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Let your hands be strong

This was the call of God to the post-exilic Jews to renew building the Temple at Jerusalem. This Temple contained the symbol of God's presence among them and was the focus of their worship and service of God. This was a period of rebuilding the Church of God which had been punished for its idolatry and Sabbath-breaking by being delivered into the Babylonian captivity. However, the Lord had sovereignly revisited his Cause and restored a remnant to Jerusalem. This was a time of reconstruction; learning from the mistakes of the past and building for the future. However, the initial zeal had waned under the opposition of Tatnai the governor and others. The task of rebuilding the Temple seemed daunting and arduous, just as the New Testament equivalent seems now. It is therefore helpful for us to notice the message God gave to the church of that period. There are lessons here for the 20th century church endeavouring to emerge from the Babylonian exile of the past 100 years, an exile brought about by the unfaithfulness of the 19th century church.

There had been slackness in building the Temple, maybe because of their desire to build their own houses and their failure to see the glory of the work. "Who hath despised the day of small things?" Now, instructed by Haggai and Zechariah, Joshua and Zerubbabel stirred up the people so that they began rebuilding and could not be stopped by the opposition.

What were these words that the prophets of the Lord were given which worked so effectually in these Jews?

They were told, "Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets." Zechariah had been given

some visions by which he was taught that the Lord would be their strength in this work. He was taught that it would not be by the might of armies that the work would be accomplished, but "by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts". As long as they had the Spirit of God, they would succeed in spite of the opposition. As Zerubbabel had begun the building, so he would finish it. When he would do so, he would cry, "Grace, Grace". So the Lord promised them that the opposition would be powerless and would melt away, even though it would appear to be as great and as immovable as a mountain, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

How were they to evidence that their hands were strong in the Lord? They were not to be afraid of their enemies. "Fear not, but let your hands be strong." Fear would paralyse them so that they would not succeed in this great enterprise. The Lord was to be their fear.

Their hands were to be strong because the Lord had returned to Zion. He had punished them, but now He had a purpose of mercy towards them. "Now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days . . . it shall come to pass that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong."

Why had He returned? It was not because of any merit in them but "thus saith the Lord of hosts, I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury." The zeal He had to His own glory which was associated with unworthy Zion made him furious for the restoration of His honour in re-establishing Jerusalem a praise in the earth once more.

The Lord imbued His prophets Haggai and Zechariah (and, through them, Joshua, Zerubbabel and the people) with a sense of His majesty and glory. So the glory of the Temple and of the work in rebuilding it was set before them by Haggai, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts", and by Zechariah, "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."

These concepts were conveyed to Zechariah in the visions recorded in the first six chapters of his prophecy. The practical outworkings are recorded in the chapters seven and eight, and strength and encouragement are fostered through the promises of good for the future in the succeeding chapters. However, warnings are given to those who undervalue and reject these shepherds that God gives the church.

So what are the practical outworkings of being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might? "These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord." They were to be strong in truth, integrity and justice so that there would be peace in Zion. Our prayer for the peace of Jerusalem is a prayer also for the Lord to raise up Spirit-taught children of truth. Righteousness and peace kiss mutually not only in the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also in His kingdom. Malice was not to be imagined in their hearts, nor falsehood in swearing oaths to the Lord. Zechariah then proceeds to correct their attitude to innovations in religious matters. The result of such obedience, the Lord assures them, will be an ingathering of people to the Church of God.

We have no Temple of stone, but one of "lively stones". "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." If this Temple is to be built, these are the principles we must have before us in the twentieth century, as we endeavour in the strength of God's grace to build the Church of God in these troublous times.

Where we have the Lord's people, the lively oracles of the Word of God and the proclamation of the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God, we have the presence of God indeed. It is when that Gospel is applied by the power of the Spirit of God, so that men and women, boys and girls see the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", that we can expect them to see the glory of the kingdom of Christ and the glory of the service of Christ. This is how they are to be strengthened for the work of the kingdom. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." ". . . Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Isaiah 62: 6, 7.

Sermon

by Rev. A. McPherson at Farr, by Daviot, on the Monday of a communion in June, 1988.

“Remember me, O my God, for good” (Nehemiah 13: 31)

There is a great deal in these 13 chapters and many lessons to be learnt from them, but I wish to concentrate on this and three rather similar prayers which some have found fault with, and try to justify them. Yes, and to show that it would be good if we also could pray like this. The prayers I refer to are found in chapter 5: 19, and in verses 14, 22 and 31 of this chapter. I feel pretty sure that all the adults present who have come across these verses in their readings of this book, have taken notice of these prayers and wondered at their wording, and wondered what sort of spirit produced them. Had Nehemiah become swollen-headed at the end of a period of successful administration of the affairs of Jerusalem, and do the prayers reveal self-confidence and self-righteousness? Many do think that, and able critics among them; but there is good reason for disagreeing with them and showing that these are good prayers which any gracious person might well pray when in comparable circumstances to Nehemiah's. We can consider two matters that these are, (1) Allegedly faulty prayers. (2) Prayers by which we may test ourselves.

1. Allegedly faulty prayers.

There is a whole set of commentaries on the Old Testament known commonly as “Keil and Delitsch.” In the last sentence of his commentary on this book, C. F. Keil says, “This piety is, however, strongly persuaded by the legal spirit of post-Babylonian Judaism.” Others again have detected in these prayers the beginnings of the Pharisaical spirit and was so prominent at the time of Christ. Certainly, a person who had read only this last chapter of the book might wonder if Nehemiah was boastful of his achievements. This was the view of the younger Marcus Dods who in an article written in 1887, felt shocked at the tone in which Nehemiah recorded his reforms in the final chapter. Dods thought, too much “I testified” and “I contended” and felt that the refrain, “Remember me”, etc. showed that Nehemiah thought that his good deeds had given him a claim on God.

Dods said nothing about the prayer in verse 22, though, which is so much in keeping with the earlier prayers and devout statements as to show that the Nehemiah of the final chapter is the same man, spiritually as appears previously. This being so, what is needed is that the other “Remembers” be explained in a way agreeable to the character of the

noble, self-denying, brave, generous and godly man who appears in the whole record.

It was the very reverse of self-interest that took Nehemiah to Jerusalem in the first place. When news came to him of the broken-down state of that city, sorrow haunted him for days, and at length King Artaxerxes noticed it. "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." In great fear, knowing that it was a capital crime to look anything but cheerful in the king's presence, Nehemiah told why he looked so dejected. The king, however, proved sympathetic and gave Nehemiah permission to rebuild Jerusalem. So the good man went away and set about his task. He organised the building of the walls, superintended the whole work, and made the builders defenders also when the need arose. He released the poor from the bondage of debt and took no payment as governor. He resisted the threats of enemies and finished the wall. He reinstituted certain religious ordinances and did much to bring the Jews back to their theocratic status. In all, he had given 12 years of constant service to God and his people. He had shown himself to be a man of action, and of prayers also, one who relied constantly on divine help.

So, in view of all this, how do we explain these short prayers in which he asks God to remember him in connection with deeds he had done? We must remember that at the time Nehemiah learned of the low state of Jerusalem, over 90 years had passed since the first contingent of Jews returned from Babylon. And for one reason or another, little was done to restore the once-famous capital to its former condition of beauty and security. The returned exiles took 28 years to rebuild the temple, and when Ezron arrived 57 years later, he had to rectify various religious and moral abuses. Another 13 years saw Nehemiah's appearance on the scene, and it was only by force of character, delegated authority and divine help that he carried through his programme of rebuilding and reform in the face of opposition from foes and the hindrances of half-hearted friends. The prayer of chapter 5 v. 19 appears to have as its background unappreciated generosity.

