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The General Assemblies

The Church of Scotland Assembly

At the Church of Scotland Assembly Rev. Dr. Bill MacMillan was appointed the new Moderator while Lord Ross, the Lord Justice Clerk, represented the Queen as Lord High Commissioner.

The difficulties that the Church of Scotland is facing in some quarters with regard to the ordination of women elders came to the fore in the Assembly when the Assembly was asked whether local parishes could decide who became an elder. By endorsing the Act that the Assembly passed in 1966 in favour of women elders, the Assembly showed that it will not allow any discrimination in this matter against women. It is strange to see a professed Christian Assembly so insistent in this matter which is anti-Scriptural and which can only lead to more confusion. It places Conservative evangelicals in that Church who hold that the ordination of women is contrary to the Word of God, in an even more impossible situation. Let them be consistent and forsake a Church which has turned its back on the Word of God.

The question of whether children should be allowed to take Communion was referred to Presbyteries for discussion. Rev. Prof. Davidson, the former Moderator supported the idea while other speakers, including Rev. George Philips opposed it. To what extremes some Churches will resort to try and retain the rising generation within their bounds. The issue of child communion has already been discussed in the pages of the Magazine.

The Assembly gave its overwhelming support to the people of Lewis in their fight against Caledonian MacBrayne over the proposed running of Sabbath ferries. It was agreed that the Church and Nation Committee should approach the Government on this matter. The Lewis Presbytery pointed out that though Caledonian MacBrayne had been compelled

through the weight of public opinion to withdraw their plans, yet it appeared likely that they would try to revive them when a replacement vessel is completed.

The American Evangelist Billy Graham was given the opportunity to address the General Assembly. He told delegates that Scotland could provide the beginnings of a spiritual revival and prayed that Scotland could become the spiritual superpower of the world. It should be obvious to Graham as well as to us that what Scotland needs is a God-sent revival and not a man-induced revival. It is only divinely-given revivals which will give lasting fruit in the hearts and lives of individuals and nations. It should also be clear to everyone that Arminian doctrine will never procure a genuine revival of religion.

The Roman Catholic Church was represented at the General Assembly. How far astray the Church of Scotland has gone from the time of Knox when Cardinal Winning can sit there as an honoured guest! May better days come to Scotland.

Free Church of Scotland Assembly

In the Free Church of Scotland Assembly, Rev. Billy Graham from South Africa was appointed the new Moderator. The Retiring Moderator, Rev. Alasdair Gollan, in the opening session of the Assembly reflected on the fact that many people eager to clean up the environment are not concerned about widespread moral degradation. He said that the media had much to answer for and that it was no wonder that the crime rate was increasing when young minds were exposed to debasing influences.

The new Moderator reminded the Assembly of the resurgence of Islam and of Eastern religions and in Africa of traditional religions. The Christian Church, he said, could never lay aside the challenge to go into all the world and preach.

The effect of tourism on Church-going and on the Sabbath in the Highlands was stressed in the Assembly. Rev. Donald MacLean said that the whole blame could not be placed on incomers for the erosion of Sabbath observance because local people were worshipping the "golden calf" of tourism instead of attending church. The Assembly was gratified by the successful opposition to Sabbath sailings of ferries in the Outer Hebrides.

As usual the Lord High Commissioner, Lord Ross, visited the Free Church Assembly. In his address to the Assembly he praised the Free Church in their continuing battle to uphold the principles for which they had fought and won in the House of Lords following the 1900 Union.

The plight of the homeless in the cities was raised in the Assembly. It was stated that the Free Church was taking the first steps to convert property to provide short term accommodation for young, homeless people. A plea was made that young ministers should have more training in dealing with social problems. The Assembly agreed by a small majority to ensure that students were adequately trained in issues of social responsibility and that ministers receive refresher training to cope with social problems. The Principal of the College opposed this sudden change in the curriculum of the College without prior consultation with staff and the training of the Ministry Committee.

The General Assembly was warned of the dangers connected with aid to Eastern countries. Rev. Bill Scott, who had been involved in such work, said that aid should be given with much care and through local pastors who knew the needs of the people, otherwise the aid might be sold on the black market.

Synod Sermon

by Rev. D. J. MacDonald, Uig, Retiring Moderator.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. Revelation 2 vs 24 and 25.

As enabled I would like to direct your minds particularly to verse 25, "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come."

The message in this part of the book of Revelation which is directed especially to the seven churches of Asia, was given by direct revelation. That is, it was given by the Saviour himself. It is the Saviour himself who says "unto the angel of the church of Ephesus, write." And again, "unto the angel of the church of Pergamos, write." And again more particularly for our consideration just now, "unto the angel of the church of Thyatira, write." In this chapter and in the previous one, the Saviour speaks particularly of His relationships to these churches. "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Perhaps we can just remind ourselves of what is said in chapter 1, verse 20, "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

This reminds us of the relationship of the Saviour to the church. He is the One who dwells in the midst of His church in the New Testament

as well as in the Old Testament where it is written, "God in the midst of her doth dwell." The fact that He dwells in the midst of His church, brings before us the fact that He rules, that is, He is the Head of His church, He is the One who rules in His church. And this is an important doctrine of scripture. For the sake of brevity and for clarity, perhaps we could just quote a short extract from the Westminster Confession of Faith, which says, "there is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ," Now that establishes that not only is He the Head of the church, but that He is the One who orders the doctrine, or the teaching, of the church. He is the One who commands the worship which the church is to give to him and He is the One who commands the practice, or the rule, within the church. Therefore these matters are not to be thought of as matters indifferent. These are not matters which have been left to the opinions, inventions, or the devices of men. These are laid down for us in the Word of God. In an age in which there is much liberty of a very unscriptural kind, it is well for us to remember that the doctrines of the church of God, the worship and it's rule are all given by the One who is Himself the Head of the church. We dare not speak of these things as of being of secondary importance. And I think it would be most appropriate if we had a sense of responsibility to Him when we meet as a Synod, as a court of His church, so that we would have something of that sense of responsibility as we approach the work and the decisions which are before us, doing this as those who are acknowledging and who ought to acknowledge and who *must* acknowledge the headship of Christ in His church in the world.

Let us also notice briefly that although this word was spoken in the past and spoken by direct revelation at a particular time, this word is still speaking to us this night: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This is the authority of what the Spirit is speaking to the churches. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." That is the authority of the Word of God still. That is the authority of the Word of God read and that is the authority of the Word of God preached and that is how we are always to heed it.

What I would like to direct your minds to particularly this night from the words which are before us is this — that in these words of our text we are confronted with this statement to those who are addressed, "that which ye have already hold fast till I come." They had certain privileges, and certain duties which were attached to these privileges. And that is true of ourselves as a branch of the visible church, that is true of ourselves

this night as a Synod. We have privileges to which duties are attached and we have privileges for which we are accountable. I need scarcely remind you that there is much in our generation to keep such thoughts away from our minds, to divert our thoughts from the realities of the Word of God. How much there is in our generation to take our thoughts away from this, that "Every one of us shall give an account of himself unto God." How much there is in our generation that diverts our thoughts from this fearful reality, "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." How much we come across every day in our life and in our work which blurs this statement of the scriptures, that as we journey on to an endless eternity, "One thing is needful." Not only is it true that there is much in our generation to keep our minds from that, but perhaps there is much in our very circumstances this evening which stands between us and seeing these realities. Perhaps we are taken up in an inordinate way with the fact that we are in the presence of our fellow men, that this is a special occasion. As if because these things are true, we could in some way or other lay aside these solemn realities.

These are realities to which we can blind our eyes for a season. And these are realities to which indeed we can blind our eyes for as long as we are in this world, but we shall see them most clearly in that day of which it is written, "Then shall I know, even as also I am known." Let us not forget that it is towards that solemn day we are all journeying. It is with that day in view that we should speak tonight and it is with that day in view that we should hear tonight also. It is with that in view we should transact all the business that will come to our hands on this occasion as a Synod. Perhaps it would be appropriate for us at the very outset this evening to confess that this spirit has not always been apparent in the past, that we have been carrying out our duties as in the presence of the Most High. In fact perhaps it has not always been true and that is proof of this, "that in all things we sin and come short." But we cannot excuse ourselves on that ground either. But it brings this forcibly to our minds that we need the cleansing of the blood of atonement even on our holy things.

