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FOLLOWING THE LORD FULLY

Six times the Bible says that Caleb followed the Lord fully. At the end of his life, Caleb himself said it, but Moses had told him the same many years earlier (Josh. 14:8,9). Before that the Lord had declared it: "my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." (Num. 14:24) A person could have no higher commendation.

These words are surely written for our learning. Caleb stands out as a man who was loyal to the Lord when so many in Israel were not. We greatly need such examples today, when much of the church is faithless or at best lukewarm. Caleb rebukes us, but he also challenges us to do better.

Meaning

What does it mean to follow the Lord? The name 'Caleb' is itself instructive. It is thought to be a compound name, derived from the Hebrew words for 'all' and 'heart'. It reminds us of the first and great commandment of the law, which is, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 23:37,38). Few in Israel yielded themselves willingly to God, body and soul, but Caleb was devoted to the Lord.

What does it mean to follow the Lord *fully*? The word in the original means to make up the full tally of something. We understand that Caleb's obedience was *complete*. God taught Caleb by His word and led him by His Spirit, and Caleb walked after Him humbly and dutifully. As believers, we must heed the voice of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, and follow His steps in season and out of season, whether others approve or disapprove. Only then can we truly say that the Lord is our first love (Rev. 2:4).

Evidence

Caleb is associated with one event in particular. After the children of Israel had left Egypt, and when they had arrived at Kadesh Barnea, the Lord directed Moses to send twelve men, one from every tribe, to search the neighbouring land of Canaan. Ten brought back a dishonest report, alarming the people and setting them against their leaders. Caleb by contrast was certain that Israel could take the land, urging the people, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." (Num. 13:30) Joshua agreed.

It was clear by their words and deeds that Caleb and Joshua possessed the faith that stands in the power of God. Their confidence in God could not be shaken – not by the cowardice of their fellow spies, the congregation's demand that they be stoned, or the prospect of fighting the giants in Canaan! Caleb spoke the truth to Israel, and was resolute, regardless of the difficulty it caused him. He and Joshua were in the minority: that did not worry them, for it did not make them wrong. In a day of declension, the minority will very likely be right.

Spirit

What made Caleb differ from others? The answer is that he had "another spirit" with him. This does not mean that Caleb alone was converted. He obviously had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, for no sinner can follow the Lord without first undergoing this mighty work of grace (Titus 3:5). He was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as were all the Old Testament believers (Isa. 63:11), otherwise he could not have enjoyed sanctifying and enabling grace. Yet Caleb was not unique in this: there were other saints in Israel.

What marked Caleb was the *strength* of his faith, and his *faithfulness* to the Lord – even above Moses and Aaron. During Israel's rebellion, his trust in God remained. Caleb rested in the covenant promise concerning Canaan (Gen. 12:6,7). The exodus showed that the Lord was about to fulfil this promise, yet in the wilderness the children of Israel bemoaned their lot, longed for what they had left behind and sought to return to the land of their bondage. It was as though they had completely forgotten their amazing deliverance! But are we any better than they? We are bound to acknowledge that the world is in us still. For our good, and the good of the Lord's cause, we need to become more like Caleb.

Godliness

That means we must follow the Lord fully in the vital matter of *personal godliness*. We know that our obedience ought to be without reserve, but we are often found wanting. It is all too easy for us to persuade ourselves that we are performing the duty God requires of us, when all we are doing is the bare minimum, just to keep up appearances. There is no hiding place; "the Lord seeth not as man seeth" (1 Sam. 16:7). A change for the better always begins when we take an honest look at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, yet we are reluctant to do this, for fear of what we might find!

The reality is that sin is not what we do now and then, but something that abides within us. One of the

abominations John Bunyan found in his heart was, "I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves". So it was with Paul: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Rom. 7:21) The only way forward for us is repentance – sincere repentance that includes a desire for renewing grace and a closer walking with God. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Ps. 139:23,24)

> *"Are we present at both Sabbath services, when that is possible for us?"*

Church

It also means we must follow the Lord fully as *members of His church*. Some duties belong to believers generally. Are we present at both Sabbath services, when that is possible for us? There the gospel is proclaimed, and Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that we should glory in Him alone (1 Cor. 1:30,31). Are we regularly at the prayer meetings? As Spurgeon said, "there is the strength of the church, and there are her Samson's locks." And are we fulfilling the great duty of brotherly love? It is quite different from natural affection, as Robert Candlish explains: "it must be love having in it the element of godliness; love having respect to God; love to them because God loves them and you love God."

There are duties belonging to the office-bearers of the church. They are to be faithful to the Lord, according to the teaching of the Scriptures. Ministers should be speaking "the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1), elders should be "holding fast the faithful word", and deacons should be "holding the mystery of the faith" (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:9). When churches depart from the Word of God in their doctrine or worship, even though the majority may approve of the changes, they are rebelling against Christ. When churches relax their discipline, to please worldly members, they are doing the same. If we are in office, are we paying in full what we have solemnly vowed to the Head of the church?

Society

Finally, it means we must follow the Lord fully in *bearing witness to the truth*. This is the duty and privilege of every believer, as Peter tells us: "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). Never underestimate the influence of a consistent, humble, Christlike life, and seek the Lord's help to live such a life! Charles Bridges said, "We should be diamonds in the lustre of grace, lodestones for our attractive power in winning souls...If only one soul be taken, the honour passes thought." All that this world offers is nothing, compared to having a part in someone coming to Christ.

The church is called to seek the good of society, and we must be a voice to the government in favour of biblical teaching. The issues where this is required are multiplying, just as regard for God's moral law is decreasing. To contend against abortion, homosexuality and transgenderism, not to mention atheism, secularism and false religion, is to encounter the sort of wrath that Caleb and Joshua experienced. We may be sure that God will be with us, as He was with them. And He *does* bless those who follow Him fully in these things. We praise the Lord for the recent encouragement in the United States, where Christians have been faithful in opening their mouths for the unborn!

Reward

Obedience to God brings a reward in assurance of God's love, but a future reward is also attached to it. Because Caleb had followed Him fully, the Lord would bring Caleb "into the land whereinto he went" as a spy. Caleb and Joshua, alone of all the adult males at that time, would enter Canaan. After Israel had taken possession of the land, Caleb was rewarded with Hebron as an inheritance; he was confident that the Lord would enable him to drive out the giants there (Josh. 14:12,13).

The promised land was a type of heaven. When Paul says "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14), he connects our place in glory and our obedience to God. This is an incentive to obey the Lord, but we must remember that the obedience which merits heaven for us is *Christ's*, not ours. Caleb's obedience typifies Christ's, which was perfect in every way. Because of Christ's obedience, His believing people enjoy salvation (1 John 3:5); because of that, let us follow the Lord *fully*.

BEREAVEMENT

REV. JAMES CLARK

"It is well" (2 Kings 4:26)

"It is well." What else could she say? Would she complain about God's treatment of her, how He had taken away her son? No, but she was tempted to! Hope had come into her life, and now it was taken away; someone had been taken out of her life, leaving behind a disturbing, painful emptiness.

The Results of Bereavement

1. *Silence*. Something which seemed harmless before, but now appears so painful; the emptiness of a room, despite it being filled with memorabilia, the echoes of unanswered prayers – silence now hurts, and we despair of changing its character. Silence – a constant companion now, and an unfriendly one. We never noticed him before, but now he demands our attention.

2. The *confusion* we see in the faces of others. They do not know what to say, but feel they need to say something. Better if they just nod, or touch us on the arm. Words don't do much for us nowadays; we read little passages from the Bible (the little is all that we can concentrate on at the moment), but they are not doing for us what we hoped for when we came to them. There is a numbness and distance about everything now. We are moving through it all, and not taking much in.

3. *Fear*. We are not sure why, but we feel so vulnerable, fragile, defenceless. It is a physiological fact that a new, powerful experience, good or bad, always gives us a feeling of trembling. A loss also makes us feel we are on our own. We are not, because we have God, but this fact does not take away the feeling. Facts are cold now, there is no arguing with them; their force has overcome us, their triumph is our defeat. Moreover, we are afraid to share how we really feel. The advice we are given, from paperbacks and paperback people, is insipid and jingoistic. The reality is that there is a difference between those who write about suffering and those who write in the "furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10)!

The Helps

(i) We must try to think of the person we have lost not only in the past tense, but also how he or she is in *their present reality*. They are only 'gone' in the sense that we cannot see them at present; they are in another part of the house. We must also think of them in the future (this is called Hope), in the reunion when we shall both be better.

(ii) We cannot *sorrow as others sorrow* (1 Thess. 4:13). We may think there is no difference, but there is a root difference between suffering on our own and suffering in the company of Christ. We meet others who say in their emptiness and despair, "I have no one to turn to." But we have Someone to turn to, Someone who has attended the funeral of all His family members, who stood at a graveside and drew forth the comment, "Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:36)

(iii) We must remember that *Christ's love is greater than ours*, and this has consequences. It is part of human nature to desire the company of the one loved; we feel this poignantly in our bereavement. Although Christ is omnipresent with His people, He has still to see His people with His human eyes, and this He desires and He shall have it (John 17:24). We must remember what we are made for (Rev. 22:4).

The Future

Recovery can be long and difficult. *The bereaved asks, "How long?"* but only God can answer that, and He doesn't! Yet He does carry out His plan for the rest of your *own* life; and you are both in it together. Exhaustion, burnout, can make it difficult to rise up again. Human supports (the ones who listen to you and don't give you advice all the time) are very helpful; they can offer to do the routine little things which may tax you each day. This leaves you space to grieve in what must be your own private world.

Some will anxiously ask, *"Will the memory of the loved one remain as strong in the future?"* It will not be weaker, but it will develop as you yourself develop from this experience. You will have a deeper insight now into the consciousness of those whom you have passed or spoken to over the years. They have the same prayers, efforts and carefulness which you have yourself now. You see all as in a procession, in a queue to depart, though only a few take this image seriously, as inevitable. Some have already been "sent on ahead" (Samuel Rutherford). This is "far better", says the inspired Paul (Phil. 1:23). "May this mind be in me also", comes the response from the aching heart. We know that when the shadows fall upon our own path, He will be there to "comfort me" (Ps. 23:4), and "grace will lead me Home." (John Newton) ■

DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

REV. TREVOR KIRKLAND

"In sure and certain hope of the resurrection..."

Thomas Cranmer's familiar words reflect Paul's summary of the gospel: *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (1 Cor. 15:3,4).

Paul declares unequivocally that the message he declares was 'received'. It was not his own message but something given to him to communicate to others. At the centre of his declaration is Jesus Christ. He asserts that the whole work of Christ was according to the plan God had already revealed in Scripture, and that the purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to deal with the problem of sin.

No History, no Gospel

The factual basis of the gospel is the *death, burial* and *resurrection* of Christ. If this history is not true then the message isn't true: no history means no gospel. The reliability of the message rests upon the reliability of the historical reality of Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

The American theologian J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), in an article 'Did Christ Rise from the Dead?', says on Paul's words to the Corinthians: "I want you to notice the mention of the burial of Christ in this passage. What does it mean? I will tell you, and then I just want you to read the passage for yourselves to see whether you do not agree with me. When Paul mentions the burial, he means that the resurrection of Christ about which he is speaking is a bodily resurrection. The thing that was laid in the tomb in the burial was the body; and the thing that was laid in the tomb was the thing that came out of the tomb in the resurrection. 'He died, He was buried, He rose.' We follow here, as we read, what happened to the body of Jesus. If a man will just read the words without prejudice he will see that they are at this point as plain as day." (*The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, Eerdmans, 1947, pp.211-12)

In the opening remarks of his inaugural address on 3rd May 1915 as Assistant Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis in Princeton Theological Seminary, Machen rightly notes: "The student of the New Testament should be primarily an historian. The centre and core of all the Bible is history. Everything else that the Bible contains is fitted into an historical framework and leads up to an historical climax. The Bible is primarily a record of events." ('History and Faith', in *The Princeton Theological Review*, vol.13, no.3, p.349)

What if we did give up the history? In his address Machen explained what happens: "Give up history and you can retain some things. You can retain a belief in God. But be perfectly clear about one point, you can never retain a gospel. For gospel means 'good news', tidings, information about something that has happened. In other words, it means history. A gospel independent of history is simply a contradiction in terms."

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones said on Romans 1:2 that "the gospel is not a philosophy; it is a statement of a number of facts". One of those facts is the *burial* of Christ. Christ's death, burial and resurrection are part of saving faith. Further, union with Christ is union in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1ff.).

So there we have it. History is foundational to the gospel. That history is simple – *the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.* Anything but that is fantasy.

Creedal Affirmation

In the Apostles' Creed we affirm that Jesus Christ "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was *crucified*, *dead*, and *buried*".

The *Shorter Catechism* (Q.23) states that "Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation." Regarding Christ's humiliation, the Catechism refers to his being *born*, in a low condition, and states that his humiliation concluded with his *death* on the cross, his *burial* and his continuing under the power of death for a time (Q.27).

Burial is prevalent in the Bible. In Israel, patriarchs, judges and kings were buried. It is noteworthy that kings were specifically said to be buried either in or outside Jerusalem; even the bodies of wicked kings had to be treated with respect. The Lord said to Abram, "thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be *buried* in a good old age" (Gen. 15:15), and this was fulfilled (Gen. 25:8,9). We read that not only Abraham, but Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah were all buried (Gen. 49:31). Aaron was likewise buried (Deut. 10:6). We note especially that God *buried* Moses (Deut. 34:6).

Burial or Cremation?

Does it really matter what we do with the bodies of the

dead? Cremation is becoming increasingly common in many circles. Consider in particular Hinduism which, as Anglican theologian Gerald Bray explains, "contains features that cannot be reconciled with Christian values, and those things must certainly be discarded by those who come to Christ. The caste system is an obvious example of this, as is the doctrine of reincarnation. Also repugnant to Christians is the ancient Hindu custom of *sati* (suttee), according to which a widow casts herself on her husband's burial pyre. *Sati* was abolished in British India but there are reports that it has recently been revived in some places, making it more necessary than ever for Christians to be wary of elements in Hindu religious tradition that contradict the Christian view of God, man, and creation." (*God is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology*, Crossway, 2012, p.431)

What if cremation becomes the norm? The immediate result is a radical alteration in terminology. Instead of, "Here lies buried...", it will be, "Here lies scattered...".

When Christ responded to the demand of the scribes and Pharisees for a sign, he pointed them to the prophet Jonah (Matt. 12:39,40). The meaning was that the Lord would die and be *buried* as one under God's judgement against sinners. Understanding Christ's words as a reference to his burial fits his calling Jonah a "sign", for Christ's death, burial, and empty tomb were widely known, and his resurrection was publicly testified by witnesses.

It is only because Christ was *buried* and rose again that he could say those blessed words to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." (John 20:27)

Death

The *Shorter Catechism* states regarding the death of believers that their souls "do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." (Q.37)

There is no room here for cremation. The specific point made is that burial is *until* the resurrection. The practice of laying a body in a grave is carried out in the faith and certain hope that the body being buried will one day arise. As the Swiss theologian Benedict Pictet (1655-1724) states in his *Christian Theology*:

"The buried bodies will rise again, the same as to their substance; which is proved from the very nature of the resurrection, which is nothing more than *the second state of a thing that has fallen or decayed*; for only that which is fallen can be said to rise again; if a new body were formed by God, it would not be a *resurrection*, but a *creation*. It is proved also from scripture: 'in my flesh', says Job, 'shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold' (Job 19:26,27). The same body which is 'sown in corruption', and 'dishonour', shall be 'raised in incorruption' and 'glory' (1 Cor. 15:42,43,53,54), and be made 'like unto [Christ's] glorious body' (Phil. 3:21).

> ***"The specific point made is that burial is until the resurrection."***

It is evident also from the resemblance of our resurrection to that of Christ; for Christ did not assume a different body from the one he had before; hence he declares, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself' (Luke 24:39), and also from the justice of God, which requires that the same body that sinned, should be punished, the same that fought the good fight should be crowned; and as the same soul shall be arraigned in judgement, so also the same body; nor indeed can it be conceived, that God would punish bodies that had contracted no evil, and spare those which had committed sin, and that he would leave without any reward those bodies which ministered to the soul in fastings, prayers, praises, and other exercises of religion, while he bestowed the crown of righteousness on bodies which performed nothing.