Then, from the sixth verse of chapter 13, we see that Nehemiah had gone back to Shushan and resumed his serving of Artaxerxes for a time. It was a long enough absence for further backsliding to take place, and Nehemiah when he returned, had again to act vigorously, displeasing many as he did so. Taking all this into consideration, what we see is a godly, conscientious and zealous man doing God's will in the face of the disapproval of many less honourable than himself. And well aware that

men generally did not appreciate his motives he, as it were, says to the Lord. "Thou knowest what I have done, and though I receive no recognition nor reward from men, yet do Thou remember me for good, notwithstanding my imperfections which need thy mercy, and I shall be satisfied." This view of these brief prayers will, I believe, be confirmed shortly when we make a more detailed examination of them. The prayers are not faulty.

2. Prayers by which we may test ourselves.

First, let us look at the one in chapter 5 v. 19; "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people." There were no funds to pay for the huge task of repairing the city wall, and it was done by voluntary, unpaid labour. But many of the workers were poor and laden with debt to the wealthier ones among them. These latter, it has to be said to their shame, had lent at high rates of interest with the result that land, vineyards and houses had to be mortgaged, and even their sons and daughters given into the service of the creditors. When Nehemiah learned this, he was very angry, and at a conference with the creditors, soundly rebuked them and constrained them to redress the situation, and they did so.

In this we see how kindhearted Nehemiah was, yet shortly afterwards he had to defend himself from charges of oppressing the poor. No doubt there were some who had restored their debtors the possessions they needed in order to live, but had done it grudgingly; and out of malice and for revenge had put about the rumour that Nehemiah himself had been oppressing the poor. The good man's defence can be seen in chapter 5 from v. 14 onwards. Although the governor, he had levied no taxes for his maintenance, but instead had run his household at his own expense. All this he did, as he says in verse 15, through the fear of God. Nehemiah had acted in a very different way from men in their natural state who as Paul has said, "seek their own." Out of pity and concern for the poor, Nehemiah had redressed their wrongs and refrained from burdening them, at great cost to himself. Was not this true love to his neighbour? And he sought no earthly recompense, but only the approval of God. That is the point of the prayer in verse 19.

Now let us test ourselves in this matter. Looking back over the past, can you say that you have sought your neighbour's true good sincerely and selflessly? Which raises the question, "Who is my neighbour?" The answer is, "My neighbour is the person whom I am in a position to help. Beginning with those who stand in the closest relation to me, then going out in widening circles to embrace many others to whom in one way or

another I may do good." And good means true good. Not only good for the body, but regarding our neighbours as souls with spiritual and moral needs whom in some way we may be able to help. This obviously places discipline and chastisement among the means of doing good. Now, can you, friend, call the Searcher of hearts to witness, as Nehemiah could, that albeit imperfectly, you have attempted to act like His child and seek His Fatherly blessing?

Secondly, we have the prayer in chapter 13 v. 14; "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deed that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof." On his return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah soon noticed that the temple services were not being conducted properly because of the scarcity of Levites. This he found to be connected with Tobiah the Ammonite's use of the large chamber where the tithe offerings for the support of the Levites had been kept. Nehemiah then discovered that Tobiah, a man of a people who were the deadly foes of Israel, had been given this accommodation in the temple because he was connected with Eliashib the high-priest by marriage. So, regardless of Eliashib's displeasure, Nehemiah in his usual energetic manner put the matter right. He evicted Tobiah, cleared the chamber of furniture, and put it back into use as a storehouse for the Levites. With food available in Jerusalem, the Levites could now work there, and the services of God's house began again to be conducted properly. To Nehemiah, the proper functioning of the sanctuary was vital to the well-being of his people, and he had a true zeal for God's house, the same spirit as later appeared in his Saviour in full measure when He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem and fulfilled the words of Psalm 69 — "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And, of course, he did not do this without offending men. Eliashib and his relations were much put out by what was done, but what did it matter if men were offended or became ill-disposed? Nehemiah refers the whole matter to Him who knew why he had done these things, and craves to be remembered by Him; "Remember me, O my God, concerning this."

Let us now test ourselves by this prayer also. Have we a proper regard for the worship of God and the Cause of Christ? Have we been zealous for their purity and honour; and, this is very important, for their suitability for God's purpose of calling men to Himself in repentance and faith? And this is what the history of the Church tells clearly; that when departures are made from doctrine, from worship, from practice, from the manner of Christian living, from government and discipline — then that Church will become unfitted for the Lord's purpose of calling sin-

ners to Himself. I referred the other day to persons I know of in the Church of Scotland in a situation where all they have is a "do-good religion", who are told to keep attached to the Church, to engage themselves in its various activities, to be friendly, be kind, be moral, and so on. But there is not a word about how a sinner may be saved. Not a word about guilt, condemnation, depravity, lostness or about the divine provision of a Saviour from sin and the way that that is done. This is what happens if the purity of religion is in any way neglected. You can be certain that deterioration will follow, and that it will accelerate, and in a short time, a Church that was useful to the Lord and honouring to the Lord will be changed into something quite different.

We have to be careful in this matter because there is no question that the Free Presbyterian Church is in some ways different from what it was 50 years ago or more. I can remember back 50 years, and I see trends, tendencies and movements that did not exist then. In fencing the table yesterday, I spoke of the worldliness that appears in women having short hair and wearing men's garments. Half-a-century ago these things were not to be found among ourselves, and that had been the situation in the Church for centuries, from the time of the Apostles, in fact. Then, all of a sudden, people conclude that there is nothing wrong with these things, that the verdict of the Church through 19 centuries is to be set aside, and that new interpretations of Scripture support this worldliness. I give that as an example, and there are other things that drive one to the throne of grace. Now, let each of us ask himself or herself whether we can say truthfully to God,

"The habitation of thy house,

Lord, I have loved well;

Yea, in that place I do delight

where doth thine honour dwell."

(Ps. 26: 8)

"Remember me as a lover of thy name and house, and all that is thine."

The third prayer is in verse 22: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy." Once again the Lord's servant has to enforce the observance of the Sabbath, and having done that, betakes himself to prayer. The words he uses show clearly the spirit in which he prayed. So far from exhibiting complacency, boasting or self-righteousness, he shows how conscious he is of his imperfections and sins. Sparing mercy is what he asks for. After all his valiant service — and none of us has done anything comparable to what Nehemiah did in his time; whatever striving, whatever contending, is nothing in comparison with these 12 years of Gon-honouring

activity on Nehemiah's part. Yes, after all this valiant service, Nehemiah has the same sort of prayer as the penitent thief, "God have mercy upon me a sinner."

Now, let us test ourselves in this matter. How much does divine, sparing mercy figure in our thinking, praying and doing? Do we really think what we sometimes say, that we are unprofitable servants? And why did not Marcus Dods perceive this element in Nehemiah's praying? I think he did see it, but it suited him not to take notice of it, for his rationalistic purposes, and for his opposition to God and to many parts of His Word, and to His servants, and His Cause. Marcus Dods, it is to be feared, knew nothing personally about the divine mercy, and it suited him to pay no attention to this verse which shows clearly the spirit in which Nehemiah was acting.

The fourth prayer is our text: "Remember me, O my God, for good." Nehemiah mentions one last deed. His people were being corrupted by the widespread practice of marrying women belonging to nations who were enemies of Israel and idolaters. As a result, children were growing up who could not speak the Jewish language properly, and who in other ways were not fully Jewish. Nehemiah put a stop to this: he insisted on the separateness of God's people, and the purity of the priesthood. And once again, in a few words he seeks God's blessing on himself. Let God remember him in a good way, and he shall have all he could desire in the better country where the Church of God is not troubled and weakened by declension or backsliding.

Test yourself by this. Is separation from the world one of your great concerns? Have you a clear view of the fact that the world, that is, the great mass of unregenerate people, to which you at one time belonged, represented by your neighbours, or your relatives, even perhaps a wife or husband — do you see that the world is opposed to God and His Church? The Saviour said that it was; He said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John 15: 19).