One other thing I would like to mention by way of introduction and that is this. This being the first night of a Synod and that it is time for the Synod to meet again, focuses our attention on the passing of time. And that is another fact that we should be seeking grace not to lose sight of. For each year, each month, each day is all adding up the time which we have in this world — the time of which it is written, "the wind passes over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." The

time is coming and coming soon when we will no longer be among men and the place which we fill this night will be empty and it would be our wisdom to ask ourselves where we shall be then. When our place here knows us no more, where shall we be?

Now as the Lord will be pleased to help, there are three things arising from the words of our text to which I would like to draw your attention briefly:—

First of all we would like to say a little concerning, *the things which we have*, as that relates particularly to our meeting as a Synod and to our standing as a branch of the church in the world.

In the second place I would like to dwell briefly on this, how we are to regard these things — *Hold them fast*.

And thirdly, the time element that is mentioned, "*till I come*."

1. In the first place then a word or two about the things which we have. We will only value these things if we grasp this at the very outset, that these things which we have are God-given privileges. It is of His sovereign dealings with us in providence that we have them and any other view of them will lead to a wrong valuation. If we think of these things merely in terms of something we have inherited from our fathers, or something which we have because of our cultural background, we will have no right spiritual appreciation of them and we will not use them for the purpose for which they have been given us primarily, and that first purpose is to seek mercy for our own souls. That is the prime purpose for which we have been given these things. But it is true of us as individuals, as congregations, as a branch of the visible church that we have the gospel. That is the central part of these things which we have, the gospel, the good news, the good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. In brief that is this, that God has in His grace and mercy provided salvation for a number which no man can number of our lost and ruined race. Now that is not a full definition of the gospel, neither is it meant to be, but what I want to say is that we cannot accept a lesser definition of it and why I insist upon that just now is this, that until men see themselves and know themselves in truth as lost, ruined sinners, unable to help themselves, they will not appreciate the gospel and they will not appreciate the Saviour. Did He not say Himself, "They that the whole need not a physician, but they that be sick." And we fear that that is why there are those in our midst even as a congregation this night who do not appreciate the gospel, a gospel which speaks of a free salvation to lost and ruined sinners. They like to hear about the church and they like to hear about the church's stand and the church's position and they like to hear of their privileges

and that gives them a feeling of belonging. But they do not welcome this question, "What think ye of Christ?" That is a question which makes them feel uncomfortable and yet that is the important question. That is the question which ought to take up our minds first and foremost. For how can we love the cause of Christ if we do not love the One whose cause it is. As a people we have the gospel in its fullness — all the counsel of God. This is the gospel that makes known to us, that God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, came into this world as the Saviour, came into this world as the God-man. The One who had in Himself, who united in Himself the two natures, the divine nature and the human nature and who as the God-man is the Mediator, and who as the God-man was His people's Surety and as His people's Surety gave a perfect obedience to the law of God. As His people's substitute He died for the ungodly, "the just for the unjust." He died instead of them to ensure that they would be set free. That is how we are to understand what took place at Calvary — that Christ died for the ungodly. This is left on record for us in the scriptures that on the cross He cried out, "It is finished." He finished the work of His people's salvation. He died and He rose again, and He is alive now to make intercession. He ever liveth to make intercession.

Now these things are the things which we have already. Things with which we are all familiar and there is none in our midst, as far as I know, who is a stranger to the gospel and there is none who is a stranger to the invitations of the gospel. There you see the first part of our responsibility, that none from our midst need perish for lack of a Saviour. None from our midst need perish for lack of a Saviour preached. All your life you have heard of this work. You cannot remember this night how often you have heard this One being lifted up. How often you have heard this said in the preaching of the gospel, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." You cannot remember the number of times you have heard the gospel invitations. How often have you heard, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How often have you heard this, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else." And what a solemn responsibility is upon you, as those who have heard these invitations. Surely that is what many in our midst ought to be taken up with this night, rather than anything else. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches:" and let him hear tonight that the Saviour of sinners is saying to sinners still in their sins in our midst, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Well we have the word in it's entirety. We have the Bible with nothing added to it and nothing taken away from it, and

that ought to be precious to us. And it ought to be precious to us, for this reason among others, because of it's rarity in our day. For these things which we have already are not things which are common to the human race, far from it. They are not things which are common in our midst as a nation. What a solemn matter it is, that God is a stranger in the land as far as the preaching of the full-orbed gospel is concerned. That is in our land, not to mention just now the many millions of our lost, ruined race who have never even heard the gospel and how favoured we are in comparison to such. What responsibility is ours in comparison to such, for as I said this is not a gospel that is common or that is common in our own land. It is not a gospel which you will find in most of the mainstream churches of our land, where many of the vital doctrines of the Word of God are denied. These are things which are known to you all — that there are those who hold positions as preachers in the churches and they deny such fundamental doctrines as the virgin birth of the Saviour the atoning nature of His sacrifice, His physical resurrection, and the fact of eternal punishment. Where the necessity of the new birth and the saving, personal operation of the Holy Spirit are not denied, these are lost sight of because those who preach fail to assert them. Failing to assert these doctrines is tantamount to failing to hold them fast. Now as I said these are facts which any who are interested can discover for themselves and therefore we need not take up time unduly with them just now.

But perhaps we ought to say this — that this is not the gospel which the Decade of Evangelism is going to proclaim in this land. It is not the gospel of free and sovereign grace. This is not the gospel which Billy Graham preaches. His preaching is soon to be heard again in our land with all it's attendant unscriptural practices, but I say, and I say without fear of contradiction, that it is not the gospel which we have that he is going to proclaim and that the thousands or the millions who will hear him, will hear. Sad as that is, it is none the less an incontrovertible fact.

The gospel which we have is not the gospel which is proclaimed among papists. It is not the gospel which is known to Romanists, although they know the word, for they are adding to the word. They are adding to the word their sacrifices, as they call them, the sacrifice of the mass, which, as we understand the matter, is a direct insult to the Saviour who said on the cross, "It is finished." Here are these people, who are getting a place as Christians, and they are saying, It is not finished. We must add to it, we must daily add to it and although it is specifically stated in the scripture, there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, yet the Romish priests without any fear interpose between God and sinners

as mediators. According to themselves, they need more than the intercession of Christ, they need the prayers of saints. And after all this, all they can promise their people is purgatory, years or centuries of suffering before they are eventually fit for heaven. These things are well enough known to need no more comment, but this I would like to say, How sad it is and how solemn, the place that is given by our national church in Scotland to this wicked institution, the church of Rome. This year, for the first time the 'anti-christ' is to be officially represented at the General Assembly. There is a bishop from Dunblane going to be at Edinburgh, representing the church of Rome at the Church of Scotland Assembly, and surely we ought to tremble at that very fact. Surely this is among the things of which it is written, "Shall I not visit for these things?" These are the things which we have and they should be precious to us because of their rarity and also because of their intrinsic value. We are not saying that we are better than others as individuals or as a church, but we are saying, and we are saying without apology, that to us much has been given and therefore much shall be required of us. This is a personal responsibility from which we cannot turn away without incurring guilt and this is a responsibility which is on us as a church to which we ought to give constant attention.

2. But I must go on secondly to notice this, how we are to regard these things which we have. That is contained in these words "That which you have already, *Hold fast*." Use your strength to retain it, keep possession of it. Lay hold of it so as not to lose it. The words convey all these ideas and that these things are to be highly regarded. They will only be highly regarded if we see them as received from God. As we mentioned already, there is a danger in our midst that many do not value these things as they ought, for that very reason. They do not see them as what is come from God.

We have these things, because by God's blessing, others laboured faithfully and watched and held fast in their own day. So that it is true of us, "others have laboured but ye have entered into their labours." It would be a fit subject for our personal meditation this night to consider how many others have laboured prayerfully and faithfully since the time these words were written until the present time to ensure that in God's overruling providence we might have these things which we do have.

