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## Enoch and Pleasing God

Enoch was almost unique in the history of the world. He was the only human being ever, apart from Elijah, who did not leave this world by dying; “he was translated that he should not see death” (Heb 11:5). At the end of his life, he was taken straight to heaven, with the tie between his body and soul still unbroken. We know very little about his time on this earth, but Scripture makes it made plain that his was a truly godly life. We are told that he “walked with God” (Gen 5:24). There was a time when, spiritually, he was far away from God. But he was rescued from that condition; he was turned from his own ways and began, by the grace of God, to walk in the way which leads to everlasting life.

In expounding the phrase, *walked with God*, Matthew Henry first emphasises the fact that Enoch’s was *true religion*. “What is godliness but walking with God?” he asks. “The ungodly and profane are without God in the world; they walk contrary to Him. But the godly walk with God, which presupposes reconciliation to God, for two cannot ‘walk together except they be agreed’ (Amos 3:3), and [it] includes all the parts and instances of a godly, righteous and sober life. To walk with God is to set God always before us, and to act as those that are always under His eye. It is to live a life of communion with God both in ordinances and providences. It is to make God’s Word our rule, and His glory our end, in all our actions. It is to make it our constant care and endeavour in everything to please God and in nothing to offend Him. It is to comply with His will, to concur with His designs, and to be workers together with Him. It is to be ‘followers of God as dear children’.”

Henry’s second point is that Enoch’s walking with God represents *eminent religion*: “He was entirely dead to this world and did not only walk after God, as all good men do, but he walked with God as if he were in heaven already. He lived above the rate, not only of other men, but of other saints.” It is clearly a matter of vital importance to have true religion, not merely in the sense of accepting that biblical Christianity is true, but also of trusting in the living God – coming to Him in the way He has appointed in Scripture: by faith in Jesus Christ, who died for sinners and rose again.

Yet believers have no right to be complacent about their spiritual condition; their aim should be perfection. They may be tempted to feel that, as they are now safe from eternal destruction, all is well. In a sense that is so, but it is to miss the point of what we are told about Enoch: he not only had true religion – in a spiritual, saving way – but he had true religion in an eminent degree. All believers are called to walk *closely* with God; they are directed to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of [their] Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). We live at a stage in the history of the Church when few show any indication of having experienced true religion. Corresponding to that is the further fact that few true believers give evidence of eminence in religion; few walk closely with God. Yet the power of God to enable believers to live eminently holy lives is the same today as in Enoch’s time. Let them then, with the same faith as Enoch had, look to the Lord, for Christ’s sake, to work in them by the Holy Spirit to such an extent that they would indeed walk closely with God.

When Paul describes Enoch’s faith to the Hebrews, he refers to the testimony that Enoch had during his lifetime: “he pleased God” (11:5). Then the Apostle goes on to emphasise that “without faith it is impossible to please Him”. He expressed to the Romans what is fundamentally the same truth: “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8) – describing them now as those who still live according to the fallen nature in which they were born, who were never regenerated by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, because Enoch was a believer and because he was a new creature, he pleased God by the way he lived – in other words, by his walk.

But how was it possible? How could God be pleased with a man who was still a sinner? One answer is that God was pleased with everything in the life of Enoch which was the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart and life. As God looked on the holy way that Enoch interacted with his family and other people around him, He was well pleased with the effects of His work in this man’s life. As God looked on the holy thoughts and desires in Enoch’s heart, God again was pleased with the effects of His own work. And God was also pleased with the effects of His grace as He looked on Enoch in prayer, or in offering up sacrifice with his eye on the Seed of the woman, who was yet to come to do all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners – Enoch among them.

Further, God was pleased with Enoch as justified; he was accepted before God as one who was forgiven, as one whose sins were not being imputed to him, as one who could be treated as if he had always kept the law of God to the very last detail – and all because of what Christ was to do in his place in the fullness of time. It may be easier to think of Paul than Enoch as united

to Christ, for Paul lived after the Saviour had come in the flesh. As united to Christ, the Lord looked on Paul as “crucified with Christ”, and so as truly justified for the sake of Christ and His finished work; thus God was pleased with him. But the same holds true of Enoch, who also benefited from all saving blessings for the sake of the One who was to come in due time to work out a full salvation for him and all other Old Testament believers. Even then God was pleased with him as united to Christ.