The hatred takes many forms; not always, perhaps least often, an open, undisguised form. It shows itself in its attempts to undermine Christ's Church, and attempts to manoeuvre the children of God into compromises that weaken their position and set them sliding from one point of decline to another. The world has many ways of working its evil purposes on the people of God. And wherever you have worldliness mixed with the spirituality of the Church of Christ, there you have the

seeds of declension, and almost certainly there will be declension.

God's design for His Church is that it should reflect the moral glory of the Redeemer, its glorious Head. Let us, therefore be on our guard against worldliness in every form that it takes, and be on our guard against its intrusion into the life of the Church, into its worship, and practice, and discipline. Yes, the world involving itself in the discipline of the Church! The Church applying discipline — the world condemning its action! What right has the world to act as a judge in such matters? The world, in all its carnality and evident ignorance of basic spiritual facts and truths! But that is what happens, and the world is powerful in our day. The people of God in the midst of the world are few and weak, and behind the power of the world is the power of the devil. Yes, Satan is the god of this world, and he uses it to try to destroy the Church of God; and in so doing, aiming at God his Maker who cast him down after he had sinned. Satan is full of enmity against the Lord, and against God's creatures, and especially against those in whom the Spirit of the Lord dwells.

We do not know the thousandth part of Satan's devices. What he wants is to bring the Church to be just the same spiritually and morally as the world. In fact he has in large measure achieved that. Most of the branches of the Visible Church are worldly, doctrinally corrupt, and devoid of Gospel truth, their people lacking in spirituality, their ministers false shepherds leading their poor flocks astray. Satan has achieved a great deal, and do you think he is going to be happy so long as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland exists, adhering to the doctrine, worship, practice, government and discipline with which it began? No, he will not be happy, and he is working hard to achieve his evil aims in our congregations, and families, and in our own souls. Let us be continually on guard and praying that God would open our eyes to detect this worldliness wherever it is to be found.

So it was with this godly, good man, this courageous servant of God. Are you, like Nehemiah, content with the good that God will give you here and in eternity? It would be a good thing if we could find resemblances like these between ourselves and this great servant of God. We could expect to be remembered for good. We could think that we were giving evidence that Christ's love was constraining us to live no longer unto ourselves but to Him. That would be a goodly conclusion to come to as we review the past, as we think over what we have been doing, saying and thinking. Oh how good to be able to think that in some measure the love of Christ has constrained us to live no longer to ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again!

Spurgeon 100 years ago

Almost exactly 100 years ago, C. H. Spurgeon inserted the following in his magazine, The Sword and Trowel, December 1888, p620.

STAND FAST

Failure at a crucial moment may mar the entire outcome of a life. A man who has enjoyed special light is made bold to follow in the way of the Lord, and is anointed to guide others therein. He rises into a place of love and esteem among the godly, and this promotes his advancement among men. What then? The temptation comes to be careful of the position he has gained, and to do nothing to endanger it. The man, so lately a faithful man of God, compromises with worldlings, and to quiet his own conscience invents a theory by which such compromises are justified, and even commended. He receives the praises of "the judicious"; he has, in truth, gone over to the enemy. The whole force of his former life now tells upon the wrong side. If the Lord loves him well enough, he will be scourged back to his place; but if not, he will grow more and more perverse, till he becomes a ringleader among the opposers of the gospel. To avoid such an end it becomes us ever to stand fast.

The Lord's Guidance

by Rev. John Newton

But how then may the Lord's guidance be expected? After what has been premised negatively, the question may be answered in a few words. In general, he guides and directs his people, by affording them, in answer to prayer, the light of his Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand and to love the Scriptures. The word of God is not to be used as a lottery; nor is it designed to instruct us by shreds and scraps, which, detached from their proper places, have no determinate import; but it is to furnish us with just principles, right apprehensions to regulate our judgments and affections, and thereby to influence and direct our conduct. They who study the Scriptures, in a humble dependence upon Divine teaching, are convinced of their own weakness, are taught to make a true estimate of every thing around them, are gradually formed into a spirit of submission to the will of God, discover the nature and duties of their several situations and relations in life, and the snares and temptations to which they are exposed. The word of God dwells richly in them, is a preservative from error, a light to their feet, and a spring of strength and con-

solation. By treasuring up the doctrines, precepts, promises, examples, and exhortations of Scripture, in their minds, and daily comparing themselves with the rule by which they walk, they grow into an habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquire a gracious taste, which enables them to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty, as a musical ear judges of sounds. And they are seldom mistaken, because they are influenced by the love of Christ, which rules in their hearts, and a regard to the glory of God, which is the great object they have in view.

In particular cases, the Lord opens and shuts for them, breaks down walls of difficulty which obstruct their path, or hedges up their way with thorns, when they are in danger of going wrong, by the dispensations of his providence. They know that their concerns are in his hands; they are willing to follow whither and when he leads; but are afraid of going before him. Therefore they are not impatient: because they believe, they will not make haste, but wait daily upon him in prayer; especially when they find their hearts most engaged in any purpose or pursuit, they are most jealous of being deceived by appearances, and dare not move farther or faster than they can perceive his light shining upon their paths. I express at least their desire, if not their attainment: thus they would be. And though there are seasons when faith languishes, and self too much prevails, this is their general disposition; and the Lord, whom they serve, does not disappoint their expectations. He leads them by a right way, preserves them from a thousand snares, and satisfies them that he is and will be their guide even unto death.

Sketch of Life and Times of George Gillespie

by Rev. John Colquhoun

(Continued from page 321)

4. GILLESPIE AT WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY 1643-1647.

The General Assembly of 1642 appointed a Commission to prosecute the work of bringing about uniformity of religion in all His Majesty's dominions and renewed that Commission on subsequent occasions. A later Assembly also gave the following commission to certain persons to prosecute the Treaty of Uniformity in England with the Houses of Parliament and the Assembly of Divines:-

“The General Assembly, taking to their consideration that the Treaty

of Uniformity in religion in all His Majesty's dominions is not yet perfected, Therefore renews the power and commission granted by preceding Assemblies for prosecuting that Treaty, unto these persons afternamed, viz. M. Alexander Henderson, M. Robert Douglas, M. Samuel Rutherford, M. Robert Baillie, M. Geo. Gillespie, *Ministers*; and John, Earl of Lauderdale, John, Lord Balmerino, and Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston, Elders: Authorising them with full power to prosecute the said Treaty of Uniformity with the honourable Houses of the Parliament of England, and the Reverend Assembly of Divines there, or any Committees appointed by them; And to do all and everything which may advance, perfect, and bring that Treaty to a happy conclusion, conform to the former commissions given thereanent." *Peterkins Records of the Kirk*, P. 450.

On 15th September, 1643 Gillespie and those of the other Scottish Commissioners who at the time went to London were received by the Westminster Assembly and welcomed by the Prolocutor, Dr. Twisse and two other English members. The first business thereafter was the reading over of the Solemn League and Covenant, clause by clause, and explanations given where necessary, till the whole of it was accepted by the Assembly. Afterwards the House of Commons and the Assembly subscribed the Covenant, and the House of Lords subscribed it later on, on the 15th October. At the Westminster Assembly, Gillespie, though the youngest member by many years, took more than his fair share of the work of that learned Convocation, both in its debates and in the work of its Committees. As is well known the members were drawn from among the foremost for learning and talents in the country, and when one views the various shades of opinions among its members, especially concerning the civil magistrate and church government, one is indeed surprised to find that, after debating these matters point by point, their considered opinion should be so favourable to what we in Scotland hold to be the only church government sanctioned in Scripture, that is, Presbyterianism, and that they should so clearly give the Scripture view of the province of the civil ruler in connection with the Church of God. It may truly be said that to a large extent we owe these matters to George Gillespie, as the humble instrument under God.