But to confine ourselves just now to a consideration of ourselves as a branch of the visible church in the world, you know at the very beginning of our separate existence men were raised up who saw the necessity of cleaving to the Word of God in its entirety. They saw the necessity of separating from those who were willing to tolerate compromise as to the

doctrines of the Word of God, compromise as to the worship of God, compromise as to rule in the church of God. What our church stood for from the beginning was for the truth, for the whole truth and for nothing but the truth. And it is to the grace of God working in those of whom we speak as our founding fathers that we can directly trace these things which we have.

We must seek to understand that if we are to hold them fast we will need the same appreciation of them. We will need the same understanding of their spiritual value, as they had. It is the same testimony for the Word of God and for the Word of God in it's entirety and for the purity of worship and for scriptural church practice that is needed now as was needed then, nearly one hundred years ago. I say that particularly because it is only if we are convinced of this that we will indeed hold them fast. It is the gospel which the Reformers had. It is the gospel which the Covenanters had. It is the gospel which the Disruption fathers had in 1843 and the founding fathers of our own church had in 1893 that present day sinners need also. And let us beware, of a new gospel or an up to date gospel for modern man. For whatever technical advances man has made, whatever scientific discoveries they have made, the need of man in our day is still to be called to repent and believe the gospel. That is the gospel that must be preached amongst Jew and Gentile, amongst black and white, "Repent and believe the gospel." There is no other remedy for fallen, ruined, sinful man and to convey any other impression is going to lead us into all sorts of danger. It is going to lead us we fear into deceiving our fellow sinners as to their relationship with the God with whom they have to do. They are to repent of their sins. We are to repent of our sins and repenting of our sins we have to look to the One who is alone the Saviour of sinners.

Now we will only preserve this, we will only hand it down intact to coming generations, if we hold these things fast. Let us not underestimate the difficulties that are involved in that. We live as you know in an ecumenical age, where the whole spirit of the ecclesiastical world is this, let us all come together. Let us all come and worship together, let us all, as it were, shelter under one umbrella. It is a generation as you know, or as you ought to know, which hates distinctions. It is a generation which finds it hard to tolerate ecclesiastical separation. It is a generation, which is prepared to make allowances for sincerely held doctrines, it is prepared to make allowances for scriptural practices, but it is not prepared to make allowances for making these a ground of separation. There you see the subtlety of that situation. Of course you will preach the doctrines of free and sovereign grace, of course you will tell men that they are totally deprav-

ed. But you must not, you cannot, make that a ground of separating from those who teach otherwise.

The danger as far as we see it is that we will be affected by the spirit of the age and that we will be ashamed of the testimony of our church. Although as I said, and as I say again, it is a testimony for the truth, for the whole truth and for nothing but the truth. How sad that any who bear the name of Christian are ashamed in any way of the gospel. What the apostle said was, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and let us seek grace to be on our guard against being ashamed of it. Let us be on our guard against those who hide their true colours as we fear many do with ambiguous names. It is very difficult to know, at least we find it very difficult to know, who they really are who claim to be conservative evangelicals. We find it hard to understand what the distinctive testimony is of those who call themselves liberal fundamentalists. Let us not waste our time with such ambiguities, but let us declare unashamedly and unambiguously our allegiance to the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Because it is, as I said, and as I repeat again, a testimony for the truth, for the whole truth and for nothing but the truth.

There is nothing in the testimony of our church to be ashamed of. Certainly we have to be ashamed of departures from it on the personal level, on the congregational level and indeed on the ecclesiastical level. We have to be ashamed that we have at times failed to live up to it. We have to be ashamed of our own hearts and minds, but that is another matter altogether. And let us as we face all the difficulties which are involved in cleaving unambiguously to this testimony, let us bear in mind the words of the Saviour Himself when He said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, He it is that loveth me." John 14: 21. Not the one who has the applause of the world, or the one who has the approval of the world or even the ecclesiastical or religious world, but He that hath Christ's commandments and keepeth them. It is only by a positive effort and by a positive holding fast that we shall earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints and that is what we are required to do. Hold fast, hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints. Delivered by God and delivered to them to be trustees of it. It is ours because of the faithfulness of others. It is written of Israel,

His testimony and His law
in Israel He did place,
And charged our fathers it to show
to their succeeding race; Psalm 78: 5

Now that is something that can be applied to ourselves and I would like to apply it in this way, that our fathers discharged this responsibility faithfully. We cannot this night charge or accuse them that they did not keep their charge, they kept it faithfully and they kept it responsibly and they passed it on in that way to us. But it is a solemn consideration to ask how will future generations judge us. I would like to say this, although it is something we cannot dwell on just now, that this is part of holding fast, these things which we already have. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." That is what we are to teach, what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man. What a responsibility that is. How can we think of such a responsibility without seeing our need of holding fast. As I said there is much in our own lives to be ashamed of, but there is nothing in what is set before us in God's truth of which we need for one moment be ashamed and as far as we understand the matter you will not find and our children will not find a closer adherence to the Word of God, to what man is to believe concerning God, than they do at the present time in our own church. They will not find a clearer exposition of the doctrines and the teachings of the Word of God in any other denomination that we know of. What we must seek is grace to hold fast to the Word of God as our rule of faith and our rule of life. And we need not be surprised if this leads to conflict, it is inevitable in an age of compromise.

Now I don't want to digress at all but some of you will be familiar with the term, "consensus politics," where on certain issues political parties instead of emphasising the differences between them, concentrate on the things that they have in common. The religion of our day is what you might call, a consensus religion. Protestants, Roman Catholics, Hindus, Jews, they will all come together and they will concentrate on the things that they have in common. Now surely one need not comment on how unscriptural that is, how dishonouring this is to God who has given us this revelation of Himself. How dishonouring this is to the One who says of Himself, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He does not say, I am one of the ways. He does not just say, I am the best way. What He says is this, "I am the way" and to allow any other deities or to allow any other mediators when there is One who makes this claim is surely nothing short of a denial of the name of Christ. How can they say they are following Christ and keeping His word when they can gather with Hindus, Moslems and Jews and worship with them. What a solemn situation we are in as a nation.

Now as God preserved His witness in Scotland in 1893 when it seemed

as if the triumph of His enemies was complete, so recently when the forces of the worldly opposition concentrated all their energy upon the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and it went through one of the severest crisis of it's existence, by the grace of God the witness was preserved. Let us this night think of that with humility and with gratitude. Cast your mind back just two brief years and let us this night humble ourselves before God and let us this night be thankful in the presence of God. Let us say, "The Lord hath done great things for us," for it could have been otherwise. Having said that let me say this also, let us beware of self-glory. Let us beware of saying, "We did it." That kind of carnal triumphalism has no place in Christian life and certainly has no place in the Christian church. It was the doing of the Lord and we have no cause for glorying, in fact the very opposite. What we have to say is this that it was in our midst that this movement grew up. It was by us that these men were given a place and in that very fact there is cause surely for heart searching. Did we like Israel to fail to value our privileges, did our hearts waver, did our hands slacken in holding fast. Let us think of it personally for that is how we must think of these things. In the final analysis it is not churches that are found faithful or unfaithful, it is individuals within them. So what we are called to in the words of our text is a personal holding fast, a daily and consistent holding fast and of being so convinced of the truth of God's word that we are prepared to stand alone and if necessary in our families or in our communities or as a church in this land or in other lands. And only grace will enable us to do so.

But this is what we are called to in a dark day, a day of small things and a comparison to the past in Scotland will convince us that this is a true description of our day. I was thinking just this afternoon if you stop for a moment and compare the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1638 with the one of 1991, surely that will dispel any lingering doubts from your mind as to whether this is a day of small things. In 1638 they were covenanting with God as far as the purity of worship was concerned. They were covenanting with God as to their allegiance to the truth. So far as we hear this year in 1991 they have wasted their time talking about women elders and the admission of children to communion. Now we need make no comment upon that except to note the difference between the one and the other.

