How barbaric and heartless society has become when it can complacently accept such a situation, especially when The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists now admits that aborted babies may feel pain from the 24th week, and advises doctors to use an anaesthetic before killing unborn babies at that gestational age. Many doctors believe that pain is felt earlier, and at some hospitals an anaesthetic is used on the unborn baby to be killed from 13 weeks gestation. Such horrific slaughter ought to send us to our knees with tears of godly sorrow.

There are many more indications of our rapid downhill course, such as further moves towards legalising euthanasia, devotion to the National Lottery, increase in the crimes of murder, violence and child abuse, and the breakdown of family life. Some people, even in the professing church, may reply that there are signs to the opposite effect – some churches are growing, and more Christian literature is available than ever before. Maybe; but it must be said that some church growth is of a very questionable nature, and many Christian books are worse than useless. The fact remains that the spiritual and moral state of both the nation and the national churches is so low that we ought to humble ourselves before God, beseeching Him, "In wrath, remember mercy."

God is calling to us: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you," Hosea 10:12. Let us heed His call. □

Sermon

Behold an Israelite Indeed

*Rev D. A. Macfarlane**

Preached in 1961, transcribed from notes by listeners, and edited.

Text: *"Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man,"* John 1:47-51.

I SHOULD like, as enabled, to remark on the case of Nathanael, and on some things which are brought before us in connection with him. From the Saviour's words about him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," we can safely infer that Nathanael was a God-fearing man, though not that he was perfect. None are so in this world, but when the Lord begins the good work in a soul He will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ.

When Nathanael was coming to the Redeemer, he already had spiritual insight and discernment. He was a spiritually healthy man – a man in whom was no guile, desiring to shun all appearance of evil. His desire was to be in harmony in mind and heart with the Holy Ghost, and to be consecrated to the service of the Most High. He may have been a gracious man for years before this meeting with Christ; or it may have been on that day that he got spiritual enlightenment. In any case, the Redeemer knew full well what was in his heart. And He knows what is in ours! Let us be acknowledging, as David did:

"My footsteps and my lying down,
thou compasses always;
Thou also most entirely art,
acquaint with all my ways."

* The Rev. Donald A. Macfarlane, 1889-1979. After graduating from Glasgow University and his divinity course, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Northern Presbytery. He became the pastor of the joint charge of Dornoch, Lairg, Rogart and Bonar in 1914 at the age of 25. He was translated to Oban in 1922, and then to the Dingwall and Beaully Congregation in 1930. He continued as the pastor of that congregation until he retired in 1973, after a ministry of 59 years. He was also a theological tutor in the Church from 1933 until his retirement. He died at the age of 90.

We have every reason to conclude that Nathanael was an Israelite indeed in the sense that grace reigned in his heart; he was a living member of the mystical body of the Redeemer. Christ said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed," saying as it were, "He is coming to Me, desiring to be totally in harmony with the truth in love." Nathanael was steeped in the spirit of the godly under the Old Testament dispensation, and steeped in the spirit of holy love to the whole counsel of God, as far as he understood it. He had spiritual light, which is another way of saying that he had spiritual discernment. He had a measure of God-given entrance into the Word of God as given under the Old Testament dispensation. We cannot say that Old Testament believers had light on the fulfilment of the promises and types (which are the same thing, inasmuch as they are both setting forth the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow) in the same measure as New Testament believers had – and which they had "by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Still, they knew sufficient, and indeed they knew a great deal. They knew very well that everyone, by nature, is dead in trespasses and in sins: and we ourselves should lay this fact to heart. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" – under the sentence and power of death.

Nathanael was of the same spirit as Abel who saw Christ in the first promise: that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, or death, hell and Satan, and that He was to procure life for the soul and immortality for the body through the gospel. May this truth be in us as the leaven hid in three measures of meal. Nathanael also walked in the footsteps of Abraham and of Moses. In the house of God there are little trees and there are palm trees, but all are trees, though differing in manifold ways in the graces of the Holy Spirit.

Nathanael pastured in the pastures of the Old Testament Scriptures, and in this mountain doctrine: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." This doctrine was in the garden of Eden, in the first promise. And it was in the first sacrifice, which, as a type, was just a promise that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, was to cleanse His people from all sin. May God the Holy Ghost enlighten us in this truth. May He give you that entrance into it whereby you would be a believer. If we do not believe in the blood of Christ and in the Christ of the Blood, then we are frittering away our time this Sabbath evening. This is a holy, sanctifying truth, as well as a justifying truth. It is impossible to believe in the blood of sprinkling without beginning to love the Father, and the Redeemer, and the salvation of the gospel, and without eschewing all appearance of evil. We have the blood of sprinkling in the Passover lamb in Egypt. Ask yourself this evening, "Is the blood of sprinkling on the door posts of the faculties of my soul?" and, "Am I a lowly, intelligent debtor to the Saviour?"

We have this great truth, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," declared also in the Covenant ratified at Sinai. "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people." Although the Book was holy, the promises in it were sprinkled with blood. What does this mean? This blood was typical blood, setting forth the divine excellency. The excellence of the efficacy Christ's atoning death was sprinkled on the promises in the Book on Sinai. If you receive that truth, the Book is to you the house of God and the gate of heaven, causing you to desire more and more obedience to your Lord and Master. Old Testament believers did indeed know much of what was necessary unto salvation. They meditated on the truth.

"Moses and Aaron 'mong his priests,
Samuel, with them that call,
Upon His Name, these called on God,
and He them answered all."

Can you say with Jeremiah, "Thy words were found and I did eat them and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," Jeremiah 15:16. Did you eat Psalm 1? Can you digest a little of Psalm 2? Seek to be at home in these pastures. Most people can repeat Psalm 23, but we should seek to get spiritual understanding of it. Seek to understand Psalm 10 – not so well known, but containing a great and precious promise:

"The poor commits himself to thee,
thou art the orphan's stay."

This kind of poverty makes a soul rich for eternity. If you love the blood of sprinkling – the blood of the everlasting covenant, you love the covenant of God, and the God of the covenant. And the promises are for you, here a little, and there a little. Then we come to the promise in Isaiah, chapter 11, verse one: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Jeremiah and the minor prophets (as they are called) also foretold the coming of the Redeemer. Now, go on to Malachi, who in writing of Levi, wrote of Christ the great High Priest and antitype of Levi: "The law of truth was in His mouth, and iniquity was not found in His lips. He walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." Can you say that you are at home in these truths, walking in harmony with the God of truth?

Malachi, and Nathanael too, walked with God in peace. This was true of them through grace alone. There is no other way of walking with the Lord in peace and equity, but by grace. What is grace? We shall go to eternity without it unless the Holy Spirit teaches us. Let your prayer be, "Create in me an appetite and holy relish for grace." Seek to be like David in Psalm 119 – praying

without ceasing, longing and panting after sweet conformity to the will of God. When Philip came to Nathanael and said, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth," it reminds one of a portion in the Song of Solomon: "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents" – feed the desires and longings of thy soul, seeking pasture in the word of God, and thinking on His name. We today have not only the law and the prophets, but the noonday light of the New Testament dispensation. It is good to be feeding the kids, or desires in our souls, seeking that they would be strengthened, but we should try to benefit others also, perhaps by giving a suitable tract, or by speaking a word carefully and in love. This is not easy. It requires the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, and one must take a low place, feeling oneself to be a walking dunghill. We would shrink from a domineering spirit, but speak in holy love, with care and fellow-feeling, heeding the word: "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." In every step we take, we need the application of "the blood of sprinkling", and to have the publican's prayer.