Though the Independents and the Erastians were not numerous in the Assembly yet, among them were to be found men of great talent and learning, and these did their utmost to force their new opinions on the rest of the Assembly, only to find that they had more than their match in the Scottish Commissioners. Robert Baillie, in reference to the debates on

the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, gives an idea of what had to be contended with when he says. "The unhappy Independents would mangle that sacrament. No catechising nor preparation before; no thanksgiving after; no sacramental doctrine or chapters in the day of celebration; no coming up to any table, but a carrying of the elements to all in their seats athort the church; yet all this, with God's help, we have carried over them to our practice. We must dispute every inch of ground. Great need have we of the prayers of all God's People."

The story is often told how Gillespie defeated John Selden, Esq., known as "the learned Selden". Arriving rather late, so the story goes, when he came to the door he was told that the place was so crowded that it was impossible to get an entrance. "Can you not admit a pinning?" he said, comparing himself to the small stones which masons use for packing a wall. He worked his way to the seat allocated to the Scottish Commissioners, and took his place beside them. The subject under discussion was Matthew 18: 15-17. Selden in a learned speech, conspicuous for the amount of Rabbinical lore which he packed into it, maintained that the passage had no reference to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and that it altogether related to civil jurisdiction. Herle and Marshall, both very learned men, endeavoured to reply to it but utterly failed to demolish his arguments. Some accounts say that at this juncture it was Samuel Rutherford who turned to Gillespie and said, "Rise, George, rise up, man, and defend the right of the Lord Jesus Christ to govern, by His own laws, the Church which He hath purchased with His blood." Gillespie arose and, first of all, gave a masterly analysis of Selden's speech and then proved clearly that the passage had reference only to a spiritual jurisdiction, because, (1) the nature of the offence and cause treated of is spiritual; (2) The end is spiritual, for it is not restitution or satisfaction, but to gain the soul; (3) The persons are spiritual, for Christ speaks to His Apostles; (4) The manner of proceeding is spiritual — all is done in the name of Christ; (5) The censure is spiritual, for it is binding the soul; (6) Christ would not have sent His disciples for private spiritual injuries to civil courts; (7) The Church of the Jews had spiritual censures, and the expression, "Let him be as a heathen," imported prohibition from sacred things, for the heathen might not come into the temple; and the ceremonially unclean might not enter, much more the morally unclean. Such was the effect of his arguments that the Assembly was convinced, and it is reported that Selden himself said, "That young man, by this single speech, has swept away the learning and labour of ten years of my life." His friends, expecting to find a summary of the analysis

which he had given of Selden's speech in a note-book in which he had been jotting down something now and then, were surprised to find nothing but *Da lucem, Domine* (Lord, give light), and similar petitions. This shows that though he had acquired a vast amount of learning, he greatly felt his need of being wholly dependent upon the Lord for help and guidance.

The details of this combat between two intellectual giants are given so clearly that one is loath to believe that it has no foundation. As far as any authentic proof is concerned some of these details cannot be associated with the particular discussion with which tradition has associated them, but they may, however, have a connection with one of the many other passages-at-arms between these two champions. Dr. Mitchell proves from the most reliable sources that the details, as given by tradition, in connection with this particular debate are not according to fact. He says, "The manuscript Minutes coincide with Lightfoot's *Journal* in assigning Gillespie's speech not to the session of 20th but to that of 21st February. In Gillespie's own Notes it is introduced at the close of the account of the former session with the words, 'I reply', not 'I replied' and may simply embody a brief outline of the reply he was to make on the following day. The reply made to Selden on the spur of the moment was that of Herle, who in 1646 succeeded Dr. Twisse as Prolocutor, and judging even from the fragmentary jottings preserved by Byfield, one cannot doubt that it was a very able reply. Gillespie and Young appear to have taken the evening to arrange their thoughts, and at next session made very telling replies, the former to the general line of argument, the latter to the citations from rabbinical and patristic authorities." *The Westminster Assembly*, p. 288.

On the occasion of a Solemn Fast on 27th March, 1644, Gillespie preached before the House of Commons from the words, "And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them." Ezek. 43: 11. At the beginning of his sermon he refers to another discourse he preached on a like occasion in which he laid open England's disease, that is, corruption in religion and the iniquity of their holy things. He then tells them, that the symptoms of that disease are "your high places not yet taken away, many of your old superstitious ceremonies to this day remaining, which, though not so evil as the high places of idolatry in which idols are worshipped, yet are

parallel to the high places of will-worship, of which we read that the people, thinking it to be too hard to be tied to go up to Jerusalem with every sacrifice, 'did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the Lord their God only', pleading for their doing so, antiquity, custom, and other defences of that kind, which have been alleged for your ceremonies." The sermon was published by order of the House of Commons, and, in a preface to the Reader, he observes, "Reformation has many unfriends, some upon the right hand, and some upon the left; while others cry up that detestable indifferency or neutrality abjured by our solemn covenant, insomuch that Gamaliel and Gallio, men who regarded alike the Jewish and the Christian religion, are highly commended, as examples for all Christians, and as men walking by the rules, not only of policy, but of reason and religion."

Directory for Public Worship

Early in January 1645 Gillespie, along with Baillie, returned to Scotland for a brief season and before leaving the Assembly he acknowledged, in his parting speech, that it was one of the greatest mercies which he received in this world to have been associated with the Assembly, returned humble thanks for their forbearance towards him, and gave expression to his great respect for the Dissenting brethren among them. The Prolocutor, in his reply said: "All of us have had great experience of your learned pains: for myself, I have taken great comfort in your learned discourses." Their purpose in going to Scotland was to submit the Directory for Public Worship to the General Assembly which sat on 22nd January, 1645. At that Assembly the Directory, after certain alterations had been recommended which were afterwards agreed by both Houses of the English Parliament, was adopted and an Act made on 3rd February, 1645 "for the establishing and putting in execution of the Directory." According the Baillie this Act was written by Gillespie. Three days later the Scottish Parliament passed an Act "approving and establishing the Directory for Public Worship".

On 9th April, 1645, we find Gillespie and Baillie appearing again in the Westminster Assembly and Gillespie, in his report of the acceptance by the Church of Scotland of the Directory for Public Worship, assures the Divines that the hearts of those in Scotland are much with those at Westminster, that they are "so much comforted by those first-fruits, that it makes them long for the full harvest." He also tells that they themselves would have been there a month previously but were carried away to Holland.

In a little over a month after this we find the Assembly discussing the

Report from the Committee on the Catechism in which Mr Gillespie takes his share, and in the course of the discussions, imparted the information that when lately in Scotland he showed his brethren an example of the plan upon which they intended to go and that it was liked very much. In this he refers to the original form in which the Westminster Assembly's plan for catechising was cast. When they had gone as far as the exposition of the Fourth Commandment we find from the printed Minutes of the Assembly, for 14th January, 1646, that it was ordered "That the Committee for the Catechism do prepare a draft of two Catechisms, one more large and another more brief, in which they are to have an eye to the Confession of Faith, and to the matter of the Catechism already begun." In this we see the origins of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as they are known to us today.

Sermon Before the House of Lords.