3. But lastly and briefly there is the time element mentioned here, "Till I come." Now we are told quite clearly that Christ is coming again. He is coming to judge the world in righteousness. He is coming to each one of us at death and then we shall be required to give an account of our

stewardship, particularly of our stewardship of our gospel privileges that we have had all our lives and which in the grace and the mercy of God we are still enjoying. Now there is a danger of us being like Capernaum, which was exalted to heaven with privileges but which also was cast down to hell. There is a danger of us being like Bethsaida, which though they saw all these mighty works they did not believe. And there is a further exhortation later on in this book concerning this very matter, "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Rev. 3: 11. For if we fail to hold fast, if we fail to hold fast the gospel personally we shall not obtain the crown of which the apostle could say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." And it is time, is it not, to ask ourselves what are we doing with the gospel which we have from sabbath to sabbath and from year to year. Privileges will not save anyone, they will only add to our condemnation. And however long or short our time is this night, it is all the time we have, "till I come." It is all the time there is as far as you and I are concerned. And how necessary to be living our lives as those who believe the truth of our accountability, who believe this that the Word of God is the standard by which we are to be judged when He comes, and it is our wisdom to have it as our standard now.

And if that involves, as it will involve avoiding teachings, wherever they come from or whoever puts them forward, which seem to suggest there is an easier way into the kingdom, we are to turn away from such. That is the exhortation given by the apostle himself, "from such turn away." From such as would explain the new birth in any other context except as the work of God the Holy Spirit. It is not making a decision, it is not turning over a new leaf, it is the Spirit bringing alive those who are dead in trespasses and in sin. And let us turn away also from those who suggest that the Christian life is easier now than it was at any other time and therefore that we can give scope to ourselves or give licence to ourselves in sin. The standard is still this, "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12: 14. The Saviour has said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16: 24. And that is still the standard no matter what the majority say, no matter what the view accepted in our day. But let us hold fast with an eye to our accountability although we can expect to be misunderstood and misrepresented, but we cannot hold fast and be in step with a generation that has forsaken the Word of God. We should not be unduly moved by the judgements of our fellow men. Let us seek grace to have our eyes lifted up to the One who is saying, "And, behold, I come

quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Rev. 22: 12. Let us seek grace to live our lives in the light of that coming.

May He bless His word.

Letter

by Samuel Rutherford to his Parishioners

Dearly beloved and longed-for in the Lord, my crown and my joy in the day of Christ, — Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I long exceedingly to know if the oft-spoken-of match betwixt you and Christ holdeth, and if ye follow on to know the Lord. My day-thoughts and my night-thoughts are of you: while ye sleep I am afraid of your souls, that they be off the rock. Next to my Lord Jesus and this fallen kirk, ye have the greatest share of my sorrow, and also of my joy; ye are the matter of the tears, care, fear, and daily prayers of an oppressed prisoner of Christ. As I am in bonds for my high and lofty One, my royal and princely Master, my Lord Jesus; so I am in bonds for you. For I should have slept in my warm nest, and kept the fat world in my arms and the cords of my tabernacle should have been fastened more strongly; I might have sung an evangel of ease to my soul and you for a time with my brethren, the sons of my mother, that were angry at me, and have thrust me out of the vineyard; if I would have been broken, and drawn on to mire you, the Lord's flock, and to cause you to eat pastures trodden upon with men's feet, and to drink foul and muddy waters. But truly the Almighty was a terror to me, and His fear made me afraid. O my Lord, judge if my ministry be not dear to me, but not so dear by many degrees as Christ my Lord! God knoweth the sad and heavy Sabbaths I have had, since I laid down at my Master's feet my two shepherd's staves. I have been often saying, as it is written, "My enemies chased me sore like a bird, without cause: they have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me" (Lam. 3: 52,53). For, next to Christ, I had but one joy, the apple of the eye of my delights, to preach Christ my Lord; and they have violently plucked that away from me. It was to me like the poor man's one eye; and they have put out that eye, and quenched my light in the inheritance of the Lord. But my eye is toward the Lord: I know that I shall see the salvation of God, and that my hope shall not always be forgotten. And my sorrow shall want nothing to complete it, and to make me say, "What availeth it me to live?" if ye follow the voice of a stranger,

of one that cometh into the sheep-fold not by Christ the door, but climbeth up another way. If the man build his hay and stubble upon the golden foundation, Christ Jesus (already laid among you), and ye follow him, I assure you, the man's work shall burn and never bide God's fire: and ye and he both shall be in danger of everlasting burning except ye repent. Oh, if any pain, any sorrow, any loss that I can suffer for Christ, and for you, were laid in pledge to buy Christ's love to you! and that I could lay my dearest joys, next to Christ my Lord, in the gap betwixt you and eternal destruction! Of if I had paper as broad as heaven and earth, and ink as the sea and all the rivers and fountains of the earth, and were able to write the love, the worth, the excellency, the sweetness, and due praises of our dearest and fairest Well-beloved! and then if ye could read and understand it! What could I want, if my ministry among you should make a marriage between the little bride in those bounds and the Bridegroom? Oh, how rich a prisoner were I, if I could obtain of my Lord (before whom I stand for you) the salvation of you all! Oh, what a prey had I gotten, to have you caught in Christ's net! Oh, then I had cast out my Lord's lines and His net with a rich gain! Oh then, well-wared pained breast, and sore back, and crazed body, in speaking early and late to you! My witness is above; your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two salvations to me. I would subscribe a suspension, and a fristing of my heaven for many hundred years (according to God's good pleasure), if ye were sure in the upper lodging, in our Father's house, before me. I take to witness heaven and earth against you, I take instruments in the hands of that sun and daylight that beheld us, and in the hands of the timber and walls of that kirk, if I drew not up a fair contract of marriage betwixt you and Christ, if I went not with offers betwixt the Bridegroom and you, and your conscience did bear you witness, your mouths confessed, that there were many fair trysts and meetings drawn on betwixt Christ and you at communion feasts, and other occasions? There were bracelets, jewels, rings, and love-letters, sent to you by the Bridegroom. It was told you what a fair dowry ye should have, and what a house your Husband and ye should dwell in, and what was the Bridegroom's excellency, sweetness, might, power, the eternity and glory of His kingdom, the exceeding deepness of His love, who sought His black wife through pain, fires, shame, death, and the grave, and swimm'd the salt sea for her, undergoing the curse of the law, and then¹ was made a curse for you; and ye then consented, and said "Even so I take Him." I counsel you to beware of the new and strange leaven of men's inventions, beside and against the word of God, contrary to the oath of this

kirk, now coming among you. I instructed you of the superstition and idolatry in kneeling in the instant of receiving the Lord's Supper, and of crossing in baptism, and of the observing of men's days, without any warrant of Christ our perfect Lawgiver. Countenance not the surplice, the attire of the mass-priest, the garment of Baal's priests. The abominable bowing to altars of tree (wood) is coming upon you. Hate, and keep yourselves from idols. Forbear in any case to hear the reading of the new fatherless Service-Book,² full of gross heresies, popish and superstitious errors, without any warrant of Christ, tending to the overthrow of preaching. You owe no obedience to the bastard canons; they are unlawful, blasphemous, and superstitious. All the ceremonies that lie in Antichrist's foul womb, the wares of that great mother of fornications, the kirk of Rome, are to be refused. Ye see whither they lead you. Continue still in the doctrine which ye have received. Ye heard of me the whole counsel of God. Sew no clouts upon Christ's robe. Take Christ, in His rags and losses, and as persecuted by men, and be content to sigh and pant up the mountain, with Christ's cross on your back. Let me be reputed a false prophet (and your conscience once said the contrary), if your Lord Jesus will not stand by you and maintain you, and maintain your cause against your enemies.

I have heard, and my soul is grieved for it, that since my departure from you, many among you are turned back from the good old way, to the dog's vomit again. Let me speak to these men. It was not without God's special direction, that the first sentence that ever my mouth uttered to you was that, "And Jesus said, For judgement I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9: 39). It is possible that my first meeting and yours may be when we shall both stand before the dreadful Judge of the world; and in the name and authority of the Son of God, my great King and Master, I write, by these presents, summonses to those men. I arrest their souls and bodies to the day of our compearance. Their eternal damnation standeth subscribed, and sealed in heaven, by the hand-writing of the great Judge of quick and dead; and I am ready to stand up, as a preaching witness against such to their face, on that day, and to say "Amen" to their condemnation, except they repent. The vengeance of the Gospel is heavier than the vengeance of the Law; the Mediator's malediction and vengeance is twice vengeance; and that vengeance is due portion of such men. And there I leave them as bond men, aye and whill they repent and amend.

