

THE Free Presbyterian Magazine and Monthly Record

Vol. 97

AUGUST 1992

No. 8

The General Assemblies

The Church of Scotland

At the Church of Scotland Assembly, Rev. Hugh Wylie, Hamilton, succeeded Rev. William MacMillan as Moderator. The Lord High Commissioner was Lord MacFarlane of Bearsden. A leading Conservative businessman — he is deputy chairman of United Distillers — he defended wealth creation saying that it was an important and legitimate pursuit.

The Assembly took the radical step of abolishing Synods. It was claimed that they had outlived their usefulness and were duplicating much of the work of the various Presbyteries. In a Church the size of the Church of Scotland one would have expected that the function of a Synod as a review body would have been beneficial in preventing the General Assembly from being clogged down with business, and afford more lengthy consideration of cases coming under review. Their existence since Reformation times did not seem to weigh heavily with the Assembly.

The Kirk's Board of World Mission and Unity along with the Church and Nation Committee gave in a report of alleged persecution of Roman Catholic bishops and Presbyterian missionaries in Malawi. While critical of alleged human rights violations there, it was urged that aid be continued through non-governmental organisations. President Banda was ordained an elder in the Church of Scotland but he has had no part in Church affairs for many years. The Assembly appealed to him to consider the allegations being made.

The Assembly approved controversial proposals to allow children to take communion. Kirk Sessions were given discretion to admit baptised children to communion. Reports received from Presbyteries showed that 30 Presbyteries were in favour and 18 against. Rev. David Wright, Stornoway, opposed the move stating that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration was implicit in the unnecessary new legislation. He asked whether the intention behind it was to bring the Church of Scotland into line with the practice of the Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

Professor Torrence expressed concern over the way in which posts in Scotland's divinity faculties were filled. He said: "We have appointed people who do not believe in the deity of Christ; we have appointed people who are humanists or atheists." He also stated that the last two Professors appointed at St. Andrews were from the Church of England. The situation is indeed serious in the Church of Scotland Colleges if these things are true — and we have no reason to doubt Professor Torrence's assertions. The question arises, however, whether if the Church of Scotland had the full say in these appointments they would appoint Bible-believing Professors. We fear not.

A minister, Rev. Sandy Nairn, of Auldearn, who was deposed from the ministry for his refusal to baptise infants, had his appeal against the sentence rejected by the General Assembly. One would have expected that Mr Shaw would have realised that his views were unacceptable and that the only course open for him was to leave the Church of Scotland. What is extraordinary about the Assembly is how firm it can be on a matter such as this, and yet that it tolerates within its bounds men whose views on other doctrines are totally at variance with Scripture.

The Joint Commission on Doctrine set up by the Church of Scotland and the R.C. Church had considered the possibility of communion being taken together on ecumenical occasions. Rev. David Levinson appealed to the Roman Catholic hierarchy to grant a dispensation on such occasions. Bishop Conti, the R.C. delegate to the Assembly, said that there were very deep theological principles involved, but promised to take back to his fellow bishops the sentiments expressed. Of course, as Bishop Conti well knows, there are very deep theological principles involved — these all being the creation of the R.C. Church in its heretical and blasphemous doctrine of the Mass.

The Assembly deplored the Government's intention to introduce a National Lottery. It is unbelievable that the Government would support a lottery at a time when millions of pounds of hard-earned money — and in some cases, no doubt, handed out money — is being spent on gambling. To reduce and eliminate the outlay in this nefarious business would be more appropriate for the Government.

The Church and Nation Committee came under attack for supporting left wing policies. One minister called for the Committee to be suspended indefinitely. He said that anyone looking at the Report could not fail to see a left-of-centre thread running through it. The Committee Chairman accused moderates of conducting an alarmist campaign. However the left wing bias has been noticeable for some time.

The Assembly backed the call for a referendum to determine Scotland's constitutional future and decide whether Scotland should have its own Parliament. This had been proposed by the Church and Nation Committee. A motion to delay a decision on this matter was defeated by 445 votes to 347. The Assembly also dealt with a number of other political issues.

The Assembly endorsed the aim of bringing the minimum stipend for the Church of Scotland ministers up to the level of the national average wage. The present stipend is just over £13,000 which is £2000 short of the national average wage for Scotland, it was said.

The Free Church of Scotland

The Free Church Moderator of Assembly, Rev. Donald MacDonald, Carloway, Lewis, dealt in his opening address with the subject of education. He said that at present parents had to send their children to schools which were riddled with virulent unbelief in Christianity. He called for the setting up of Church schools. He reminded the Assembly that it was the Church, and not the state, which had pioneered education in Scotland. Church schools were handed over to the State on the understanding that children would continue to be instructed in the Christian faith. That trust in the State had been misplaced and it could not be denied that State education had been taken over by humanism. He went on to state: "Our children, who are the Church's hope for the future, instead of being nurtured in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord, are being bred in scepticism, agnosticism and atheism." He reminded the Assembly that the Roman Catholic Church had its own schools maintained at public expense. It was time, therefore, for evangelical churches to demand similar educational provision for their children. The Moderator is right in his assessment of the present educational set-up. It will not be easy however to rectify it as the process has gone on for several decades and ought to have been tackled long ago.

Rev. Angus Smith, Ness, speaking in the Public Questions debate asserted that the Free Church of Scotland was in spiritual decline. He denounced young professing Christians who went to Rock Concerts and to dancing. He pointed out the discrepancy between the disciplinary action taken in the Isle of Lewis and that in other parts of the Church on these matters. So far as dancing is concerned, if the Free Church is to act it will have to begin with office-bearers before it proceeds to deal with members. Mr Smith warned that with the spiritual decline and moves away from Reformed principles the Free Church would finish up in the Church of Scotland again.

A proposal to cut the stipends of ministers whose congregations do not contribute enough to the Sustentation Fund was put forward but not without some opposition. It was finally agreed that the proposals should be discussed at Presbytery level first. The ministers' stipend was increased to nearly £11,000 which was reckoned to be 72 per cent of the national average wage.

It appears that the Free Church is in communication with the A.P.C. One question which the Free Church is seeking an answer to, but which has not yet been answered satisfactorily, is why they set up another Church. Another question which the A.P.C.'s should try to answer is why they hold on to property belonging to the Free Presbyterian Church when some of their congregations make no pretence of holding fast to Free Presbyterian Church doctrine and practice. They will need to find a better answer than liberty of conscience.

Sermon

by Rev. Jonathan Ranken Anderson

"All things are ready: come unto the marriage" Matth. 22: 4

We live in a fallen world. We are members of an apostate family. We lie under a heavy condemnation. But soon we must pass from our present state into another, and there receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or bad.

In the prospect of this judgment we have everything to fear; for who can say he is pure from his iniquity? Who can stand at the tribunal of his own conscience? How then can any of the children of men stand at the bar of God, with the least hope of justifying himself, and obtaining a sentence of acquittal? 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' (Ps. 130: 3). 'For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' (1 John 3: 20.)

In this sad condition, the voice of mercy is heard in the everlasting gospel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. And well will it be for us, to listen to its tender and melting accents, and inquire seriously into their import and tendency. We owe this to Him from whom these accents come; for He is the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity. He is the great Creator of heaven and of earth, and of all the creatures that are therein. He is the Lord our Maker, and as such possesses claims upon us peculiarly weighty, and altogether unquestionable. Oh, let none turn away from Him who speaks to us from heaven! For soon the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened, and all the dead, small and great, stand before God. The eyes that now run over these pages shall

then see the King of Glory on His great white throne; the truths that are set before them now will then form elements of the great assizes; and the gospel, which holds a prominent place here, will appear there as telling with powerful effect upon those who receive it or reject it. 'Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' (Heb. 3: 7,8.)

The form which the voice of mercy in the gospel assumes is that of invitation — a form benignant and persuasive. And to whom is it addressed? The answer returned by every page of the word of God is to *sinners*. We may wonder at this. We believe the angels are amazed at it. But it is of the nature of mercy to show kindness to sinners; it is the design of grace to extend salvation to sinners; and it is the end of the plan of redemption to glorify its Author upon sinners.