When Philip brought Nathanael to Christ, it was as if the Redeemer said, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely". Come along now, dove Nathanael, let me see thy countenance." Nathanael did manifest his countenance: were they not all seeing the countenance of his soul? And if the stamp of the character of your soul were shown up, would you be found saying, like Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee"? We believe that this would have been the confession of Nathanael.

And the Redeemer heard him make this confession: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Only by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit did Nathanael know this. Philip and Peter and John could speak lovingly of the Redeemer, but they could not teach savingly. Pray now for the Holy Spirit to enlighten yourself. When Nathanael said, "Rabbi, thou art the son of God, thou art the King of Israel," we could almost say that he passed into the New Testament dispensation; he was in the porch of it, on the very threshold of it. But, of course, many things had to happen before that dispensation would be ushered in. Nathanael had already seen Christ's day afar off, but now, having a near view of it, he has holy worship and prostration of soul. He got a further exercise of faith, and was built up in his most holy faith. "Come ye into His courts and bring an offering with you" – a heart offering of holy worship.

We can grasp only a little of what is implied in what Nathanael said: "Thou art the Son of God." He received this sanctifying truth from the Most High, and he would have grown into the meaning of it. "'Thou art the Son of God', and all the angels of glory are bowing to Thee." The angels foretold His coming;

they proclaimed his birth with praises, "Glory to God in the highest." Philip said, "Come and see," and the only thing Nathanael saw with his bodily eyes was Christ's human nature. But Nathanael discerned, by the unction of the Holy One, that Christ was indeed the Lord of glory. It is He who "counts the number of the stars and names them every one". He also counts the number of His spiritual stars and He calls them all by name. Is the light of holy love in you, dear soul? "Thou art the King of Israel," said Nathanael. "He who was to come in the fulness of time." Here we have grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. Nathanael was sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The King of Israel was dwelling in him, and he was enabled to glorify God in his body and spirit which were His, and he is with Him now in Heaven.

In verse 51 we have the promise: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This is a vast field, but I would point three things. First, probably this referred to the ascension of the Redeemer – note it says first, "ascending", which suggests that the angels were down already at His command. If it does refer to the ascension, then Nathanael was present at it and saw some of the angels there. He believed the angels of glory went with the Redeemer as He ascended.

God is with shouts gone up, the Lord,
with trumpets sounding high.
Sing praise to God, sing praise, sing praise.
praise to our King sing ye.

Secondly, Nathanael is in glory now, "with the spirits of just men made perfect", and has the fulfilment of the promise. He sees and discerns that angels are, and desire to be, consecrated to the Lord. And this also is part of what he enjoys: to know that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. Angels carried the soul of Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, and it is probable that they so minister to all the godly.

Thirdly, Nathanael was to see it on the Great Day. Above all else, this refers to the great day of judgement. The King of Israel is to come, and you and I are to be present. The dead in Christ shall rise first. Ask that you may surely believe this. Does it have an influence on you so that you have the stamp of the better world upon you? Are we of the blood-sprinkled saints? "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

The preparation for the Great Day is to be washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. May the Holy Ghost wash our souls for eternity by omnipotent grace, and an omnipotent resurrection in our souls. Break these nuts from the garden of nuts. He shall gather in His people from the four winds. May He grant that we be of them, and be enabled to say, "Thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel."

●

The Church of Rome at the Bar of History

Rev. John MacLeod, M.A.

A lecture given at the 1996 Theological Conference

Part 2 - The Teachings Based on Tradition

WE shall now direct attention to some of these special teachings – based on these sources – which the Church of Rome holds to be authoritative, beginning with papal rule and authority, described as being the very cornerstone of the doctrine of Roman Catholic tradition.

The claims of the Papacy

The Church of Rome claims to be the true Church of Christ and maintains that the See of Rome is divinely authorised to reign and rule over the universal Church with the power of infallibly determining what is and what is not to be regarded as acceptable in the realms of Christian doctrine and practice. This authority has been exercised through a succession of popes and bishops from the Apostle Peter; that, at least, is what is claimed.

Webster sums up papal claims in the following propositions which summarise what was determined by Vatican I, meeting in 1869-70:

1. Christ gave Peter the primacy of jurisdiction over the entire Church as well as the entire world.
2. Inherent in the primacy of jurisdiction is also an infallible teaching authority over the entire Church.
3. This right of jurisdiction is passed down to Peter's successors, the bishops of Rome, for all time.
4. When speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, when speaking in his official capacity as pope, and defining a doctrine on a matter of faith or morals, the Roman pontiff teaches infallibly.
5. The Roman pontiff has absolute authority in himself, possesses authority over all councils; his judgment cannot be questioned; he, himself, can be judged by no human tribunal.
6. The Roman church has ever remained free from all blemish of error and the doctrines of the Catholic faith have always been kept undefiled by her.
7. If any questions of faith arise within the Church universal they must be defined by the judgment of the Roman pontiff.
8. It has at all times in the history of the Church been necessary that every Church throughout the world should agree with the Roman Church.
9. These teachings have always been held by the entire church through all ages and can be validated by the scriptures, the canons of general councils and the unanimous consent of the fathers.

10. It is necessary that everyone who professes to be a Christian must submit to the authority of the Roman pontiff in all areas of faith, morals and discipline, and if anyone disagrees with these teachings of Vatican I they are anathematized.

As far as Scripture authority for holding these views is concerned, Rome principally appeals, as is well known, to Matthew 16: 18-19 – *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* It is not possible within the confines of this paper to do much more than draw attention to what has been regarded as the Protestant – and correct – interpretation of this passage. Christ, in the light of Peter’s confession, and not Peter is the Rock. Without adverting to the argument based on the different genders of *petros* and *petra* in the Greek original, it can be proved from Peter’s own interpretation of the Saviour’s declaration (as that is found in his First Epistle) that Christ, not Peter, was the living stone, the elect, precious chief cornerstone. From the same Epistle it is equally evident that Peter did not regard himself as invested with power over the other apostles. He was their fellow elder and certainly not setting himself up as a lord over God’s heritage. “There is absolutely nothing in this passage,” Webster writes, “which speaks of successors to Peter and the passing on of his personal prerogatives to them. The keys, rather than signifying the institution of the papacy and supreme authority to rule the Church and the world, are representative of the authority to exercise discipline in the Church and to proclaim the Gospel, declaring the free forgiveness of sins in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a declaration opens the kingdom of God to men or, if they reject the message, closes it to them. The keys are not the possession of a single individual, for exactly the same authority which Christ promises to Peter he also grants to the other apostles. They are all given authority to bind or loose by declaring the forgiveness of sins through Christ.”