Ye were witnesses how the Lord's day was spent while I was among

you. O sacrilegious robber of God's day, what wilt thou answer the Almighty when He seeketh so many Sabbaths back again from thee? What will the curser, swearer, and blasphemer do, when his tongue shall be roasted in that broad and burning lake of fire and brimstone? And what will the drunkard do, when tongue, lungs and liver, bones, and all, shall boil and shall fry in a torturing fire? He shall be far from his barrels of strong drink then; and there is not a cold well of water for him in hell. What shall be the case of the wretch, the covetous man, the oppressor, the deceiver, the earth-worm, who can never get his wombful of clay (Ps. 17: 14), when, in the day of Christ, gold and silver must lie burnt in ashes, and he must compear and answer his Judge, and quit his clayey and noughty heaven? Wo, wo, for evermore, be to the time-turning atheist, who hath one god and one religion for summer, and another god and another religion for winter, and the day of fanning, when Christ fanneth all that is in His barn-floor: who hath a conscience for every fair and market, and the soul of him runneth upon these oiled wheels, time, custom, the world, and command of men. O, if the careless atheist, and sleeping man, who edgeth by all with, "God forgive our pastors if they lead us wrong, we must do as they command," and layeth down his head upon time's bosom, and giveth his conscience to a deputy, and sleepeth so, while the smoke of hell-fire fly up in his throat, and cause him to start out of his doleful bed! Of, if such a man would awake! Many woes are for the over-gilded and gold-plastered hypocrite. A heavy doom is for the liar and white-tongued flatterer; and the flying book of God's fearful vengeance, twenty cubits long, and ten cubits broad, that goeth out from the face of God, shall enter into the house, and in upon the soul of him that stealeth, and sweareth falsely by God's name (Zech. v 2,3). I denounce eternal burning, hotter than Sodom's flames, upon the men that boil in filthy lusts of fornication, adultery, incest, and the like wickedness. No room, no, not a footbreadth, for such vile dogs within the clean Jerusalem. Many of you put off all with this, "God forgive us, we know no better." I renew my old answer: the Judge is coming in flaming fire, with all His mighty angels, to render vengeance to all those that know not God, and believe not (2 Thess. 1: 8). I have often told you that security will slay you. All men say they have faith: as many men and women now, as many saints in heaven. And all believe (say ye); so that every foul dog is clean enough, and good enough, for the clean and new Jerusalem above. Every man hath conversion and the new birth; but it is not leal come. They had never a sick night for sin; conversion came to them in a night-dream. In a word, hell will be empty at the day of judgment, and heaven pang full!

Alas! it is neither easy nor ordinary to believe and to be saved. Many must stand, in the end, at heaven's gates (Luke 13: 25). When they go to take out their faith, they take out a fair nothing, or (as ye use to speak) a blaflum. Oh, lamentable disappointment! I pray you, I charge you in the name of Christ, make fast work of Christ and salvation.

I know there are some believers among you, and I write to you, O poor broken-hearted believers: all the comforts of Christ in the Old and New Testaments are yours. Oh, what a Father and Husband ye have! Oh, if I had pen and ink, and ingine to write of Him! Let heaven and earth be consolidated into massy and pure gold, it will not weigh the thousandth part of Christ's love to a soul, even to me a poor prisoner. Oh, that is a massy and marvellous love! Men and angels! unite your force and strength in one, ye shall not heave nor poise it off the ground. Ten thousand worlds, as many worlds as angels can number, and then as a new world of angels can multiply, would not all be the balk of a balance to weigh Christ's excellency, sweetness, and love. Put ten earths into one, and let a rose grow greater than ten whole earths, or whole worlds, oh what beauty would be in it, and what a smell would it cast! But a blast of the breath of that fairest Rose in all God's paradise, even of Christ Jesus our Lord, one look of that fairest face, would be infinitely in beauty, and smell, above all imaginable and created glory. I wonder that men dow bide off Christ. I would esteem myself blessed, if I could make an open proclamation, and gather all the world, that are living upon the earth, Jew and Gentile, and all that shall be born till the blowing of the last trumpet, to flock round about Christ, and to stand looking, wondering, admiring, and adoring His beauty and sweetness. For His fire is hotter than any other fire, His love sweeter than common love, His beauty surpasseth all other beauty. When I am heavy and sad, one of His love-looks would do me meikle worlds' good. Oh, if ye would fall in love with Him, how blessed were I! how glad would my soul be to help you to love Him! But amongst us all, we could not love Him enough. He is the Son of the Father's love, and God's delight; the Father's love lieth all upon Him. Oh, if all mankind would fetch all their love and lay it upon Him! Invite Him, and take Him home to your houses, in the exercise of prayer morning and evening, as I often desired you; especially now, let Him not want lodging in your houses, nor lie in the fields, when He is shut out of pulpits and kirks. If he will be content to take heaven by violence and the wind on your face for Christ and His cross, I am here one who hath some trial of Christ's cross, and I can say, that Christ was ever kind to me, but He overcometh Himself (if I may speak so) in kindness while I suffer for Him.

I give you my word for it, Christ's cross is not so evil as they call it; it is sweet, light and comfortable. I would not want the visitations of love, and the very breathings of Christ's mouth when He kisseth, and my Lord's delightful smiles and love-embracements under my sufferings for Him, for a mountain of gold, or for all the honours, court, and grandeur of velvet kirkmen³. Christ hath the yoke and heart of my love. "I am my Beloved's, and my Well-beloved is mine."

Oh that ye were all hand-fasted to Christ! O my dearly-beloved in the Lord, I would I could change my voice, and had a tongue tuned by the hands of my Lord, and had the art of speaking of Christ, that I might point out to you the worth, and highness, and greatness, and excellency of that fairest and renowned Bridegroom! I beseech you by the mercies of the Lord, by the sighs, tears and hearts-blood of our Lord Jesus, by the salvation of your poor and precious souls, set up the mountain, that ye and I may meet before the Lamb's throne amongst the congregation of the first-born. Lord grant that that may be the trysting-place! that ye and I may put up our hands together, and pluck and eat the apples off the tree of life, and that we may feast together, and drink together of that pure river of the water of life, that cometh out from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Oh, how little is your hand-breadth and span-length of days here! Your inch of time is less than when ye and I parted. Eternity, eternity is coming, posting on with wings; then shall every man's blacks and whites be brought to light. Oh, how low will your thoughts be of this fair-skinned but heart-rotten apple, the vain, vain, feckless world, when the worms shall make them houses in your eye-holes, and shall eat off the flesh from the balls of your cheeks, and shall make that body a number of dry bones! Think not that the common gate of serving God, as neighbours and others do, will bring you to heaven. Few, few are saved. The devil's court is thick and many; he hath the greatest number of mankind for his vassals. I know this world is a forest of thorns in your way to heaven; but you must go through it. Acquaint yourselves with the Lord: hold fast Christ; hear His voice only. Bless His name; sanctify and keep holy His day; keep the new commandment, "Love one another;" let the Holy Spirit dwell in your bodies; and be clean and holy. Love not the world: lie not, love and follow truth: learn to know God. Keep in mind what I taught you; for God will seek an account of it, when I am far from you. Abstain from all evil, and all appearances of evil: follow good carefully, and seek peace and follow after it: honour your king, and pray for him. Remember me to God in your prayers; I do not forget you. I told you often while I was with you, and now I write it again, heavy,

sad, and sore is that stroke of the Lord's wrath that is coming upon Scotland. Wo, wo, wo to this harlot-land! for they shall take the cup of God's wrath from His hands, and drink, and spue, and fall, and not rise again. In, in, in with speed to your stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, and hide you there whill the anger of the Lord pass! Follow not the pastors of this land, for the sun is gone down upon them. As the Lord liveth, they lead you from Christ, and from the good old way. Yet the Lord will keep the holy city, and make this withered kirk to bud again like a rose, and a field blessed of the Lord.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. The prayers and blessings of a prisoner of Christ, in bonds for Him, and for you, be with you all. Amen.