Now, will any of our readers deny that this is their character? We doubt not that most, if not all of them, will be ready to allow that it is. By this admission you are shut up to the obligation of accepting the invitation given you to the marriage feast. And if this be not the practical result, rest assured you deceive yourselves and do not allow you are sinners; or you are in ignorance, and do not know what it is to be sinners; or you are presumptuous, stifling conviction, resisting truth, and trifling with the salvation of your souls. Oh be persuaded to stop for a moment, and inquire which of these is your case, and take a course answerable to the real posture of your affairs. To commit a mistake here, remember, may cost you your life — it may ruin your eternal interests — it may for ever damn your souls, 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek. 33: 11.)

But if you deny you are sinners, or do not act upon the admission, then you sin against the light; and if you perish, surely your blood will be upon your own heads. For the scriptures plainly tell you, that you were 'shapen in iniquity, and in sin did your mother conceive you' — (Ps. 51: 5) — that in you 'there dwelleth no good thing' — (Rom. 8: 18) — but 'that every imagination of the thoughts of your heart is only evil continually' — (Gen. 6: 5) — that from this corrupt fountain has proceeded all the wickedness you commit — all the wickedness which is committed in the earth — and all the wickedness against which the wrath of God will burn for ever in hell.

Now, why does that word which brings the tidings of salvation also bring the revelation of your sin? Is it to torment you before the time? Oh do not harbour so hard a thought. Is it to throw you into unnecessary alarm? Oh do not judge so unjustly of him who is Love. Is it to unfit you for the society and business and enjoyments of life? The very reverse of all

this. The revelation of your sin is put into your hands, that you may look into it, and ponder and pray over it. Nor will anything release you from the pressing obligation to do this, 'For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Matt. 12: 26.)

The soul is infallibly lost, unless there be produced by the Holy Ghost a thorough and saving conviction of sin. For though the law speaks, men will not hear; though it shines with the clearest evidence, men will not see; though it is arrayed in majesty most awful, and supported by authority most sacred, men refuse to bow to it. And yet, it is through the law they are to obtain knowledge of their sinfulness, and conviction of their guiltiness. If, therefore, the law do not prevail over the stubbornness of human nature, the gospel is never reached, the marriage feast never tasted, and the soul never saved. But herein do we see the power of sovereign mercy, that, by the grace of the Spirit of God in the soul, the law does its work; and he who is brought under its influence for salvation is awakened, convinced, and self-condemned.

In pleading for such a work, we are not to be held as, in any degree, fettering the freeness of the gospel. The invitation which the servants of the King were instructed to offer, was not surely fettered because it was to be addressed to the halt, the maimed, and the blind. And neither is the freeness of the gospel affected by the fact, that its offers are to be made to sinners — that is as we have seen, such as really are in the condition, and possess the character of sinners. The sick alone apply to a Physician, the lost alone seek after a Saviour: 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' (1 Tim. 1: 15.)

The blessings of salvation laid up in Christ Jesus, and exhibited in the light of divine truth, are compared to a marriage feast — a comparison at once most apposite and instructive. For it has been shown, that the guests to whom the invitation is given, and by whom alone it is received, are sinners of this world. Now, it were the merest mockery of such creatures, to bid them to any feast, in which salvation was not the principal food — the most sweet and satisfying delight. The men of the world have a taste for riches, because they are covetous — for power, because they are ambitious — for fame, because they are vain-glorious — for things not meet to be named, because they are earthly, carnal, devilish. In this we find the true secret of the incessant toil to which they submit, and the endless bustle through which they pass. But to a poor sinner, under the solemn feeling of eternity, weighed down with a burden of guilt, and ready to be swallowed up in the abyss of his own corruption, the all-absorbing

concern is, 'What must I do to be saved?'

O, how welcome to such a man, on the wayside of a vain, and weary, and worthless life, is the call, 'Come to the marriage!' To him it appears so marvellous, that he finds it hard to believe there is a feast, and that he is invited to be a guest. The great majority of those that are called christians find no difficulty in the matter. Is it for a moment to be supposed, they are so wicked, as to deny the truth of God, reject the Son of his love, and despise the gospel of his grace! The thing is absurd — it is a slander upon their character, and a stigma upon their profession. But let self-righteous men please themselves as they may — those that are truly alive to the plagues of their hearts are convinced, that however desirable the riches of divine grace, they have, by nature, no esteem of them; however free the offers of salvation, they have no relish for them; and however glorious the character of the Saviour, they put no confidence in Him.

In this, however, we see fresh occasion for the display of saving mercy. By such painful exercises and humiliating discoveries of the heart, men are broken off from their self-confidence, and brought helpless to the feet of sovereign grace. The marriage feast is open to all; pressing invitations are sent forth, and arguments used to enforce them. But if the gospel has arguments for, the world has arguments against compliance. The most of those that are bidden 'make light of it, and go their ways — one to his farm, another to his merchandise; and others take the servants, and entreat them spitefully and slay them.' (Matt. 22: 5,6.) Nor will it be otherwise with any, unless they are by the strength of divine grace subdued and humbled. The darkness that reigns in the soul must be dispelled, and the true light shine; the hardness that cleaves to the heart must be taken away, and softness communicated; in a word, there must be a new creation in the man; and the effect of this new creation is to bring him to the marriage.

By faith, springing from the work of God in the soul, or rather constituting the very essence of that work, a poor sinner receives Christ. He is the door into the marriage feast; by him if any man enter, he shall be saved. He is also the sum of the marriage feast; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. For the heart that is renewed has cravings which none but Christ can allay; desires which none but Christ can fulfil; wants which none but Christ can supply. 'And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.' (Col. 2: 10.)

In Christ Jesus, at the marriage feast — through the word and ordinances of God — by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost — a believer is given to the exercise of true repentance. The soul is in a poor and wretched state that is not alive to the evil of sin — that does not mourn

for the offence which it offers to God — that does not turn from it unto Him against whom it is committed. In this carnal generation of so-called religious people, self-confidence seems to be everything. Let a man, as it is said, be conscious that he believes in Christ, he is safe — he needs no further evidence that his sins are forgiven him. On the other hand, it is reckoned a species of hell for a man to lose sight of his own grace, and despair of his own salvation. And is this, then, the marriage feast of which so much is said in the word of God — which has formed the grand theme of every gospel proclamation that has ever been heard in this world — which cost the Son of God his precious blood to provide it for perishing men — which none but the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is able to actually impart to the soul! What a delusion hath fallen upon men, who can weave such imaginations, and give them to the world as the true sayings of God! And what a delusion is at work in those who greedily receive it, as if it were a passport to the kingdom of heaven!

Let it be known to all men, and let those who care for their safety here and hereafter lay it to heart, that if men do not repent, they shall all certainly perish. The thing that hurts the soul, that has driven it from the presence of God, that has polluted, and corrupted, and damned it, is sin. Now, there is no salvation from sin without repentance — no interest in Christ without repentance — no evidence of interest in Christ without repentance — no faith in Christ without repentance. Let men be conscious of what they please; let them see as much grace in themselves as their eyes can take in; and let them hope to the end of their days for salvation, — it is all vanity and a lie, if there be not, with a contrite spirit, a thorough and universal turning from sin unto God in heart, speech, and behaviour. 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.' (Matt. 3: 7,8.)

The marriage feast is to a large extent deserted in our day — not, indeed, avowedly, though that too is perhaps nearer than is supposed. But the profession that is made of respect to it, and desire after it, is for the most part utterly hollow. We have men that call themselves christians that do not know what a broken heart is, that never shed a tear over the dishonour they have done to the Holy One, that never looked upon Him who was pierced so as to mourn for him. Oh no! The sorrow that professors feel is altogether of a different sort; it is 'the sorrow of the world that worketh death.' (2 Cor. 7: 10.)