....We may learn from this doctrine, to comfort ourselves against the terrors of death, to encourage ourselves to endure with fortitude all our trials, and to make those bodies which are to be raised to immortality, 'the instruments of righteousness.'" (pp.353-4)

Public Witness

The *Directory for the Public Worship of God* drawn up by the Westminster Assembly has a section entitled 'Concerning Burial of the Dead'. The direction is clear regarding the dead body; it is to be taken to "the place appointed for public burial" and "interred". Throughout this section the reference is to *burial* and nothing else. Were the authors ignorant of other practices – or was it the case that they believed burial to be the Christian way? We believe it was the latter and not the former.

As the influence of the surrounding culture seeps into the Church, and Christian practice is altered, it is no surprise that alternatives to burial become first plausible, then acceptable and finally are advocated. If we lose burial, we unwittingly lose an important symbol of Christian hope and expectation. Perceptions *do* matter. Let us rather retain the practice of burial as a public witness to the grand truth of the resurrection of the body. ■

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

REV. HARRY WOODS

The ultimate goal of the Christian life is stated for us in Ephesians 1:4. It is that we may be presented without fault before the Father's presence. But while that is true it is nevertheless legitimate for us to ask what is the goal of Christian *living*? The Bible tells us that a number of goals are to be pursued by the Christian in this life.

Goals to be Pursued

There are three chief goals that we ought to pursue:

Holiness – We are told that holiness of life is essential, for without it no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Holiness is the outward evidence of an inward change having taken place. Holiness doesn't come magically. The Christian, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, is called to *put off the old man* and *put on the new man* (Eph. 4:22-24). This involves a turning from our old sins, lifestyles and attitudes and a turning to God, depending upon him to conform us to the image and likeness of his Son.

Service – 1 Corinthians 6:20 reminds us that Christians are not to live to themselves. We have been redeemed by the blood of Christ in order that we might serve him with our whole being – our body, our mind and our soul. Everything we are and have is to be used for the Master's glory.

Witnessing – The Lord says of his disciples, "Ye *are the light of the world.*" (Matt. 5:14) By calling us out of darkness and into his marvellous light, God wants us to tell others what he has done for us. This is not always easy for the saints of God. Following the principle of beginning close to home and then working outwards (Acts 1:8), we should start with our family and then our friends and workmates.

Obstacles in the Way

When Christ saves us he does not immediately make us holy, or take us at once to heaven; rather, for his own glory and the spread of his kingdom, he leaves us in this world. This means that we have to face a number of obstacles in our pursuit of these three goals.

Sin and Temptation – Paul tells us that "*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" (2 Cor. 5:17) Yet despite this, being in the world we are still subject to temptation and sin. We have to contend with the pressures from our pagan surroundings, the pull of our old lifestyle and our own spiritual immaturity.

Self – Christians often neglect this obstacle. We have lived so long looking after number one that we find it hard to put Christ first, but consider the words of our Lord in Mark 8:34. Sin and temptation are often obvious, but self is more subversive, influencing us in an unconscious manner. For a simple but useful mnemonic to help in getting the right balance, consider the word *Joy*, remembering that true joy comes when *Jesus* is put first, *others* second and *yourself* last.

Satan – For the true believer, Satan is not some Hallowe'en figure of a demon to be laughed at but a mighty enemy who opposes the interests of our souls. The Bible tells us that we wrestle not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). Our opponents are supernatural opponents and their aim is our eternal destruction. The names of Satan should alert us to the fact that he is to be considered a fearful enemy – one we could not hope to overcome were it not for the fact that Christ himself has conquered him. He is called the *accuser* (slanderer), the *adversary*, the *evil one*, a *murderer* and a *liar*. Our sworn enemy uses many ways to hinder us. He may catch us by surprise, lay siege to our hearts, minds and souls, or appear as an angel of light to lead us astray.

The Resources Available

It might seem as though, with all this against us, *who* could stand? The fact is that no one can stand *on their*

own, but we can stand when we use the helps God has provided for us.

The Word of God – 2 Timothy 3:16,17 reminds us that the Lord has provided a source of teaching and guidance for his people that will enable us to face these obstacles and resist and overcome our enemies. The Holy Scriptures will nourish and feed us and enable us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer – What a privilege to be able to tell God of our needs, temptations, sins and fears! We often feel alone in the battle with sin, self and Satan, but the truth is that we are never alone as Christians. Through Christ we have access always to the Throne of Grace and to the presence of God.

Fellowship – We are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, because there are real spiritual benefits that flow from fellowship with other saints (Mal. 3:16).

The Holy Spirit – Great though the Word, prayer and fellowship are, they are nothing without the presence of the Holy Spirit and his enabling of us to make use of them. Here is a wonder indeed: every Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling within, and God is *for* his people and *with* his people! ■

COMMITMENT!

REV. JAMES CLARK

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15)

How do we explain the lack of commitment in church members nowadays? Does it not seem astonishing? Is it because many members are not genuine, or is it because many have grown not only "lukewarm" but actually cold in their love to Christ? (Rev. 3:15; Matt. 24:12) Let us suppose that it is backsliding, and not a polite, indifferent apostasy – how has this come to pass?

Why is Commitment Lacking?

1. It seems that many have *lost the sense of wonder* in salvation, unlike David and Paul, who always admired the grace in their salvation. Losing this sense of wonder is due to self-righteousness, forgetting that we are saved by mercy alone. It presupposes bad teaching, that we are not totally depraved and must resist salvation until made willing in a day of God's power (Ps. 110:3); it takes great power to save a sinner, it is not a little thing. We forget also that unless the Holy Spirit had convinced us of a need only Christ could meet, we would never have called upon Him, never have seen any beauty in Him that we should desire Him (Isa. 53:2). We have lost the wonder of the father's pity, in that He sent His Son to save the lost and despairing. Indeed, we have forgotten what it was to be without Christ, and without hope (Eph. 2:12) – perhaps this is why Paul was constantly reminding the Ephesians and other congregations of what they were and would have become, had Christ not come to seek and save that which was lost.

2. There can be an *overemphasis on earthly, secular things*. The mind can be too much on this world and not the next. Some Christians spend too much time campaigning in politics, petitioning parliament, etc., and not enough effort on fighting our real spiritual foes. Spirituality is a struggle, and unless we use the means to maintain it we shall settle down in this world, building our dreams here instead of living in tents and ready to move on. This is not to deny our responsibilities in this world, it is to give to Christ the preeminence in our thoughts, the first place and not the second. We are to deny ourselves and the interests of the old man, to take up the "all things new" and pursue them. Worldliness makes worship routine and an add-on to secular life instead of our most important activity on earth, as it shall be in heaven, We cannot serve two masters, God and the world. The Apostle had good reason to tell the Colossians and us to set our affection (thoughts and desires) on things above (Col. 3:2) – this is where Christ is and therefore we should "seek those things which are above" (v.1).

3. *Love of comfort* can diminish commitment. We are called to be soldiers, marathon runners, ones who take up their cross daily, as those who are hated by the world and by the prince of this world. How any follower of Christ can escape the consequences of this is baffling, but many do try and many are successful – but at the cost of commitment. And the cost is compromise, silence, following the (religious) crowd, not rocking the boat; talking a good game soon becomes a spectator sport! A faith which merely gives assent to a set of things to believe is not a faith which acts for Christ, not a faith which labours by love (Gal. 5:6).

4. *Ambition and egotism* detour commitment – it becomes a commitment to advancing oneself. As Hugh Martin well said, "You cannot make yourself great and Christ great at the same time." Unfortunately, many Tom Thumbs in the visible church have grown into giants in their own estimation. And their commitment to Christ is diminished in proportion as they seek to build up personal influence and to maintain it. They love to attract attention to themselves! This is far from the Lord's ideal in serving Him "as a little child" (Mark 10:15), with the child's single focus on pleasing his father, as Christ pleased His Father.

No Part-time Devotion

Joshua was not talking about joining the contemporary part-time religion when he uttered these words. His enthusiasm and devotion to the Lord set him apart from those who wear the Christian mask some days and take it off other days, depending on the pressures and the company. "How much I owe!" said M'Cheyne, and, like Paul, he laboured more abundantly in the grace that made him what he was (1 Cor. 15:10). We all serve someone, independence is a dream. We may be serving ourselves and our own interests, or we may be serving the church in a kind of ecclesiastically organised idolatry, or we may be some of those who actually serve the Lord, like Joshua. Where do we put most of our thoughts, devotion and effort? The answer we give to that question, said John Knox, will tell us if the Lord is our God (as the First Commandment reminds us).

> *"True freedom is to serve Christ, the One who set you free."*

There is a command to choose, "*Choose you this day whom ye will serve*" (Josh. 24:15); there is no freedom of choice here because there is no valid or approved alternative. Not to choose the Lord is not an indication of freedom but an evidence of slavery; the will is still in bondage. True freedom is to serve Christ, the One who set you free. Moreover, with choices come consequences (Gal. 6:6-8). No one can plead that they have a lack of information in order to make their choice. To refuse to serve the Lord is a sign that the information has not been used, prejudice reigns and independence rules!

But what happened when Adam desired independence? His quest for independence led to alienation from God – this is always the result of going our own way and not God's. The ability to choose the right has been lost by the Fall, but your responsibility continues. Pray for the grace that enables you to make the right choice for your life: "without me ye can do nothing" (but) "I can do all things through Christ which [who] strengtheneth me." (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13)

"*This day....*" Time is running out. All life is a service and Christ is the best Master! ■

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

REV. THOMAS BUCHANAN

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:34,35)

A preeminent duty of the Christian life is to love other Christians. During his valedictory address in John chapters 13 to 16, our Lord Jesus Christ gave the disciples this exemplary commandment

to love one another, as he had loved them. What is meant here is that this was an imperative not only by the precept of Christ but also by his example. This Christian love is an indispensable badge of Christian living, because it cannot be separated from the love of Christ for his own. Remember, a badge is something that is on display for others to see. While we understand this to be a truth, we are all acutely aware of our own deficiency in Christian living and especially in this command to love each other. Yet, it is understood that the Christian's deficiency in this matter does not invalidate the duty, nor does it lessen the obligation upon all Christians to love one another as Christ has loved them.

Commanded to Love

The first thing for us to consider is that this is a commandment to be obeyed, as with all the rest. Just as the Father gave commandments to be obeyed, so also did the Son, who had come as a true and faithful witness in revealing the Father's word and will. Just as Christ abode in his Father's love by keeping the commandments, so we abide in Christ's love when we keep this commandment to love one another (John 15:10). A standing obligation of the moral law is love, for love is the sum of God's moral law (Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:10). It has always been the highest duty required of all men to love God and love their neighbour as themselves. How then is it a "new commandment"?

We are not to consider this commandment as 'new' in terms of its origin. This command has always been an indispensable standard among the Covenant community of God (Lev. 19:18). Rather, what is meant here is that this standing obligation is given a new and greater significance by Christ's example, in which love is more fully revealed to us. It is in Christ's love that the Christian perceives the love of God, and so is brought to a greater sense of obligation to love other Christians.

Motivated to Love

No greater motive is given, or could be given, to the Christian to love other Christians than the love of Christ for us. In his first epistle John drives this truth home to the reader when he writes concerning the expression of this love and the Christian's imitation of it: "*he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" (1 John 3:16) Just as it is with the forgiving of other Christians, so it is with a Christian's loving of other Christians. The Apostle Paul reminded Christians that in forgiving one another they are to do so even as Christ forgave them (Col. 3:13). The motive given to "love one another" is the same: Christ commands Christians, with regard to other Christians, to love one another "as I have loved you".

This should stress to the Christian the important place their 'considering of Christ' has for living the Christian life. If we are to love one another, the perpetual considering of Christ will be the best companion to our daily thoughts. In making this part of his or her practical religion, a Christian will not only consider Christ's love but also how Christ loved his own. To help us here we can think of two ways that Christ has loved his own: with self-denial and with sacrifice (Eph. 5:2). In summary, we could say that Christ loved his own with a love that cost him much. In viewing our obligation to "love one another" in light of this motive, we understand how hard it is for the Christian to practise it. The two virtues we see in Christ are the two great hindrances to our practice; self-denial does not come naturally (we think too much of ourselves), and sacrifice is not pleasant (it costs too much). Christians need to pray for the grace of Christ, to apply the love of Christ, in their love for one another.

> *"When we love one another we exalt Christ in his Person and Work before the whole world."*

The Benefit of this Love

The benefit of this love for other Christians because they are Christians is not tied to the Church. We are instructed by Christ that this is how "all men" will know that Christians belong to Christ. A disciple of Christ is most visible in his love to other Christians: it is a testimony to the world that the love of Christ is a true and verifiable love. This love is no warm, fuzzy feeling like the love of those of the world: rather it is obedience to the Word of God and honouring to the Person of Jesus Christ. When we love one another we exalt Christ in his Person and Work before the whole world.

Let us discover in ourselves this love for other Christians. In so doing, the benefit to us will be that we will know that we ourselves are Christians. Consider this challenge to Christians from John Brown of Edinburgh (1784-1858), writing on this very command of Christ: "*It is obvious that the man who is destitute of this peculiar affection to Christians as Christians, is not – cannot be – himself a Christian.*" (*Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1854) ■

MISUNDERSTOOD

REV. JAMES MACINNES

Do you feel that no one understands you?

Perhaps there can be times when home feels like the plains of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), where the people, once united in building a great tower, found that it was no longer possible to communicate, as each was now speaking a different language. You, however, can understand the words: it's just that the speaker doesn't seem to make any sense. You don't understand what mum and dad keep going on about, and they clearly don't understand you. It's as though parents belong to a different world and can't recognise the different pressures that you face, the complexities of the world you live in, or the choices you want to make.

It can be tempting to conclude that further discussion is pointless and withdraw, perhaps to the solitude of your room or the distraction of your mobile phone. On occasions like this, the only people who seem to understand are friends around your own age.

The Human Heart

The Bible offers us a helpful perspective: "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...*" (1 Cor. 10:13). What this, maybe surprising, verse indicates is that everyone should be able to understand each other, because everyone faces the same kind of issues. Perhaps you are not convinced though. "My parents and grandparents grew up so long ago: how can they know what it is like for me today? And anyway, if they do know what it is like for me, wouldn't they respond quite differently?"

It is important to recognise that the same range of temptations can come in very different settings. Trends and fashions are always changing, but the human heart, filled with aspirations and fears, insecurities and desires, remains the same in every age. Solomon teaches this same truth: "*The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*" (Ecc. 1:9) How life is experienced may be different, but the essence remains the same.

Honouring our Parents

While it is *possible* that mum and dad have forgotten what growing up was like, and might not *always* be ready to think back and sympathise, it is probable that they understand a lot more than you realise. Sometimes it is because they shudder with shame at their own mistakes that they are so determined to steer you away from doing the same things. In the busyness of family life, parents don't always feel able, or don't always have the opportunity at that precise time, to explain every decision they make.

And while parents have a duty before God not to provoke you to anger (Col. 3:21) (which means they should not be unnecessarily difficult or demanding), what is required on your part is trust and patience and the humility to learn from them, together with a willingness not to be easily 'wound up'. These are all aspects of honouring your father and mother (Col. 3:20; Exod. 20:12). Just as you are a work in progress, so are your mum and dad; no one is born a good parent – it is necessary to *become* one. It is more effective if you pray for them than simply protest and complain. It may be that in answer to such a prayer the Lord will change both them and you!

Understanding Ourselves

Rather than simply feeling stuck because you are *misunderstood*, it is much more productive to try to understand yourself and others. Beginning to understand is like a ladder by which you are able to climb out from the dark dungeon of self-pity. Simply focusing upon your grievances is a sure way to shut and bolt the door of that dungeon from the inside. "*Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*" (Prov. 10:12)

You might not be keen to admit it, but the reality is that sometimes you don't really understand yourself, and then there can be times when you don't want to be understood, because you already know that what you are doing is wrong. Sin separates and isolates. Isolation leads to frustration and despair.