On 27th August, 1645, being the day appointed for solemn and public humiliation, Gillespie preached before the House of Lords in the Abbey Church at Westminster. His sermon was based on the words, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." Mal. 3: 2. The general doctrine which he drew from these words was; "The way of Christ, and fellowship with Him is very difficult and displeasing to our sinful nature, and is not so easy a matter as most men imagine." He brings many things from Scripture to prove this, and then propounds the question, "How does all this agree with Matthew 11: 30, 'For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light;' and I John 5: 3, 'His commandments are not grievous?'" He shows from the same source that there is perfect agreement, and then insists on the need of all classes of people to be cleansed. In his application he addresses his audience, saying, "My second and chief application shall be unto you, my noble lords. If you be willing to admit such a reformation as is according to the mind of Christ, as is like the 'refiner's fire', and 'fuller's soap', then, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (who will say, ere long, to every one of you, Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward, Luke 16: 2), I recommend these three things unto you, — I mean, that you should make use of the 'refiner's fire' in reference to three sorts of dross: 1. The dross of malignancy; 2. The dross of heresy and corruption in religion; 3 The dross of profaneness." Never was exhortation more faithfully given and never was it more needed. When the sermon was printed he added a "Preface to the Reader", in which he says:-

"I have in this sermon applied my thoughts toward these three things:

1. The soul-ensnaring error of the greatest part of men who choose to themselves such a way to the kingdom of heaven as is broad, and smooth, and easy, and but little or nothing at all displeasing to flesh and blood, like him that tumbled down upon the grass and said, *Utinum hoc esset laborare*. 2. The grumbling and unwillingness which appeareth in very many, when they should submit to that reformation of the church which is according to the mind of Jesus Christ, like them that said to the seers, 'See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things.' Isa. 30: 10, and again, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,' Ps. 2: 3. 3. The sad and desolate condition of the kingdom of Scotland, then calling for our prayers and tears, and saying, 'Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter): for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me,' Ruth 1: 20. We are 'Pressed out of measure, above strength,' and 'had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us,'." II Cor. 1: 8-10.

About this time Gillespie was engaged in another controversy. On 13th July, 1645, the Rev. Thomas Coleman preached before the House of Commons a sermon which was remarkable for its highly Erastian views. When Gillespie's sermon before the House of Lords was printed he added an appendix to it entitled, *A Brotherly Examination of Some Passages of Mr Coleman's late Printed Sermon*. Coleman replied in a pamphlet entitled, *A Brotherly Examination Re-examined*. Gillespie replied to this in a pamphlet entitled, *Nihil Respondes*. A bitter reply from this came from the pen of Coleman, bearing the title, *Male Dicis Maledicis*. Gillespie issued, in reply to this, a pamphlet entitled *Male Audis*, in which he surveyed the whole Erastian Controversy, silencing not only Coleman, but no one else has endeavoured to reply to it to this day. On the title-page he tells us that in it the repugnancy of Coleman's "Erastian doctrine to the Word of God, to the Solemn League and Covenant, and to the ordinances of Parliament; also his contradictions, tergiversations, heterodoxies, calumnies, and perverting of testimonies are made more apparent than formerly." When such charges are proved, and they are indeed proved in this pamphlet, it is no wonder though Mr Coleman never replied to them.

Though he gave punctual attendance at the various Sessions of the Assembly of Divines, and contributed in a most useful way to the discussion of the various subjects brought before it yet we find that this was, by

no means, the limit of his labours there. At the Session held on 30th July, 1646 we read from the published Minutes that "Mr Gillespie gave his books dedicated unto the Assembly to the Prolocutor and the rest of the members then present, for which he had thanks returned by the Prolocutor in the name of the Assembly." In a foot-note the Editors of the printed Minutes state, "This was his great work: *Aaron's Rod Blossoming; or, the Divine Ordinance of Church Government Vindicated*. It was dedicated 'to the Reverend and Learned Assembly of Divines convened at Westminster,' and was published in London in 1646." In this book he deals, first, with the government of the Jewish Church, showing that it was distinct from the State; that the Jews had an ecclesiastical sanhedrim as well as a civil one; the nature of ecclesiastical excommunication among the Jews, as shown in Scripture, and, by fourteen arguments, shows that offenders against the Moral Law were excluded from the passover. Secondly, he goes on to write of the government of the Christian Church, giving the history of Erastianism, and proves what is the proper place of the civil magistrate with respect to the Church of Christ; that Christ has a general kingdom as He is the eternal Son of God, and a particular kingdom as He is Mediator, reigning over the Church only. In the third part of his book he deals more particularly with excommunication from the Church and suspension from the Lord's Table, proving from Scripture and antiquity that scandalous persons ought not to partake of the Lord's Supper. That such a work could be produced at a time when he was engaged so fully in other work requiring great mental concentration amply proves both the learning and the industry of the man.

Gillespie Finally Returns to Scotland

Gillespie took his last leave of the Assembly on 16th July, 1647, and this, incidentally, shows that the pleasing tradition connected with the answer to the question, What is God? in the Shorter Catechism, cannot be rightly associated with his name. On this point Prof. A. F. Mitchell, D.D., of St. Andrews says, in tracing the sources from which the Larger Catechism was taken, "The answer to the question, What is God? had in the former draft been taken from Palmer's work with the exception that 'perfection', is in the plural, as it had been in another catechism published anonymously in the previous year. Here the former description is exchanged for one abridged apparently from Ussher's *Body of Divinity*. The next answer, respecting the properties and attributes of God, was at first distinct from the previous one. Dr. Briggs supposes it may have been got by crushing into one the answers to more than a score of questions in Palmer's treatise and Dr. Matthews' by a somewhat similar condensation

of various answers in Ball's larger catechism. But it is simply an abridgment of a paragraph in Chapter II of the Confession of Faith; and the ultimate answer of the Larger Catechism to the question, What is God? was got by joining these two answers into one. The answer to the same question in the Shorter Catechism is composed of the Scriptural definition, 'God is a Spirit', with the incommunicable attributes arranged in the same order as they were by Rogers, but in adjectival form, and the communicable in substantive form almost exactly as they had been given by Egerton." *The Westminster Assembly*, p. 422, 423.

In a foot-note to the same work, p. 429, Dr. Mitchell says, "Even three months after he (Gillespie) left London all that he was able to report to the Scottish Assembly, respecting the Catechisms, was that the Divines 'have had no time yet to do anything in the latter, but here is the copy of the greater, which is almost complete'." This is further confirmed by the following recommendation from the Commission of Assembly which sat on 29th September, 1647. "The Commission, apprehending that the Assembly of Divines in England will not fall upon the Short Catechism at this time, do therefore recommend to the Ministers of Edinburgh and Messrs David Calderwood and Robert Ker, Messrs David Dickson, Robert Ramsay and Robert Baillie, and Messrs Robert Blair and Samuel Rutherford, so soon as the Large Catechism shall be perfected and sent down, to draw out of it a short plain Catechism for the capacity of the weaker, in case the Assembly of Divines shall do nothing in it, and desires Mr George Gillespie to write to their brother Mr Samuel Rutherford, to learn if the Assembly of Divines will take any pains in the Short Catechism." *Commission of Assembly Records, 1646-47*, p. 306.

The General Assembly which met in August 1647 caused to be printed the *Hundred and Eleven Propositions* which Gillespie wrote against Erastianism, Independency, and Liberty of Conscience, falsely so-called. The reason for printing them is, in the Act ordaining their publication, given as, "Being tender of so great an engagement by solemn covenant, — sincerely, really, and constantly to endeavour in our places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in this kirk of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed kirks, and to endeavour the nearest conjunction and uniformity in all these, together with the extirpation of heresy, schism, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine. . . ." These Propositions give a very clear view of the heresies refuted and

anyone who studies them carefully can make himself master of the arguments used to support them and of how they can be combated. The early part of these Propositions were written while Gillespie was in London, and in the midst of other labours, yet they are written with all the thoroughness which is so characteristic of the man, so that, after reading them, one is constrained to pause and adore the great goodness of the Lord in giving such a gift to His Church.

(To be continued)

Precious Saving Faith

"But without faith it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11: 6.