But those who by faith come to the marriage feast are truly penitent. Nor can they be said to be partakers of the feast at any time, unless they

are in the exercise of this grace — ‘with bitter herbs shall ye eat it.’ In this frame they receive the remission of sins — another and eminent part of the marriage feast. But neither on this blessing do men at large set any value — they do not understand what it is, nor how it comes; nor, were it possible to bestow it upon them, would they know what use to make of it, nor how to enjoy it. The Queen might issue as many pardons as her Majesty pleased, but no one would pay the least regard to them, nor find the smallest use for them, but criminals shut up in prison, and about to be led forth to execution. Now, the great King, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of salvation, issues no pardon but in favour of the penitent: ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ (1 John 1: 9.) ‘I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.’ (Ps. 32: 5.) ‘Her sins, which are many,’ said our Lord to the woman that was a sinner, ‘are forgiven; for she loved much.’ (Luke 7: 47.) And wherein did her much love appear? She washed his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head.

The man that thus comes to the marriage feast is a partaker of true holiness. He has the principle of it in the new nature wrought in him by the Holy Ghost. But by the faith of Christ he cultivates it from day to day. He seeks out and mortifies his corruptions — his pride, his selfishness, his envy, his carnality, his hypocrisy, his rebellion, his enmity. For all these still remain in his soul — they sorely vex him, weaken his strength, mar his comeliness, and impair his usefulness. He has from this source griefs that the world knows nothing of, and with which he gets no sympathy from a race of professors, whose heads may be full of notions, perhaps clear, and orthodox, and magnificent, but whose hearts are left under the power of deadly rancour to the pure truth, and to those who hold by it, and are willing to suffer for it. ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ (Rom. 7: 24.)

In Christ crucified, however, he finds virtue to kill the power of sin within him, and though to his own apprehension, he may seem to make little of it, nay, as if he were getting worse, yet he cannot give up the struggle, nor look to any other for relief. ‘I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ (Rom. 7: 25.)

Let sinners, therefore, hear the kindly voice that bids them to come to this feast. The time is short. The opportunities now given will soon pass away. The means of grace will soon cease. In any circumstances it were our wisdom to attend to the things that belong to our peace; but in these days there are considerations which carry peculiar weight and solemnity.

The sky all around is gathering blackness. The visible church is rapidly decaying, and is to a large extent already dead.

The profession of multitudes is completely withered. The pure word of the Lord is becoming very scarce. The power of the Spirit of God is to a fearful extent withheld. The ark is securing the few souls that are to be saved, and the still small voice is heard, 'Yet there is room.' But if it be neglected, soon the door will be shut, and a deluge of darkness and gloom envelope the land, to be exceeded only by the deluge of fire, that will at last burn up the world of the ungodly. Flee, then, oh flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold of eternal life. The door of hope may yet be opened to you. A cordial welcome may yet be given, and a rich repast spread before you. But soon your day of grace may close for ever, and the night of an undone eternity set in upon you. Haste, escape for your lives, tarry not in all the plain. For He who gives the marriage feast is rich in mercy to all that call upon Him. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' (Luke 13: 24.)

The Act of Faith

by Rev. Edward Pearse

Now, there is a threefold act of faith, which the Spirit of God works in the soul, whereby he more especially closes with Christ, and is espoused unto Him, made one with him in a marriage-covenant.

1. An act of choice or election.
2. An act of trust or dependence.
3. A act of resignation or subjection.

1. An act of choice or election. In the act or work of believing, the soul is, by the Spirit of God, made solemnly and deliberately to choose Christ as his only Head and Husband, his Lord and Saviour, being thus offered to him in the gospel. Choice or election, as the schoolmen tell us, is an act of the will, whereby it pitches upon some one thing, and prefers that before all others in order to such or such an end. Accordingly we may conceive of this act of faith we are speaking of: it lies thus; the will is by the Spirit of God sweetly and powerfully determined upon Christ, preferring Him for a Head and Husband, a Lord and Saviour before all others. It singles Him out, as it were, from all others, whether persons or things, in heaven and earth, and embraces Him as the best Husband, the best Saviour, the best Lord. There are others which make love to him and tender themselves to his embraces, as sin, self, the law, the world, with its enticements; but he passes by all, yea, rejects all with loathing

and indignation, and pitches upon Christ as infinitely best, saying to Him, "I will have none in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee." This the scripture calls sometimes "a laying hold upon Christ," Prov. 3: 18, sometimes a receiving or embracing of Christ, John 1: 12. It is true, in the work of faith, Christ is, and must be received into the understanding, but he is most properly said to be received into our will and affection: Christ in the gospel is revealed and offered to the soul with all his riches, fulness and perfections; He is tendered to him as a full, a mighty, and uttermost Saviour, as one who has not only an infinite fulness and sufficiency in Him to redeem and save, but also an infinite suitableness and amiableness in Him to endear and delight the soul; and accordingly the soul accepts and embraces Him, he cleaves to Him, and fastens upon Him, resolving to have none but Him alone. His language of Him now is, There is none like Christ, no head like this Head, no husband like this Husband, no saviour like this Saviour for my soul: this is the Head, the Husband, the Saviour that I need, and that indeed my soul desires. No love like His love, no beauty like His beauty, no blood like His blood, no righteousness like His righteousness, no fulness like His fulness; He, therefore and He alone shall be my Head, my Husband, my Saviour and my all for ever. Sweet Jesus, says ye, dost Thou tender Thyself for a Head and Husband to me, and art Thou willing to be embraced by me? Lo, then I do with my whole soul accept of Thee, and that for all times, and in all conditions with all Thine holiness as well as Thy love, with all Thy inconveniences as well as Thy privileges; to suffer for Thee as well as to reign with Thee; and this the soul does upon the deepest counsel, and most mature deliberation; and accordingly he abides by his choice for ever.

2. An act of trust or dependence. As in the work of faith the soul is, by the Spirit of God, made to choose Christ; so also to trust and depend upon Him for all grace, righteousness, an salvation. Now it builds upon Christ, anchors upon Christ, rests and relies upon Christ for all life and peace, for all grace on earth, and glory in heaven. He lays the whole weight and stress of his salvation upon Him: he commits all to Him, ventures all upon Him, expects all from Him. This the scripture calls sometimes a trusting in Christ, Eph. 1: 12. sometimes a leaning upon Christ, Cant. 8: 5. sometimes a hoping in Christ, 1 Cor. 15: 19. And in this respect Christ is called our hope, 1 Tim. 1: 1. our hope, that is, the object of our hope and trust, as to life and salvation. The soul has no hope in himself, no hope in the creature, no hope in the law or first covenant, no hope in any thing in heaven or earth on this side Christ. He looks here and there,

to this and that, but he can find no solid ground of hope, no foundation to build or rest upon for life and salvation; but then he turns his eye upon Christ, and there he sees abundant ground of hope; he beholds Him upon the cross, and there is hope; he beholds Him upon the throne, and there is hope; he looks upon Him dying, and there is hope; he looks upon Him rising and ascending, sitting at the Father's right hand making intercession for us, and there is hope; he looks upon the infinite virtue of His blood, the infinite efficacy of His Spirit, the infinite fulness of His grace, the infinite dimensions of His love, the infinite freeness and faithfulness of His promise; and in these he sees infinite ground of hope and trust, and accordingly he rolls and ventures all upon Him. Here I'll build, says he, here I'll rest, here I'll hang and depend, here I'll live; yea, and if die I must, here I'll die. His language to Christ now is like that of the psalmist to God in another case; "Now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee," Psa. 39: 17. This is to cast anchor within the vail, Heb. 9: 6. And indeed it is with poor souls many times as with persons at sea; the storm arises, the waves lift up themselves, which beating upon them, they are ready to sink every moment, and their very soul is melted because of heaviness; but anon they cast anchor, and are at rest: so poor souls are under storms of sin, guilt, and wrath, perishing in their own apprehension every moment; but anon they drop an anchor of hope upon Christ, and do rest upon Him. Or it is with them in this case as it was with the dove, when she was first sent out of the ark, she found no resting-place abroad for the sole of her foot; but at length returned to the ark, and there found rest. Gen. 8: 8, 9. So the poor guilty soul finds no rest any where but in Christ. His language in this act of faith is such as this: I am a poor, lost, sinful distressed creature, and there is but one door I can expect relief from, and that is Christ, and at this door I'll lie and wait; I know He is able to help me, for He can save to the uttermost: and surely He hath compassion, great compassion, towards poor sinners; He is a merciful High Priest. He says concerning Him, as they sometimes did concerning the king of Israel, Behold, we have heard that the king of Israel is a merciful king, peradventure he will save us. Yea, He has bid me look to Him and be saved; and He invites all them that are weary and heavy laden to come to Him, and promises them rest. Why then should I not rest, and rely upon Him? It is true I am a mighty sinner, but He is a more mighty Saviour. Have I sinned to the utmost? He has satisfied to the utmost. What shall I say? True I am death, but Christ is life; I am darkness; but Christ is light; I am sin, but Christ is holiness; I am guilt, but Christ is righteousness; I am emptiness and nothingness, but Christ is fulness and