Your lawful and loving pastor,
Aberdeen, *July 13, 1637*

S.R.

1. Thus

2. See Letter 161. The Service-Book, which has no author's name.

3. High Churchmen.

The Millennium

by Rev. K. D. MacLeod

The millenium which we are now to consider is, of course, that particular period of a thousand years which is spoken of in Revelation 20: 3, that period for which Satan is to be bound up in the bottomless pit so that he may no more deceive the nations. Such a restraint on the activity of Satan is obviously a tremendous boon for the world, and for the Church of Christ in particular. Charles Hodge is only typical of so many of the greatest Reformed writers when he describes the Millenium as a period in which "the Church is to enjoy a season of peace, purity and blessedness such as it has never yet experienced".¹

Yet this is by no means the way in which all interpreters look at this passage. Some do believe in a future period of extensive blessedness for the Church because they find it taught in other parts of Scripture, although they do not accept that it is the teaching of this particular passage. More fundamentally, A-Millennialists deny that there is any such period of world-wide blessing before the Church. They speak instead of the progressive development of both good and evil in the world until the second coming of Christ at the day of judgement. William Hendriksen, a promi-

1. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1977 reprint, vol 3, p 859. This reference appears in an extended and useful treatment of the subject-matter of this lecture. Briefer, but useful, treatments appear in other textbooks on theology, eg, Dabney's *Systematic Theology*, A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* and Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*.

nent A-Millennial writer, understands the binding of Satan for a thousand years to indicate "that throughout this present gospel age" (ie since New Testament times) "the devil's influence on earth is curtailed. He is unable to prevent the extension of the Church among the nations by means of an active missionary programme. During this entire period he is prevented from causing the nations — the world in general — to destroy the Church as a mighty, missionary institution."² But he adds, "The majority will always be on the side of the evil one. We most emphatically reject the dream of a man-made era of peace, prosperity and universal righteousness on the earth preceding the second coming of Christ".³

We, of course, also reject, and with equal emphasis, any such *man-made* era. It is probable that one of the most important reasons for the strength of present-day A-Millennialism is this kind of reaction against an evolutionary type of theology which was especially fashionable before the First World War, a type of theology which held that man by his own powers, and with perhaps a little help from God, would develop into something approaching perfection. It is interesting to note, almost by the way, a remark by J. M. Kik, "One of the contributing factors to present-day pessimism, gloominess, defeatism within the Church is the omitting of the Psalms from the hymn books".⁴

It is certainly not on the strength of just one verse, and that one verse a verse in the most figurative book of the Bible, that we base the doctrine of the Millennium, the word being understood in its traditional sense. Samuel Miller, in a single paragraph in a sermon entitled, *The Earth Filled With the Glory of the Lord*, quotes twenty separate verses⁵ from various parts of the Bible to support this view of what he calls "the universal prevalence of true religion," and He by no means exhausts Scripture testimony on the theme.

There is no doubt that true religion enjoyed a period of tremendous expansion in the early Christian centuries; there is equally no doubt that through the work of Bible translation, over the last two hundred years especially, God's Word has been taken to most quarters of the world. And wherever the Bible is we can expect that it will in some measure be blessed by God to the good of souls. To that extent there has been a fulfilment of such a verse as Psalm 72: 7, which speaks of the Kingship of the Saviour in these terms: "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The point at issue, however, is: Has

2. Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, 1986 reprint p 188.

3. *Ibid*, p 189.

4. Quoted by Lorraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, 1984 edition, p24, Boettner provides useful summaries of the main views taken of the Millennium; however, his book is distinctly inferior to those by Fairbairn and Brown.

5. In *The Missionary Enterprise, A Collection of Discourses on Christian Missions by American Authors*, 1846, p 146f.

the world ever yet seen this, and similar verses, fulfilled in anything like that fulness of meaning which they contain? Quite simply, has the world ever seen a time when *all nations* have been brought, as Psalm 72: 17 promises, to call Christ blessed? Multitudes of individuals, certainly, but not by any stretch of the imagination all nations.

In this connection it is worth quoting Robert Gordon's comments as he discusses the promises of deliverance to God's Church which are recorded in Isaiah 52, and these comments are applicable to many other parts of the prophecies. "The passage . . . ought to be full of interest to every believer, considered simply as a prediction of the future enlargement of the Church and her final establishment, in the conversion of all nations to the faith of the gospel. Much of what is here foretold has already been accomplished; and we should beware of undervaluing what has already been done towards carrying into effect the glorious deliverance here predicted of immortal souls from their state of ignorance, guilt and servitude. In what a different condition did the apostles leave the world from that in which they found it! . . . And amidst all the struggles which the Church has had to maintain . . . what countless multitudes have there been who made their escape from all the degradation and defilement of their house of bondage! . . .

"Believers ought to remember and rejoice in all these; and on the principle here laid down respecting the deliverances wrought for the people of God in Old Testament times, believers should regard the past triumphs of the gospel as so many pledges and tokens of future and still more glorious victories, till the kingdom of the Redeemer, the dominion that he is to wrest from the powers of darkness, shall extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. The firm conviction that such victories will infallibly be achieved is essential to the maintenance of a lively and active zeal in the cause of Christ. . . . Such predictions then, as we find recorded here, should be full of interest to believers, as fitted to awaken a vivid anticipation of the time when all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God".⁶

It should be perfectly obvious that in so many of these Old Testament prophecies there is so much more of God's blessing held out to His Church than has ever yet been brought about. Apart from some such concept of the Millennium as we are putting forward, it seems impossible to do justice to a verse like Isaiah 11: 9, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The figure implies a widespread knowledge of God, similar in its extensiveness to how the seabed is covered

6. Gordon, *Christ As Made Known to the Ancient Church*, vol 3, 1854, p 333.

by water. So widespread will that knowledge be, that the figure can only be satisfied by a completely different order of things from what we, or any other generation, has known.

It will be a time when we may expect to see fulfilled in every direction the words of Jeremiah 31: 34. "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." It is not, on the whole, mere head-knowledge that is to overspread the earth. It will be saving knowledge, knowledge that carries in its train true repentance and spiritual worship, for "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the governor among the nations" (Ps. 22: 27f). We need not assert, however, that every individual at that time will be a follower of the Lamb; there will still be those who do not at the heart submit to the Saviour, and "the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Is. 65: 20).

A-Millenialists deduce from the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, not only that good and bad will continue together in the world until the end of time, but also that their proportions will not change dramatically. But what is taught with remarkable clearness in, for instance, the early verses of Isaiah, chapter 2, is that the position of the Church of God in the world will indeed change dramatically. There, as so often in the Old Testament prophecies, Old Testament terms are used to express New Testament ideas. Thus, because the temple of God on Mount Zion was the centre of the Old Testament Church, the term Zion is used in the prophecies to represent the Church in all ages, even in an age after the temple has been destroyed, never more to be restored. So we are told that "it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." The physical Mount Zion bears no comparison for height with the mountains which surround the land of Israel. Equally, the true Church of God has always been of very little consequence to most people; there are many institutions, false religions among them, which make a far greater impact on the world scene today, just as in almost every other generation. But, before the last days (ie the whole New Testament age) will have come to an end, the Church of God will reach a prominence above all human institutions.

When an individual gets a change of heart there follow effects on his or her outward life, for Christ is accepted not only as Saviour, but as King. So when the multitudes come under the saving power of Christ there will

be dramatic changes in national and international life, for He will be accepted as King of nations. Then, as we further learn from Isaiah, chapter 2, Christ "shall judge (or rule) among the nations." And a particular effect of His rule will be that "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Peaceful uses will be found for armaments, and not only will war itself come to an end, but no one will feel the need to learn the skills which are necessary for waging war. Peace between man and man is the natural consequence of man being reconciled to God.

In a sense there is no need to make special reference to any particular nation, given that during the Millennium it will be said universally, "The nations of this world are become the nations of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. 11: 15). Yet the Jews have from the time of their first father Abraham had a special place in the history of redemption. And Paul is at pains in writing to the Romans to demonstrate the future ingathering of his people. He thus addresses the Gentiles, "If thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (11: 24). There can only be one answer to Paul's question — in his own words it is, "And so all Israel shall be saved" (11: 26).