Paul's words (Hebrews 11: 6), "But without faith it is impossible to please God" give cause for much careful examination of the soul, concerning its state and its activity in secret before God; whether a man possess indeed that true and unfeigned faith, and act from it, in a tender dependance upon Divine influences, and in the power of Christ; this is well pleasing to God, and without it none can please God. Touching the words, we shall so consider them in our very brief enlargement as in some measure to throw light upon them and apply them to our object.

With regard to the enlargement, these words are a general conclusion drawn from what the Apostle had said of Enoch, and they indicate at the same time that Enoch possessed faith, for he pleased God; "now without faith it is impossible to please God".

Our Apostle speaks of faith. By this you are not to understand that *historical faith*, by which a man takes all to be true, firm and infallible, which God has revealed in His eternal word. A man can have that by a study of Divine truth which has a certain power of demonstration to the conscience, in convincing him that God alone is the Author of such a revelation. The devils themselves believe in this sense and they tremble. Neither are you to understand *the faith of miracles*; for in the great and universal day shall Christ say unto some, who in His name have cast out devils; "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." Neither understand here *temporary faith*; for that has no root, neither can it withstand the heat of adversity and persecution.

But understand with me that *precious saving faith* which is God's priceless gift; whereby the convinced, burdened and heavy-laden sinner goes out of himself and all his own righteousness, unto Jesus, embracing Him and clinging to Him; this is the faith by which the just do live, and

receive a share in all the good things of the covenant, whereby we can be saved. Our Apostle says of this saving faith, that without it men cannot please God; this being the doctrine of God's precious word, that all which is not of faith, is sin; and hence being displeasing to God, it speaks little comfort to those who rest upon their moral and respectable walk, or upon their profession and knowledge, without ever experiencing the heart-renewing grace of God. What do I say? It points out to them that all they do, since it issues not of faith, displeases God, yes angers Him.

The truth hereof will appear to your Christian consideration:

Firstly, when we reflect upon God with whom man has to do, He is the last Judge of all the earth, the thrice-holy God, standing with the unregenerate sinner in the relationship of the covenant of works; in the which all His attributes and perfections are armed against the sinner, and His sword is unsheathed to do away with him; his tears and sighs, reformation of life and seeking of God, can in no way suffice Him; His justice must be satisfied before He can show friendship with the sinner; but neither angels nor men can satisfy it; it is Immanuel alone who has done it, but none has a part in Him without faith. Hence God being just, men cannot please Him without faith.

Secondly, when we consider man. Although he have an appearance of virtue, many things which are materially good; in so far as they come forth from an unregenerate source, they are sheer vices before God, "splendid sins" as Augustine said. The whole world is condemned before God; and there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Rom. 3: 10, 12). "The carnal mind (margin, the minding of the flesh) is enmity against God" (Rom. 8: 7). How can that which is sin please God? Man cannot make amends for sin by sinning; and on this account, without faith it is impossible to please God.

Thirdly and finally, we consider faith itself; that one-ness of will with God: that approval and consent and worship of the virtues and perfections of God, as the Lord has been pleased to reveal these in the way of sinner's salvation, without any of his own righteousness, alone through the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and through faith alone embraced. Now the contrary of faith is unbelief, which deems this wisdom of God to be foolishness and seeks its salvation in something else; but thereby men cannot please God. It thus remains a proven fact that it is impossible without faith to please God.

This then being so my dearly beloved readers, that it is impossible without faith to please God, each of you will be obliged with me to conclude that faith is that *one* thing, which alone is absolutely needful to us,

if we are to live comfortably and to die blessedly, and upon good grounds expect a glorious entrance into that city not made with hands, whose Builder and Maker is God, where faith shall be exchanged for glorious sight. Yes, beloved, you will doubtless conclude with me that for us all there is much which concerns us in a knowledge of this faith — its nature, disposition and operations — so that we may be able to examine and to try ourselves in the fear of the Lord.

For this reason we have found cheerfulness to speak in more detail concerning Faith; and before we proceed to a closer consideration of its nature, to speak first about the designations thereof, which are very numerous in God's word; of which, were each to be mindful, he would discover the manifold wisdom of God, and would cease from unnecessary differences, and also from harsh treatment of little ones. For we would then see how one and the same faith is found under different descriptions; and we should not deny or thrust aside seeking souls and such as desire salvation, though not having experienced this or that degree included under a certain description, when they have indeed known the soul experiences comprehended under another.

One believer will have much faith under the description of *trusting*, but another will be more active in *fleeing* unto Jesus; both are operations of the same faith; and therefore the one should not suspect the other nor deal harshly with him.

— Taken from the introduction of the author's book, "THE A B C OF FAITH" — Rev. Alexander Comrie 1764.

Letter

by the Rev. Christopher Love.

How to live in this world so as to live in heaven? Yours I received, and thought on that question. It is one of the common pleas of my heart which I have often occasion to study, and therefore takes me not unprovided.

It is hard to keep the helm up against so many cross winds as we meet with on this sea of fire and glass. That man knoweth not his own heart that finds it not difficult to break through the entanglements of the world. Creatures' frowns encompass and tempestuate the spirit, that it thinks it doth well to be angry. Both ways grace is the loser. We had all need to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. The greatest of our conflicts and causes of complaints seem to have their original here —

temptation follow tempers, as there are two predominant sins in the temper of every heart. Pride is one in all men in the world.

I will tell you familiarly what God has done for my soul, and in what tread my soul keeps towards Himself. I am come to a conclusion to look after no greater matters in the world but to know Christ and Him crucified. I make best way in a low gale. A high spirit and a high sail together will be dangerous, and therefore I prepare to live low. I desire not much; I pray against it. My study is my calling; so much as to tend that without distraction I am bound to plead for no more. By my secluded retirements I have advantage to observe how every day's occasions insensibly wear off the heart from God, and bury in itself, which they, who live in care and lumber, cannot be sensible of. I have seemed to see a need of everything God gives me, and to want nothing he denies me. There is no dispensation, though afflictive, but either in it or after it, I find I could not be without it. Whether it be taken from or not given to me, God quiets me in Himself. I cast all my concerns on the Lord, and live securely on the care and wisdom of my Heavenly Father. My ways, you know, are in some sense hedged up with thorns, and grow darker and darker daily; but yet I distrust not my God in the least, and live more quietly in the absence of all, by faith, than I should do, I am persuaded, if I possessed them. I think the Lord deals kindly with me to make me believe for all His mercies before I have them. They will then be Isaac's "sons of laughter". The less reason hath to work upon, the more freely faith casts itself upon the faithfulness of God. I find that while faith is steady, nothing can disquiet me, and when faith totters, nothing can establish me. If I tumble out among creatures, I am perfectly lost, and can come to no end. But if I stay myself on God and leave Him to work in his own time and way, I am at rest, and can sit down and sleep on a promise when a thousand rise up against me. Therefore my way is not cast before hand, but to work with God by the day — "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof." I find so much to do continually with my calling and heart, that I have no time to puzzle myself with peradventures and futurities.

As for the state of the times, it is very gloomy and tempestuous. But why do the heathen rage? Faith lies at anchor in the midst of the waves, and believes the accomplishment of the promise through all those overturnings, confusions, and seeming impossibilities. Upon this God do I live, who is our God for ever, and will guide us unto death. Methinks I lie becalmed in His bosom, as Luther in such a state. I am not much concerned; let Christ see to it. I know prophecies are now dark, and the

books are sealed, and men have all been deceived, and every cistern fails, yet God doth continue faithful and faithful is He that has promised who will do it. I believe these dark times are the womb of a bright morning.