Vatican I claimed that it could validate its claims by drawing attention to the practice of the Church down through the ages and also by claiming the support of the early Fathers and their universal consent. But history proves otherwise. Webster shows that over the first two centuries not one of the early Fathers held the views of Vatican I and the overwhelming majority of the Fathers of the entire patristic age all disagree with the Roman Catholic Church’s interpretation of the previously-cited passage in Matthew’s gospel. However dominant a role Peter played in the early development of the New Testament Church, there is no evidence that he was regarded as its undisputed head and ruler. It was James, not Peter, who presided over the Jerusalem Council and if Peter was infallible and beyond criticism when it came to pronouncing on matters related to faith and morals, how was it that Paul found it necessary in Antioch to withstand him to the face, because he was to be blamed? If Scripture and the early history of the Church provide an abundance of evidence to show

that the claims of papal authority and infallibility are untenable, we may well ask how was it that later popes managed to assert their authority over the Western Church and came to enthrone themselves in the Vatican, resplendent in gorgeous robes and crowned in turn with the three-tiered tiara? Paul, writing as moved by the Holy Ghost, drew attention in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians to the fact that "the mystery of iniquity" was already working even in his day but then goes on to speak of one standing in the way and so hindering its full revelation and development. "He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." Most sound interpreters identify this person, or succession of persons, with the Roman Emperor and, historically, it was the collapse of the Roman Empire that paved the way for Antichrist to occupy the seat left vacant. The establishment of this usurped dominion was also greatly facilitated by the production of the notorious ninth century literary forgery known as *The Pseudo-Isodorian Decretals*. This collection of documents contains "a fabrication of Church history which set forth precedents for the exercise of sovereign authority by the popes over the universal Church throughout the centuries," and they, in combination with two other major forgeries, *The Donation of Constantine* and *The Liber Pontificalis*, were, in the eleventh century codified into a system of canon law which elevated the then reigning pope and all his successors to the position of absolute monarch over the Western Church. "These writings," we are told, "were then utilised by Gratian and incorporated into his *Decretum* in the twelfth century. "By this means they became the basis of all canon law in the Church as well as the foundation for all scholastic theology relating to the Church." It is only by distorting or ignoring historical facts that the myth of papal infallibility has been perpetuated. It can be shown that Popes always erred and that Fathers and councils never regarded the bishops of Rome to be infallible. Some of the bishops present at Vatican I were ready to admit this and were honest enough to vote against the issuing of these decrees. Webster draws attention to example after example of papal fallibility over the centuries. In the seventeenth century two of them, for instance, in turn censured Galileo for teaching the Copernican theory of the solar system. It took a long time but it is now officially accepted by Rome that this was a grave error. So much then for papal infallibility! We now pass on to consider:

Mariolatry

It is well known that the present incumbent of the papal chair is much given to Mariolatry and that, for instance, he attributes his survival of an assassination attempt to her personal intervention in his behalf. The bullet removed from his body is reported to be now among the artifacts laid up at the Fatima shrine in Portugal. What is taught in the Roman Catholic Church with

regard to Mary has of course no Scriptural basis whatever, nor can there be found, even in its historic tradition, what might be taken as support for the dogmas which have been promulgated. Her immaculate conception, her assumption into heaven and her present mediatorial role are dogmas which were, nevertheless, in 1854 and 1950, declared authoritatively to be truths revealed by God and necessary to be believed for salvation. As neither Scripture nor tradition can be appealed to as sanctioning Mariolatry the Roman Catholic Church has to maintain that it is based on new revelations and that is an even greater departure from the principle of *sola scriptura*. "From the early years of the Church," Webster tells us, "some writers such as Irenaeus began to stress Mary's humble obedience to God as the antithesis of Eve's folly, thus elaborating upon the Biblical antithesis between Christ and Adam. At a time when there was growing veneration of martyrs, Mary also began to be viewed as one who should be specially honoured because of her unique relationship to the Lord, and slowly she became more and more exalted in the consciousness of the people. She was therefore accorded *hyperdulia*, the highest degree of veneration, as opposed to mere *dulia* which belongs to all saints and angels, and *latria*, which is due to God alone."

"Yet," Webster continues, "there is not the slightest evidence that there was a cult of Mary or a worship of her person in these early centuries. The real turning point in the doctrine of Mary came with the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, when Mary was declared to be the 'Mother of God' (*theotokos*). This was not initially intended to exalt Mary so much as to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and preserve the truth of His divinity. However, just as the portrayal of Mary as being antithetical to Eve was distorted by the unbiblical way that Mary was seen to contribute to our salvation, so this changed emphasis opened up the possibility of a growing exaltation of Mary herself. The veneration became so great that eventually she was believed to have been immaculately conceived. The next step was for her to be exalted to the position of co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix with Christ. Mariology had clearly led to Mariolatry."

That Mary was in the same spiritual state as all are who are descended from Adam by ordinary generation and in need of salvation both from original and actual sin is clear from her own declaration, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." The doctrine that she was immaculately conceived and thus free from original sin was taught first of all by Pelagius and his disciple Celestius and we are assured that not one single early church Father agreed with it. Even Popes and theologians such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Bede, Anselm and even Thomas Aquinas repudiated the views of Pelagius so it remains a mystery how the Roman Catholic faithful can possibly believe in a doctrine which is not found in either of the two sources which

they appeal to as authoritative – not to mention the fact that the unanimous consent of the Fathers is altogether absent – but was formulated by one ‘infallible’ pope who, in doing so, plainly contradicted other ‘infallible’ popes of the past. The doctrine of Mary’s perpetual virginity is likewise entirely unsubstantiated. That she gave birth to other children seems clear from Scripture. We are told that the One she wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger was “her firstborn son.” The Greek word translated ‘firstborn’ is *prototokos* and Webster points out that when it refers to children it means the first to be born. Moreover the Bible tells us quite clearly that Jesus of Nazareth had brothers and sisters and to say that the words used refer exclusively to cousins is not tenable. It suited Rome to preach that celibacy was a higher spiritual state than that of marriage. Her nunneries and monasteries, vital sources of revenue, would then be provided with the personnel required to keep them in operation. Now apparently with the searchlight of investigative journalism being turned on these institutions as well as the priesthood, the Roman Catholic Church is encountering recruiting difficulties. Now we are hearing noises coming from several quarters suggesting that celibacy is not a closed issue after all and that the Pope has set up a forum for debating it. “It is not divine law,” Cardinal Hume recently said without blinking, “it is Church law, so any Pope or general council could change it.” As for the doctrine of the assumption of Mary body and soul to heaven, either without dying or shortly after death, even a prominent Roman Catholic writer (Eamon Duffy) has conceded that “there is, clearly, no historical evidence whatever for it . . .” Yet, in 1950, Pius XII in his decree, declared it to be a dogma revealed by God. He justifies himself on the ground that it seemed reasonable that Mary should be thus dealt with and that nothing was impossible with God! In the very teeth of what the Bible explicitly teaches of Christ as the one Mediator between God and men, the Roman Catholic Church assigns Mary the place of a co-mediatrix with titles and attributes which place her on an equality with Him. We move on to the matter of:

Salvation

If Arminianism is, according to Principal Cunningham, *a scheme for dividing or partitioning the salvation of sinners between God and sinners themselves*,” then, in Roman Catholicism we have the very essence of it. “Martin Luther,” James Buchanan wrote, “described the doctrine of justification as “an article of faith that decides whether a church is standing or falling. By this he meant that when this doctrine is understood, believed and preached, as it was in New Testament times, the church stands in the grace of God and is alive; but where it is neglected, overlaid, or denied, as it was in mediaeval Catholicism, the church falls from grace and its life drains away, leaving it to a state of darkness and death. The reason why the Reformation happened, and Protestant churches came into being, was that Luther and his fellow Reformers believed that papal Rome

had apostatised from the Gospel so completely in this respect that no faithful Christian could with a good conscience continue within her ranks." Rome's faith, that is, the grace of faith has come to be defined within her pale as "belief in the Church itself and its teachings," and justification "is not a finished act with permanent consequences, but a process in which an individual works to stay in what the Roman Church calls a 'state of grace'." A full blown sacramental system has replaced God's instituted means of communicating salvation to perishing sinners. The number of the sacraments has been increased to seven – baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, ordination, marriage and extreme unction and an exclusive priesthood, along Old Testament lines, has been set in place to act as "a mediating agency between God and people." Ordination confers upon the priest the right to teach and govern and is supposed to place an indelible mark upon the individual concerned which he can never lose. It is plain that there is no basis in Scripture for such an institution. According to Rome, the sacrament of Baptism (to quote Webster) "is perceived as the means of receiving four basic gifts: the remission of sins, deliverance from death, regeneration, and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit." As a refutation it will be sufficient to quote the Shorter Catechism, "Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's." The early Church knew nothing of baptismal regeneration, auricular confession, penance, purgatory, indulgences and the whole sacramental system now in operation would not have been owned by the early Fathers. It was the Council of Trent that entrenched the Church of Rome in error, and there it remains to this day, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men and placing all within her pale and devoted to her under a new yoke of bondage. We pass on to consider.

The Eucharist

Rome's doctrine of the Eucharist was first given dogmatic expression at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. "It was then," as Webster reminds us, "that the Church formally adopted the doctrine of transubstantiation. Quoting the Council of Trent again, "In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner on the altar of the cross." Without referring just now to the passages of Scripture with which we are already familiar, and which plainly condemn the Tridentine statement, attention may be drawn to the fact that the unanimous consensus of the early Fathers is not there to support it. Tertullian denied the real presence of Christ in the sacrament; the elements were, in his view, symbolical or representative of spiritual realities. "Augustine," Webster tells us, "argued that the sacraments, including the

eucharist, are signs and figures which represent or symbolise spiritual realities. He made a distinction between the physical, historical body of Christ and the sacramental presence, maintaining that Christ's physical body could not literally be present in the sacrament of the eucharist because he is physically at the right hand of God in heaven, and will be there until he comes again. But Christ is spiritually with his people. Augustine viewed the eucharist in spiritual terms and he interpreted the true meaning of eating and drinking as being faith: 'To believe on Him is to eat the living bread. He that believes eats; he is sated invisibly, because invisibly is he born again.' Clearly, if Augustine had lived after The Council of Trent he would have come under its anathema!

To sum up – paraphrasing Webster to a great extent – the Roman Catholic Church, through its legalistic teachings, has invalidated the finished work of Christ in salvation. By elevating Mary to the position of a Mediatrix and Queen, and the Pope to be visible head of the Church, it has set aside the Biblical teaching that Christ is the only Head and Sovereign. By encouraging the worship of Mary it has promoted idolatry. By its teaching on the sacraments and the priesthood, it has undermined the sufficiency of Christ's vicarious sacrifice. In its teaching on justification it has shifted the foundation for salvation from the imputed righteousness of Christ to imparted grace which enables sinners to merit heaven by their own works. Through its teaching on asceticism and purgatory it has embraced the influences of Pagan philosophy. "In short," Webster says, "by elevating the teachings of men in its tradition to a place of authority equal to the Scriptures, it has displaced God's authority with its own."

It has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. ●

Praying Daily for Ministers

LET us pray daily for all ministers that they may be true successors of Peter and his brethren, that they may preach the same full and free Gospel which they preached, and live the same holy lives which they lived. These are the only ministers who will ever prove successful fishermen.

To some of them God may give more honour, and to others less. But all true and faithful preachers of the Gospel have a right to believe that their labour shall not prove in vain. They may often preach the Word with many tears, and see no result of their labour. But God's word shall not return void, Isaiah 55:11. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void." The last day shall show that no work for God was ever thrown away. Every faithful fisherman shall find his Master's words made good: "Thou shalt catch men."

From Expository Thoughts on the Gospels by J. C. Ryle

A Catechism for the Instruction of Communicants

By Andrew Thomson, DD (1779-1831)

Concluded from page 340 in the last issue

Questions Nos. 138 to 165 (some of which have been edited)

THE last instalment dealt with the duty of preparing to partake of the Lord's Supper, and the communicant's exercise while partaking. This concluding instalment deals with the communicant's duties after communicating.

SEE the May issue, page 140, for a biographical footnote about Dr. Andrew Thomson.

138. Question. *What should you do after partaking of the Lord's Supper?*

Answer. I should express my thankfulness to God for the opportunity He has given me of celebrating this ordinance, and pray that He would enable me to improve it to wise and useful purposes.

139. Q. *Should you not again employ some time in serious self-examination?*

A. Yes: the heart is so very deceitful; we are so apt to mistake outward solemnity for internal devotion, and the ordinance of the Supper is such a solemn transaction between God and the soul, that self-examination seems to be as necessary after as before communicating.

140. Q. *What is it with respect to which you should examine yourself?*

A. I should examine myself with respect to the manner in which I have acted, and the experience that I have had, at the Lord's Table.

141. Q. *What may be the result of this examination with respect to the manner in which you have acted at the Lord's Table?*

A. It may be that I have been careless, inattentive, and irreverent, indulging myself in vain thoughts, and eating and drinking without spiritual views and devout feelings; or it may be that I have had my mind suitably affected and employed, and, in other respects, partaken worthily of the ordinance.

142. Q. *What is your duty if the latter has been your conduct at the Lord's Table?*

A. It is my duty to thank God, who is the author of all gifts and graces that I enjoy, for having enabled me to communicate in a becoming and acceptable manner.

143. Q. *What is your duty if the former has been your conduct?*

A. I should be humble before God, entreat Him to pardon the unworthiness I have been guilty of, and determine, through His grace helping me, to avoid it carefully on every future occasion.

144. Q. *Is not your most worthy communicating accompanied with imperfection?*

A. Yes: sin and imperfection cleave to the purest of my religious services, and therefore I have always great reason to abase myself; but I should be particularly careful to do so when my shortcomings are wilful and deliberate, or proceed from any kind of indifference to sacred duties.

145. Q. *What may be the result of your self-examination with regard to the experience you have had at the Lord's Table?*

A. It may be that I have been comforted, and gladdened, and improved: or it may be that none of these effects have been produced, but that I have felt weariness and disappointment, and the absence of those blessings which this ordinance promises and is intended to bestow.

146. Q. *What is your duty if the former has been the case?*

A. It is my duty to be grateful to Him by whose grace the Sacrament has been made effective, in giving me peace, and joy, and improvement, and to be careful to express my gratitude, by devoting myself still more zealously to the observance of all His ordinances and commandments.