The glory of the gospel is that Jesus Christ did not come to save holy, righteous people; rather he calls sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). He understands you perfectly and is gracious and merciful, so, confessing your sin and seeking his forgiveness, come to him today.

RETIRING MODERATOR'S SERMON

REV. MURDO A.N. MACLEOD

PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

Fathers and Brethren, as we saw in our reading in the earlier verses of this chapter, and indeed in the previous chapters of this epistle, the Apostle Paul has been directing and instructing Timothy, and through him the believers in Ephesus and the church in every age, about the importance of appropriate conduct. Whether that be for men and women generally, or elders and deacons particularly, he was concerned, as it says in our text, that they would know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God.

Reminder

The Apostle is reminding us in all of this that the church has not been left to make pragmatic decisions about matters of faith and manners, or given liberty to change direction on either faith or manners depending on the prevailing mood of the time. Rather, we have been given instruction for our domestic, professional and ecclesiastical lives, and our welfare, and the good of the church, depends, in large part, on our following God's guidance. Be sure, he says, to behave well, whether I am there or not. In verse 14 he tells Timothy that he hopes to come shortly but if he tarries, Timothy is to take care.

> *"We remember the way the Lord revealed to His people in the Old Testament that it was His will to dwell amongst them."*

Now in order to underline the importance of these matters he writes very solemnly here in verse 15, tying up and applying what he has said before. So what we have here is Paul reinforcing all he has said and giving reasons why appropriate conduct was so important.

As we come to this verse I would like to notice first of all that we are given a description of the Church, and then secondly an application for the Church.

1. We Have a Description of the Church

In fact we have a threefold description of the Church:

The House of God

We are told firstly that the Church is *"the house of God"*. We remember the way the Lord revealed to His people in the Old Testament that it was His will to dwell amongst them. We see this in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. What a powerful motive this is for appropriate conduct! This principle carries on into the New Testament, where the church is still "the house of God". Even more astonishingly, individual believers are also God's house or God's sanctuary. "There are good reasons", comments John Calvin, "why God bestows

this name on his church; for not only has he received us to be his children by the grace of adoption, but he also dwelleth in the midst of us."

What a wonderful truth this is; God dwells in them. Surely then as the temple of the Spirit they are to conduct themselves accordingly. Some have taken the word "house" here to signify "household", and whether that is a correct interpretation or not there can be no doubt that our union in one body is a precious truth with further far-reaching implications.

The Church of the Living God

Secondly, we are reminded that the Church is *"the church of the living God"*. In their day, as in our own, false gods abounded, but there is only one living God and He has only one church. And our association with it, our membership of it, our service in it, bring us into something that is both sacred and powerful. This is the most important body in the whole world, far exceeding the G7 or the United Nations. The Church of the living God is a place where wonders and mighty works take place, for "never man spake like this man." (John 7:46) The church of the living God is a place where issues of life and death are settled. How important then that we behave in an appropriate fashion.

The Church of the living God belongs, not to us but to Him, and He is the living God who watches and measures all that is done in His name. Some tasks this week in General Assembly may appear mundane and unimportant but, while some are inevitably of greater import than others, even the smallest task, the proverbial cup of cold water, is a task in the Church of the living God and ought to be approached accordingly.

The Pillar and Ground of the Truth

The third part of the description informs us that the Church is *"the pillar and ground of the truth"*. It will be helpful if we divide this part into two.

The Church is the pillar of the truth. What does this mean?

Firstly, *the Church proclaims the truth*. In the ancient world rulers would attach important edicts and proclamations to city pillars. On these pillars you would find the words of the king. In similar fashion in the Church, and from the Church, sounds out the Word of the living God. "God himself", says Calvin, "does not come down from heaven to us, nor does he daily send angels to make known his truth; but he employs pastors, whom he has appointed for that purpose." The Church is God's vehicle for the proclamation of the Gospel; it proclaims the truth.

Secondly, *the Church also defends the truth*. Pillars support the infrastructure and the Church is to defend truth against error. And it hardly needs to be said that the devil, and men who do his work, are constantly attacking the truth. How subtle these attacks have been, and, sadly, how successful, even in our own nation. What a travesty when the very body which is appointed to defend the truth becomes an instrument in the hands of Satan to undermine the truth. As we survey the confusion of our day we conclude with grief that "an enemy hath done this" (Matt. 13:28). Fathers and Brethren, let us hold fast to this precious deposit of truth entrusted to our care.

> ***"The Church is God's vehicle for the proclamation of the Gospel; it proclaims the truth."***

Now we must remember that any defence of the truth which we can muster will be seriously undermined if the Church's own life and character is wrong. It will quickly lose credibility and authority, and we have seen that happen on many fronts. If the elders and deacons mentioned in verses 1-13 ignore all that Paul has said, the Church at Ephesus will soon cease to be the pillar of the truth, proclaiming and defending it.

The Church is also the "ground of the truth". What does this mean?

This is another illustration drawn from buildings. As a building arises from its foundation and leans upon it, so the truth of the Gospel leans upon the Church, and, in good measure, stands or falls as the Church stands or falls. You have only to consider the pre-Reformation period to find ample illustration of this. The Church must "buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23) if it is to be of any use in this poor dark world of ours.

2. We Have an Application for the Church

Paul, having reminded Timothy and the friends in Ephesus of the lofty nature of the Church, presses home the application of appropriate conduct. He hoped to be able to visit them, and no doubt during any such visit, they would take particular care in their conduct. But if he is delayed he wants then to remember that whether he is present or absent they are to behave as "the church of the living God". Teachers will often warn their potentially unruly pupils that although they may have temporarily left the classroom the class is to behave as though the teacher was still present. Paul was absent but that should make no difference.

In one sense the Lord Himself is not present in the Church. He is always present by His Spirit of course,

but He is not here in any visible form and indeed He compared Himself, on more than one occasion, to a Master away on a journey. Woe to those servants whom He finds on His return to have become careless during the interval. Take care, He says, for we do not know when He shall appear and we must give an account of our stewardship. "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." (Mark 13:34-36)

To put it another way, alongside these great privileges we have both great encouragement and great responsibility.

Encouragement

We have encouragement to press on, giving all diligence over the days of General Assembly, for we are involved in a work that shall endure. The Church of the living God shall have final, ultimate success when all the endeavours of this world have come to an end. His name shall endure forever and even our small part in that labour is of lasting significance. When the seventy went out with the good news of the Kingdom, Jesus told them on their return that He "beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18), and he is still falling!

Your congregation may not be very big and your difficulties may be very deflating, but do not for a moment contemplate giving up or even falling into disabling despondency, for this is "the church of the living God".

"Walk about Zion, and go round;
the high tow'rs thereof tell:
Consider ye her palaces
and mark her bulwarks well;
That ye may tell posterity.
For this God doth abide
Our God for evermore; he will
ev'n unto death us guide."
(Metrical Psalm 48:12-14)

Responsibility

We also have great responsibility. I have already touched on this but I want to underline the point, for surely the Apostle does.

Let us bear these things in mind as we enter into debate and discussion; it is "the house of God" and we are co-workers with those who are of that heavenly household. How should we treat our families? Let us take equal care and extend equal love to one another.

And when we return to our own congregations let us remember the Apostle's injunction. Let us serve, "Not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). This has always been difficult but in our modern age there are new dangers lurking. We live our lives in a more public way than those who went before us. Social media platforms, for example, can be a blessing but also a danger. We need to bear in mind when we are speaking, writing or posting on social media that we are associated with the Church of the living God, and that what we write reflects on that body.

"This has always been difficult but in our modern age there are new dangers lurking. We live our lives in a more public way than those who went before us."

Labouring for the Lord

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Let us close with a further comment from Calvin on these words. "By this mode of expression he commends the weight and dignity of the office; because pastors may be regarded as stewards, to whom God has committed the charge of governing his house. If any person has the superintendence of a large house, he labours night and day with earnest solicitude, that nothing may go wrong through his neglect, or ignorance, or carelessness. If only for men this is done, how much more should it be done for God?"

So Fathers and Brethren, and Christian friends, as we meet in General Assembly, and as we shall return, God willing, later in the week to our several stations, let us do so with the Apostle's injunction in mind, for as we often sing:

"But who of glory is the King?
The mighty Lord is this;
Ev'n that same Lord, that great in might
and strong in battle is."
(Metrical Psalm 24:8)

May the Lord bless His word. ■

MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

REV. GREG MACDONALD

THE PASTORING/PREACHING CONNECTION

What a great treasure is given to the church of Christ: the Gospel of Salvation!

We have been given charge of the talent of the message of salvation – and woe unto us if we preach not the Gospel to the whole world!

Preaching

I suspect that every minister here would confess that the part of their ordination vow that weighs most heavily, is the part that asks about their motives for entering into the ministry of the Word. And in that vow we profess that our chief inducements for entering into the ministry are zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who takes this desire and has appointed preaching to be the chief outlet for the expression of that desire, the chief and highest means by which needy souls are touched by the saving grace and love of Christ. Preaching is key. Preaching is vital. We cannot overemphasise the pulpit nor dare we undermine its place.

And yet the difficulty comes in connecting between the pulpit and the pew. Ultimately we are dependent on the presence and power of the Spirit. Word and Spirit are both equally necessary in the effectual calling of sinners. It is the work of the Spirit to convince us of our sins and misery, enlighten our minds in the knowledge of the truth, and so to both persuade and enable us to embrace this blessed Saviour made known to us through the preaching of the Gospel.

Therefore it is essential for the minister of the Word to labour, so that he introduces no barrier or obstacle between the Word and the sinner. To this end he will labour over the doctrine of the text. He will read widely and pray earnestly. He will meditate deeply. He will rehearse his sermon. He will exercise control over his own frame and form of speech. He will toil to ensure that he is adding no obstacle for any soul, no offence but that inherent in the preaching of the Cross.

Pastoring

Yet the minister, though dependent on the Spirit to give the increase, is not without his own responsibilities. He is the sower going out to sow the seed. He is the farmer preparing the soil. He is also the husbandman carefully selecting the right seed for the right soil, tailoring the delivery of the message so as to produce the best prospects of success.

The farmer then will watch the seasons, and he will till his field. The fisherman will mend his nets and will judge the wind. And so the preacher too must have regard to the souls in front of him. He is not drawing a bow at a venture. Yes, the Lord may use it thus. But that is no excuse for the preacher to preach with any indifference to the needs of those in front of him, especially when they have committed the welfare of their souls to his keeping.

Good preaching is then pastoral preaching. *That* is the substance of this address. It is a spiritual meal chosen by the pastor, full of all the spiritual vitamins necessary to keep the flock in the best of spiritual health. We do not feed the same meal over and over and over again. We seek to preach the whole counsel, to prepare the full range of spiritual food.

Brethren, we have the immense blessing of solid preaching. We have deep preaching. We have doctrinal preaching. We have expository preaching. We have sweet, devotional preaching. Let us not then lose our labour by failing to make sure that we are preaching to the people who are in front of us. And to do that requires pastoral care.

Consider first of all:

1. Christ the Pastoral Preacher

When the Saviour announced the beginning of his public ministry, he did so by entering into the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth on the Sabbath Day. At the set time he stood up, indicating his desire to read a passage from the Word and expound it. There was then brought to him a copy of the scroll of Isaiah. Jesus carefully turned to a specific section of Isaiah, and read from chapter 61. Luke records it for us:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down." (Luke 4:18-20)

> ***"It is both fascinating and instructive to notice the emphases of the ministry that Christ was claiming. He would preach – that is clear."***

The Saviour's Preaching

By this act, Jesus formally proclaimed the beginning of his preaching ministry. In doing so he also laid claim to being the One spoken of by Isaiah, that is, the Messiah. It is both fascinating and instructive to notice the emphases of the ministry that Christ was claiming. He would preach – that is clear. He is the Preacher above all, the true Speaker in every sermon: the voice of the sermon is the voice of the Saviour. *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."* (2 Cor. 5:20)

But notice that he is no mere orator. The orator can prepare himself in precisely the same way no matter his audience. The audience are secondary to the performance. An oration can be delivered to an empty theatre. Not so the preacher. Not so with Christ. Even in announcing his calling to preach, he has a pin-sharp focus on those *to whom* he must preach. It is the Gospel *to* the poor. Healing *to* the brokenhearted. Deliverance *to* the captives. Sight *to* the blind. Liberation *for* the bruised and bound! Comfort *for* all that mourn.

In all ways and in all cases, the Saviour says that he will be intensely aware of *who* he preaches to; a claim fully supported by all the evidence across four gospels. His care, compassion, and astute use of the truth with sinners, evidences the unique skill of the Saviour in handling the souls of sinners. No two cases are alike. He is always carefully tailoring the presentation of the material to those in front of him. He never wavers from his message. But he delivers it in the most compelling way possible to those in front of him.

Personalised Ministry

Consider some examples:

– The woman of Samaria, this woman seeking to make discrete use of the well, something of an outcast even from her own society – and yet Jesus speaks to her with disarming directness, as both an adulteress and as Samaritan.

– Zacchaeus, the famous short tax-collector – and yet providence sent him up a tree, and Jesus stood at the bottom of it – looking up at this man who himself was too short to see Jesus.

– Herod, the man who silenced the Gospel ministry of John – and Jesus would not answer him a single word.

– Judas, the arch traitor himself – yet Jesus called him friend.

– Peter, his heart broken, his tears falling in bitterness at the look of Jesus, then having to ask three times, once for each denial – how it grieved poor Peter! – *"Lovest thou me?"*

– The woman with the issue of blood – *"Who touched me?"* A flow of blood - and yet Jesus began by announcing that he had been touched, so that there could be no denying of it! A woman who was scarce allowed to touch anyone, for her uncleanness. *"Who touched me?"*

– Mary and Martha, grieving at the loss of their dear brother Lazarus. What truth does Jesus lead with? *"I am the resurrection..."*

– John the Baptist, languishing in Herod's prison, but asking if Jesus was the One who would come – *"blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me..."*

– Mary his mother, at the Cross – *"behold thy son..."*

– Nathanael, under the fig tree – *"Behold an Israelite indeed..."*

– The fishermen Andrew and Peter – *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

– The parable of the vineyard let out to unworthy husbandmen: even the chief priest and scribes

themselves perceived he was directing his message to them.

– Nicodemus – *"Ye must be born again"* – this ruler of Israel!

– The thief on the cross, in the middle of his torturous death – *"To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."* Even to the very end, Jesus manifested his ability to understand the human condition, in this case vile, crass, violent ignorance – *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."*

– And if we could be allowed one more example – *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"*

Do we see how personalised Christ was in his ministry? He never lost sight of his hearers. The pattern is clear - Jesus always knew to whom he was speaking. He was never imprecise or general where he could be direct and plain. This is what gives his ministry its pastoral power in the preaching of his message. And it is this I believe that we must strive for brethren in our pulpits. To know, as carefully as we can, to whom we are speaking, in both their state and needs.

Christ the pastoral preacher. Secondly:

2. Christ the Pastoral Pattern

Now of course we are not Jesus. We don't have infallible insight into the condition of all our hearers. The Lord Jesus knew the hearts of his hearers. Even when they opposed him. Even when they hated him. *"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."* (John 2:23-25)

The Saviour's Pastoring

The Spirit gave Jesus an unerring discernment as to the state and needs of every single soul he encountered. He never once mismatched a truth to the person he was addressing. Never.

We do not possess that kind of precision in our discernment. How often, Fathers and Brethren, have we longed to know what was going on in the heart of one of our beloved people? How often we have seen their struggle, and longed for them to open up to us a little? Or else: How often we have watched their indifference and wished that there was some hint of spiritual interest! No doubt there were other times, when we thought someone was spiritually bright and all was well with their souls, and in fact they were longing for us to notice their struggle and their pain.

So it is obvious that we do not possess anything like the infallible empathy of the Saviour. But, brethren, despite our disadvantage, the pastoral compassion evidenced by the Saviour is still there for our example. It is recorded in order for us to emulate his practice, and strive to follow his pattern.