There are very many other passages which could be referred to, which teach the same truth and develop various aspects of the matter further, but we may now return to look more carefully at that specially controversial passage at the beginning of Revelation, chapter 20, where we read of the binding of Satan. In doing so we may note how Christ reacted to the report which the seventy disciples brought back of their mission, "Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." He told them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Lk. 10: 17f). The Saviour was evidently seeing their mission as one example of the damage that is done to Satan's kingdom when His messengers go out in His name, and the corresponding advancement there is for the Kingdom of grace. Doubtless His mind was then exercised about the whole work that will be successfully carried on until every knee will bow before Him. This *binding of Satan* must then be one particularly effective step in that great work of destroying Satan's kingdom.

David Brown draws attention to the expression, "Satan's seat", used in the epistle to the Church in Pergamos (Rev. 2: 13), and states, "This certainly refers to the powerful party which Satan had in that place, and

the dominant influence which through them he exercised in opposition to the gospel — a party made up of persecutors on the one hand and licentious corruptors of the truth on the other. If this be correct, the unseating or dethroning of Satan in Pergamos — his banishment from where he dwelt — would not mean the total cessation of his influence in that city, but just the destruction of the party which represented him and did his work in opposing the gospel there”.⁷

Accordingly during the Millennium, and we now use Patrick Fairbairn’s words, Satan “shall no longer have a distinct party to represent him, or a fitting agency to ply his devices and prosecute his designs. It will be as if he had altogether lost his influence among the generations of mankind, though, since men shall still be in the flesh, and death shall still work, and a liability shall still exist to deception and apostacy, his connection with the world cannot be wholly destroyed”.⁸ The extent of the work done on the Day of Pentecost, and throughout apostolic times, is proof positive that it needs no power different from what is already at work in the world to bring about the prosperity of the Church. So, as we look at the Lord binding Satan, can we not see a vastly increased degree of the restraint that He already exerts on Satan’s power to put into effect his malevolent designs? Thus, on the one hand, the power of the Holy Spirit will be exerted to a very much greater extent, and, on the other hand, the power of temptation will be very much reduced.

At this point in describing his vision John speaks of a resurrection — the first resurrection — and those who then rise are to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years; they are to sit on thrones, and judgement is to be given to them. They are “the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands.” They obviously include the souls that John saw under the altar when the fifth seal was opened, and to whom it was said “that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev. 6: 11). We have then a *picture* of the martyrs of old once more alive, but now reigning over the world instead of dying for the cause of Christ as previously they did. But the expression *soul* itself

7. Brown, *Christ’s Second Coming. Will It Be Premillennial?* 1983 reprint, p 403f, Brown does an excellent job of demolishing nineteenth-century Premillennial arguments and provides much excellent material in support of the Postmillennial view in the process. In the nature of things it is not as straightforward an account of Brown’s position as would have been the case if the book had been constructed on a different principle.

8. Fairbairn, *Prophecy Viewed in Respect to Its Distinctive Nature, Its Special Function and Proper Interpretation*, 1865 edition, p 466, Fairbairn’s final section, pp 442-493, is, in the present writer’s opinion, the best exposition available of the position taken in this lecture. The whole book deserves to be reprinted; it was last published by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1964.

suggests that it is not a literal and bodily resurrection that is being described. We are reminded of how, when the time comes for receiving the Jews as a nation into the Church of God once more, it is to be "life from the dead" for the Gentile world — the near-total spiritual death of the Gentile world being replaced by God-given life, which will be a resurrection indeed.

What is represented here is the greatest of the gospel's triumphs, when, in Fairbairn's words, "the universal Church, freed at length from the thralldom of the antichristian yoke and recovered from the slumber and filth of ages, is to burst forth in the freshness and beauty of a divine life; when all her members shall reflect the holy grace and energy of her glorified Head, and these members grown so many in number and so powerful in influence that every sphere of life shall be penetrated by their agency, and every region of earth be willingly obedient to their sway".⁹ If we think of the spiritual state of individual believers at this time, when the Holy Spirit is to come with such power, we must expect that they will on the whole grow more in grace and grow more quickly than at any other time. According to Psalm 72 the righteous are to flourish in the day of the Messiah. It is a Psalm which refers particularly to Christ as King, and it is surely at a time when His Kingship is most evident that grace in believers will flourish most.

Accordingly it is the resurrection of the martyrs that provides the most appropriate figure. "It should be", says Fairbairn again, "as if the flower alone of the Church, her noblest exemplifications of holy zeal and self-sacrificing love, had come to life again and entered on their immortal career. Nothing any longer should appear of the lukewarm . . . far less of those who had openly espoused the cause of ungodliness . . . Hence the eulogium, 'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power'; that is, they shall all be visibly of the right stamp . . . men so sincere in heart, so consistent in behaviour, so clearly and transparently Christian, that no room shall be left for doubt in regard either to their blessed condition or their glorious destiny".¹⁰

This glorious state of things is, however, not to continue indefinitely; the thousand years are to come to an end. "When the thousand years are expired", we are told, "Satan shall be loosed for a little season and shall go out to deceive the nations" (Rev. 20: 7f). A *first* resurrection was mentioned, the rising of the children of God to power in the earth. A *second*

9. Ibid, p 474.

10. Ibid, p475.

resurrection is implied in the words, "The rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were fulfilled" (Rev. 20: 5), which we may safely take to be the rising once more to power and influence of the ungodly, when the power of the Holy Spirit is largely withdrawn and God's restraint on the devil is also in large measure removed.

John sees how Satan is once more permitted to "go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about and the beloved city" (Rev. 20: 7-9). As so often in the book of Revelation, the symbolism of these verses has its roots in Old Testament prophecy, in this case in Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, where Gog is described as belonging to the land of Magog, the chief prince of various tribes. With his army are other nations which lived at a considerable distance from the land of Israel, some of them at the very corners of the earth. Fairbairn comments on how "they were, therefore, the fit representatives of a hostile movement to be made from quarters *morally* at the greatest distance from the kingdom of God, and thence disposed to imagine that by mere dint of carnal weapons and numerical force they might carry it as by storm over the children of righteousness and peace".¹¹

This is the final assault of Satan and his forces against the cause of God in the world, but it will not be successful, for fire is to come down from God out of heaven to devour Gog and Magog and their followers, while the devil that deceived them is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (see Rev. 20: 9f). Jonathan Edwards speaks of how at that time "the wickedness of the world will remarkably call for Christ's immediate appearing in flaming fire to take vengeance on them",¹² and he is by no means alone in seeing the deliverance which God then gives to His Church as Christ's literal coming at the last day to judge the world and to consign all the wicked to hell with the devil and his angels.

(To be continued)

11. *Ibid.*, p 487.

12. *The History of Redemption*, 1959 reprint, p 328.

Book Review

The Lord's Day by Rev. Thos. Boston and Dr. John Kennedy. Reformation Press, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis PA87 2NP. £2.25 + 30p post and packing.

This booklet consists of a reprint of a short treatise by Rev. Thos Boston on the Fourth Commandment and of a Lecture on the Fourth Command-

ment by Dr. John Kennedy. The issue of this pamphlet is most timely in view of the many inroads made on the sanctity of the Sabbath in these days. Men, today, make a mock of Sabbath keeping as though the law of the Sabbath was the invention of men and could be discarded at will. But if they do not repent of their sin, they will discover that the God of the Sabbath will never admit them into the rest of the eternal Sabbath that awaits the people of God in glory but will appoint them their portion in that place of which He says in His Word, "There is no rest, saith my God, unto the wicked."

We wish for this booklet a wide circulation.

D.B.M.

Mission News

Miss Ishbel MacCuish leaves for Zimbabwe on July 10th, if all is well, for a period of three months. Her assistance will be much appreciated in the John Tallach School while Miss Katie Macaulay is at home on furlough. Mr and Mrs Neil Murray hope to leave for Zimbabwe at the end of July. Neil is anxious to work as far as possible at Binga, where there is such great need, but as their Government Work Permit is based on their work at Mbuma Hospital, there may be delay in their allocation.