147. Q. *What is your duty if your experience has been comfortless and unfruitful?*

A. It is my first duty to inquire seriously and candidly into the causes of this, and my next duty is to endeavour, by every proper mean, to remove these causes, that I may hereafter be able to partake of the Lord's Supper with greater benefit and success.

148. Q. *May not such an experience be ascribed to some fault on the part of the communicant?*

A. Yes: the general truth is, that if we "draw nigh unto God, He will draw nigh unto us" (James 4: 8), and, therefore, if we are disappointed and sent empty away, we have reason to suspect that our preparation has not been sufficient, that our expectations have been unreasonable, or that our conduct at the Lord's Table has not been altogether suitable.

149. Q. *What does this suggest?*

A. It suggests that in every case of such experience, whilst we bewail, in the spirit of perfect submission to the divine will, the absence of that peace and gladness we had hoped to enjoy, we should also search ourselves diligently, to see what has on this occasion, "separated between God and us," and prevented our "hungry souls" from being satisfied "with good things," and "our strength from being renewed as the eagle's."

150. Q. *Is there not a kind of experience which some ignorant people look for, but which you have no reason expect at the Lord's Table?*

A. Yes: I have no reason to expect any sudden impulse on my understanding, or any violent affection of my heart and feelings; for though there is nothing to hinder the Spirit of God from operating in that remarkable way, yet His ordinary method is calm and secret, and the Sacrament of the Supper is one of those means, by which in a rational manner, He works upon our minds and dispositions.

151. Q. *What is that kind of experience which the nature of religion in general, and of the Lord's Supper in particular, gives you ground for expecting?*

A. I have ground for expecting that I shall feel that comfort and pleasure which the contemplation, by faith, of the memorials of Christ's sacrifice is naturally fitted to inspire: that I shall experience a more heartfelt sorrow for sin, when I see all that Jesus suffered on account of it: that my love to Him shall grow more warm and ardent, when I behold the great price that He generously paid for my redemption: that all my resentments towards others shall die away in my breast, when I have such a striking proof of the great mercy of God towards me; and, in short, that I shall receive more lively and lasting impressions of those infinitely important truths which are built upon the death of Christ, and essentially connected with the salvation of my soul.

152. Q. *Whatever your conduct and experience at the Lord's Table may have been, are not you bound to fulfill the obligations which the act of communicating implies?*

A. Certainly: since I have vowed unto the Lord, and since my vow is not only lawful, but highly proper and useful, I am bound by every consideration of duty and of interest to perform it with the utmost care.

153. Q. *What conduct does this vow bind you to maintain?*

A. Such conduct as is prescribed by the word of God: to do no iniquity (Job 34: 32); to attend to the care of my soul as "the one thing needful"; to deny myself, take up my cross daily, and follow Christ (Luke 9: 23); and to study to love Him more, and to serve Him better than I have ever yet done. In short, it must now be my great object and business, to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge [saving and practical] of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3: 18).

154. Q. *What are we to think of those who, after partaking of the Lord's Supper, give themselves up to the ways of the world and sin?*

A. We should not judge rashly or severely of any man; but these persons unquestionably show that at the Lord's Table they have not really "been with

Christ," and "learned of Him." Either their profession has not been sincere, or they are backslidden and acting in gross contradiction to their profession; in both which cases their conduct is highly culpable.

155. Q. *Is not this conduct of theirs extremely injurious?*

A. Yes: it is extremely injurious to themselves, because it is a great aggravation of their guilt; and it is extremely injurious to religion, because it sets a pernicious example before others, and gives a handle to wicked and unbelieving men to blaspheme, to vilify the gospel, and ridicule its ordinances.

156. Q. *Is not this treatment of the gospel, however, by unbelieving men, very uncandid and unjust?*

A. Yes: for the gospel, like every other system, must stand or fall by its own merits and evidences; and cannot be accountable for the lives of its professors. If it is to be judged by the conduct of professing Christians, it must only be when these sincerely believe its doctrines, and faithfully obey its precepts.

157. Q. *But since the enemies of religion do frequently judge and speak of religion according to the conduct of its professors, should not you be particularly cautious on that account?*

A. Surely: having partaken of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and made the solemn profession which that implies, I should be especially careful to, "walk in wisdom towards them that are without" (Col. 4: 5); to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thes. 5: 22), and to let my light so shine before men, that others, seeing my good works, may glorify my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5: 16).

158. Q. *Is the fact that our sacramental vows are apt to be forgotten or disregarded, any good reason for not partaking of the Lord's Supper?*

A. No: it is not a good reason; for we may as well say that no promise should be given, because it may not be fulfilled, or that no bargains should be made, because bargains are often broken. Besides, partaking of the Lord's Supper is a commanded duty, which must be performed, if we would submit ourselves to the authority of Christ. And having observed this ordinance, we should strive to walk worthy of it, which we may certainly do with the help of Christ, as the apostle could do all things by Christ strengthening him, (Phil. 4: 13).

159. Q. *Should not the practical effects of communicating appear in all the various relations and circumstances in which you may be placed?*

A. Yes: Communicants come under engagements at the Lord's Table, which reach to every relation and condition of life. They engage to, "adorn the

doctrine of god their Saviour in all things" (Titus 2: 10), and therefore, if they have been sincere in their profession, they will study to be more humble in prosperity, and more patient in tribulation; more resolute in withstanding temptation, more diligent in their improvement of the means and ordinances of grace, and more dutiful as husbands and as wives, as parents and as children, as masters and as servants, as neighbours and as friends.

160. Q. *Is not the life which, at the Lord's Table, you undertake to lead, a life of difficulty and danger?*

A. Yes: I am so much surrounded with temptations to sin, I have so many powerful enemies to struggle with, and my heart is so corrupted and perverse, that it cannot but be hard and difficult to lead that life of faith and holiness which my Saviour requires; and hence the Christian life is called in Scripture, a burden, a yoke, and a cross.

161. Q. *Do these expressions mean that the Christian life is destitute of comfort?*

A. No: they cannot mean this: the Christian life, though a burden, is light; though a yoke, it is easy; though a cross, it has, to those who bear it, its joys as well as its sorrows. Such is the account of it given in Scripture, and such is the experience of every real disciple of Christ.

162. Q. *Is not the Christian life perfectly consistent with the true enjoyment of this world?*

A. Yes: that is to say, the true Christian can enjoy all the *innocent, lawful* pleasures of the world, and these, to a mind like his, are numerous; he avoids the misery which is the appointed and certain attendant upon vice; he escapes the cares and disappointments which often harass ungodly men, because he "uses the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of all things passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7: 31), and the good things, nay the very evils of life, afford him a ground of satisfaction peculiar to him, because his principles teach him to regard and treat them as means by which he is enabled to "lay up a good foundation for the time to come, and lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6: 19).

163. Q. *At the same time, are those not greatly mistaken who enter on the Christian life, or continue in it with the idea that it has little or nothing but what is easy and agreeable?*

A. Yes: for though godliness has "the promise of the life that now is" (1 Timothy 4: 8), and all "who love the law of the Lord have great peace" (Psalm 119: 165), yet Scripture declares every true Christian can bear witness to the truth of the declaration, that there are many severe trials, many painful

struggles, many discouragements, and many sorrows, necessarily connected with the belief and practice of the Gospel.