Christ has set the standard; it is for us to follow after it. We will not meet that mark of perfection, of course. But on that account are we to give up? We cannot meet the standard of his preaching, but we must preach on. We cannot meet the standard of his obedience, but we must obey the law. So no, we cannot meet the standard of the perfection of his pastoral skill, yet we must strive for that pastoral discernment that will inform our preaching.

> ***"How would we help a Nathanael under the fig tree? How would we minister to a woman of Samaria by the well?"***

Pastorally-attuned Preaching

So then Christ himself set the standard but he was also modelling pastoral preaching for us. He was tending directly to the specific needs of his hearers, and he was establishing a pattern for his ministers to follow. This is the goal then: pastorally-attuned preaching such as was exemplified by the Saviour! This high goal is to have our sermons crafted with delicate care and packed with suitable counsel to address the needs of our people each Lord's Day. That is a lofty goal. But we must not lower the bar. We must not accept less. Yes, we know our limits, our frailties, and our own struggles.

The question then shifts, and becomes not should we do this? We must do it. The question becomes, *How* are we to do this? How can we pastor our people like that in preaching to them? How would we help a Nathanael under the fig tree? How would we minister to a woman of Samaria by the well? How would we reach a tax-collector hiding in a tree?

These things may seem beyond us as mere ministers and elders. But Christ sends no man warring at their own expense. He always provides the food for his soldiers, the weapons for his army. He has called us to this pastoral office. And so we find that he has provided for us means suitable to our own weaknesses, knowing

full well that we cannot be possessed with the infallible discernment inherent to him alone.

Pastoring our People

You love your people. You long to preach to them in a suitable and relevant manner. You know your own many weaknesses. What has Christ gifted to us in order to so reach our people, after the pattern of his own ministry? The means to achieve pastoral preaching is the *active pastoring of our people*. Pastoring is the primary means.

We need to preach to those in front of us. But we don't know their souls. So Christ has given us tools for us to use. We are not left without ways to know them. It is not intuition. It is not guesswork. It is not by reading the latest greatest theological tome, valuable though that will be. It is not any private revelation of the Spirit. Brethren, there is a need to understand our people. We must pastor them. There is the obligation to follow Christ in his example of spiritual keen-sightedness. *Our* preaching must speak to *our* people.

A farmer is not simply going to scatter the same seed everywhere he goes. He will ready the soil. He will tend to it. He will investigate the health of the soil. He will prepare it. Weed it. Feed it. Plough it. And then finally sow seeds suitable to its type and condition. As farmers with seed, we must consider the soil in which we will sow. When is it ready for sowing? What can we do to help clear the weeds? How much ploughing of the soil has this needy soul experienced?

And to do this we must visit our people. We do not possess the insight into human nature of Jesus. We do not know the hearts of all men. We need to use the means he has given to us. Pastoring. And that takes time. It takes patience. It takes thoughtfulness. It takes courage to direct the conversation onto spiritual matters. It takes humility, listening and wisdom.

The Pastoral Relationship

Brethren, I say these things acutely aware of my own shortcomings. I say them certain that in this, as in so many things, I count as less than the least. But I say it with the conviction that it is required of us. *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."* (1 Cor. 4:2) In this context, "faithful" to the pattern Christ has given to us. You cannot know someone just from seeing them in church. The parting handshake is *not* the equal of the pastoral visit. Yes, preaching is pastoring. But it is only pastoring when it is grounded in an understanding of where the flock are.

Brethren, one of the driving motivations in my selection of this topic was the experience of covid restrictions, when pastoring became much, much more remote. We are thankful for telephones and other means of communication. But I became acutely aware that my own preaching was suffering. It was beginning to revert to the sort of preaching done as a student. Where you simply do not know the people in front of you. As an itinerant you are far more likely to be left drawing a bow at a venture. But there is no need for that when you are in a settled charge.

Useful though these means may be, there are things that our people will *not* say over the phone and they *won't* say it at the door of the church and they *won't* say it by text message, and nor should they be expected to. There are questions that can be asked in a home, responses given, and even just a look in the eyes that a pastor is sensitive to. Now probably we miss many of them. Our congregants have likely been frustrated during a visit that we missed their cues. When they tried to let us know something was wrong but struggled to put it into words. It is a tragedy when that happens. It can be spiritually crushing. Brethren, we *have to* develop that pastoral relationship.

> ***"In Scripture we will find guidance for those who are confused. We will find comfort for those who grieve. We will find counsel for those who are burdened."***

The Pastoral Material

Now this is not at all to neglect the Scriptures themselves as God's revelation. In the Word we will find every reference to every possible emotional and spiritual state. It is absolutely the Word that will meet their needs. Not us. In Scripture we will find guidance for those who are confused. We will find comfort for those who grieve. We will find counsel for those who are burdened. We will find hope for those who despair. And we will find warning for those who are struggling with temptation.

All of the primary pastoral material is there in the Word. Our task is to know our people well enough to bring the right portion to the right person at the right time. The Scriptures must always be our primary

source from which we bring the truths of the Gospel into the lives of sinners. And yet the mere study of the Scriptures alone, will not serve us to know how our people are doing *today*. The Scriptures and their study cannot replace the pastoral work required of both ministers and elders. Even if a sermon is immensely useful to someone and you had no idea it would help them. The Lord will still do that.

> *"We must adapt our demeanour and behaviour to the people in our congregations. The truth of the Gospel must not change."*

But preaching and pastoring are not in competition. They are the mutual complements of the minister's calling. So the way we get to discern the state of our people, and so apply the remedies of Scripture to their varied situations, is the careful, kind, prayerful and loving pastoring of their souls through regular visitation. Brethren I believe that if we fail in this, we fail our people, we fail to follow the example of our Master, and we fail to uphold the calling with which we are called.

Willing to Adapt

Think of the words of Paul: *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law... that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* (1 Cor. 9:19-22)

We must adapt our demeanour and behaviour to the people in our congregations. The truth of the Gospel must not change. But we need to be willing to come alongside people, striving to understand their complexities, to bear with them their burdens, to notice when they are grieved, to care when they are in pain.

Brethren, Christ is indeed our pastoral pattern. His example is not merely for us to observe and admire. It is for us to strive after and, by God's grace, to emulate. Now, friends, this is an overwhelming thought in many ways. But there are of course encouragements to the taking up of this responsibility.

Christ the pastoral pattern. Thirdly:

3. Christ the Pastoral Provider

Notice that Christ himself, in appointing under-shepherds in his congregations, has not in any sense abdicated the role himself. He remains the Lord our Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd of the flock. He is himself your Shepherd too, as a member of his body. You have full access and recourse to his infinite resources.

What he does then for the body is to provide under-shepherds. This is explained by Paul: *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (Eph. 4:11,12).

Pastors and teachers are the gift of Christ for his body, the church. This means that Christ has made specific provision for his church, for the pastoral care and support of his people: **HE** is doing it, but **we**, as ministers and elders, are the means that he uses. Christ has made that provision. So if the body of Christ is not being pastored, it is because *we* have failed to fulfil our office.

The Role of Elders

Now most of what has been said so far relates to ministers, to the pastoral preaching that emulates the Saviour. I apologise if elders have felt neglected. But *teaching elders* are supported in their pastoral work by *ruling elders*.

Elders, your role is vital to the upholding of the pastoral work in your congregation. In most circumstances the elders are local and have access to local knowledge that takes a minister years to acquire. The pastoral input of elders is of huge significance throughout the lifetime of a congregation, and never more so than in the first five or ten years of a preacher's ministry.

Notice that Christ structured his church to have a plurality of elders in a congregation. And what is

their function? It is to pastor the flock. Think of that – a congregation can usually get by with one single preacher – but it needs multiple elders wherever possible. That is an indication of the necessity of the pastoring of the people. Together the Kirk Session pastor the flock. An active elder is able to draw the preacher aside and mention the needs of someone he has visited recently, he is able to guide the preacher to areas that might be helpful for them.

> *"There is no lack brethren, in the care Christ has for his flock, nor in the way he has made channels and conduits for the expression of that care."*

The minister and the elders work together for the pastoral care of the flock. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28)

Calling and Gifts

So this immense need of the congregation to have pastoral preaching, to have preaching that reaches to their souls and to their needs and to their circumstances, is fully catered for by the governance of the King and Head of the church, by the Good Shepherd.

He gives ministers a joint calling. Elders are given only the calling of being a pastoring elder, but everyone called to preach is also always called to pastor. He provides his preachers with pastoral gifts as well as preaching gifts – without which no man can say he is called to the ministry of the gospel. He must be given to hospitality, and "a lover of good men" (Titus 1:8). He must be patient, and "gentle unto all men" (2 Tim. 2:24).

So Christ provides this pastoral preaching for his people by gifting men with both preaching and pastoring gifts. And then in support of this end, he provides other pastors of the flocks, local ruling elders, who can devote themselves to the pastoral care of the flock, and thus can inform and support the pastoral preaching of the Word.

There is no lack brethren, in the care Christ has for his flock, nor in the way he has made channels and conduits for the expression of that care. That's what we are to be. That's what we are to strive for. Channels for the pastoral care of Christ to his people. It is no easy thing: to seek to be the living expressions of Christ's pastoral care and love for his people. Brethren, this is our calling: all of us, both ministers and elders. This is what he asks of us. To spend and be spent for him, and for his church which he has purchased with his own blood.

Pastoral Awareness

He was sent to bind up the brokenhearted, and to bring good news to the meek and lowly, and to offer liberation to the captives. All kinds of people. Discover again the joy of who is in your congregations. Because it changes. One person who was flying in the heights of joy last time you visited, could well be suffering the assaults of Satan next time. He hasn't called us to an easy life. But he certainly hasn't called us to a boring one either.

Ministers, this pastoral awareness will guide you in sermon preparation. It will lead you to texts and passages you would not otherwise turn to. It will throw light on the Word as you see its relevance to the needs of your flock. It will help you in crafting suitable application for your sermons, without which we are little more than lecturers. It will soften you in preaching truth, because you yourself will have wrestled with the implications of the message for this person and that person. For one it might be a delight and offer hope, for another a frightening alarm. It will bring tenderness to your voice as you seek to impress that truth into the hearts of your people.

To the one you may well be that savour of life unto life, to another of death unto death. It will humble you. It will leave you to cry out, "who is sufficient for these things?"

But it is the reason for our calling. We are called to be *pastoral preachers*.

LOYAL & DUTIFUL ADDRESS

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The Loyal & Dutiful Address of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

May it please Your Majesty.

We, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) met in General Assembly this 24th day of May 2022, humbly desire to express to Your Majesty our continuing loyalty to Your Majesty's person and throne.

We note, with gratitude to the Almighty, Your Majesty's recovery from the occasional ill-health which has troubled Your Majesty and we assure Your Majesty of the prayers of Your Majesty's loyal subjects within our denomination. We are also gratified that Your Majesty has the assistance of Your Majesty's son, His Royal Highness the Duke of Rothesay, and Your Majesty's grandson, His Royal Highness the Earl of Strathearn, together with other members of Your Majesty's family. We further assure Your Majesty of our prayers for Your Majesty in the continued grieving of the past year for Your Majesty's dearly beloved husband, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. We trust that Your Majesty has found comfort and strength in the One who is the "God of all comfort." We rejoice even in sorrow to know that there is One who has defeated death, and offers eternal life to as many as believe in Him.

Throughout the last year many matters of serious concern have been experienced across our beloved nation. We are thankful for the efforts made by Your Majesty's Government to limit the threat from the Covid-19 virus, and especially rejoice in the lifting of restrictions relating to Public Worship. The example set by Your Majesty of regular church attendance is one that we ardently pray would be followed by many more across the nation, to hear the Word of Life. It remains our sad conviction that despite such solemn warnings of Providence the nation has neither turned from its sins, nor repented of its godlessness. It is the fear of the Ministers and Elders here gathered that such a failure of repentance has consequences more serious and more lasting than the pandemic itself.

In more recent months the nation has faced the threat of aggression from abroad, and the support offered to Ukraine is morally commendable. The sad spectre of war is surely one more cause for the nation to unite in prayer, and seek the protection of the Almighty. In such politically divisive times the Ministers and Elders here gathered assure Your Majesty that they would earnestly support Your Majesty in any National Day of Prayer to meet the present crisis, believing such a day would be agreeable to Your Majesty, beneficial for the nation and honouring to the Lord. Amos 5:4: "For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live."

The establishment of true religion in our land is very precious to the Ministers and Elders here gathered. We believe these matters to be precious also to Your Majesty, knowing the esteem and sincerity in which Your Majesty has always held Your Majesty's coronation vows. The toleration of false religion grieves the Holy Spirit of God. In this we confess the sins and faults of the professing Church of Christ in the land. The vacillations of the ministry, the absence of doctrinal care, and the lack of pastoral compassion for immortal souls have all allowed the clear Gospel call of salvation in Christ alone to become both muted and distorted. One of the blessings of Your Majesty's long life is that Your Majesty has known better days in our land. One of the sadnesses must be witnessing the spiritual decline of the nation. 1 Corinthians 14:8: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

Nonetheless the believer remains comforted by the promises of Scripture and the certainty of the One who rules above all. Even in the most uncertain of times, Christ is King, His Word is true, and His Return is fixed. We rejoice with Your Majesty in the abiding truth of the Scriptures. 2 Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure."

We consider it our great honour thus to communicate with Your Majesty each year at our General Assembly, and offer this Loyal and Dutiful Address as a ministration of the Word and a counsel of true comfort from Christ, the only King and Head of the Church.

May the blessing of God rest upon Your Majesty and all members of the Royal Family.

So pray Your Majesty's most loyal subjects, the Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in General Assembly convened. ■

GENERAL ASSEMBLY REPORT

REV. THOMAS BUCHANAN

The General Assembly of 2022 saw a welcome return to in-person proceedings after two years of online General Assemblies. It was evident that commissioners, delegates and the public were glad for this kind providence and mindful of God's mercies toward His Church.

Monday 23rd May – 1st Sederunt

Retiring Moderator

The Assembly was opened with worship conducted by the retiring Moderator, Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod (Snizort). The praises of the Assembly commenced with appropriate words from Metrical Psalm 145 (first version): "*I'll thee extol, my God, O king; I'll bless thy name always.*" Continuing this theme the Assembly, led by Mr Macleod, acknowledged in prayer that "The cause is low but the Lord is great." Mr Macleod preached from 1 Timothy 3:15, setting out the threefold description given of the Church and following this with its relevant application, namely the importance of appropriate conduct in the work of the Assembly and beyond. The Assembly was exhorted in light of the Church's duty respecting care, love, patience and brotherly kindness. Mr Macleod rightly stated: "Let it be seen among us that we know that this is the Church of the living God." (The sermon is included in this issue and an audio recording may be found on the denominational website.)

Election of Moderator

After constituting the 2022 Assembly, the retiring Moderator called for nominations for a new Moderator. Rev. Iain Smith (Rtd) moved the name of Rev. Greg MacDonald (Cross), and upon his election Mr MacDonald duly took the Chair. On behalf of the Assembly the new Moderator thanked the outgoing Moderator for the duties he had performed. Mr MacDonald then thanked the Assembly for permitting him to be their servant and reminded the Assembly that he was there to serve them.

Assembly Arrangements & Nominations

The Report of the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee was presented by the Acting Convener, Rev. James MacInnes (Lochalsh & Strath). The Report deals with matters necessary for the orderly management of the Assembly. The usual 'Committees to Expedite the Business of the House' were duly appointed and a number of individual appointments were also made: Rev. James I. Gracie as Assistant Clerk *pro tem* for this Assembly, Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod as Assembly Office Manager, Mr Donald John Morrison as Assembly Officer, and Mr Colin Crichton (Elder, Stornoway) Precentor at the Assembly.

The Principal Clerk (Rev. Graeme Craig) gave a word of thanks to a number of individuals who had assisted the Assembly Clerks' Department. Special thanks were given to Mr Murdo Murray (Stornoway) for his dutiful work performed quietly behind the scenes. The Committee were indebted to Mr Murray for his preparation and printing of papers for Committees and the Assembly. The Principal Clerk noted that the whole Church are grateful for his tireless work. The Congregation of Liberton Kirk were thanked for the use of their building for the meeting of the Assembly.