sufficiency; I have broken the law, but Christ has fulfilled the law; and His life is infinitely able to swallow up my death; His light, my darkness; His holiness, my sin; His righteousness, my guilt; His fulness, my emptiness: on Him, therefore, I'll lean, and live, and hope. It is true I am utterly unworthy of any life, any grace, any favour; but Christ does all for sinners freely; He loves freely, He pardons freely, He saves freely; how vile, therefore, and unworthy soever I am, yet I will rest and depend upon Him; who knows but He may cast an eye of love upon me? This is that act of faith which is held forth; "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. 14: 24. I have neither strength nor righteousness of my own, but I have all righteousness and strength in Christ; all righteousness for pardon and justification, and all strength for holiness and sanctification. This is that the apostle calls a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh, Phil. 3: 3.

To draw towards a conclusion of this head. Which way soever the soul looks on this side Christ, he meets with nothing but discouragement. If he looks to himself, there he sees nothing but sin and guilt, blackness and deformity; in his heart he sees a fountain of sin, an abyss of sin, a ver hell of sin and wickedness; in his life he finds innumerable evils, sins of crimson dye and scarlet tincture staring him in the face. Yea, his very duties are not without sin; even in these there is abundance of pride, formality, unbelief, and the like; his very "righteousness are as filthy rags," Isa. 64: 6. If he looks unto the law, there he reads his doom and condemnation in every line thereof; there he finds himself under the curse; there he sees nothing but fear, and "blackness, and darkness, and tempests," Heb. 12: 18. If he looks to justice, that he finds as a flaming sword keeping him from the tree of life, from all happiness; that appears with an angry frowning countenance, demanding satisfaction, as being infinitely wronged. But now in the midst of all these discouragements, the poor soul at length gets a sight of Christ, in whom he sees encouragement after all. He discovers land in a storm, as it were, and finds in Him a foundation to rest his weary spirit upon; in Him he sees that which can atone with God, satisfy justice, answer all the demands of the law, fully deliver him from sin and guilt, and make him both holy and happy for ever; and accordingly he rests and rolls himself upon Him, resolving that if he dies, he will die thus leaning upon this Beloved.

3. An act of resignation or subjection. As in the work of faith the soul thus chooses Christ and depends upon Him, so also he is by the Spirit of God made cordially and unreservedly to resign up himself unto Him, to be ruled, governed, and disposed of by Him in His own way. The soul

now puts himself out of his own power and possession, he passes himself away from himself, and he gives up himself into the power and possession of Jesus Christ, to be ruled, governed, and saved by Him as He sees good. Which is properly that act of faith which we call resignation, and this the scripture often mentions; "One shall say, I am the Lord's," Isa. 45: 5. that is, he shall give or resign up himself to the Lord to be for ever His, and at His disposal. So, "They gave themselves unto the Lord," 2 Cor. 8: 5. And Eph. 5: 24. the church is said to be subject to Christ. The case seems to be this — There having many treaties passed in order to a match between Christ and the soul, the soul at length, through the help of the divine Spirit, is made freely to consent to take Christ for His only Head and Husband, and to be subject to Him in all things, to be perfectly and eternally at His disposal. His language now to Christ, is like that of Ahab to Benhadad, "Behold, I am thine, and all that I have is thine," 1 Kings 20: 4. Lord Jesus, says the soul, I have been my own, and have lived too much at mine own will, and to my own ends and interests; but now I desire to be thine, and to live in Thy will, and to Thine ends; take possession of me, save me, rule me, lead me, dispose of me as Thou pleasest; do all Thy pleasure in me, pull down and set up what Thou wilt, I'll be, and do, and suffer what Thou wilt have me to be, and suffer. And this is properly that act of faith, whereby we close with Christ as a Lord and King, and is indeed the evidence of the truth of the two former; for you must know that though faith's first aspect be to Christ as a Saviour, yet it comes to eye him as a Lord and King also. As faith fully rests upon the satisfaction of Christ, so it freely bows to the sceptre of Christ; yea, when faith cannot challenge Christ as a Saviour yet it will own Christ as a Lord. You know how Laban spake to Abraham's servant upon the sight of the ear-rings and bracelets which he had given his sister Rebekah, and upon his hearing a relation from her of his discourse with her, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?" I have room for thee, Gen. 24: 31. In like manner does the soul speak to Christ, upon the sight of that worth which is in Him, and that need which he has of Him; Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? I have room for Thee in my understanding, and in my will and affections; and I would have Thee possess all, and command all. In a word, the soul freely gives up himself to Christ's holy and spiritual government. Thou art a holy Christ, says he, He who is to reign, and I resign up myself to Thee. I will have no Lord but Thee; take the whole throne to Thyself within me. I know Thy yoke is an easy yoke, and I desire to bear it; Thy sceptre is a righteous sceptre, and I desire

to bow to it; Thy kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and I heartily desire to come under the power of it. I would be sanctified as well as justified; I desire Thy Spirit to subdue my corruptions for me, and to make me holy, as well as Thy blood to wash away my guilt for me, and ingratiate me with Thyself. And this is an opening of the gates, and lifting of the everlasting doors, to let Christ the King of glory in, Psa. 24: 7. Thus by these three, which indeed are the great uniting acts of faith, the Spirit of God enables the soul to close with Christ in a marriage covenant, and relation.

Faith that Stood the Test

by Rev. J. A. MacDonald

“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” Joh 21: 17.

In this verse the Lord seeks to ascertain Peter’s love to Him and Peter’s reply was: “Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” Christ was pleased with his answer in the affirmative. The Pharisees and all graceless folk never gave expression in this manner. They do not believe that the Lord knows all things for if they did they would tremble, “for the Lord looketh on the heart.” 1 Sam. 16: 7. The words in 1 Corinthians verse 22, are very solemn “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”

What Paul said when writing to the Hebrews we find very comforting when we are low in our mind and feel as Jacob of old did when he said: “all these things are against me.” “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Heb. 12: 6.

O, the wonderful strength of Peter’s faith which enabled him to say: “thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” Peter was sure that Christ had loved him long before he was born. It is very like what God said to his dear people through the prophet Jeremiah: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” Jer. 31: 3.

Dear friends, see that you will be praying for grace to enable you to follow Christ until your last breath in this world. Indeed I would like to say to you as the psalmist said:

“Wait on the Lord, and be thou strong,
and he shall strength afford
Unto thine heart; yea do thou wait
I say, upon the Lord.

Psalm 27: 14.

Oh no, it is not enough to follow the Lord part of the way. Remember that Jesus said: “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Matt. 24: 13. Those who go back, go back unto perdition. In a day like ours we should be as bold as Jacob was when he said: “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” Gen. 32: 26. Strive to ensure that Christ may give you the “white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” Rev. 2: 17.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew from all eternity what he had to suffer and endure for His beloved church before ever leaving the bosom of the Father, where he basked in His love. He who knew that the sword of justice was still asleep in its scabard, would one day hear the solemn voice of God the Father saying: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow.” Zec. 13: 7. Oh, the amazing love of God the Father to poor sinners when he gave this command.

Oh, what a faithful lover of the Lord blessed Ruth was. It is obvious from God’s word that He captivated her heart and soul at a comparatively young age — hence the spontaneous prayer: “Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee.” Ruth 1: 16.

We should be thankful that the Old Testament as well as the New afford us a long catalogue of those who feared His name and stood fast in the great day of battle. The great day of Judgment will manifest all this. His own people will then hear from his own mouth: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matt. 25: 34.