164. Q. *Has not God provided you with support and consolation fully adequate to these hardships and difficulties?*

A. Yes: every support and consolation that my situation needs and that I could reasonably expect or possibly desire.

165. Q. *What is that support and consolation?*

A. An assurance that God will make His grace, sufficient for me, and perfect His strength in my weakness (2 Corinthians 12: 9); a divine intimation that Christ has already subdued my spiritual enemies, and that through Him every true believer shall be more than a conqueror; a promise that the Holy Ghost shall be given to them that ask Him, to abide with them continually, and to lead them in the way everlasting; and there is set before me the certain prospect of a most happy and glorious immortality in heaven, if I be faithful even unto death. With such encouragements, and such motives, I have every reason not only to be "stedfast and immovable," but even to go on my Christian way "rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Concluded

The Long Hair of Women and their Head-covering in the Public Worship of God

An exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 11:14-15

Rev Donald M. Boyd

IN this passage, the apostle uses a subsidiary argument for the practice of women wearing a head-covering in public worship. His reasoning begins at verse 13, being based upon natural comeliness, the intuitive sense of propriety. He reminds the Corinthian church that it is a shame for a man to have long hair, but that it is the woman's glory to have it so. He relates this to his primary subject thus – she has a natural 'covering', therefore it is comely for her to have a head-covering in public worship.

It is important to notice the distinction in the Greek between the head-covering and the natural covering, which is not shown in the English translation. In verses 5-7, and 13, in referring to the head-covering, the word 'katakalypto' is used, but in verse 15, referring to the woman's hair, the word 'peribolaion' is used. This shows that the apostle does not mean to identify the woman's long

hair *as* her covering – (this mistake is not infrequent) – but to use the fact that she has a natural covering (peribolaion) as a reason for her head-covering (katakalypto) in public worship.

‘Peribolaion’ is translated ‘vesture’ in Hebrews 1:12. It is something that is “cast round” the body (cf. Mk 14:51; Acts 12:8); literally, peri = round, bolaion = throw, or cast, as in ballistic missile. Bunyan’s interesting thought that the woman’s hair should be long in order to cover her face in worship, like a veil, in the presence of the angels (1 Cor 11:10), is probably wrong, for the more suitable word ‘perikalupto’ (Mk 14:65; Lk 22:64) was available to convey this thought if it was intended. ‘Peribolaion’ was specifically chosen, and Paul does not use the word again in any of its forms except in Hebrews 1:12. In using this word to describe the woman’s hair, one visualises a garment, like a shawl, covering the head and cast around the shoulders. This implies that a woman’s long hair should be at least shoulder-length, if possible. However, the head-covering to be used in public worship is not described as a ‘peribolaion’ (shawl), but ‘katakalypto’ is used.

There is a peripheral thought that may be included in his use of ‘peribolaion’ to describe the woman’s hair. Many, though not all, of the uses of the verbal form of the word in the Septuagint and Greek New Testament are associated with glorious clothing. The idea of glory may have attached itself to the meaning of the word, and this may tie in with Paul’s subject in 1 Corinthians respecting the glory of the woman’s long hair. As glorious clothing is usually the outer garment, it may have come to mean the outer garment.

The above scripture passage therefore shows that there ought to be a distinction between the length of men’s hair and women’s hair. This distinction is also seen in Revelation 9:8 where John describes the locusts as having the faces of men but “the hair of women”.

The long hair of women is alluded to in various passages of scripture, e.g. Song of Solomon 4:1, 6:5; Luke 7:38; John 12:3.

Edited from *View From Farr*, Inverness, No 2:6, 10 Mar 1986, p.2. —D. M. B.

Book Review

A Guide to the Puritans by *Robert P Martin*.

Published by the Banner of Truth Trust. Hardback, 546 pages, £12.95. Available at the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.

THIS book represents a tremendous amount of work in cataloguing the published writings of the Puritans and others deemed to be in the same tradition. The first section catalogues sermons and other writings under topical headings such as, to quote from a particular page, Free-will and Free-agency,

Friendship, Fruit (Spiritual), Glorification, Glorifying God, and God, which last is subdivided as follows: Acceptance with, Attributes of, Children of, Compassion of, Decree(s) of, etc. There follows a scripture index, in which the same material is classified according to the passage of Scripture on which it is based. There are some further briefer lists of material such as biographical material and sermons on special occasions.

This is not a book to be read through, but it will surely prove useful to anyone looking for something by a reliable author on a particular topic. There are occasional brief comments on the material. The author has imposed a number of restrictions on his work: it is confined to material which has been recently in print; commentaries are completely omitted (because Spurgeon tackled this area of writing in his *Commenting and Commentaries*); Spurgeon's sermons are also not included (because a textual index for them is already available); twentieth century writings are confined to those published by the Banner of Truth Trust.

The writers quoted are men whose writings can be highly recommended with few reservations. And if this volume will result in a greater use of the tremendous heritage of Reformed literature which has been handed down to us by previous generations it will prove valuable indeed. The author is pastor of a Baptist church in Seattle, USA.

Rev. K. D. Macleod

John Ndiyamabombo Mpofu

A Sketch of an African Elder

ONE of the best known of the elders in our Church in Zimbabwe who were converted in Rev. J. B. Radasi's day was John Ndiyamabombo Mpofu. As a young man he was employed as a gardener by the Wesleyan minister in Bulawayo. John had never been to school and so he could neither read nor write, but he was a lively, intelligent young man. It was a rule among missionaries that whoever was employed by them must attend the church services on each Sabbath and the prayer meeting during the week.

One day the minister, passing through the garden with a Bible in his hand, spoke to John and said, "John, this is God's book. He is speaking to you and telling you that you are a sinner." John looked up briefly, not comprehending the remark. On another occasion, the minister said to John, "John, this is God's book," again pointing to his Bible. "He is speaking to you. He is telling you that you are a sinner, and that there is a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." John began to show interest, and on the next occasion when he saw the minister

carrying the Bible he said: "Mfundisi (Minister), I want that book."

"You cannot read, John. It is no use giving you the Bible," said the minister.

"But you tell me that God is speaking to me. I want it," said John.

"Yes, God is speaking to you, but I have only a few Bibles and I must give them to those who can read."

However, John insisted that he wanted it, and the minister gave it to him.

John told afterwards how he took the Bible to his hut after work, and prayed to God to help him to read. Next morning he got up early and again prayed to God to help him to read. It is not known how long he continued to pray, but eventually he began to make out words, and then to understand what he was reading. One of our missionaries questioned him. "You must have known the letters, John." "No, I did not." "Perhaps you knew some of it by heart." "No, I did not. God taught me to read." (Often in later years we heard him, when he was conducting services, read the Bible slowly and clearly from the pulpit).

John Mpofu married and came to live at Libeni near Ingwenya. He began to attend the services held by Rev. J. B. Radasi. The preaching of the word was blessed to him and he was converted. As a young warrior John had fought against the British during the Zulu war of 1893, but now he was involved in another war. He began to "fight the good fight of faith".