Yet we must remember that the emphasis is on the eminence of Enoch’s religion, at a time when extreme ungodliness was probably already widespread. And if our generation also is extremely ungodly, his eminence should encourage today’s believers to seek for greater holiness. They are, in common with believers in every generation, to remember the great cloud of witnesses who have already gone to glory and to follow Paul’s exhortation: “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:1,2). Only by such faith is it possible to walk with God, and to do so with greater consistency.

This is not, of course, to suggest that Enoch was perfect. Paul too walked closely with God – he pleased God – and yet we find him mourning over the depth of iniquity in his own heart. He cried: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom 7:18,19). Yet it was because of his progress in the way of salvation that Paul was able so clearly to understand the strength of remaining sin in his soul. We can be sure that Enoch’s thinking would have been along the same lines. And God would have been pleased with what He saw of such effects of grace in Enoch’s heart.

God took Enoch home to glory without passing through death. That was exceptional. Enoch was exceptional also in that he was taken from this world at a relatively early age (for his time). Matthew Henry suggests, among other possible reasons, that this may have been “because his work was done, and done the sooner for his minding it so closely”. And he goes on to remark that “God often takes those soonest whom He loves best, and the time they lose on earth is gained in heaven, to their unspeakable advantage”.

But though today’s believers must die, they will rise again. On the last day, in their resurrected bodies, they will join Enoch on the right side of the Judge, and He will make plain that each of them, in one degree or another, pleased God. We ought to be very conscious that our opportunity to serve God on earth must be much shorter than Enoch’s. May each of us seek grace to make the best possible use of that opportunity, and so to please God!

## The Redeemer's Care of His People<sup>1</sup>

A Sermon by Jonathan Ranken Anderson

Matthew 18:5. *And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me.*

The Lord Jesus Christ has a people on the earth. From His Word we learn who they are and what is the estimation in which He holds them. In their origin they are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. In their dispositions they are simple and teachable, as little children. The change produced upon them and the dispositions wrought in them are the results of divine grace, the fruit of the Redeemer's death, and the work of the Holy Spirit. They are thus sent into the world – not, however, without a fence set around them. And this bears a double aspect: one to invite kindness, another to protect from injury.

In the class the Saviour had just described, those who humble themselves as little children, we trace the principal features of true believers. We are by nature proud and intractable. We refuse to listen to instruction or reproof and are bent on doing our own will and walking in our own ways. We are the furthest possible from the temper of a little child. We are not docile, we are not confiding, we are not submissive. If therefore a change is to be wrought which will reach the hidden man of the heart and diffuse its influence through the whole soul, *that* must be conversion. For nothing short of it will reach the seat of the disease and effect a cure.

We do not mean here to enter into an exposition of conversion. The simple point of view in which this subject is presented by our Lord is that of a deep and thorough change of nature, so that they who were men in pride and rebellion will become children in humility and submission. He presses the absolute necessity of this change if we are to have an interest in the kingdom of heaven and assigns the highest place to him who manifests most of the disposition which is thereby implanted. For it is idle to expect that any man will humble himself till he is humbled, or that he will be humbled except by being converted. We may say indeed that to be converted is nothing else than to be humbled and, vice versa, to be humbled is to be converted.

Now it is such a man as is humbled, and made a little child, of whom our Lord speaks. We may attempt to sketch some of the leading features of his character, because if we do not know how to distinguish him from others, we will be unable to discern between when we receive and when we offend.

He is first of all teachable. By grace he has been convinced of his ignorance

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted, with slight editing, from a little volume, *Soul Counsel*, which, apart from this sermon, consists entirely of letters by Anderson.

– not only what arises from a lack of means of instruction, or the opportunity to avail himself of them or diligence in using them. He may be culpable in all these points, but none of these, or all of them together, will in his view explain the ignorance of which he complains. A man may, in all the pride of his heart, own that he is ignorant because of these reasons, for the evidence against him may be too clear and powerful to be resisted. He may persuade himself – he may stoutly maintain – that were he to enjoy certain advantages, such as education or leisure or effort may supply, he would easily overcome his blindness and attain to the knowledge which he needs. But where conversion has taken place, such conceits are undermined; a man is led to see his ignorance in its native depth and virulence; he regards it as one of the bitter fruits of his apostasy, and resolves his ignorance into his depravity of heart and his estrangement from God. He has “the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”.