Many things more I might have said, but enough. O, brother, keep close to God, and then you need fear nothing. Maintain secret and intimate communion with God, and then a little of the creature will go a great way. Take time for duties in private; crowd not religion into a corner of the day. There is a Dutch proverb — "Nothing is gained by stealing or lost by praying." Lay up all your goodness in God, so as to over-balance the sweetness and bitterness of all creatures. Spend no time anxiously in before-hand contrivances for this world; they never succeed, God will run His dispensations another way. Self-contrivances are the effects of unbelief. I can speak by experience. Would men spend those hours they run out in plots and devices in communion with God, and leave all on Him by venturesome believing, they would have more peace and comfort.

I leave you with your God — and mine. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Pray for your own soul, pray for Jerusalem, and pray hard for your poor brother.

Reviews

Cremation not for Christians by Alfred J. Levell. Gospel Standard Publications, 1981. 21pp. Paperback.

Cremation, is it Christian? by James W. Fraser. Loizeaux Brothers, New Jersey, 1965, revised 1985. 31pp. Paperback.

The Paganism of Cremation by Ergatees. Westminster Standard Publications.

Sadly, there is no good book, currently in print, exposing the unchristian nature of cremation. These three pamphlets seem to be the only ones readily available. The third one was reprinted in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* September 1988, pp284-287.

Mr Levell's pamphlet deals with six scriptural arguments for Christian burial and against cremation. Mr Fraser's pamphlet is a passionate appeal for more consideration to be given to the subject. It is dated in places but still contains some useful points that are not normally made in anti-cremation pamphlets.

As is too common with Christian pamphlets, the scriptural arguments are mustered in a disconnected manner. This blunderbuss approach may

be useful to some, but more closely reasoned treatment is needed to have a wider and more compelling effect on the Christian community. While we welcome these modest efforts we await a fuller published statement of the scriptural position against cremation.

Notes and Comments

Standard Grade Religious Studies course

The Scottish Examination Board have issued a consultation document on their proposals for the Standard Grade Religious Studies course which is intended to replace the O-grade course next August. This document has caused some public outcry because it is apparent that the study of the Roman Catholic Church is being given priority over the National Church. All pupils taking the course would study Christianity (Unit 1), but in studying public worship, the Christian year and rites of passage, pupils will study these “in relation to the Roman Catholic tradition and at least one other example, taken from the reformed tradition.” This is another blatant example of supplantation by the Roman Catholic Church which is creeping into many areas of our national life.

Unit 2 of the same course is the study of a second religion chosen from Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Religious Studies (the study of various religions) is gradually taking over the place of what used to be known as Religious Education, which is Christian and Protestant and involves not only study of the Protestant religion but also acts of worship.

A Single Ground for Divorce Proposed

The English and Scottish Law Commissions have both issued consultative documents in order to ascertain whether there would be public support for altering the grounds of divorce. They are suggesting possible faults with the present law which “pretends that there is one ground for divorce — irretrievable breakdown (of marriage) — whereas in reality there are five grounds for divorce — three based on matrimonial offences and two based on periods of separation.” They suggest that there is possibly too much emphasis on fault in divorce cases, that the present law may be encouraging separation and perjury, and that the periods of separation required to obtain divorce are too long. They propose cutting the Gordian knot so that there would be only one ground for divorce. The choice they propose lies with either “making the sole ground for divorce a period of separation” or “making the sole ground

for divorce the lapse of a period of time from the giving of notice of intention to divorce"(!) the latter being preferred.

The period of separation or the period of notice proposed by the Scottish Law Commission is three months! "That would be adequate to eliminate cases of impulsive divorce. . . ." "The main purpose of a period of notice is to ensure that people have time to consider their position. It is designed to prevent divorces being obtained in haste where the difficulty in the marriage is only temporary." The Law Commission (England) are not quite so sanguine. They suggest nine to 12 months.

Annihilation supported by Evangelicals

The October 1988 *Evangelical Times* draws attention to the fact that Rev. John Stott, a leading evangelical Anglican, has finally gone into print rejecting the orthodox doctrine of eternal punishment of the impenitent in favour of the doctrine of annihilation. Eryl Davies, in reviewing *Essentials* (Hodder and Stoughton), draws attention to this and he promises to examine the subject in more detail in the next issue of *Evangelical Times*. Dr Davies, who wrote a book on *The Wrath of God* (Evangelical Press), drew attention to Stott's doubts in an article in the *Evangelical Times* in January 1986 where he gives a brief history of this unorthodox view promoted by IVP, which published in 1974 J. W. Wenham's *The Goodness of God*. IVP has this book currently in print under the new title *The Enigma of Evil*. Wenham's was the first popular book by an evangelical author and publisher in which doubts about eternal punishment were expressed so forcefully, and in which conditional immortality was tentatively put forward as a possible and more satisfactory alternative to that of eternal punishment. Dr Davies says, "it is interesting that most of the English advocates of conditional immortality are evangelical Anglicans."

Dr Eryl Davies is the editor of *Foundations*, the theological journal of the British Evangelical Council. In the Spring 1988 edition, he reviews the *New Dictionary of Theology* published in 1988 by IVP and which is edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright, with J. I. Packer as the consulting editor. In this review he says, "Allow me one other criticism. Conditional immortality, I am sad to say, is assumed and openly advocated in some of the relevant contributions." He refers to the articles by M. J. Harris, Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. Harris wrote articles on Death, Resurrection and the Intermediate State. Davies accuses him of being unnecessarily brief and vague at certain

points, but respecting his article on Immortality, Davies says that Harris "openly acknowledges where his sympathies lie, concluding that the scripture teaches conditional immortality." The article on Eschatology has been written by Stephen Travis of St John's College, Nottingham, who believes in conditional immortality.

Opening the Door to Charismatic Teaching

Under the above title, Dr Peter Masters examines "the latter-day abandonment by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones of orthodox Holy Spirit theology" in the current issue of the *Sword and Trowel*, September 1988. Dr Masters examines the teaching of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones who repudiates the reformed doctrine of the cessation of the apostolic gifts, so that this is a companion article to the article which first appeared in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, May 1987, examining Dr Lloyd-Jones' views on second blessing teaching. Both articles demonstrate that Dr Lloyd-Jones was opening the door among Reformed people to charismatic teaching. In a trenchant article, Dr Masters draws attention to Dr Lloyd-Jones' "dogmatism and intimidation" in reserving his "most withering and intolerant passages . . . for those most unreasonable of people — the cessationists." He draws attention to his "misrepresentations of cessationism". On the subject of modern day prophecies, Dr Masters charges Dr Lloyd-Jones of offering "no useful tests whatsoever" to help the church discern between true and false prophecies. On the subject of modern tongue-speaking he says, "It has to be said that the arguments advanced in this book (*Prove all Things*) amount to very poor reasoning and constitute a dramatically different quality of exegesis from that which we have previously been used to from the pulpit and pen of Dr Lloyd-Jones." On the subject of modern healing and faith-healers he finds Dr Lloyd-Jones woefully inadequate. "(Dr Lloyd-Jones) is puzzled and unwilling to come down on one side or the other in connection with Kathryn Kuhlman. If, therefore, *he* cannot resolve the genuineness of this (rather extreme) faith-healer — even after protracted thought and consideration — how can ordinary pastors and church members?" He then goes on to paint the consequences of such uncertainty.

Dr Lloyd-Jones rejects the traditional reformed view that tongues were the gift of real languages. He considers the tongues of 1 Corinthians to be words spoken while in religious ecstasy. They were not understood by the speaker. Dr Masters goes on to refute this. However, there seems to be another very simple refutation. 1 Corinthians 14: 27 says that no more than two (or at the most, three) people were to speak in tongues at any

one meeting; and no-one at all was to speak if there was no interpreter present. This is a key to tongue speaking.

This shows that, generally, prior consultation would need to be made by the tongue speakers whether there would be an interpreter present. This suggests strongly that the tongue speaking was not spontaneous but was prearranged. Taken with the rest of 1 Corinthians 14, this suggests the tongues were foreign languages.