In 1923, the year before Mr Radasi's death, Chief Betestani, who was also under his ministry, was ordered by the Government to move with his people and all their cattle from Induba, near Ingwenya in the Ntabazinduna Reserve to Shangani Reserve, now known as Nkayi, as Ntabazinduna was overstocked with cattle. They had to travel more than eighty miles over rough country and sleep by the way, with the ever-present threat of being attacked by lions and leopards.

Shangani Reserve was thickly forested and undeveloped in any way except where the London Missionary Society had begun work. When the Chief was settled, he sent word to Mr Radasi that he wished to have a preacher and also a teacher for his people. Mr Radasi called his office-bearers, except John Mpofu who was in town, to find out if any of them were willing to go. No one offered to go. When John Mpofu came from town, he heard from Mr Radasi about the meeting. John said he would pray about the matter. After a few days he came back to Mr Radasi and said that he would go to Nkayi to preach. He was accompanied by his son, Alexander, a fine Christian and a teacher who had been trained at Lovedale. After a four-day journey on foot they were welcomed by Chief Betestani, but the people there resented their coming and gave them much trouble, even burning the roof of their house on three occasions. However, after years of discouragement, Alexander wrote to Rev. John Tallach, who was now the missionary at Ingwenya and had encouraged them to persevere: "Not for all the money in the world would I have missed seeing the change that has come

over the people here, by means of the Gospel and the school."

One of those converted under John Mpfu's teaching of the truths of salvation was Paul Magaya, who was later appointed as an evangelist in the Shangani Mission area. He was most zealous and tireless in the work.

John Mpfu, although a very active and gifted man, was always aware that he needed the Lord's help in all his work for the cause of Christ. On one occasion, a Baptist minister who visited the Mission at Ingwenya came across John sitting under a tree beside a little table with his Bible open before him. Having been introduced, the minister said, "You are preparing your sermon for tomorrow!" "No," said John, "I am waiting for it to come from above."

He was also a discerning man. In the book, *James Fraser*, by Rev. A. McPherson, there is the account of a camp-fire discussion on the question: "How is it that some professing Christians have all the appearance of true believers, yet have no influence for good on the people among whom they live?" John said, "I have heard Europeans say that there are shops in Bulawayo where stoves and fireplaces are advertised. To make them more attractive, some kind of artificial fire is put in them. These artificial fires seem to glow like real fires, and from a distance one could not tell whether they are real or not. But if you approach such a fireplace you find that it gives out no heat because there is really no fire, just the appearance of it. That is why some professing Christians do no good to themselves or others. They have no fire. When you draw near to them your heart is not warmed because all they have is the appearance of fire."

From this beginning at Nkayi by John Mpfu and his son Alexander, the Mission extended under the efforts of Rev. John Tallach, Rev. Dr MacDonald, Rev. James Fraser and others. By 1946 there were 13 mission stations in the Nkayi district, and in 1954 Mbuma Mission, which included a teacher training centre, and later a hospital, was founded in the heart of the district.

When John Mpfu was more than 80 years old, he said during a visit to Mbuma, "When I began to descend the Mbuma escarpment and looked down on the Mission buildings spread out below me, I could not help marvelling that the habitation of wild beasts should be chosen by the Lord as a place where his name should be praised. Truly, His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts. Here at Mbuma the Lord has been pleased to fulfil His word which says, 'He turneth the wilderness into a standing water and dry ground into water springs'."

John Mpfu died at the age of 86 and went, we believe, to his everlasting rest. *The History of the Free Presbyterian Church* states, "The names of both these men [John and Alexander Mpfu] deserve to be recorded and held in honoured remembrance. They laboured in this new sphere in the face of determined opposition and bitter persecution so that for a time their lives were in danger. But they held on, and their work was not in vain in the Lord."

— J. N.

Protestant View

Apparent soul-searching by the Papacy about its past

THE city of Rome has recently seen the latest effort by the Roman Catholic Church to "cleanse its soul" in the run-up to the year 2000, and by the Pope to bring Roman Catholicism closer to Judaism. It was a conference of theologians to help the Roman Catholic Church decide whether it should admit any anti-Semitic wrongdoing. The Roman Catholic Church in Spain also plans to examine its "collective conscience" over its support for the Franco dictatorship.

Possibly the result of these reviews will be a sophisticated whitewash job in which there will be subtle, limited admissions of "mistakes" and "errors of judgement", and all in order to take the heat out of a situation in which the Vatican is increasingly being confronted by its evil past. Despite its apparent soul searching, the Vatican steadfastly refuses to allow its archives, regarding the relationship between the Vatican and the Nazis, to be opened to an independent international commission.

There can be no cleansing of "soul" or of its "collective conscience" for the Papacy. As a blasphemous, God-dishonouring, Christ-debasing, soul-deluding system, it is incorrigibly corrupt. Scripture shows that it is destined to be destroyed. There can be only one call to those within it, "Come out of her, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," 2 Corinthians 6:17. □

Persecution by Roman Catholics in Mexico

ACCORDING to a report in July in Mexico City's *Excelsior* newspaper, police authorities in Huayapan in central Mexico said that Roman Catholics expelled six families from their homes and confiscated their properties "for being evangelicals". The persecutors were led by town official Panfilo Hernandez. They were helped by Roman Catholics from the nearby town of Pueblo who had already driven four families from their homes for the same reason.

No doubt the attackers took encouragement from the Pope's condemnation of "Protestant sects", as he described them, when he was in Latin America last year. It is interesting, however, that the press unexpectedly reported the injustices and aroused public support for those so cruelly treated.

Scripture gives us reason to believe that the day is coming when all Rome-inspired or Rome-led persecution will be fully exposed. Much of it has already been uncovered; more is being uncovered; but we should be praying for the coming of the time when the Papacy will no longer be successful in hiding its dark and evil deeds. □

Notes and Comments

Bishop supports reduction of age of consent to 16

IT is shocking that Bishop Richard Harries of Oxford has called for the age of homosexual consent to be lowered from 18 to 16. It is especially significant that he has done so, says the *Times*, because he is the chairman of the bishops' committee on homosexuality, a leading adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the first diocesan bishop to call publicly for this further lowering of the age of consent. He also wants the law which prohibits local authorities from promoting homosexuality to be abolished.

We need not be surprised at his conduct. When the issue was before Parliament in 1994, he supported the lowering of the age of consent to 18. Indeed, most of the bishops at that time voted for an age of consent of 21 or 18.

Church leaders are under obligation to teach the people that sodomy is contrary to the divine law and exceedingly offensive in God's sight; and they are to compassionately call those who are guilty of this sin to repentance, showing from Scripture that such sinners may be forgiven and renewed by God. What a solemn indictment it is of these professed ministers that instead they support the legalising of sodomy, and even vote for the lowering of the age of consent. They claim to be God's servants, but they are doing the devil's work.

William Hague's views of marriage and cohabitation

FEW will disagree with the editorial in the *Times* which says that "William Hague has planted his standard on libertarian ground since coming to office". Although he claims that he and his Conservative Party support the traditional family, they do not regard marriage as fundamental to the building of society, but rather as one of several alternative lifestyles, which are equally valid, including cohabitation and homosexual unions.