Two things are indispensable to bring such a man truly to a teachable disposition. He must be renewed in the spirit of his mind and also reconciled to God and brought near to Him. For it is obvious that, if his ignorance be such as we have described, nothing less can reach his case and effectually meet its condition. In his pride he will not learn and therefore he must be humbled. In his distance from God he cannot learn and therefore he must be reconciled. Now provision is made for both in Christ Jesus, and His people are complete in Him. The ignorance that proceeds from this deep-seated root, and which is to be reached only by this heavenly cure, spreads over the whole soul and extends to the entire range of spiritual things. A man that is made conscious of such ignorance is humbled; he is ready to learn the lessons that are taught him. He is grieved at his blindness; he laments it before God and is constrained to seek its removal. In this very thing his lowly spirit appears. For he allows that it is free to the Father of lights to deliver him from his ignorance or not, as it seems good in His sight. He waits upon Him in the means which He has appointed and patiently passes through the fiery trials to which he is subjected.

He further feels his need of spiritual knowledge. A sense of ignorance, such as I have described, is very painful – and the more so because manifold inconveniences arise from its prevalence. For “he that is in darkness . . . walketh in darkness, and knows not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes”. But besides this, he may be convinced of the value of the light of which he is destitute. In one aspect indeed, this cannot be without a measure of illumination; but it may be indirect – only such as to humble the soul and create a feeling of uneasiness, yet not such as to direct, far less to

satisfy. However it is, this much is obvious, he who is made teachable sets a high value upon what will dispel his darkness, remove the veil from his eyes, and bring him to see light in Jehovah's light. The Psalmist felt this when he said: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law". And, again: "O send forth Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me, and bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles".

The result of this whole process is to awaken an unquenchable thirst for spiritual knowledge. A need is felt by the soul, analogous to that of the body when needing a drink – a craving is awakened and, if possible, it will be allayed at the everlasting spring of light and truth. By this means, a man is disposed to receive light by whatever means it is communicated, just as the Israelites were fain to accept deliverance from the bondage of Egypt at the hand of that Moses, whom in their pride and scorn they had before rejected; or as the same people, when famished in the wilderness, were fain to go out and gather the manna that fell around their tents, or when parched with thirst, they eagerly drank of the waters that flowed from the flinty rock. "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." And thus true spiritual knowledge is exceedingly desirable to a man who by grace has his ignorance made grievous to him: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun".

We might show that such a little child as our Lord describes is confiding – a very obvious attribute of a child, to which the man is compared. For, whatever be the cause, it is undeniable that a child is unsuspecting and ready to place confidence in everyone who appears kindly or uses the language of friendship. We might also show that such a child is simple and guileless and, finally, that he is submissive. We pass, however, from these points and advance to consider what it is to receive one such little child.

In this mode of speaking it seems implied that there will be communication between those that receive and those that are received, or else there could be no opportunity of applying the test that is here proposed, whether the duty shall be discharged or neglected. The disciple of Christ offers himself, in some way or other, to the attention of his fellowmen, so that it may be ascertained whether they will receive him or not. We must not, however, imagine that he is proposed to their attention, viewed simply in himself. In this respect, he does not differ from any other individual. And if he is not presented as a disciple, so neither can he be received as a disciple. The language makes it apparent that he must be offered to the view of others as a disciple of Christ, and in the character which is here said to belong to him, that of childlike humility. We might be guilty of over-refining were we to say that it is not the person, but the character, that is to be regarded. But we should err in the

opposite direction were we to say that it is the person apart from the character. The two ought to be conjoined. And it is only when the person is arrayed in his proper attire, and acting in his proper character, that we can receive him or neglect him.

Nor is this all: he that receives him is to do so "in the name of Christ". He must therefore be able to trace a connection between him and Christ. He must believe that he has an interest in Christ, and Christ has an interest in him. And how else is he to do this but by taking knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus – by discovering in him the mind that was in Christ and observing that he walks even as Christ also walked? From all this it is manifest that he who thus receives a disciple of Christ must himself be a disciple of Christ. And so it is expressly declared: He receives Me. Is nothing more meant by this than that he who receives a believer in the name of Christ is himself a believer? We shall see, if we inquire into the drift of what is here stated.

The design of the Saviour was to correct the spirit of ambition and mutual rivalry which showed itself in His followers. In this spirit, there was an undue elevation of one and an unjust depreciation of another. He that sought to be foremost thought more highly of himself and more meanly of his fellows than he ought to think. Now what corrective does our Lord apply? He distributes His followers into received and receiving, offended and offending. He requires the former to be as a little child, and thus overthrows from the roots the pride and self-importance that cleave to them. He enjoins the latter to deal with the brethren as they would deal with Himself, and this restrains them from treating them harshly or censoriously. We can hardly conceive a method better fitted to repress the spirit of ambition which began to manifest itself amongst the followers of Christ, and which in every age has produced so much mischief in the Church. The Saviour commends to the love of His people at large each of His true disciples, fixing upon them meekness and docility, as the badge by which they were to be recognised. And then He stamps with special importance the act of giving to such an one a cordial welcome, by intimating that He holds it as equivalent to receiving Himself.