As the time is getting near the centenary of our beloved church we cannot but love and admire the God-honouring stand taken by Rev. D. Macfarlane and Rev. D. Macdonald along with the Rev. Neil MacIntyre who was at the time a divinity student. These, along with many other ministers and elders since that time, stood faithful to Christ and His Cause in the world to their last breath. No sooner had Mr Macfarlane placed his historic protest on the table than Dr. Rainy was on his feet seeking to appoint a committee to deal with Mr Macfarlane’s protest. It is likely that he had some other scheme in view, but godly Mr Macfarlane was outside the door of the Assembly before Dr. Rainy had sat down.

One day a friend, we believe with tears, told the Lord Jesus Christ: “He

whom thou lovest is sick.” John 11: 3. Before many days had passed it was the news of Lazarus’s death that was circulating in the towns and villages. After four days Jesus went to see for Himself where his body was laid. As he fastened his eyes on the grave of one whom he loved, he cried with divine authority: “Lazarus come forth.” That Lazarus did come forth gives adequate proof of Christ being equal with the Father. Lazarus came forth bound with the grave clothes. While clothed with these grave clothes he could not associate with the other disciples — hence the Lord’s command: “Loose him and let him go”. This was done. Before long we read of Lazarus as one who sat at the table with Him who had delivered him from so great a death.

His sisters were also friends of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary brought a box of very costly ointment and poured it on the Saviour’s feet. Wicked Judas Iscariot found fault, but the Lord rebuked him with the words: “Let her alone, against the day of my burying hath she kept this.” She sat at his feet weeping and with such God honouring tears she washed the Saviour’s feet and wiped them with the hair of her head. Oh to be like her. With it all she was demonstrating the words of Peter: “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”

“O Lord, all that I do desire
is still before mine eye;
And of my heart the secret groans
Not hidden are from thee.”

Psalm 38: 9

The Psalms and Uninspired Hymns

Extracts from a Speech by Dr. Hugh Martin, in the General Assembly of the Free Church, 3rd June, 1872.

First of all, then, on behalf of human hymns, it has been said, “We live now under a better and brighter dispensation than that of the Old Testament, therefore the inspired Psalms of David, and other Psalms in Holy Scripture, are insufficient.” But the question is not whether the dispensation under which we now live is better and brighter than that which preceded it; but whether, under this better and brighter dispensation, there is any security for better and brighter hymns than the Psalms of David, and whether there is a promise given to any man, or any body of men, of a richer unction of the Spirit — and not a richer unction only, but a specifically inspiring unction of the Spirit — for the purpose of composing hymns for the public worship of God in the Church than was given

to him, of whom it is written, that in his blessed swan song he spoke as follows:— “David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue.” Is there any modern hymnologist in circumstances to say that? Dr. Adam must tell us who he is, before his argument from the greater brightness of the New Testament dispensation is of any worth, otherwise it is an argument not only on behalf of hymns, but against the Book of Psalms.

Further, we are told that “it would be strange if we were never to rise in this respect above the dispensation which had passed away.” Yes, no doubt, when the fulness of the times was come, the Church rose above the dispensation which then passed away. But the question is not whether we are to rise above the Old Testament dispensation, but whether we are, by the help of uninspired hymnologists, to rise above the Spirit and Word of God in the mouth of “David, the son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet Psalmist of Israel.” Is it modest to talk of rising above the height to which he who was “raised up on high” was raised? Still further, it has been said “It would be strange if we were always to walk in the morning dawn, and never pass into the sunshine of the perfect day”. Sir, who can fail to admire the ingenuity which has discovered the resplendent fulness of noontide glory in uninspired songs, and nothing but twilight in the Psalms of David? Was it an uninspired modern hymnologist whose pen produced the following, or was it the Psalmist of Israel? —

“Because of life the fountain pure
Remains alone with thee,
And in that purest light of thine
We clearly light shall see.”

If the Psalms are but twilight, and human hymns the sunshine of the perfect day, then walk always in the perfect light. . . Sing nothing but human hymns, for that is perfect sunshine; and sing no Psalms of David, for that is going back to twilight. Excuse me, however, if I think that this argument of our friends is moonshine, and the logic of it is the logic of the twilight, and suited for those only who are of weaker vision. I say the Psalms are the full noonday light of Messianic glory, and the hymns are but the twilight — likely, if you trust to them, or put them on a level with the Word of God, to prove an evening and not a morning twilight, and you know the fatal difference there.

Again, it has been said that because a crowd at our Lord’s entry into

Jerusalem sang a quotation from the 118th Psalm, slightly modified, therefore human hymns are lawful. It is a marvellous argument, and branches out into several very marvellous syllogisms. Because an inspired psalm was sung long ago, therefore uninspired hymns should be sung now! Because a crowd, at their own instance, and not assembled for public instituted worship, chanted a quotation from a psalm, therefore Free Church ministers should give out human hymns to be sung by their people in the divinely instituted ordinance of congregational song! Because an inspired psalm was sung on a weekday in Jerusalem, therefore uninspired hymns should be sung in Scotland on the Sabbath! . . .

Then again, we have had an argument from Scripture, from the text, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." But first, let it be inquired how the Word of Christ — the Word of God — is to dwell in us richly by singing the word of man? That is a strange idea to extract from the writings of a well regulated intellect like that of Paul — not to speak of their being written under the inspiration of the Spirit. I can understand how the Word of God should dwell in us richly by singing the Word of God — dwelling on it in solemn, meditative, grave, sweet singing of it, till — to use a Scotch phrase — it *seeps* into the soul and takes its dwelling there, while in warm emotion of faith the worshipper's spirit in believing song dwells deliberately upon it. Thus it may come to dwell richly in us. But how is God's Word to dwell in us by singing man's word? How is the Divine Word to dwell in us by singing human hymns? . . . But even though it were granted that this verse refers to uninspired hymns, and though the strange problem could be solved of how God's Word is to dwell in you by singing the words of man, how are you to prove that this text refers to public worship? Paul is not speaking in this connection of believers in their Church capacity, or in their action in public, divinely instituted, worship, I defy any man to show that the apostle is here referring to public worship at all.

But it has been asked in this house, "Are we always to sing predictions and never sing fulfilments?" But do you need to go outside the Psalms to get the language of fulfilment? Shall we sing of the Incarnation? Ps. 40: 6 — "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; mine ears hast thou bored." Or, as in Heb. 10: 5 — "A body has though prepared me." Is that the future tense? is that mere prediction? Shall we sing of Christ's faithfulness and zeal in duty? Ps. 69: 9 — "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Is that prediction, or is it the language of fulfilment? Shall we sing of the sufferings of our dying Redeemer? Ps. 69: 20 — "I looked

for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." If that is prophecy, is it not the language of history? And is not the spirit of prophecy the historic testimony of Jesus? Shall we praise Christ for His ascension? "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men." Is that the language of mere prediction, as contra-distinguished from that of fulfilment? Sing we Christ's reward in glory? "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." Is that prophetic merely? Is it not historic? Shall we sing of Christ's intercession, and of his mediation generally? "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, whom thou madest strong for thyself." Of Christ's action in His prophetic office? "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation." What about the language of prediction, and the absence of the language of fulfilment, there? Shall we adore Christ in His priestly office? "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." His kingly office? "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." What is there, sir, concerning Christ's kingdom that is not celebrated in the Psalms in the language of fulfilment? I say that even when the mystery of God shall have been finished, and both the fulness of Israel and the fulness of the Gentiles shall have been brought in, the Church may celebrate her millennial glory in the language of fulfilment from the Psalms of David.

"He mindful of his grace and truth
To Israel's house hath been;
And the salvation of our God
All ends of the earth have seen."