Mr Dick Vermeulen has returned to Malawi and Kenya for another period of three months. It has been decided by the F.M.C. to provide permanent accommodation for the men in Malawi. Sites have already been purchased in two different places.

The Rev. P. Mzamo and Mr William Mpofu, grandson of the late John Mpofu who began the work at Nkai under the late Rev. J. B. Radasi, are going to Malawi and Kenya as Deputies from the Zimbabwe Presbytery. A minister in Malawi has expressed an interest in our Church. The Rev. P. Mzamo and Mr William Mpofu will contact him while they are in Malawi.

Miss Zekveld has received her Work Permit and will now proceed to Mbuma Hospital as soon as possible, D.V. She is travelling from Canada.

Miss Graham writes from Ingwenya Mission that they had a severe water problem recently. Something went wrong with an electric wire, and the electric motors on two of the wells ceased to operate. This was an alarming situation as it occurred at the weekend, and there were over four hundred boarding pupils and a staff of teachers dependent on the water. Mr David Ndlovu and his men returned a diesel engine from Mbuma, over

a distance of one hundred miles, and succeeded in setting it up by 11 p.m. on Saturday evening. Electricians in Bulawayo were contacted the following week and they repaired the damage to the electric motors. **J.N.**

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 10th September at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 10th September at 6 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 17th September at 6 p.m.

Canadian: At Inverness on 1st October at 9 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 15th October at 12 noon.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 8th October at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 25th October at 2.30 p.m.

Annual Communion in Sydney, Australia

The Kirk Session decided that the second Sabbath in June (D.V.) would be the date fixed for the annual Communion in Sydney.

Calvin MacKenzie, Session Clerk

Reception of Student

At its meeting at Edinburgh on 14th June, the Southern Presbytery accepted as a student for the ministry, Mr Keith M. Watkins, 6 Bankton Wood, Muiriston, Livingstone, West Lothian. The prayers of our people are asked on behalf of Mr Watkins and his fellow-student, Mr R. MacLeod.

Alex. McPherson, Presbytery Clerk

Resignation of Rev. John MacDonald, North Tolsta

The Outer Isles Presbytery at its meeting in Stornoway on 18th June, 1991, regretfully accepted the resignation of the Rev. John MacDonald from the pastoral charge of the North Tolsta Congregation and his consequent retiral, on health grounds, from the active ministry. The Presbytery expressed the hope that he would enjoy a long and useful retirement.

John Macleod, Clerk of Presbytery

Induction of Rev. D. B. MacLeod at Edinburgh

The Southern Presbytery met at Edinburgh at 6.30 p.m. on Friday, 14th June, for the purpose of inducting the Rev. D. B. MacLeod who had been minister of Dingwall and Beaully, to the pastoral charge of the Edinburgh Congregation which had been vacant since June, 1989. The Call had been unanimous, and the service was attended by a large, representative gathering of church people.

At 7 p.m. the Moderator, Rev. D. MacLean, began the service,

preaching an appropriate sermon from 2 Corinthians 4: 5 — “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” It was clearly stated that the preaching of the Gospel is a preaching of the truth respecting God’s love to the lost through Jesus Christ the Lord, who to save his people had to bear their sins. This truth is in inspired Scripture, the Word of God. Those who preach other gospels handle the Word of God deceitfully. In order to preach the Gospel one must know what it is, and have experience of it in his own soul. As dead souls have to be enlightened, the preacher must open the Scriptures and show how necessary it was that Christ should die and enter into his glory. Thus great is the sinner’s need. The needy soul whom God purposes to save is by the Holy Spirit accompanying the truth, enlightened in the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and powerfully drawn to trust in Him for salvation.

A minister must be himself enlightened in these matters, and when called to leave what he has been doing and preach Christ, he has to rely on divine light to enable him to preach. He handles the Word faithfully, addressing his hearers consciences, and setting forth Christ as the only balm for wounded consciences. He may tend to faint because of the opposition of indwelling sin, Satan and the world, but God will ensure that he does not preach in vain. The carnal methods so much used today will not be blessed to the saving of souls.

Ministers are also servants of the Church in that their labours are for the benefit of the Church, the love of Christ motivating them to this — “For Jesus’ sake”. They serve also by ruling the Church; discipline is a thing little understood today, but commanded by Christ as necessary. Christ’s ministers do not preach themselves. They are earthen vessels; their ability to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, referred to here as a treasure, is a valuable God-given faculty which in each case will be exercised only for a while. In due course the vessel will be broken, but by the Gospel it has proclaimed during that while, God will be glorified. Let us hold tenaciously to this view of the ministry.

At the end of public worship, and after a narrative of proceedings had been read, the Moderator asked Mr MacLeod to stand and put to him the questions appointed to be asked of a minister before induction. These were answered satisfactorily, and Mr MacLeod then signed the Formula. After engaging in prayer, the Moderator formally inducted and admitted Rev. D. B. MacLeod to the pastoral charge of the Edinburgh Congregation, in the name of the Presbytery, and by authority of the Lord Jesus Christ the Head of the Church. After being given the right hand of

fellowship by the Moderator, the other members of Presbytery and Revs. D. M. Boyd, N. M. Ross and D. A. Ross associated with it, did the same.

The Rev. L. MacLeod, being called on to address the newly-inducted pastor welcomed him back to the Presbytery. He then gave suitable advice regarding his own walk and conversation, and also his duties towards the flock now put in his charge. As an experienced minister, Mr MacLeod was aware of the likelihood of difficulties and trials, but Christ would be with him, and the Holy Spirit who had led him to this charge would be his Helper. The congregation was then addressed by Rev. A. McPherson, and were referred to ways in which the settling of a pastor over them, affected them as individuals, families and as a congregation. God was able to bless them greatly in this new stage of their history.

Messages of goodwill from other Presbyteries and ministers were read, and the service then concluded by praise and the benediction. The congregation were then given the opportunity of shaking hands with Mr MacLeod as they left the church. It was a heartening occasion, and we pray that much blessing will follow Mr MacLeod's ministry.

— Alex. McPherson, Presbytery Clerk.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Bracadale: Anon., £50 for Induction Expenses, per C.C.; D.M. Portree £2 for Manse Repairs per C.N.

Daviot-Stratherrick-Tomatin: Friend, Stornoway, £50.

Edinburgh: Anon., £500 for Sust. Fd.; Tolsta Friend, £10; J.N. Inverness £50; Mr and Mrs D. M., Strathconon £20, all for Congr. Fd.; Raasay Friends for Manse Purchase, £50; Friend, Glasgow, £10 for Manse Fund; Anon., C., Skye £20 for Induction Coll.; Anon., per Mrs Nicolson, £10; J.C., Glasgow, £20; Anon., £12, all for Communion Expenses.

Glendale: Anon., £50 where most needed; Two Glendale friends £20 for Congr. Purposes, both per Rev. D. Nicolson; Envelope in plate £20 for Communion Exps., per E.K.

Greenock: D.R.M., Glas., £25 for Congr. Fds per Rev. L. M.

North Harris: K.M., Harris House, £10 (envelope in plate); Friend, Stockinish, £5 per R.M.C., both for Door Coll.; A.&R.F., £10; R.M.C., £5 (both envelope in plate); P.M.L., £10 (envelope in plate), all for Bus. Fd.; Anon., Tarbert £50 for Sust. Fd., £25 for Home Miss. Fd., £25 for Jewish and For. Miss. Fd. per J.M.L.

Portree: Two Friends £30 for Sust. Fd.; J.M. £20 for Cong. Purposes; Friend, £12 for Door Coll., all per F.M.; Anon., £10 for Maintenance Fd.; Anon., Glendale £50, where most needed; Anon., £20 for Door Coll.; Anon., £4 for Bus. Fd., last four by envelope in plate.

Raasay: Friend of the Cause, Inverarish £50 for Sust. Fd. per M. D. MacKay; Mrs MacR., Osaig £10 per Rev. J. R. Tallach; Friend, Inverarish, £20; Envelope in plate, £20; Anon., £20, last four for Car Fd.

Staffin: Envelope in plate £5 for Car Fd., from Friend of the Cause; Anon., £5.80 for Car Fd.

Stirling: Friend, South Harris £50 for Communion Expenses per J.N.M.