Hannah Keddie

(Order of the Day)

There was an Order of the Day for the Presentation of the Sabbath School Grade 2 Examination Award, which went to Miss Hannah Keddie (Duthil-Dores).

Supplementary Report

The Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee presented a Supplementary Report on the Tuesday evening. It outlined some proposed changes in the structure and membership of the Church's Committees, including the abolition of the Public Questions, Religion & Morals (PQRM) Committee, with its work being assigned to an individual. The Committee recommended that the Standing Committees be composed of just six members and that the normal period of service be reduced from a maximum period of four years to three. The Principal Clerk presented three separate Motions to the Assembly, which, if carried, would reject the Committee's proposals and leave arrangements for the Standing Committees as they were.

Rev. Timothy McGlynn (Aberdeen) supported the Report, conveying the sense of unanimity within the Committee on their proposal and how important it was that ministers be free to do the work of the gospel. Rev. David Blunt (North Uist & Grimsay) and Rev. David Fraser (Rtd) spoke in favour of the proposed amendments. Mr Blunt stated that the abolition of the PQRM Committee would be a great loss to the Church, due to the weighty matters for which it is responsible – matters too weighty for one individual to deal with. The three Motions of the Principal Clerk carried, which meant that no change would be made to the structure or membership of Standing Committees at this Assembly.

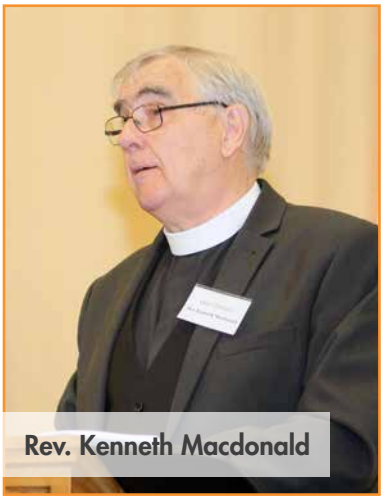
Tuesday 24th May – 2nd Sederunt

Moderator's Address

After the opening devotions, the Moderator addressed the Assembly with 'The Pastoring/Preaching Connection'. The address was based on Isaiah 61:1-3 (and Luke 4:18-19), with Christ being set before the Assembly as a Pastoral Preacher, a Pastoral Pattern, and a Pastoral Provider. This address was a heartfelt exhortation for the pastoral ministry of our Church to be an extension and support of its pulpit ministry. Ministers were duly reminded of their great motives and chief inducements to entering the ministry, namely "*zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls.*" The Moderator did not fail to address the Elders also, who rightly share pastoral responsibility for the flock of God, a provision made by Christ Himself. (The address is included in this issue and an audio recording may be found on the denominational website.)

Loyal & Dutiful Address

The draft of the Loyal & Dutiful Address to Her Majesty The Queen was presented to an upstanding Assembly by the Moderator. Several areas are worthy of note. The Address expressed gratitude to the Almighty for Her Majesty's recent recovery from the occasional ill-health that has troubled her, and Her Majesty was assured of the denomination's prayers. The Address also expressed thanks to Her Majesty's Government for the efforts made to limit the threat of Covid-19, and especially for the lifting of restrictions imposed upon the Public Worship of the Church. Mention was also made of the denomination's support for a National Day of Prayer in light of the war in Ukraine, with its possible wider implications; the Address expressed a belief that this would be agreeable to Her Majesty and honouring to the Lord. The Address appropriately remarked that it must cause Her Majesty a degree of sadness to witness the spiritual decline of the nation during her long reign. The toleration of false religion grieves the Holy Spirit of God. (The address will be skilfully scripted by Miss Joan MacDonald (Westhill) before being sent to Her Majesty.)


Rev. Kenneth Macdonald

Ecumenical Relations

This Report was presented by the Convener, Rev. Kenneth Macdonald (Rtd), who commenced by expressing the difficulty the Committee had faced over the last two years in having few opportunities for advancing relations with other bodies due to the Covid restrictions. There were three main areas of interest highlighted in the Report:

Scotland

The interest that talks with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland (RPCoS) had garnered over recent years, whether positive or negative, had not advanced in the past year. The Committee are unsure where these discussions will now lead but it is their intention to bring a finalised report to the 2023 General Assembly. A question was asked by Mr Lindsay MacCallum (Kiltearn) as to whether the Committee had yet established during its talks if the RPCoS regarded the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) as Erastian? The Convener assured Mr MacCallum that the question would come up in any further discussions.

Australia

The 2021 General Assembly approved in principle the Committee pursuing the incorporation of the Australian Free Church (AFC), and therefore it was of interest to learn that no such proposals were being brought to the 2022 Assembly. The Committee reported that a negative response had been received from other Australian Presbyterian denominations – the Southern Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) – to the proposed erection of an FC(C) Presbytery in Australia. It was reported that the Committee remain of the opinion that there appears to be no insurmountable barrier to a coming together of the AFC and the PCEA and that this may be done without loss of integrity on the part of the AFC. The Committee recommended to the Assembly that the proposed erection of an Australian FC(C) Presbytery be passed from and that parties be encouraged to work towards realignment. In regard to this matter,

Rev. Iain Smith (Rtd) suggested to the Committee that it is unrealistic and unfair to ask the AFC and PCEA to realign and that this may show a degree of ignorance regarding the Australian situation. The Principal Clerk, who acts as Clerk to this Committee, assured Mr Smith that the Committee were aware of the sensitivities surrounding such a proposed realignment.

North America
The Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC) in North America had made contact with the Committee out of concern that momentum be not lost in discussions to forge a closer relationship and possibly bring about a union between them and the FC(C) in North America. Although this may not be feasible at the present time, there were some encouraging and helpful discussions over Zoom. The Convener explained, in line with the Committee's Report, that the ultimate goal of any such union would be the development of an indigenous, independent, North American sister Church, with presumably the PRC Congregation in England being brought into the FC(C). The Report was moved according to the print and formally seconded by Rev. Timothy McGlynn, the Vice-convener.

(Order of the Day)
There was an Order of the Day when the following were invited to address the Assembly: Mr Jonathan Winch (Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales); Rev. Philip Moffet (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland).

Finance & Sustentation
This Report was presented by the Committee's Convener, Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod (Snizort), who commenced by acknowledging two things: (1) the Lord's faithfulness to the denomination; (2) the faithfulness of our people in their ready giving to the Lord's cause. The Convener highlighted a number of items in the Report:

Bracadale and Duirinish Congregations
There was reason for thanks for the progress made by the Bracadale and Duirinish Congregations in paying off their mortgage loan for the manse. The Committee were delighted that they are able to begin the process for transfer of title for the manse building.

Ministerial Stipend
In the current economic climate the Committee, after careful consideration, were recommending to the Assembly that the ministerial stipend be increased to £22,000 as from 1st July. In light of this recommendation the Convener also directed the Assembly to paragraph (6) of the Proposed Deliverance, which called on the General Assembly to note with concern the dramatic rise in the cost of living, and to enjoin our people to make these developments a matter of prayer.

Aberdeen Congregation
The Committee were delighted to report that the Aberdeen Congregation no longer needed Special Arrangements, as they are now able to move onto the Equal Dividend Platform; the Convener conveyed to the Assembly that this had been an encouragement to the Committee. The Convener continued by conveying the warmest thanks of the Committee for the work of Mr Murray Mackay (General Treasurer), Mrs Muriel Smith (Financial Administrator) and Mr Murdo Murray (Committee Clerk).

Resident Lay Agent
The Convener expressed the appreciation of not only the Committee but also the whole Church for the tireless and diligent work of Mr Donald Robertson (Resident Lay Agent). Mr Robertson was appointed by the General Assembly in 2008 as Resident Lay Agent for the denomination. It was noted that up until his retirement in March 2022 Mr Robertson had proved a most faithful servant in the Lord's cause. It was because of the assistance that he brought to congregations that many Interim Moderators were greatly relieved of their burdens, and congregations without a Minister received pastoral care and visitation. The Convener recalled a time when he tried his best to get Mr Robertson to take a holiday, and when he succeeded he was not surprised to learn that it was a visitation and preaching holiday in one of our congregations! The Convener expressed the sense of sadness within the Committee when they were informed of Mr Robertson's intention to retire, yet they fully understood his decision. A presentation was duly made to Mr Robertson by the Moderator, who thanked him for his service. Mr Robertson remarked, "I thank God for enabling me in some small part to be a servant in His Church."

Mr Donald Robertson

General Treasurer
The Convener invited the General Treasurer to address the Assembly. Mr Mackay commenced his Report on an encouraging note, highlighting that the projected

deficit of £97,572 in the budget for 2020 was actually only £12,961. He also highlighted that despite the membership of the denomination having decreased by 8% over the past two years, the congregational remittances have been maintained. He added that with 83% of congregational remittances going towards the denomination's payroll, the importance of remittances and Gift Aid cannot be over emphasised. Mr Mackay concluded by giving a note of thanks to all the local congregational Treasurers for their hard work.

This was, all in all, an encouraging report for the Assembly. Those who contributed to the speeches reiterated the rising cost of living as something to be closely monitored with respect to the Minister's stipend and the finances of our congregations.

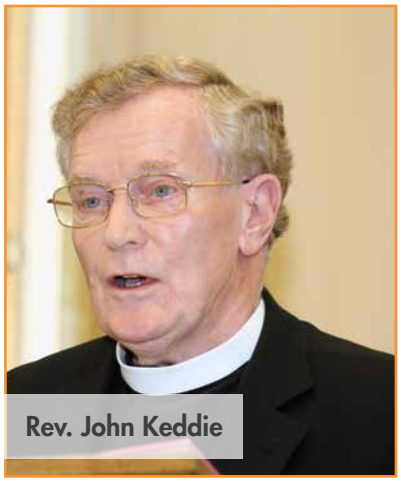
General Trustees

This Report was presented by the Chairman of the General Trustees, Dr Andrew Naylor (Elder, Harris). The remit of the General Trustees is to manage the Trust Estate of the denomination – in other words the assets in funds and property which the Trustees hold on behalf of the Church. The Chairman highlighted the sale of the property in Tain, Ross-shire; net proceeds of £92,531 were passed to denominational funds in accordance with the terms of the original bequest in 2010. The Chairman conveyed the appreciation of the Trustees for the late Mr John MacKenzie (Elder, Assynt & Eddrachillis), both in regard to his work behind the scenes with the Tain property and his diligence and expertise in many areas over many years. Thanks were also given for the diligent work of Mr John N. Gillies (Elder, Partick) as Clerk to the General Trustees.

The current Roll of the Board of Trustees is: Dr Andrew I. Naylor, Harris (Chairman); Mr Lindsay MacCallum, Kiltearn (Vice-chairman); Mr Murdo MacDonald, Poolewe & Aultbea; Mr Thomas MacInnes, Portree; Mr John N. Gillies, Partick.

Special Committee on Psalmody

The Convener, Rev. John Keddie (Rtd), began his presentation with a quote from John Calvin on the book of Psalms which is as relevant to our own denomination in the year 2022 as it was in the reformer's day: "*There is no other book in which there is to be found more express and magnificent commendations, both of the unparalleled liberality of God towards his Church, and of all his works; there is no other book in which there is recorded so many deliverances, nor one in which the evidences and experiences of fatherly providence and solicitude which God exercises towards us, are celebrated with such splendour of diction, and yet with the strictest adherence to truth; in short, there is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise.*" (*Commentary on the Psalms*, 1563)


Rev. John Keddie

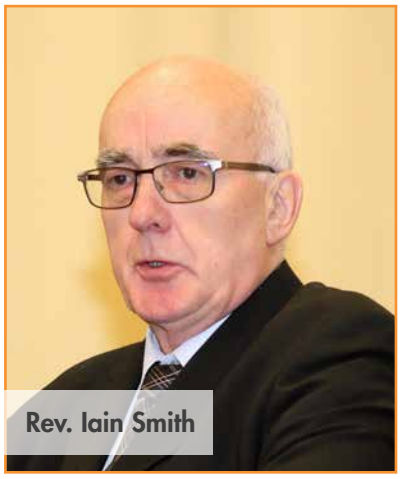
The Convener told the Assembly that it is good that such a Special Committee on Psalmody exists within our denomination, as psalmody is essential in the worship of the Church. It was noted that the Committee, in their objective to promote good psalm-singing in our congregations, have provided aids for congregational singing. There is a new booklet to help precentors choose tunes appropriate for the psalms to be sung; it is entitled 'Classification of Metrical Psalm Tunes' and is available for free distribution. The Convener mentioned encouragements concerning psalm-singing, informing the Assembly of an initiative called 'The Psalms Project Romania', which is a ministry dedicated to restoring psalm-singing in the contemporary Evangelical church in Romania. To strive for such a return to uniformity in worship in Scotland is something worthy of our effort.

Petitions

There were four Petitions before the Assembly, three of them highlighting the great need within the denomination: manpower. The first Petition was presented by Rev. Hugues Pierre (Pau), requesting the appointment of General Assessors to the Free Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon; such a petition is natural, as the Presbytery has only recently been erected. There were two Petitions from the Free Northern Presbytery, both presented by Mr Lindsay MacCallum (Elder, Kiltearn). One was to request General Assessors to assist the functioning of the Presbytery, and the second was to request a realignment of Presbytery Bounds. The Free Northern Presbytery has had an issue with inadequate manpower over the years, but in recent years it has also become severely depleted through the passing of long-standing members of Presbytery, and with no new Elders for many years. The final Petition was presented by Rev. Calum Smith (Bracadale and Duirinish), requesting the consolidation of the two Congregations, with one Kirk Session and one Deacons' Court, and under Mr Smith as its Minister. With no questions or other Motions, all four Petitions were granted.

The Convener of the Business Committee (Rev. James MacInnes) conveyed to the Assembly the

delightful news that the business of the House was moving efficiently, and it was therefore possible to move consideration of the Report of the Legal Advice & Property Committee from Thursday morning to Tuesday afternoon. This was a welcome sign of an earlier finish to the Assembly than had been scheduled.


Rev. Iain Smith

Legal Advice & Property

The Report was presented by Rev. Iain Smith (Rtd), Convener, who referred to two items in particular:

Marriage Authorisation

Mr Smith commenced by detailing the ongoing issue the denomination is having with its application to the Scottish Government to be prescribed under the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977. Currently application is made on an individual basis for each Minister for a rolling three year period; the current period is due to end in 2023. The Convener expressed the ongoing frustration of the Committee with the process, and indeed their suspicion of it.

Law Agents

The Committee also proposed a change in the Church's Law Agents from Drummond Miller LLP to Lindsays Solicitors, Edinburgh. It was noted that Drummond Miller had served the denomination well in the early days after the division of 2000; time had now come however to change to a Law Agent more suitable for the denomination's current legal and property needs.

Tuesday 24th May – 3rd Sederunt

Welfare of Youth & Education

(Order of the Day)

There was an Order of the Day for a presentation to be made to the Prizewinner of the Bible Class Grade Examination. This prize was awarded to Miss Lydia MacDonald (Stornoway) and presented by the Moderator.

Lydia MacDonald

The Report was presented by the Convener, Rev. Timothy McGlynn (Aberdeen), who began by reminding the Assembly that the difficulty of the past two years had been acutely felt by our young people. The Convener believed that many of them had been robbed of a feeling of belonging during the Covid-19 'lockdowns'. Mr McGlynn evoked the messages from the retiring and serving Moderators, encouraging the Assembly to remember that as the 'household of God', the Church has young people in it too, and that being so, the 'pastoral care' of the Church is to be given to them also. The uptake of places at the forthcoming Summer Camp has been a great encouragement to the Committee, and they hope that its return will be a blessing both to the young people and their leaders. The Committee expressed its thanks to Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod (Snizort) for her work as Clerk and for those within the Church who freely give of their time to teach in the Sabbath Schools.