All the ends of the earth that have seen the salvation of our God, know the Psalms of David. The Psalms are the grand catholic hymnal, and the singing of them provides for Christian union and for perfect catholicity. One more *primâ facie* principle, and I am almost done. The great, primary, responsible leader of all worship in the Church is our blessed Lord Himself — the minister of the true sanctuary which the Lord pitched, and not man. In this capacity He is pleased to say in the 22nd Psalm — and it is quoted in the New Testament too — "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." On this verse Calvin has this beautiful comment:— "It thus appears that our Lord is the leader of our songs and chief composer of our hymns." Are they uninspired hymns which Christ composes, and leads us in singing in the great congregation? He is spiritually present with His people in their worship in the sanctuary. But were He bodily present, as in the synagogue of

Nazareth, when there was given to Him the book of the prophet Isaiah, would you give Him any other book of song than the book of the Psalms of David, or other inspired songs of Scripture? Would you give Him other than His own Psalms to lead you in singing? — His own Psalms, in that they are composed by Himself; and His own Psalms, in that His soul sang them, with grace in His heart unto the Lord, in the days of his flesh. You maintain communion with Him, and He with you, when, in the praises of the sanctuary, you sing His Psalms. You may think your hymns are in accordance with His Word, but the Psalms are His very Word itself. You can sing them in faith untainted with doubt, in the full assurance of faith, unshackled from the spirit of criticism which man's word continually provokes, yea, demands — in that faith which cometh by hearing, when the hearing is the hearing of the Word of God, and which goeth forth in songs of faith, when the songs are the songs of the Spirit of God.

Is Latin America Turning Protestant?

by Rev. K. D. MacLeod

In 1492 Christopher Columbus reached what was for his generation the unknown continent of America, his first landfall probably being one of the Bahamas. It was a prelude to the takeover by Roman Catholicism of the whole American continent except for the United States and Canada — those parts of the continent known as Latin America because the national languages are Spanish and Portugese, both derived from Latin. Five hundred years later Latin America is still heavily under the influence of Rome, but for how much longer will this influence be dominant?

It is said that 42% of the world's Roman Catholic population live in South America, but a large foreign mission force is still necessary to keep the organisation functioning. A Roman Catholic publication has complained recently that missionaries *from* Latin America form less than 2% of its worldwide missionary force. Possibly it is this inherent weakness which is showing itself in the mass exodus from the Roman Catholic Church to Protestantism over recent years. Protestant numbers in Latin America have grown from 15 million in the late 1960's to at least 40 million now. There has been a significant increase of numbers in Protestant numbers in almost every country in the region, a sixfold increase in some cases. According to a Roman Catholic bishop in Brazil, Latin America is becoming Protestant even more quickly than Central Europe did in the sixteenth century; in his own country alone half a million people forsake Rome each year.

It has been estimated that if numbers continue to increase at the present rate a third of the population of Latin America will be Protestant by the year 2010, with Protestants becoming a majority not very long afterwards even if the rate of growth was to slow down. On the same basis Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala will have a Protestant majority by the year 2000. It is claimed that the election of Jorge Serrano Elias in Guatemala as the first Protestant to become president of a Latin American country is largely the result of the proportion of Guatemalans who are Protestants — 30%.

How then are we to assess this remarkable phenomenon? If the corrupt system of which the Pope is head is being weakened, this must be good news, especially if this weakening becomes permanent. But one cannot become over-enthusiastic, for there is much room for concern about the quality of the Protestantism to which these ex-Roman Catholics are turning. The danger is not, on the whole, the liberal theology which has so largely overwhelmed English-speaking Protestantism. Latin American Protestantism is still largely evangelical, so that broadly speaking, it accepts the full authority of the Scripture, however deficient its understanding of them may be.

Its weakness is illustrated by what is variously described as the back door, or the revolving door, phenomenon — professed converts from Roman Catholicism are leaving the Protestant churches in droves. A number of reasons are given. One is a lack of teaching in the truths of the Bible, which, at least in part, is the result of church leaders themselves being untaught. One estimate gives the number of pastors without formal training as 175,000. In consequence there is much shallow and erroneous teaching. But even where pastors are trained much of the doctrine is Arminian. In such a situation there is an absence of a sense of the sinfulness of sin and of the holiness of God. And where there is a deficient doctrine of sin the doctrine of the atonement is correspondingly deficient — God is not given the glory of the perfect salvation purchased by Christ for fallen men who are totally incompetent to begin, or even to assist in, the work of deliverance from sin and its consequences.

The fact that a large proportion of Latin American Protestantism is Pentecostalist and Charismatic is another major cause for concern. One amazing example of growth is in this area. The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God is an independent Pentecostal church which began only 15 years ago. It now claims two million worshippers meeting in 800 “temples” throughout Latin America, Portugal, Angola and the United States, with 2,000 ministers, a TV network and a number of radio stations.

However, a movement majoring on signs and wonders of an external kind is not the type of body which will overcome Rome, which itself leans heavily for its support on so-called miracles, especially in the less-developed world.

Latin America is not an area where the results of ecumenical co-operation are being displayed to the world. Protestants there have seen too much of what the Roman Catholic system is really like when it has the upper hand. Accordingly most protestant churches maintain a proper separation from Rome. The Roman Catholic Church has publicly attacked Protestant criticisms with paid advertisements and street marches. Priests continue their attacks in their sermons and doubtless use such means as the confessional to bolster the crumbling structure. Allegations have even been made that the movement to Protestantism is all the result of the CIA plan to destroy Roman Catholic liberation theology and to further US imperialism. Persecution today is not on the scale of the years after 1948 in Colombia when hundreds of Protestants were killed in what was known as *la Violencia*. However, reports of persecution continue in some countries in the region, notably Columbia, Mexico, Costa Rica and Venezuela.

What of the future? Optimistic projections for continued Protestant growth were quoted above. Will these projections be realised? There is good reason to be somewhat sceptical. Apart from doubts about the accuracy of the statistics, what if the number of those who go out the "back door" of the Protestant churches — to the cults, back to Rome, or wherever — begins to exceed the number of professed converts? Already, in 1989, a survey in the small Central American country of Costa Rica found that 8% of the population said that they had at one time been evangelicals, but had then returned either to Roman Catholicism, joined one of the sects, or given up organised religion completely. The growth of the cults in this environment must not be underestimated. The success of Billy Graham's crusade in Buenos Aires last November was trumpeted on the basis of the large number, 259,000, who attended. However, Jehovah's Witnesses were also able to pack the football stadium used by Billy Graham. There are reports of growing nervousness within the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and we must never underestimate the capacity for that organisation to recover when it has been weakened. We only have to think of how Rome brought Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe back into its fold during the Reformation period to realise its capacity to recover lost ground.

What Latin America — and the whole world — needs is the faithful

proclamation of the true gospel, accompanied by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But "how shall they hear without a preacher"? Certainly God has not left the world without the gospel, nor has He left it without preachers who proclaim that gospel in its purity. "The harvest truly is great," said the Saviour, "but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest." But, whatever the immediate future brings, we can look forward with confidence to the time when Latin America and the rest of the world will be brought truly to serve the King of kings, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Book Reviews

COMMUNION WITH GOD by John Owen. Abridged and made easy to read by R. J. K. Law.

The editor, having read something of this great author, not surprisingly, desired that others would share the rich treasure. Conscious of the weighty style of Owen, the editor has sought to simplify him and so hopefully attract many to these writings.

Two questions immediately arise. The first is, 'Is it competent for an editor to condense?' Our answer is plainly 'no'. This is the province of the author and none but he. Those who edited the puritan works, originally, were most scrupulous on this issue and it will be observed rather than change even an obvious misspelt word, the editors draw attention to their observation by means of an asterisk and a footnote. Works that are masterpieces cannot be altered. This criticism applies equally to all attempts that have been made to simplify the works of others, as for example Bunyan's works. The second question is, 'Is it possible?' Again we are compelled to say 'No'. Owen's works are works of great genius which manifests itself in the choice of words their cadence and rhythm. The deep spirituality of the man pervades almost every paragraph and the reader is drawn into his devotional spirit by his constant use of the personal pronouns.

In order to substantiate such criticism we would refer to the following changes in the abridged version.

Owen uses the Scripture largely and in the abridged version these are often reduced to a text reference. Besides, the editor has dared to use a version to which it is most unlikely Owen would have given his approval. Owen made use of italics where he would stress a point and the omission of these has left the reader without the meaningfulness of such expressions.

Owen had a carefully studied plan which was indicated by the use of numerals — these, too, have disappeared.

More seriously still, is the use of expressions which do no credit to the author as substitutes for his language.