He has demonstrated his belittling of marriage when he insisted, according to a press report in September, "he will still sleep with fiancée Miss Ffion Jenkins during next month's Tory conference." He rejected criticism saying, "We are getting married in December. We are absolutely committed to each other." His response suggests that he wants to identify with the many unmarried couples who live together in Britain, and seems to give them the green light.

But whatever Mr Hague may have done or not done, unmarried couples who justify their cohabiting because they are committed to one another should note that they do not absolve themselves from the sin of uncleanness by their excuses. They will be condemned by God if they repent not. Scripture says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed is undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Hebrews 13:4. □

Government proposals to relax Sabbath legislation

THE Home Secretary, Mr Jack Straw, has said that the Home Office has been examining proposals to relax the 1780 Sunday Observance Act, which prevents night clubs and discos from opening on the Lord's Day. He believes that the decision could create up to 3,000 jobs.

Not only would such a decision directly contravene the Fourth Commandment but also result in more opportunities for young people to get caught up in problems caused by drink and drugs, with the related increase in violence, and other social problems. It is very necessary that we write to our local MPs stating our strong objections to this proposal. □

Car Boot Sales on Sabbath in Inverness

THE Northern Presbytery protested to the Highland Council some time ago against the Council giving permission for car boot sales to take place in the car park of the Council's Headquarters. Among other things the Presbytery said, "Our concern is that this decision can only encourage further desecration of the Lord's Day. . . Up and down the country, various councils are discovering the cost of abandoning the "Sabbath rest" of the Lord's Day. . . There is the overlooked and immeasurable cost in awakening the displeasure of God by this disregard of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ whose triumph over the power of death is commemorated weekly in the Lord's Day. . . We will be grateful to see the Highland Council follow past policy in the Highlands and distance itself from Sabbath desecration."

Part of the Council's reply is as follows: "Planning consent has been granted only on a temporary basis at the moment, as has permission from the Highland Council, . . . I think that at the end of the day members felt that this was . . . purely for charitable purposes and all activity was done simply on a voluntary basis, and at the end of the day considered that, all things considered, more people would benefit from this sort of activity than would be affected adversely. . . . The democratic process took its course and, as I said before, generally elected members felt that in this particular circumstance it would be acceptable certainly for a trial period, after which time it will be reassessed."

The Council offers the sop of a "trial period" arrangement, but past experience proves that this is the thin end of the wedge for greater Sabbath desecration – one Inverness shop at least has decided to open on Sabbath because of competition from these car boot sales. The fact of the proceeds of the sales going to charity will not for a moment atone for desecrating the Sabbath. The Council also seems to shift responsibility for the decision to the "democratic process", but this will not make the elected representatives less blameless in the eyes of the Lord of the Sabbath. □

Church Information

MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY (D.V.)

NORTHERN: At Dingwall on Tuesday, 24th February, 1998, at 2.00 pm.

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 17th February, 1998, at 3.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 10th March, 1998, at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Tuesday, 10th February, 1998, at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 3rd March, 1998, at 1.00 pm.

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

ZIMBABWE: At Bulawayo on Tuesday, 10th March, 1998, at 11.00 am.

DAY OF HUMILIATION AND PRAYER

THE Synod has appointed that "Wednesday, 10th December, 1997, be kept as a day of humiliation and prayer throughout the Church, to acknowledge our enormous transgressions and backsliding both nationally and ecclesiastically, and to implore the Lord for His own glory to shine upon us favourably, by the outpouring of His Holy Spirit in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHURCH DEPUTIES TO CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

THE Dominions and Overseas Committee is sending two deputies to assist our congregations abroad.

God willing, the Rev. K. D. Macleod will visit Australia and New Zealand, leaving on the 2nd of December and returning on the 27th of January 1998. It is expected that he will supply all our Congregations in these countries, and also attend to various other duties laid upon him.

Rev. K. Watkins, who has already arrived in Chesley, Canada, is supplying the congregation there and also conducting the communion season services. He will also be visiting a group of people who worship together in Mount Elgin, and another in the Southern part of the United States, both of which wish to know more about the Free Presbyterian Church with a view, in the case of one of them at least, of belonging to the Church.

We are grateful to Mr Macleod and Mr Watkins for willingly undertaking this extra work. It is most desirable that we would pray for them as they engage in their duties for the Church in these countries, that the Lord would protect them in their travels, give them wisdom and grace for their work, and success in it.

Rev. D. A. Ross, Convener of the Dominions and Overseas Committee

VISIT TO THE UKRAINE

THE Rev. D. A. Ross flew to Odessa on Thursday, 6th November, to do some mission work among those in Odessa and Kiev with whom we have contact.

He expects to return on Tuesday, 25th November, God willing. He requests that the Lord's people may be remembering him in prayer, seeking that the Lord would bless his endeavours. □

NOTICES TO CONGREGATIONAL TREASURERS

1. Final remittances for 1997

CONGREGATIONAL Treasurers are requested to send their final remittances for 1997 to the General Treasurer to reach him not later than Monday, 29 December 1997, to allow these to be banked by 31st December, 1997. All payments not banked by the end of the year will be considered as 1998 receipts.

R. A. Campbell, General Treasurer

2. Acknowledgements of donations

IT has been agreed with the Editor, that all acknowledgements of donations for insertion in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* should, in future, be sent to the General Treasurer's office and not direct to the Editor. It is hoped to have these entered on computer disk there and sent to the Editor in that format. Acknowledgements for entry in the January 1998 issue, for example, should be sent to the General Treasurer, to reach him by 12 December 1997, and so forward.

R. A. Campbell, General Treasurer

LIST OF COMMUNIONS

THE list of communions on the inside front cover of this magazine has been corrected for 1998. The Editor would be glad to hear of any further changes which require to be made. □

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE GENERAL TREASURER acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

Bookroom Fund: Anon., £11.45 per M. M. M., J. W. S. D., Orkney, £50 per M. M. M.

Eastern Europe Fund: Anon., North Uist, £60; Anon., Psalm 60:4, £75; Anon., Inverness, £55.53.

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Canada, (Oct) \$100; Anon., Psalm 60:4, £50; *Kenya Mission*, A Friend, Edinburgh, £100 for Binga Mission.

CONGREGATIONAL TREASURERS acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Dornoch: Communion Expenses: Anon., £20; "For the purchase and distribution of God's Word", Anon., both per envelope in plate.

North Uist: Car Fund: M MacLeod, £50; *Manse Expenses:* M MacLeod, £50; both per H MacDonald.

Portree: Sustentation Fund: Psl. 126:6, £50, per envelope in plate; Friend, £10, per F.M. *Where needed:* Stornoway Friend, £40; Friend, £20; *Manse Expenses:* Ebenezer, £100, three per S.Y.M.

Stornoway: Congregational Fund Anon., £300; Friend, Glasgow, £50; Miss I McD; £20; Friend, NT; £10; all per Rev. J. M.; Anon., £6; per plate. *Sustentation Fund:* P.J.M., £60; C.M. £20; both per Rev. J. M. *Communion Expenses:* Anon., £100; Anon., £10; "Friend of the Cause", Breasclete, £10; all per plate. *Petrol:* Anon., £10, per plate. *Leverburgh Home of Rest:* D. & A. McL., £20, per Rev. J. M.