(Order of the Day)

There was an Order of the Day for the reception of Delegates when the following were received and invited to address the Assembly: Rev. Craig Dennison (Trinitarian Bible Society); Rev. Iain Wright (Orthodox Presbyterian Church).

Denominational Name

A Supplementary Report from the Special Committee on the Denominational Name was presented by its Convener, Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod (Snizort). The Committee had been appointed by the General Assembly 2021 to evaluate the merit of a change of the name of the denomination as a means to enhance the public witness of the Church and improve the possibility of uniting like-minded brethren throughout the land. The Committee consulted with Presbyteries and duly reported to the General Assembly that no presbytery had expressed any desire for a change in the denomination's name. The Convener stated that the Committee had done its duty and with the recommendation of no further action requested that the Committee be discharged. This was approved by the Assembly.

Wednesday 25th May – 4th Sederunt

The first hour of the day was given over to devotional exercises, as is the usual practice of the Assembly. It is an encouraging and blessed time of worship for commissioners, delegates and the public in the midst of the business – a period during the Assembly that is welcomed by all.

Public Questions, Religion & Morals

When this Report was called for, Rev. Greg MacDonald was replaced in the Chair by the retiring Moderator, in order to allow Mr MacDonald to present the report as

Convener of the Committee. The Convener directed the Assembly to two areas of special focus: abortion and the war in Ukraine.

Abortion

The Committee continue to oppose the vile abortion laws throughout the United Kingdom. They have been greatly troubled by the fact that the Abortion laws have become more entrenched and note that even in the last few months Westminster has passed additional abhorrent legislation to make 'at home' abortion a permanent legal right. The Convener noted the progress being made against abortion in the United States, and called on the Assembly to pray that this would be one of those issues that would 'come across the pond', and that the same discussions would be relevant in Scotland. It was stressed, and no doubt agreeably received by the Assembly, that we can no longer suffer the silence and ought to be ready to meet the challenge. The Assembly was reminded that evil is a darkness that does not do well in the light, and that we should resist the opposition in their attempt to mute the argument. The Committee commended Mr Donald John Morrison (Home Mission Worker) for the 'Abort Abortion' campaign and continue to support his work for the unborn.

Ukraine

The devastating war in Ukraine has been a constant news item since it began in February and the Convener highlighted the warning from God that was once again going unheeded. As Covid-19 was a warning unheeded, so the war in Ukraine is another voice from heaven. The Convener continued in asking the question why the West was not asking itself the question, "Why has the West become so weak?" The answer can only be that the West is weak due to its wholesale departure from God. The call is for the leaders and nations of the West to repent and for our leaders to call our nation to repentance.

There were a number of speakers to this Report. Rev. Maurice Roberts (Rtd) reminded the Assembly that "righteousness exalteth a nation" and that in hearing the issues highlighted in this report we need to be crying out to God for our nation. A passionate speech was delivered by Rev. David Fraser (Rtd), challenging the Assembly and calling for the Church to be the protestors of our own day, especially with regard to the issue of abortion. Mr Fraser appealed to the Assembly, "Let us not have blood on our hands!" This was followed by a call to protest against the large-scale Sabbath desecration in Scotland: "Do we not have a responsibility to the Lord of the Sabbath?"

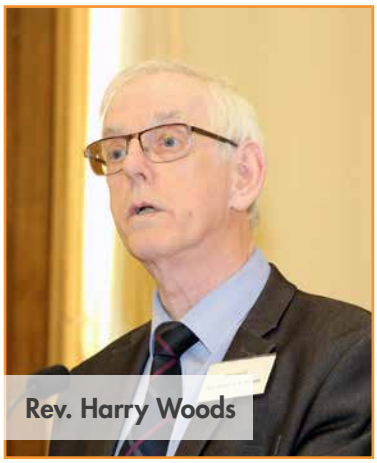
(Order of the Day)

There was an Order of the Day for the reception of Delegates when the following were received and invited to address the Assembly: Rev. Stephen McCollum (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland); Mr Allan McCulloch (Scottish Reformation Society).

Overture

An Overture from Members of the House was brought to the General Assembly in response to decisions that had been taken by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland earlier in the week. The Overture was presented by Rev. David Blunt (North Uist & Grimsay), who commenced by saying of these decisions, "we are not surprised by them but we should be shocked by them." The two items of concern were the conducting of 'same-sex' marriages and the approval of the 'Saint Margaret Declaration', an open pursuit of closer relations with the Church of Rome. It was overtured that a statement be adopted by the General Assembly and sent to the Church of Scotland, and that it also be issued to the Press.

The two main points of the Overture are as follows: *1. "The General Assembly deplore the decision of the Church of Scotland to approve the 'Solemnisation of the Same Sex Marriage Overture', thus allowing ministers to conduct same-sex 'marriages'." 2. "The General Assembly deplore the decision of the Church of Scotland to approve the 'Saint Margaret Declaration', a further step in the pursuit of closer relations with the Church of Rome."* Mr Blunt concluded his presentation with the words, "May the Lord always give us strength to speak up." The precise implications of these unbiblical decisions are yet unknown. The Assembly duly approved this necessary Overture.


Rev. Harry Woods

Publications

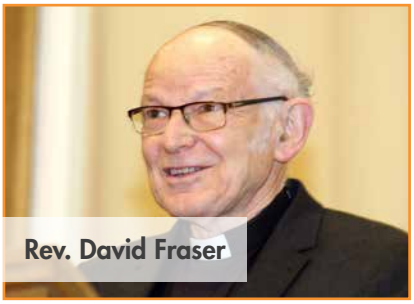
The Convener, Rev. Harry Woods (Rtd), presented this report to the Assembly. With the oversight of the Church's magazines being one of the Committee's main responsibilities, the Convener thanked the editors for their labours in writing, sourcing and preparing material for the readership of the magazines on a monthly basis. The Committee had appointed Rev. James MacInnes as a new assistant editor of the *Witness* for an initial period of three years; Mr MacInnes has made frequent contributions to the Missions section recently. The current editorial team for the *Witness* consists of Rev. David Blunt as Editor, and Rev. James Clark, Rev. Trevor

Kirkland and Rev. James MacInnes as Assistant Editors. Rev. Thomas Budgen is Editor of the *Explorer* magazine.

The Committee have a number of publication projects ongoing and the Report informed the Assembly of an attempt to prioritise some projects to enable progress. The Committee noted their appreciation of the work carried out by Mrs Elizabeth Nicolson (Snizort) as Subscriptions Secretary and Miss Katrina Mackay (Ayr) as Magazine Distributor.

(Order of the Day)

There was an Order of the Day for the reception of Delegates when the following were received and invited to address the Assembly: Rev. Roy Mohon (Presbyterian Reformed Church); Rev. Jason Tuinstra (United Reformed Churches in North America).



Rev. David Fraser

Training of the Ministry & Admissions

This Report was presented by the Convener, Rev. David Fraser (Rtd). The Convener commenced with the most important and urgent issue of student applications for the ministry. The Committee had reported last year, and did so again this year, that the lack of student applications was a matter of concern for the denomination.

Applications for Recognition

The Committee was pleased to report that one new student from Scotland hopes to enter the Seminary on a four-year course in September. Applications for recognition as Candidates for the Ministry had also been received from two men within the Bounds of the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon. A further encouragement from overseas was received by the Committee with the potential of two applications coming from within the Bounds of the Presbytery of the United States of America. The Convener conveyed his hope that these applications would be like "the first swallows of spring and that many more will come." In speaking to the Report, the Principal of the Seminary, Rev. Graeme Craig, stressed the importance of a trained ministry and thanked the lecturers of the Seminary for their work in training students. This was accompanied with a call to pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send labourers into these fields.

Application for Admission

A Supplementary Report was presented by the Committee concerning an Application for Admission by Rev. Stuart Farmes. The General Assembly considered the Application in private and agreed to admit Mr Farmes as an ordained minister of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The Moderator received and welcomed Mr Farmes into the ministry of the FC(C) and called upon Rev. Harry Woods (Rtd) to lead the General Assembly in prayer. Mr Farmes' name will now be included on the Roll of Ministers without Charge and once he has signed the Formula he will be available for a Call.

Rev. Stuart Farmes

Wednesday 25th May – 4th Sederunt

Home & Foreign Missions

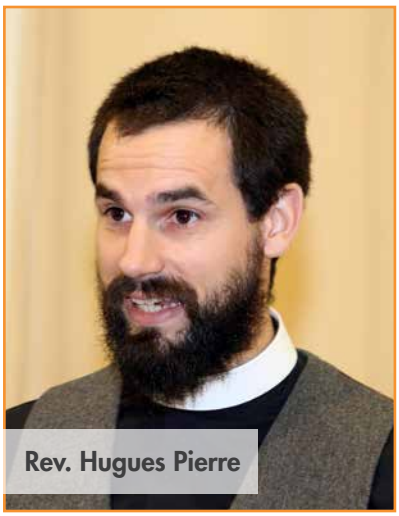
Mission work at home or abroad is an obligation laid upon the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church. The Committee acknowledge that while some are identified as 'missionaries', it is important to recognise that each member of the Church must be engaged prayerfully in seeking the advance of the Gospel. It is an all-inclusive work in which we must all be involved in our own ways.

The Convener, Rev. James MacInnes, spoke of the need for the Church to be aware that many men connected with the mission work of the Church are engaged in tent-making ministries, especially in the Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon. The Convener also spoke of the Jews being a standing matter when we as a Church think of our mission work: the prayer of the Church is that the veil that is upon them would be removed and that the Jews would see that their Messiah has come in the Person of Jesus Christ.

In speeches to this Report, Rev. James Gracie (Edinburgh) spoke of the continued difficulties for the Smiths Falls Congregation in Canada, which are exacerbated by its significant distance from other parts of the Church. This was followed by Rev. Bill Scott (Rtd), who in the absence of Rev. Jorge Ruiz Ortiz (Rubí) spoke on the work in Spain. Mr Scott commended Mr Ortiz to the Assembly for special remembrance in prayer and concluded by stating his belief that the Lord was moving among our people in France and Spain.

(Order of the Day)

There was an Order of the Day for the reception of Missionary Delegates when the following were received


Rev. Hugues Pierre

and invited by the Moderator to address the Assembly:

France
Rev. Hugues Pierre (Pau) acknowledged that it was a great privilege for him to address the Assembly. He went on to say: "As you know, our congregation is located in Pau, in the south-west of France, in a place historically associated with an important Reformed heritage (indeed I remind you that Béarn was one of the first reformed kingdoms in the world). It is interesting to note that a pastor of the Free Church, Charles Calder Mackintosh, lived there at the end of his life. Pau is a small, quiet town of about 100,000 people. Reflecting France, its population is mainly Roman Catholic, atheist and Muslim." In giving details of the Congregation and its work, Mr Pierre went on to say: "Our congregation is composed of 17 people, 9 of whom are communicant members. We have two services on Sundays (11am/4pm) and a prayer meeting on Wednesday evenings (7pm)." Mr Pierre concluded by stressing to the Assembly that it was such a blessed time to be with them, reminding him of the oneness of the Church despite national differences.

Sri Lanka
Rev. James MacInnes updated the Assembly on the work in Sri Lanka. It had been the hope of Rev. S.N.V. Partheepan to be in attendance at the General Assembly but now it is hoped that he will be able to attend next year. Mr MacInnes made the Assembly aware of recent updates on the work that could be found on the Church website and in the *Witness* magazine. A few highlights to mention were that there have been 10 baptisms (7 infants and 3 young adults) of late, and the ordination of a deacon. Gratitude was expressed for the progress being made in the building of the manse and the generous gifts that were enabling it. Mr MacInnes reminded the Assembly of the perilous situation politically and economically in Sri Lanka.

Middle East Reformed Fellowship
Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod (Snizort) presented to the Assembly a report on the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). This is a missionary organisation which serves in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. It began with the vision of three young people in Beirut in the early 1970's. MERF unashamedly upholds the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and holds to the Reformed Confessions. It seeks to spread the gospel through radio broadcasts, websites and literature in over a dozen languages. It is also actively involved in the training of men in its established training centre in Lokichogio, North West Kenya. Mr Macleod said: "Since it was established in 2003 it has trained over 700 pastors and evangelists and lay readers from various tribes. MERF is also mindful of the Turkana people who inhabit that corner of Kenya and local pastors, trained at Lokichogio, serve the church there."

Home Mission Worker
Mr Donald John Morrison (Home Mission Worker) commenced his report with a challenging quote from a missionary to South Africa: "Missions is more than a matter of obeying a command, it is the result of an encounter with Christ. To meet Christ, means to become caught up in a mission (Christ's mission) to the world – a mission of reaching the lost with the gospel." Mr Morrison has been a missionary for twenty years and feels that with each day a greater importance is laid upon him for Home Mission as the churches in Scotland continue to empty or be filled with unbelief. The call is simply to put sermons in shoes and take the gospel to the people of Scotland. The report was delivered in the same passionate manner that exudes from Mr Morrison in his mission work.

Deceased Ministers & Elders
Among the formalities of the Assembly is the solemn Report of the Committee preparing a Minute anent Deceased Ministers & Elders. This Report is normally given near the end of the Assembly and is received by the Assembly upstanding. It was reported that four elders of our denomination had entered into their eternal rest during the past year: Malcolm Fawkes (Duirinish), Donald Hamish MacDonald (Beauly), John MacKenzie (Assynt & Eddrachillis), and William Murray (Brora).

Conclusion
After a vote of thanks expressed by Rev. Thomas J. Buchanan (Brora), the next General Assembly was appointed to convene on Monday 22nd May 2023 (D.V.), at a place yet to be confirmed. The General Assembly then concluded with the singing of Psalm 122, following which the Moderator formally announced the dissolution of the Assembly and duly pronounced the apostolic Benediction. ■

[Images in the Assembly Report are courtesy of Rev. Andrew Allan]

CHURCH NEWS

Rev. Warren & Mrs Valerie Gardner

Jubilee of Rev. Warren Gardner *(Rev. Brent C. Evans)*

With thanksgiving to God, the Presbytery of the United States of America marked the ministerial jubilee of the Rev. Warren Ewing Gardner on the evening of Friday, April 1, 2022. This evening concluded several days of rich fellowship, which included a presbytery meeting and presbytery's semi-annual colloquium. In addition to the officers of presbytery and guests who were already gathered in Atlanta, a larger crowd gathered on Friday evening, which included members of the Atlanta and Greenville congregations and of the Auburn-Opelika preaching station. Sadly, several who had travelled down from the Mebane congregation to attend on the Friday evening had to return home early due to the news of the death of Mrs Beers' father.

Public worship was conducted at 7p.m. on the Friday. Rev. Robert McCurley preached from Jeremiah 3:15, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." The preaching on this text drew our eyes to Christ by showing us Christ as the giver of pastors, Christ's heart in pastors, and Christ nourishing his sheep through pastors.

After the conclusion of public worship, the jubilee celebration commenced with the singing of Psalm 92:12-15. Mr McCurley, the Moderator of Presbytery, reviewed the ministry of Mr Gardner and expressed his own appreciation for Mr Gardner. Ordained by the Presbyterian Church in the United States (or 'Southern Presbyterian Church') in 1972, Mr Gardner later served in the Presbyterian Church in America before being admitted to the Free Church (Continuing) in 2004. Within the FC(C), Mr Gardner served the Atlanta preaching station (2004-06) and later the Atlanta congregation (2006-17). He served as Moderator of General Assembly in 2013.

Many of those who had gathered took the opportunity to express their thankfulness to the Lord for Mr Gardner's ministry. Several speakers expressed how edified they were by Mr Gardner's humility and servant-heartedness. One spoke of the life-changing impact that Mr Gardner's preaching had upon him from the time he came under it at fourteen years old. Mrs Gardner's support of her husband was acknowledged, and more than one speaker noted how the hospitality extended to them in the Gardner home in Winder, Georgia, was an early and influential introduction to the FC(C). Mr Gardner was described multiple times as a father-figure to the presbytery, and another speaker referred to the Gardners as a "father and mother" to the presbytery who had made a sacrificial investment by entering the FC(C) and helping to establish it in our land.