Referring to the Saviour's loving discourse at the time of his disciples' sorrow on account of His leaving them Owen says that the Saviour relieved them thus — 'Take no care of that, nay, impose not that upon me, of procuring the Father's love for you.' This is replaced by 'Jesus, in effect, says 'Don't worry about that. I do not have to pray that the Father may love you. . . ' "

Similarly elsewhere Owen's words 'This also argues a holy greediness of delight' are replaced by 'Doesn't this show the soul's great delight in Christ.'

There are moreover, passages, where it is difficult to see to what advantage the words of Owen have been changed.

Owen's 'Yea, and as this love is peculiarly to be eyed in him . . . Christians walk oftentimes with exceedingly troubled hearts concerning the thoughts of the Father towards them' We have — 'This love is especially to be recognised as in God . . . Christians are often very worried as to whether God loves them or not.' Here, it appears that the stress which Owen is laying on the peculiar love of the person of the Father is obliterated.

There seems to be no advantage to replace the term 'the spouse' by the 'Shulamite'. Naturally there are many passages omitted which reveal the depth of feeling in the author and portray his profound humility and reverence for the things of God. Such an omission is in the words ' . . . Woe woe would it be to us, should he change in his love.'

As to how far the matter is simplified, one has reason to ask, when the passage 'A sweet savour expresses that which is acceptable and delightful' is replaced by 'The scent of a soothing aroma symbolises all that is acceptable and delightful'. Many of the references to the distinction of the persons within the Godhead are passed over as also the explanation of the union of the two natures of Christ in the one person.

On the whole as one reads the substitutes one feels a degree of vexation. It seems questionable how proper it is for the publishers to produce the book with the name of Owen prominent and also his photograph.

The deep humility of John Owen is lost when — 'It is but a little, from him who hath the least experience of it of all the saints of God; who yet hath found that in it which is better than ten thousand worlds; who desires to spend the residue of the few and evil days of his pilgrimage in pursuit hereof — in the contemplation of the excellencies, desireableness, love,

and grace of our dear Lord Jesus.' Instead of such we have simply — "This is but a little glimpse of that communion which we enjoy with Christ."

Surely it is better than the present generation of professed Christians would be urged to read the puritans in their original than to attempt to suit their low level. Such reading would make them realise how dwarfed this generation is and so act as a means of rebuking their pride.

The editor has done similarly with other volumes of Owen but it cannot be expected that the result will be any other than with this one.

A. E. W. MacDonald

APOSTASY FROM THE GOSPEL. An attempt by R. J. K. Law to abridge part of Volume VII of the works of the late Dr John Owen, D.D.

We have reviewed above Mr Law's abridgment of Volume II of the works of Dr. Owen and in doing so made the observations that it was incompetent in our opinion, for an editor to deal in this way with an author's works and also that it was not possible to accomplish the task satisfactorily.

Added to this we observed that much is lost of the savour of the original and the clear numbering of Owen's paragraphing is put aside and in many instances, text references are given where Owen gives the full words of Scripture and these always in the Authorised Version — Mr Law taking the liberty of substituting a Version of which we can hardly think Owen would approve.

In this volume we observe that the condensing has left out much of Owen that is valuable in connection with warnings about Apostasy and portions most suitable to the present time in the history of the church — such passages as these:

Owen warns against 'the cold, formal pronounciation or reading (as is the manner of some) of a well-composed oration doth not well express this labouring in word and doctrine.'

He also warns against the immodest apparel of professing Christians denouncing the "vanity of apparel, with foolish light, lascivious modes and dressings therein, and an immodest boldness in conversation among men and women."

It appears that more 'liberality' is attributed to Owen than is due when the editor translates Owen's words, 'Love unto the saints without dissimulation; readiness to bear in meekness with different apprehensions and palpable misapprehensions, not intrenching on the foundation: freedom from imposing your sentiments on those who cannot receive them,

and from judging rashly on supposed failures; readiness for universal communion in all religious duties with all that 'love the Lord Jesus in sincerity' — thus "We must avoid that lack of love and refusal to unite in worship and fellowship with other true Christians who may differ with us in the outward order of worship."

In some instances there appears to be a softening of the language of Owen who speaks thus '. . . brings that person into great spiritual danger of suffering God's wrath for ever,' for which is replaced the words — 'is a high aggravation of sin and a certain presage of destruction.' The majestic style of Owen is in many parts replaced by a very unworthy substitute — phrases which one recoils from as to their value in the English language, for example: 'But aren't all . . .' 'Take it or leave it attitude'.

The Editor's use of the expression 'the writer of the epistle' may leave the unwary reader to conclude that Owen was not well assured in his own mind that the epistle was written by the apostle Paul. Many useful references to history and to the original languages, wherein Owen exhibits his vast learning, and almost all the references of Owen to Moham-medanism are omitted. There is no substitute for reading the Puritans but to read them for oneself and it is questionable whether the Title 'Puritan Paperbacks' is justifiable.

A.E.W. MacDonald

Notes and Comments

The European Community

The decision of Denmark in a referendum not to approve the Maastricht Agreement has thrown the Common Market into utter confusion. Moves for the further integration of Europe have been suddenly halted. Though the Europhiles in Britain and elsewhere will do their utmost to resurrect the dead carcass of the Maastricht Treaty, yet a salutary warning has been given that nations should be left to decide their own destiny and not have it imposed on them from outside. The Romanist schemes for a revived Holy Roman Empire have suffered a set-back but knowing the subtlety and ingenuity of the Jesuits fresh attempts will be made to put the scheme back on track again. How good it is to know that there is One who rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and who sees and knows all things and will effect His own purposes in the earth.

The Roman Catholic Church and Celibacy

The question of the Romish doctrine of celibacy has been discussed in the Press in connection with the scandal of Bishop Murphy of Galway.

According to Roman dogma the celibate condition is meant to be a more pure and holy and dedicated state than that of the married state. Rome's inventions always defeat themselves for the lie will never overcome the truth. The history of the celibate states of priests and nuns etc, in the Romish Church shows that far from leading to a more holy life it has only led to immorality and other evils. Bishop Murphy's case is only one more proof of this.

Divorce Laws

Since the law was passed in 1976 making irretrievable breakdown the sole ground for divorce the divorce rate has only increased. The intention now seems to be to make the way as open as possible for divorce except having regard to the interests of the children. The Scottish Law Commission in 1989 suggested that the separation period should be reduced to one year with consent and two years without consent. The present state of matters in relation to divorce reflects the low moral condition into which the nation has sunk. Taking into account as well the high percentage of children born out of wedlock it is clear that the nation is ripening for judgment, if it is not already under judgment in being left to its own devices.

The Sin of Sodomy

The sin which brought fire and brimstone from heaven on the cities of the plain is looked upon with no aversion by this 'enlightened' generation. Consequently, not satisfied with having given this sin legal sanction on the Statute Book of the land, it is now proposed to extend that sanction further by reducing the age of consent from 21 years to 18 or 16 years. Even the plague of AIDS which stemmed from this evil vice seems to have no effect on the legislators' minds, seeing that they are wholly unwilling to curb the vice at its source. Rather they are ready to open the door wider for this plague to progress. The attitude of the God of heaven is clear: "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this."

Sabbath Trading

The House of Lords has backed local authorities' power to curb Sabbath trading. Notwithstanding this, the large Supermarket Companies are ready to defy the law and continue Sabbath trading. It is not their defiance of the law of the land that is the most serious matter but their defiance of the law of God. Those responsible may even escape the sentence of the law of the land for their evil conduct but they will not escape the just judgment of God. Their pretence of waiting for the advice of the Euro-

pean Court in Luxemburg will be of no avail then, for the members of that Court will themselves be under judgment if they do not uphold the law of God.

Lothian Regional Council and Republican March

The Lothian Regional Council refused permission for an Irish Republican march in Edinburgh in May. The Transport Committee accepted the Chief Constable's warning that the proposed march and rally might lead to widespread violence in the city centre. This followed violence at a similar march last year. The Council are to be commended for this action.

What Americans Believe

A number of surveys over the years produced amazing figures for the proportion of Americans who claim to be born again. The figures are so high as to be manifestly contradicted by the worldliness of the lifestyle of so much of the population of the United States. A recent book with the title *What Americans Believe* confirms the low quality of Christian profession. The author, George Barna, presents his analysis of extensive telephone surveys conducted with over a thousand people early in 1991. A review of the book in the magazine *Christianity Today* reports some highly disturbing findings:

83% of those surveyed agree that "people are basically good".