Church Notes

Ordination and Induction of the Rev. Kenneth D. MacLeod, B.Sc.

The Outer Isles Presbytery met in the Leverburgh Church on the evening of Thursday, the 8th day of September, and after having ordained the Rev. Kenneth D. MacLeod to the holy ministry inducted him to the pastoral charge of the South Harris congregation.

After intimation was made at the church door that an opportunity was given to any person or persons who had any objections to the life and doctrine of the Rev. Kenneth D. MacLeod to substantiate the same before the Presbytery and none appearing, the Moderator, the Rev. Alex Morrison, intimated that the Court would now proceed to the ordination and induction.

The Rev. J. MacLeod then went to the pulpit and preached from 2 Corinthians 2: 15. Mr A. Gillies, Glasgow, led the singing which was throughout in Gaelic. Public worship being ended, the Moderator put to Mr MacLeod the usual questions addressed to probationers before ordination and induction and these being satisfactorily answered and the Formula having been signed, he, by solemn prayer to God and with the hands of the Presbytery laid on Mr MacLeod, set him apart to the holy ministry. The prayer being ended, the Moderator then in the name of the Presbytery and by the authority of the Divine Head of the Church admitted Mr MacLeod to the pastoral charge of the South Harris congregation. Thereafter the Moderator and members of the Court gave him the right hand of fellowship.

The Moderator then proceeded to the pulpit and addressed the newly-inducted minister in suitable terms and after him the Rev. J. MacDonald addressed the congregation in appropriate terms.

Proceedings were then brought to an end with the singing of the last three verses of Psalm 72, the Rev. J. MacDonald acting as precentor.

The new church in Leverburgh seats 380 people and was almost full on this occasion. The ladies of the South Harris congregation as usual sur-

passed themselves in providing tea, etc., in the canteen of the local school. For this we desire to thank them most sincerely.

The South Harris congregation is greatly favoured in obtaining a young active pastor and it is the Presbytery's hope and prayer that he will be kept and that his ministry will be greatly blessed among them. The call was signed by 257 in all — 26 Members and 231 Adherents.

Rev. J. MacLeod
Clerk of Presbytery

Day of Humiliation and Prayer

Wednesday 14th December, 1988 has been appointed by the Synod as a Day of Prayer.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Southern: At Glasgow on 4th November at 11 a.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 29th November at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 20th December at 12 midday.

Larne Congregation

The services in connection with the administration of the Lord's Supper in the Larne Congregation on Sabbath, 4th December have been arranged as follows: Thursday (1st December) at 7.30 p.m.; Friday at 7.30 p.m.; Saturday at 7.30 p.m.; Sabbath at 11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.; Monday at 7.30 p.m.

Rev. Neil M. Ross, B.A., Ullapool, is expected (D.V.) to assist on this occasion.

A. Gillies
Session Clerk

Theological Conference

This years' Theological Conference has been cancelled. The Committee regret any inconvenience caused by this decision.

Rev. D. J. MacDonald
Convener of Training of Ministry Committee

Ingwenya Mission

The Foreign Mission Committee wish it to be known that there is still a shortage of staff at the John Tallach Secondary School at Ingwenya. Any person with a University Degree although not necessarily possessing Teacher Training, would be welcome there and would be acceptable to the Department of Education in Zimbabwe.

Readers should continue to bear the needs of the mission-field to the Throne of Grace continually. Anyone who is interested in giving a period of service to the Mission as outlined above should contact the Clerk of the Foreign Missions Committee, F.P. Manse, Raasay, IV40 8PB.

Church Deputies

Rev. D. A. Ross and Mr Wm. Campbell successfully completed a four week trip to several Eastern Bloc countries during the month of September.

Rev. D. B. MacLeod left the country on 8th September for a fourteen week visit to Africa. He spent two weeks in Kenya before proceeding to Malawi for one month. He hopes to return to Kenya on his return journey.

We pray that the labours of the Deputies may be blessed and that the Lord's protecting care may be over them in all their journeys.

Rev. John MacLeod

The people of the church will be thankful to the Lord that the Rev. John MacLeod has come safely through major heart surgery. We pray that he will renew his strength and be spared to resume his arduous labours among his congregation. We trust that the Lord will be pleased to spare him for many serviceable years yet.

Free Presbyterian Magazine

The sudden availability on the waiting list for Rev. John MacLeod necessitated his handing over the work of editing the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* to Rev. Donald M. Boyd, Free Presbyterian Manse, Farr, Inverness, IV1 2XF, to whom all material for the magazine should now be sent.

List of Communions

The Editor would be glad to know of any corrections to the list of Communions for 1989.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer, Room 7, Seafield House, Seafield Road, Inverness, IV1 1SJ, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:-

Sustentation Fund: Anon., £30 for Greenock Congregation.

Foreign Mission Fund: F. Ross, Nedd, £10 for John Tallach School; Donations etc. from Congregations including Dumbarton, Raasay and Lochcarron per Miss M. Graham, £600; Anon., Canada, \$100.00 for famine relief; Well-wisher, Tolsta, £5 for blind children.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: Collection at services at Calgary, 7/8/88, taken by Rev. Van Dorp, \$150.00; Anon., £30; M.R., £50; Friends, Edinburgh, £10; Anon., Inverness Collection plate, £10; Anon., St. Jude's £40, all five towards visit to Eastern Europe.

Magazine Free Distribution: Friend, £1.15; Well-wisher, Tolsta, £5.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:-

Dumbarton: Mrs MacColl, £3 for Congregational Fund, per M.H.

Dundee: Glendale friends £20 for Building Fund.

Fort William: Friend, Caol, £10; A. MacG. £10 per D. MacN., both Sust. Fund; Mrs B. £10 per Mrs M; Mrs S. £30 envelope in plate; Mrs C. Campbell, Ps. 23, £20, any useful purpose, per F. MacN., Anon Psalm 84, £20; Anon., Psalm 133, £15; Anon., £5 for Dr. Tallach's Peace Clinic, last three by envelope in plate.

Gairloch: Gairloch Friend £100, Sust. Fund; Stornoway Friends £20, £5 for Sust. Fund; Stornoway Friend £20 for Communion Expenses; last two per Rev. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow: P.W. £5; Mrs MacKinnon (two donations) £18; both Congregational Fund; Anon., £5, Anon., £5, J.M.D. (two donations) £20, Anon., £10, J.C. £20 all for Bus. Fund; J.C. £25 for Fabric Fund; Anon., £10, Anon., £200, both for Outreach Fund; Anon., £40 for Visit to Eastern Europe.

Laide: Friend, Laide, £25; Friend, Second Coast, £20; Friend, Ullapool, £5; Friend, Laide, £16.80; Friends, Aultbea, £20; Friend, Giarloch, £30; Friends, Laide, £50; Friends, Laide, £35; all per D.A.R., and for trip to Eastern Bloc: Friends. Glasgow, Math. 28: 19, 20, £100, per W.C., for trip to Eastern Bloc.

Larne: £50, and £30, Scottish wellwisher, both where most needed; £10 friend from Shildaig, all three per Rev. G. Hutton. £20 Anon. donation and £10 for Foreign Mission per J.A.F.

Rogart: Anon., £18 for Church repairs.

South Harris: In memory of bygone friends, £100; K.M. North Tolsta £10; both for Congregational Fund, both per Treasurer.

Stornoway: Anon., £60, to be used "where most needed under the African skies" per Rev. J. Macleod; Anon., £5, Anon., £5, Anon., £5 all for Communion Expenses, all per Treasurer.

Ullapool: Mrs C. M. £10, for Sust. Fund, per Rev. N.M.R.; Anon., £5 for Sust. Fund; M.C. £1 for hearing aids; Miss Catriona Forsyth £5 for Congregational Funds, last three in plate.