Several brethren from Scotland had sent written greetings for the jubilee, which were read out and received with appreciation. Each of the Gardners' five children also sent greetings. The Moderator presented

Mr Gardner with a gift and gave him an opportunity to speak. Mr Gardner's remarks drew attention away from himself, and especially highlighted the spiritual influence of his godly Presbyterian mother. Rev. Jonathan Mattull then led in prayer. The guests enjoyed refreshments and lingered long to enjoy fellowship.

The Lord be thanked for giving us such a God-glorifying and soul-edifying evening! May he grant that our practice of godliness be increased as a result of this occasion: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." (Heb. 13:7)

2022 School in Theology Reminder

(Rev. Andrew R. Allan)

Men from throughout the UK and further afield will soon be gathering for the popular annual School in Theology in September. The 69th School will be held in its usual venue at Carronvale House, Larbert, FK5 3LH, from Monday 5th to Thursday 8th September (D.V.). The School is open to all men to attend.

The varied programme contains historical, Old & New Testament, theological, missionary and practical themes. There is certainly something arranged to inform and stimulate the mind and warm the heart of all. More details of the programme can be found on the School's website.

Bookings can be made online by first registering on the SiT website (www.schoolintheology.org.uk), and then following the instructions, or by contacting the Secretary, Rev. Andrew R. Allan: tel: 0141 328 1707; email: secretary@schoolintheology.org.uk.

Nigeria is Falling Apart *(Elizabeth Kendal, Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin)*

On Lord's Day 12 June Fulani Muslim terrorists stormed a Christian community in Okpokwu Local Government Area (LGA) of Nigeria's mostly Christian Benue State. They arrived on motorbikes, shooting indiscriminately as people prepared for church, killing at least 37 people and displacing hundreds. Dozens of homes were burned. On Lord's Day 5 June, as terrorists were massacring Roman Catholic worshippers in Owo, in Ondo State in Nigeria's South-West, terrorists were descending on a Christian community in southern Kaduna's Kajuru LGA. They arrived on around 150 motorbikes, each carrying two turbaned gunmen. They killed 32 villagers and destroyed a church and dozens of homes. Critically, victims report that the terrorists were assisted by gunfire from a white-painted helicopter that provided air cover for the terrorists as they looted and torched the villages. Nigeria is falling apart. Please pray.

Quote

"Christ pronounceth them blessed that hunger and thirst after righteousness, not them that hunger and thirst after good cheer, gay apparel, fair houses, outward pomp, and fleshly vanities. Christ forbiddeth us to love the world, or the things of the world, because the fashion thereof passeth away; and yet how many have plighted their hearts to the world, as if it were the only good and true felicity. O fearful times, O fleshly corruptions, O the lamentable estate of this our land and country! Is there never a watchman to discover this danger? Or prophet left to bewail our transgressions?"

Robert Bolton

Leave a Legacy

Please prayerfully consider the ongoing work of the gospel by leaving a legacy to the Church. A helpful information leaflet is available on request. Ask your local treasurer for a copy or email:
generaltreasurer@fccontinuing.org

LOVE FOR THE JEWS

REV. MAURICE J. ROBERTS

Those of us who are Gentiles should love the Jews. But sadly this has not always been the case. In the fifteenth century Spain cast out of their country all Jews who refused to become Christians. The Crusaders looked upon Jews as enemies of the church and so they massacred many thousands of Jews. In Europe Jews often had to live in ghettos, wearing a yellow badge to identify them. In 1939 about five million Jews were massacred in concentration camps. This is an extremely sad picture. But, sadly, it indicates very clearly how much Jewish people have experienced the cruelty and hatred of those who belonged to Gentile nationalities.

The Day of Pentecost

In the light of these cruel sufferings, which Jewish people have had to face for the past two thousand years, we need to remind ourselves of the very important place the Jewish people have had in the plan of God. In the Old Testament period, before the coming of Christ into the world, Jews were the only members of God's church, except for a small number of Gentiles who were influenced by Jews to believe in the true God. So, to put it clearly, the Jews were almost the only members of the true church of God prior to the Day of Pentecost.

At Pentecost a very great change came about. Gentiles were now admitted into God's church alongside Jews. As the Apostle Peter put it to his Jewish hearers: "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them [the Gentiles] the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us" (Acts 15:8). Sadly, many Jews did not agree with this apostolic and authoritative teaching of Peter. So, a very harmful error now rose up among leaders of the Jewish nation. They did not wish to allow Gentiles to be admitted into the company of God's people.

Jews and Gentiles Welcome

At the root of this error on the part of Jewish leaders was the tragic mistake which they had very recently made in their crucifixion of the blessed Son of God, Jesus Christ. The outcome was that Jews who believed in Christ were ready to receive Gentiles into their churches. But Jews who denied that Christ was their Messiah refused to do so.

The Day of Pentecost was now to be a day on which the majority of Jews went terribly wrong. They failed to believe that God had now opened the door of faith to Gentiles as well as to Jews. Both Jews and Gentiles were now – and in all time coming – both welcome to be members of the church of God. Christ, now crucified, ascended and glorified at God's right hand, was and is the Head of the whole church of God. Jews often denied this.

Mutual Persecution

This wrong attitude on the part of the Jewish religious leaders inevitably led to their being regarded as cruel persecutors of Christians: "for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [Jewish Christians] have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us [the apostles]; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath [of God] is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thess. 2:14-16)

These words are an inspired explanation as to why the Jews were going to be severely treated in the years to come. Sadly, the cruelty of the early Jewish unbelievers towards Gentile believers was to lead to the Jewish nation as a whole being hated and severely treated. Today, we must be very careful not to have any part in this hatred of Jews or attempt to be unkind

to them. We must feel deep sorrow for the extremely serious mistakes which unbelieving Jews made in their treatment of Christ and of Christ's believing people.

The Lamb of God

God was preparing Israel for Christ's ministry and sufferings on the cross all through Old Testament times. The ceremonies of the Old Testament were, by the slaying of animals and the sprinkling of animal blood, preparatory to the sufferings of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. This is clear in the Bible's language. For example, Christ is the "Lamb of God", who lovingly gave His life for our salvation by dying for us and in that way paying for our sins and our guilt.

So today, when we meet Jews, we should lovingly try to show them that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, such as Isaiah 53: "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (v.5). The tragic mistake which so many Jews have made is to fail to see that Jesus is the God-given Messiah, who came to die for the sins of mankind. When Jews come to see that Jesus is our God-given Saviour they become ready to be shown that the Jewish nation has been in the darkness of unbelief for two thousand years. During those many, many years they have come to be disliked and not welcome in the company of Christians.

The Land of Palestine

Happily, about two thousand years after Pentecost, in 1948 the land of Palestine was given back to the Jewish people after many centuries in which they had been forced to live in faraway countries of the world. Hebrew now became once again the everyday language of Jews living in Israel.

Today, let us say it with praise to God, the beloved Jewish people are coming more and more to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us clearly that one day in the future the Jews will be grafted back into the church (Rom. 11:23). For this blessed day we should pray. When Israel as a nation comes to believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour it will be the climax of their amazing history.

God's Purpose for Israel

I believe God's purpose for Israel has been in three stages. For two thousand years, from Abraham to Christ, it was the Jews who were God's church. From Pentecost to the future date of Israel's conversion to Christ, it has been the Gentiles who have largely made up the church. But when the Jews are brought by God's grace to come to faith in Christ, the church of God will be made up of both Jews and also Gentiles.

Today, happily, Jews are coming to faith in Christ in great numbers and all over the world. Our hope is that soon the nation of Israel will recognise Christ as the Messiah and so will become a Christian nation.

In the light of what we have said, it is our wisdom to love the Jews and to pray very often for their eternal blessedness in the kingdom of God.

> *"But today many Jews are becoming true Christian believers."*

Bible Passages to Study

To understand more fully the duty we have to love and pray for the Jews it is important to read the Old Testament books. Here we see that God has special care for the Jews and that they are a highly privileged nation in God's sight.

To understand that God will one day bring the Jewish nation to become Christians we need to study Romans chapters 9-11. For two thousand years many of the Jews have been unable to see that Jesus is their God-given Messiah. But today many Jews are becoming true Christian believers. The time of their conversion is drawing near.

So, one way in which we can show our love to the Jews is to pray for them to be given grace to recognise Christ as their Saviour. Jesus prophesied in these wonderful words: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24)

When the Jews as a nation become believers in Christ there will be wonderful blessing. Paul expresses it in these words: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery...that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:25,26).

One of the encouraging statements relating to the conversion in the future of the Jews to Christ is in these words of Paul: "For if the casting away of them [the Jews] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15)

Pentecost was the day appointed by God to call the Gentiles into the Church of Christ. But when God calls the Jews back into the church, Paul tells us there will be "life from the dead"! The whole world will receive divine blessing and heavenly reviving! O how we need a revival!

So, let us love the Jews and long prayerfully for their ingrafting back into the church of God. ■

COMMENT

ROE v. WADE OVERTURNED

Landmark ruling on abortion in USA

On 24 June, the US Supreme Court overturned its *Roe v. Wade* ruling of 22 January 1973, which held that a clause of an amendment to the US Constitution made in 1868 protects a woman's right to have an abortion, although the right is not absolute. The 1973 ruling resulted from a case brought by a woman in Texas who wanted an abortion; the practice was illegal in the state at the time, except to save the mother's life. The 1973 decision had the effect of striking down many of the abortion laws then in place in individual states. The new ruling does not make abortion illegal in the USA: it returns the law to the individual states, half of which are likely to outlaw or otherwise restrict abortion while a few further liberalise it.

In 1973 Texas's lawyers had argued that life begins at conception. The Supreme Court, citing the lack of consensus on this question on the part of "those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology" at "this point in the development of man's knowledge", declined to "speculate" as to the answer. The justice who authored the 1973 decision later said, "we were deciding a constitutional issue, not a moral one." In its recent ruling the Court again acted on a constitutional basis, arguing that the right to abortion was not "deeply rooted in this Nation's history or tradition", nor was it considered a right when the Constitution was amended in 1868. (The key point of course is that *God* has given no such right, and the exercise of it breaks the sixth commandment.)

That is how the law works, with careful reasoning. Reactions to the ruling lack that. President Biden called it "a tragic error". Boris Johnson condemned the ruling as "a big step backwards", saying that he had "always believed in a woman's right to choose", and Nicola Sturgeon tweeted, "One of the darkest days for women's rights in my lifetime." None of these politicians mentioned the children killed by abortion. Advocates for abortion never do, for in their view the unborn have no rights; they do not *exist*.

While the ruling is a great help, the fight against abortion is far from over. It must be fought in the courts, but it will only be won in people's hearts and minds. To paraphrase a successful wartime leader, this victory is not the end, nor even the beginning of the end, of the war against abortion and associated evils, but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning. May it spur us on in seeking the same in the UK! ■

THE CHURCH'S ARMOURY

Our spiritual weapons

History shows us that if an army is to overcome its adversaries then it must be properly equipped, and that those who serve in its ranks must have confidence in their weapons. It is no different with the church. For her warfare in this world the church has been given spiritual weapons, and these are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4), so that Satan's kingdom is destroyed. The unbelieving think nothing of the church's weapons, because they are not 'carnal' or forged in this world. The tragedy is that many churches now seem to view things in much the same way. This is one reason why the Lord's cause in our land has become so weak.

Consider the weapon of *preaching*. There is a power in it that does not come from the preacher but from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is able to bless the preaching of God's word, the "sword" of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), so that sinners are wounded by the law and healed by the gospel. Likewise the Spirit is able to make the preaching of the word effectual for the guidance, strengthening, comfort and preservation of believers unto life eternal. Preaching ought to be the priority of the church. If that is so, then why is preaching being replaced in some places of worship by talks, presentations and other lesser things? And where preaching remains, why has its content been altered, so that stories, humour and other unprofitable things have as much of a place as the exposition of Scripture?

Think also of the weapon of *prayer*. There is a divine power in it too. True prayer is from the Spirit, who prompts and enables us to pray according to the will of God. When we are "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20), we have confidence that the Lord is hearing us. Without effectual prayer, even the best preaching lacks force. At Pentecost, thousands were brought to repentance and converted to Christ through the preaching of the apostle Peter, but prior to that the disciples had been in the upper room, continuing in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:13,14). Why then are prayer meetings often poorly attended? And why do we seem to be able to make time for everything else in our lives but persevering intercession?

The Lord has given His church these weapons that they may be *wielded*. If we lay them down then we are saying that we are wiser than God. Let us resist the temptation that there is an easier way to do the Lord's work or to obtain His blessing. ■

ANDREW MELVILLE – ELDER AND PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARY

REV. TREVOR KIRKLAND

Hero or fanatic? Historically, the Scottish reformer Andrew Melville (1545-1622) was portrayed as a faithful adherent of Scripture, defender of Presbyterianism, advocate of the two kingdom principle regarding church and state, and promoter of education. His reputation has been assailed by modern historians, who view this favourable account as a legend created by Presbyterian writers. Despite this revision, the Scottish historian Gordon Donaldson (1913-93) referred to Melville sympathetically as "the Presbyterian missionary to Scotland" (*The Scottish Reformation*, 1960, p.191). Indeed he may be viewed as the architect of Scottish Presbyterianism.

Background

Melville was born on 1 August, 1545, the youngest of nine sons. His father died at the battle of Pinkie near Musselburgh, in 1547, and his mother died the same year, so Andrew was an orphan. His elder brother Richard effectively became a surrogate father. In providence this was to turn to Andrew's advantage, for Richard perceived that while Andrew was sickly, he also had an aptitude for learning; consequently Andrew was given the best affordable education available. He was soon proficient in Latin and other subjects. In 1559 Melville went to the University of St Andrews, where he matriculated. In 1563 he left for France, where he met the Scottish reformer George Buchanan (1506-82) and the French Protestant convert Petrus Ramus, both of whom had a significant influence upon him. In 1569 he travelled to Geneva, where he was appointed a teacher, and there he met the English Presbyterian advocates Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603) and Walter Travers (1548-1635).

Melville was (and still is) considered to be the successor to Knox and Buchanan. Frequently described as a 'radical', and the leader of the Presbyterian loyalists within the Kirk, he was eventually imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1607. After four years he was freed, on condition of becoming professor of theology in the Protestant Academy of Sedan, in north-eastern France, where he died. Writers of all shades have referred to "the Melvillians" and "Melville's presbyterian programme". Reference is also made to "the Melvillian battles of the 1570s through the 1590s" and "the Melvillians' commitment to practical moral reform" (Ernest R. Holloway III, *Andrew Melville and Humanism in Renaissance Scotland 1545-1622*, Brill, 2011, p.12). After 1574, as we shall see, Melville was a central figure in the Kirk.

'Heresy' enters Scotland

On 17 July 1525, by Act of the Scottish Parliament, the works of the "heretik Luthere and his discipillis" were outlawed. John Knox noted in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* that St Leonard's College was central to the early dissemination of Protestant doctrine in St Andrews; several of the staff and students, along with a number of the 'novices' of the abbey, were persecuted as heretics by Archbishop James Beaton in the 1520s and 1530s. The most famous of these 'heretics' was Patrick Hamilton, who had returned to St Andrews after a brief spell in Germany at the University of Marburg in 1527. He expressed a number of Lutheran beliefs, for which he was burnt outside the gates of St Salvator's College on 29 February 1528. Hamilton's fellow St Leonard's student Henry Forrest was tried and executed by Beaton in October 1533.

In 1571, John Knox, out of favour in Edinburgh, took up a preaching post in St Andrews. It was one of the first towns in Scotland to profess allegiance to Protestantism. As early as 25 July 1559, when the St Andrews Kirk Session records begin, it had wholly adopted a reformed church settlement.

Looming Crises

In January 1572, as the civil war following the abdication of Mary, Queen of Scots, was coming to an end, commissioners representing the Kirk and the Crown met at Leith. According to the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland held that year, the Crown's commissioners were to convene with the Kirk's commissioners concerning *"all matters tending to the ordering and establishing of the policy of the Kirk, the sustentation of the Ministers, and support of the Kings Majesty, and common affaires of the realme"*. A Concordat was agreed by which episcopal titles and dioceses were to stand and continue in time coming.