60% agree that "the devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil". More significantly, 47% of those claiming to be evangelicals agree with this statement.

64% of those surveyed agree that "Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and others all pray to the same God, even though they use different names for that God". Again 46% of evangelicals agree.

42% of those professing to be Christians admitted that they do not read the Bible even once in any given week.

53% of evangelicals agree that there is no such thing as absolute truth.

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

K.D.M.

Mission News

Drought and lack of food are always distressing in any part of the world. At Mbumba and Ingwenya the people were able for a time to make use of what remained of the previous year's crop, but at New Canaan and

Binga there had been no crop the previous year. Food is being given for work at Mbumba and New Canaan. At Ingwenya the Rev. A. B. Ndebele has been able to help the local people with food purchased with money sent from Scotland, England and no doubt kind friends in Holland. The cattle are being fed at Ingwenya with grass bought in bales from a local farmer. The cattle are in reasonable condition and the milk they yield helps to supplement the boarding-school rations.

It is sad news to hear that Mr David Ndlovu, who carries such a heavy burden of work on the Mission generally, overseeing the building, maintenance and motor transport, is ill with pneumonia and shingles. One of the Mbumba hospital staff visits David every day at his home in Lutsha. When last we heard two daughters of the Rev. and Mrs Ndebele were in hospital in Bulawayo. We do hope and pray they will make a good recovery.

Miss Lia Terlouw's parents and her sister have arrived at Mbumba to visit Lia and the Mission. Lia will be on holiday during their visit. All will be pleased to have friends from Holland. Miss Margaret MacAskill leaves D.V. for Zimbabwe on July 8. We wish her a safe flight. During the month of August, the Rev. D. B. MacLeod and Mr Donald MacDonald leave for Kenya and Malawi, if all is well. This is a difficult field as so much depends, humanly speaking, on government regulations, and being able to achieve a great deal of business in a very short time. The prayers of the Lord's people would be greatly appreciated.

We trust that there will be a plenteous rainfall in the coming season. Sometimes there are showers in October which help to soften the soil in preparation for the sowing of seed in November. Many of the young African men hire a tractor to plough up their fields, and some are kind enough to help the widows to plough theirs. In a good year the rivers are in flood by the end of November. After ten days of rain there is a green sheen over the whole countryside, and beautiful wild flowers spring up in unexpected places. This is a wonderful promise: 'For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring.' J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 11th August at 7 p.m. for the Induction of Rev. Neil Ross.

Southern: At Glasgow on 15th September at 6 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 15th September at 6 p.m.

Canadian: At Inverness on 5th October at 9 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 6th October at 1 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 13th October at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 23rd October at 2.30 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 27th October at 11 a.m.

Visit to Chesley

Rev. John MacLeod, accompanied by Mr Robert Ross, Foindle, Scourie, visited Chesley for three Sabbaths at the end of June and beginning of July. During his time there Mr MacLeod conducted the services, including the Communion Services. The election and ordination of an elder also took place. In view of the loss of Mr Scambler last November it is good to know that the congregation is now provided with an additional office-bearer. We trust that the Deputy's labours will be blessed.

Visit to Italy

Rev. D. A. Ross expects to make a short visit to Italy at the end of July and beginning of August (D.V.). This will be an encouragement to the few people there. We trust that a blessing will follow.

Visit to Kenya and Malawi

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, the Editor expects to make a short visit to Kenya and Malawi in August (D.V.) and will be accompanied by Mr Donald MacDonald who has been accepted for work in the Mission in Kenya.

Church Notices

The Outreach Committee has prepared a leaflet for summer visitors which can be placed in tourist information centres, travel centres, etc., to encourage visitors to come to church. A space is left for local details, and Congregations are encouraged to send a large s.a.e. with a request for the approximate number required to Rev. D. M. Boyd, 11 Auldcastle Road, Inverness, IV2 3PZ."

Induction — Dingwall and Beauly

The Northern Presbytery has resolved to meet in Dingwall Church on Tuesday, 11th August, 1992, at 7 p.m. for the Induction of Rev. Neil M. Ross as minister of the Dingwall and Beauly congregation.

Rev. D. M. Boyd, Clerk of Presbytery

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr R. A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, wishes to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Foreign Mission Fund: Donations for Wheelchair (per J.G.) £3086.85.

Free Distribution Fund: A Friend £5.

Bookroom Fund: Miss M.S. £20.

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

Applecross: 1988 — F.M., Invss. £10 for Comm. Exps.; W. MacB. £800 for Cuaig Mission Hall; Anon., in loving memory of parents and aunts — where most needed £60 (in church plate); Anon., where most needed £50, both for Congr. Fd.; Anon., £50; Anon., £15 (Church Plate), both for Sust. Fd.; 1989 — Anon., of £12.41; Anon., £25 (church plate); A Friend of the Cause — where most needed £100 (Church Plate); Wellwisher — where most needed £50, all for Congr. Fd.; Anon., £25 per P.L.R.; Wellwisher, where most needed; Anon., £20, all for Sust. Fd. 1990 — Mrs M.G. per Rev. D.A.R. £20, £20, £20; Mrs M. G. per T.M. £20; Mrs J.C-M. £40; D.A.R. £10; M. & N.F. £5; Anon., — where most needed £100, all for Sust. Fd.; Mrs M.S. £5; Anon., £100, both for Congr. Fd. 1991 — P.L.R. £1.80; Mrs M. F. £10, both for Congr. Fd.; M. & N.F. £6.80 where most needed; Mrs M. G. per D.A.R. £20, £30, £30; Mrs M.G. per T.M. £20; Mrs J. C-M. £20; F.M. £50 per M.M.; M. & N.F. where most needed £10; Mr D.G. £100 all for Sust. Fd. 1992 — Anon. "for Applecross Church £100 (Church Plate); J.V.R. £5; D.R. £5; P.L.R. £6.80; M. & N.F. £6.80; J.B. for harling church £100, all for Congr. Fd.

Barnoldswick: Anon., £10 for Sust. Fd.; Friend £200 for Congr. Fd., both from Coll. plate.

Dumbarton: Glasgow Friend, £20 for Congr. Fd. per J.C.; From Estate of the late Miss Christina Sinclair, £200 for Congr. Fd. and £100 for Foreign Miss. Fd., per I.S.

Edinburgh: Passer-by, Psalm 60: 4, £10 for Congr. Fds.; Friend, Ardeneasken £5 for Comm. Exps.

Farr: Envelope in plate £15 for Daviot Communion expenses.

Lochcarron: Anon., (Feb.) £1000; Friend, Carnoustie £40 and £10; Holiday Friend, £10; Envelope in plate £70, all where most needed.

Perth: Miss W. S., Wick £50 for Perth Congr. per Rev. A. MacPherson.

Portree: Anon., £14 for Bus. Fd.; Anon., £5 for General Bdg. Fd.; Anon., £7; Anon., £10, both for Door Coll.; Friend £20 for Sust. Fd. per F.M.; Mrs D.M. £20 per S.Y.M.; Anon., £11 (envelope in plate), last two for Church Door Coll.; Friend £20, Friend £8, both for Sust. Fd.; Friend £10; where most needed; J.M. £10 for Congr. Purposes, last four per F.M.; Anon., £9.20; Anon., £7, both for Church Door Coll., both by envelope in plate.

Raasay: Friend (envelope in plate) £120; M.D. £10 per Rev. J.R.T., both Congr. Purposes; Envelope in plate £20, where most needed; Anon., Inverarish £25; Envelope in plate £10, both for Car Fd.

Stornoway: Miss S., Wick £50 for Congr. Fds; Friend, Glasgow £50 for Sust. Fd., both per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Uig: From the Estate of the late Miss Margaret Matheson, Valtos £100 per D. A. Mackay; Mrs J. £20 per P.A. Matheson; Stornoway Friend £30 (envelope in plate); Anon., £20; Anon., £20; Friend of the Cause, Breasclete £10; Anon., £10; B.B. £15, last five by envelope in plate.