It was obvious that the Concordat was a symptom of the problem, rather than a solution to it, and that trouble was on the way. Melville was soon to prove himself to be much more than a scholar, and to have the force of character to meet the difficulties of

the situation. As the Free Church minister Thomas Brown (1811-93) says, Scotland would soon find that Melville was "prepared to bear himself with a fearless intrepidity hardly inferior to that of Knox himself." (*Church and State in Scotland: A Narrative of the Struggle for Independence from 1560 to 1843*, p.56)

Melville Returns

Melville returned to Scotland in 1574, at a pivotal moment in Church affairs. In 1575, the General Assembly *"began more seriouslie to speak of the Government of the Kirk...the question wes proponed in the Assemblie...concerning Bishops"*. (*Row's History of the Kirk of Scotland, 1558-1639*, Wodrow Society, p.54) Shortly after he arrived in Edinburgh, Melville was approached in an official capacity by George Buchanan, Alexander Hay and James Halyburton on behalf of the Regent Morton, James Douglas, with an offer of a post as a domestic instructor. Melville refused. Such was his international reputation that commissioners representing the universities of St Andrews and Glasgow soon offered Melville their respective petitions for his services as provost of St Mary's College, St Andrews, and principal of the University of Glasgow. Melville chose the latter, arriving in November 1574 at only twenty-nine years of age, to take charge of a University that was on the verge of collapse.

Melville revitalised the near-defunct Glasgow University between 1574 and 1580, and from 1580 to 1607 he was principal of St Mary's College, Scotland's only divinity college. He was also rector of the University of St Andrews between 1590 and 1597, the period when the Presbyterian faction enjoyed its greatest favour at the Scottish court. His ideas can be seen at work in the early curriculum at Edinburgh University and in the constitution of Marischal College in Aberdeen. Melville also spent a little over twenty-six of the thirty-two years of his career as an educator at St Andrews (Holloway, pp.3-4). Many who would become academics and ministers in the Kirk had trained under Melville directly.

Man of Action

In 1577 Melville was given the commission to meet with the Regent regarding the Kirk's policy and jurisdiction and answer any questions on the Kirk's behalf. In 1578 he was elected as Moderator of the General Assembly and sat on the committee which drafted the Second Book of Discipline adopted later that year. In 1579 he was appointed to a commission to evaluate the foundations of the colleges and the condition of the University of St Andrews and to address any corruptions which pertained to the Kirk. In addition, Melville was appointed no less than seven times as an "assessor to the moderator" between 1577 and 1580.

In every major discussion, commission or committee, Melville was a regular participant. When he was not at the front he laboured behind the scenes, seeking at every opportunity to advance both Kirk and education. Under Melville there was a growing division in Scotland, with far-reaching consequences: on one side was the Crown, Parliament and Episcopacy; on the other side was Presbytery, the General Assembly and the Melvillians.

Melville's Legacy

What is Melville's legacy for the Church today?

(i) Melville reminds us of the important role of Ruling Elders. Too often Elders have been neglected, or seen as a rubber stamp for Ministers. Melville demonstrates the crucial function Elders have in preserving a conservative and robust Presbyterianism in the Church and combating modernising tendencies.

(ii) Melville reminds us of the place of providence. When the future looks uncertain, God is able to raise up a new generation of men. Knox exerted enormous influence, yet by the time of his death some wanted change; into the breach came Melville and like-minded men.

(iii) Melville shows how a wholehearted commitment to Scripture and principle will withstand the enmity of the ungodly. He was sent to the Tower, yet refused to compromise. That is the courage needed today.

(iv) Melville was an influence for good. He laboured tirelessly to persuade a new generation to embrace the truth, influencing both Kirk and University. Our generation has lost both, and with it the 'Melvillian manifesto'. Melville shows us what God can do with a willing instrument.

(v) Melville was not thirty when he took control of Glasgow University. In many ways the reformed brotherhood was a young persons' movement. Will today's youth become the champions of the Kirk?

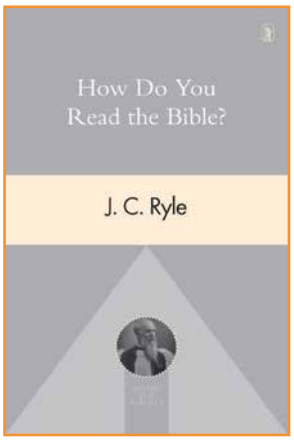
(vi) Melville was consistent amidst shifting allegiances. From 1575 to 1690, power alternated between two parties. First it was episcopacy (1584), then presbytery (1592), then episcopacy again (1610) and then presbytery again (1638). Melville was unwavering in his adherence to presbytery, regardless of the prevailing ecclesiastical wind.

(vii) Melville was a *thoroughgoing* Presbyterian. For him the parity of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments was non-negotiable; there could be no Bishops or Superintendents. The Church's spiritual independence, with its Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies, must consist exclusively of Ministers and Elders. This was a dividing line between those who were indifferent regarding the form of Church government and those who, like Melville, understood the crown rights of Christ over his Church. ■

BOOK REVIEWS

(Books for review should be sent to: Rev. David M. Blunt, 17 Knockline, Isle of North Uist HS6 5DT)

How Do You Read the Bible?
J.C. Ryle, Banner of Truth Trust, pbk, 65pp, £3.50



This short paperback contains material taken from J.C. Ryle's book *Practical Religion*. It is well set out and very easy to read. The fact that it is so short should not put you off reading it, for its contents are profitable. As would be expected from Ryle, it is full of practical common sense, with spiritual application.

The main thrust of the paperback is to challenge readers regarding their use of the Scriptures. It was obviously written in a previous generation when Bible reading was widespread. Some of the examples given may be dated, yet the truth of the point being made remains the same.

Ryle provides the following guidance for a father in the training of his children:

"He is tried by questions of the education of his children. He wishes to train them up morally and religiously, and to remember their souls. But he is told by many sensible people that young persons will be young – that it does not do to check and restrain them too much, and that he ought to attend pantomimes and children's parties, and give parties himself. What is a man to do?... There is only one answer to all these questions. A man must make the bible his rule of conduct." (pp.30-31)

I found that this small book contains much sanctified common sense regarding the reading of the Bible. I would recommend it as a short and sharp reminder to all in the church of the importance of daily, disciplined Bible reading. It may be especially useful for younger readers, and those young in the faith. ■

Rev. Richard Ross

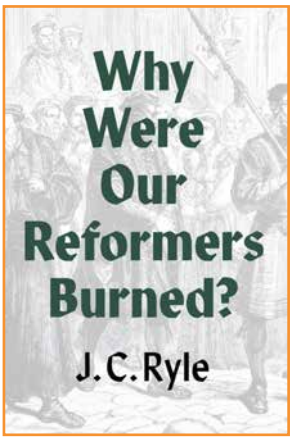
Why Were Our Reformers Burned?
J.C. Ryle, Banner of Truth Trust, bkt, 48pp, £2.00

The contents of this most profitable and stirring booklet can be found in two books by Ryle, *Five English Reformers* and the larger *Light from Old Times*. With that said, I would commend the Banner of Truth for republishing the material in booklet form. The contents remind Christians of the uncompromising stand that must be taken on the basic truths of the gospel.

The usefulness of this booklet for readers today is aptly set out by Roger Carswell in his introduction, in which he states:

"Today's tide of secularism is invasive. It pressurizes Christians, intimidating many of them into silence with respect to the glorious truths we hold dear. Feeling backed into a corner, Christians have sometimes been tempted to unite with anyone with whom we feel we have a modicum of agreement. But no matter how worthy the motive, we dare not blur, compromise, or even sacrifice the foundational truths of our Christian faith."

Like the Reformers before us we have no warrant to compromise any foundational truth of the gospel, and like the Reformers we should never contemplate standing with anyone on any social or religious issue that would endanger the foundations of the gospel.



Ryle sets before the reader a brief account of nine English Reformers who were burned by Rome during the reign of Queen Mary (1553-58). He writes: *"It is a broad fact that during the four last years of Queen Mary's reign no less than 288 persons were burnt at the stake for their adhesion to the Protestant faith."* The Reformers were content to give themselves to such a death over the matter of Rome's claimed real presence of Christ's body and blood in the mass, under the forms of bread and wine.

This will most likely seem a pointless and trivial issue to many 'evangelicals' today, and certainly not one for which it is worth being a martyr. Yet this is the point, and this is why this booklet should be read by all. The Reformers were willing to be burned rather than give any credence to a doctrine that, as Ryle states, *"strikes at the very root of the gospel, and is the very citadel and keep of Popery."* One needs to remember this when one contemplates standing with the Roman Catholic Church on social issues. If we only had the conviction of these Reformers!

The booklet is highly recommended. Ryle asks his readers *"never to forget that for the burning of our Reformers the Church of Rome is wholly and entirely responsible."* May we ever keep this in memory! ■

Rev. Thomas Buchanan

COMMUNION DATES

Communions are held on the following Sabbaths. Visitors should contact local ministers for times of the main services and the preparatory and thanksgiving services. Contact details may be found on the Church website.

July
3 Snizort
10 St Louis
24 Atlanta

August
7 Harris
21 Duirinish
28 Stornoway

September
4 Portree
11 Duthil-Dores, North Uist & Grimsay
18 Glasgow–Knightswood, Kilmuir & Stenscholl, Scalpay Harris
25 Inverness–Greyfriars, Lochalsh & Strath, Mebane

(All dates subject to change due to COVID-19)

CONGREGATIONAL REMITTANCES

	CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2022 £	ORDINARY REMITTANCES May 2022 £	Total to May 2022 £	Total to May 2021 £
Presbytery of Inverness				
Aberdeen	0	1,950	9,750	9,250
Duthil-Dores	0	1,500	10,996	11,741
Inverness	0	2,000	15,164	16,545
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,450	11,471	10,946
Poolewe & Aultbea	3,500	970	4,850	4,800
Total Inverness Presbytery	3,500	7,870	52,231	53,283
Northern Presbytery				
Assynt & Scourie	0	0	1,292	9,734
Brora	2,865	700	8,222	7,784
Kiltearn	225	0	3,208	2,363
Tarbat	0	1,000	9,583	11,062
Total Northern Presbytery	3,090	1,700	22,304	30,942
Southern Presbytery				
Arran	0	309	4,378	4,744
Ayr	0	0	5,598	5,130
Ballyclare & Doagh	0	1,120	8,375	5,500
Dumfries	0	330	1,175	983
Edinburgh	0	1,600	10,867	9,633
Glasgow - Knightswood	0	1,600	12,878	15,947
Glasgow - Partick	78	931	12,000	11,500
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	800	8,513	10,000
Rothesay	0	0	500	3,000
Total Southern Presbytery	78	6,690	64,282	66,437
Outer Hebrides Presbytery				
Cross	0	1,500	7,955	9,671
Harris - Leverburgh	0	1,650	10,524	10,283
Knock & Point	0	1,700	8,937	8,200
North Uist & Grimsay	1,645	1,050	7,646	7,566
Scalpay	233	2,200	13,375	13,731
Stornoway	0	8,245	45,397	38,143
Total Outer Hebrides Presbytery	1,878	16,345	93,834	87,594
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron				
Bracadale & Duirinish (Waternish)	278	1,500	8,851	9,344
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	0	500	2,900	3,533
Lochalsh & Strath	320	2,000	14,242	12,307
Portree	600	1,500	12,030	12,665
Snizort	625	1,600	13,003	12,045
Total Skye & Lochcarron Presbytery	1,823	7,100	51,026	49,893
Smiths Falls	0	0	995	985
Total From Congregations	10,368	39,705	284,672	289,134
Other Donations	0	2,741	21,140	14,170
Legacy	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	10,368	42,446	305,813	303,304
Included in the above: Tax	1,573	0	75,567	72,581
Recovered on Gift Aid Declarations	8,795	42,446	230,246	230,723

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Mrs Muriel Smith
Free Church (Continuing) Manse, Loch Mor,
Struan, Isle of Skye IV56 8FB
financialadministrator@fccontinuing.org

Cheques / postal orders should be made payable to "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)".

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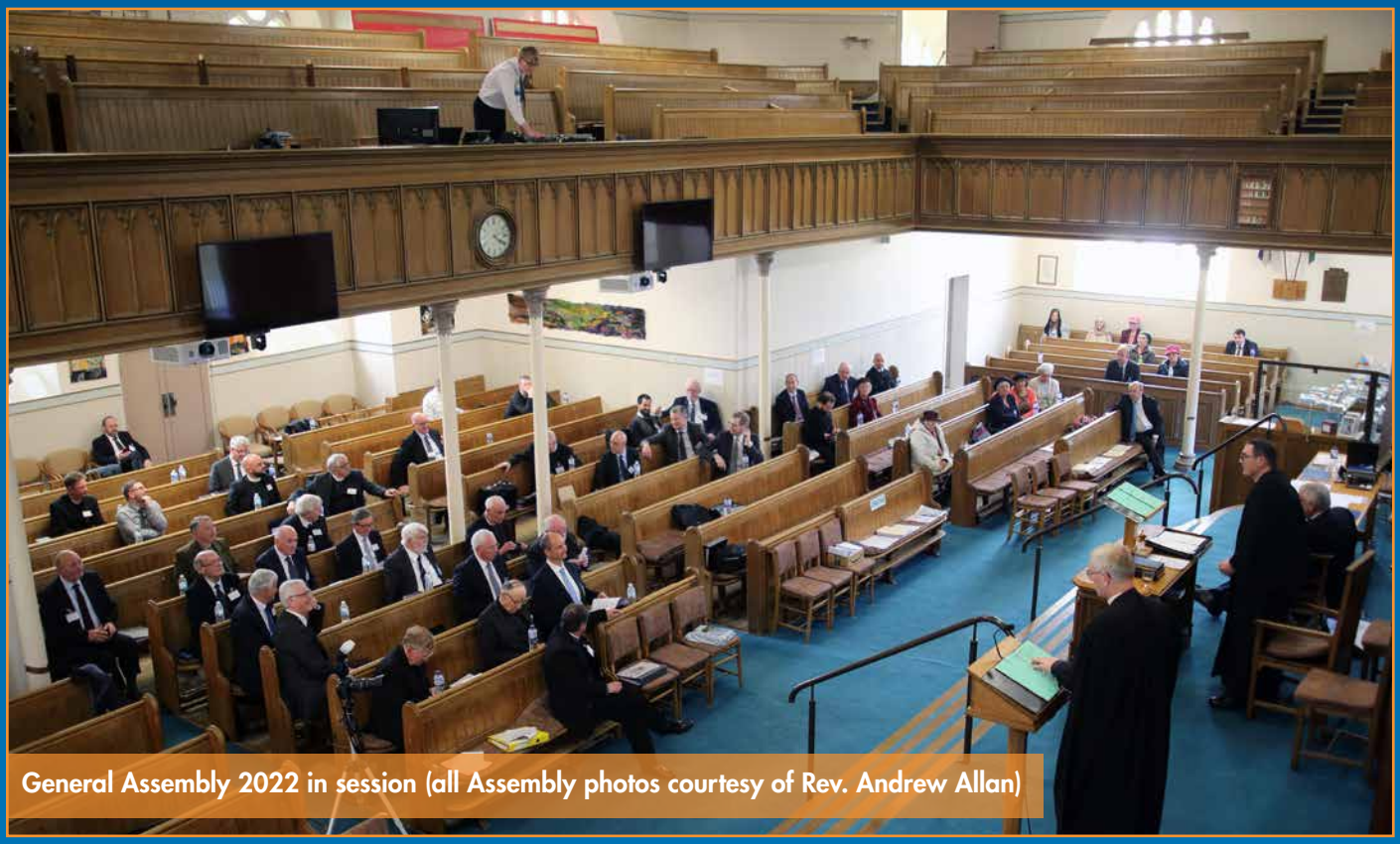

General Assembly 2022 in session (all Assembly photos courtesy of Rev. Andrew Allan)

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

Isaiah 62:6-7

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)