The language employed in describing the treatment of one disciple by another is very general, yet a little consideration will satisfy us that it is sufficiently definite to mark the line of conduct which it recommends. For he that receives one such little one must pay some attention to him and the circumstances in which he is placed, must seek or offer opportunity for cultivating friendship and communion, and must, in every way competent to him, prove his readiness to be serviceable to him. He therefore that wraps himself up in cold and heartless selfishness, and never looks beyond the little

circle which he has chalked out for himself, neglects the duty that is here so strongly commended. Indeed he may say in his own defence that he does not reject him. But we reply that he does not receive him, and thus sins on the side of omission. We should look out to meet with the disciples of Christ, for, though they have ever been few in number, obscure in circumstances and lightly esteemed, He has always had a remnant who have borne His name.

The particular form which our reception of them takes will depend on the circumstances in which we and they are placed. If they are hungry, we must give them meat; if they are thirsty, we must give them drink; if they are strangers, we must take them in; if they are naked we must clothe them; if they are sick we must visit them; if they are in prison we must come to them. In some cases, little more may be needed than the common courtesies of life, but these should not be omitted. In others, much more is required, and therefore much more must be given.

We must observe, however, that we are to receive them *in Christ's name*. For it is quite possible to receive disciples in a kindly way, yet not in the name of Christ; nor is it doubtful, though it may not be equally apparent, that we may show regard to the name of Christ and receive a reward for it, in the case of one who has only the name of a disciple and not really the character. Indeed, since it is merely by profession we can judge of others, it follows that we are to be tested, not by the condition absolutely of him whom we receive or reject, but by our respect to the name of Christ which they bear. We say, not *absolutely* by their condition, because a certain respect is due even to their condition. For we are not to admit the claims of everyone who chooses to put himself forward as a disciple of Christ. We ought to consider whether there be any ostensible grounds on which his claims rest; if not, we must dismiss them as vain and delusive. But if there be such grounds for his claims, then, out of regard to the name of the Lord Jesus, let the man who is called by it secure the attention which is due to him.

We are thus led to look at the stress that is laid, and properly laid, upon this qualification of our treatment of others who are called disciples: it must be *in the name of Christ*. In the entire range of theological literature, there are few expressions more common, and yet perhaps few less understood, than those which make up this sacred formula. Nor is it easy, in a few sentences, to give such an explanation of its meaning as will meet all the cases to which it may be applied. We speak of praying in the name of Christ, of giving thanks in the name of Christ, of coming in the name of Christ, of glorying in the name of Christ and, as here, of receiving men in the name of Christ. The name of anyone is what he is known by; in general, it consists in a brief and comprehensive description of his distinctive character, as his family, his



profession, his actions, his crimes. What, it has been asked, is in a name? We may well ask in return, What is there not in a name?

The name of Christ concentrates all that is great, and excellent, and precious in heaven and earth, in God and man, in time and eternity. We have in it that which touches eternity past and stretches to eternity to come, a height that scales the incomprehensible glory of Godhead and a depth that descends to the lowest condition of humanity, the riches of heaven's treasury and the sorrows of sinful men. But it is unwise to multiply words on a theme which is higher than the heights of heaven, wider than the expanse of the ocean, and deeper than the lowest caverns of the earth.

We might dwell at any length on the properties of the name of Christ – the various relations it touches in this world and in that which is to come, the attractions which it offers to all who truly know it and its claims to admiration and love. But we hasten to inquire, What is meant by receiving someone in the name of Christ? A person that comes before us, as at all worthy of our regard, is so either on account of his personal qualities or on account of some relation he bears to others – his family, friends, society or nation. If he offers himself to our notice on personal grounds, he presumes on our having such a knowledge and esteem of him as will dispose us to respond to the appeal he makes to us. But if, leaving aside his personal character, he rests his claim to our consideration on his connection with others, he then expects us to have sufficient respect for them to dispose us to accede to his wishes.

Now, to receive any one in the name of Christ supposes some connection, on the part of him who is so received, with Christ, and such interest in Him as offers a ground for asking kindly entertainment. And it supposes, on the part of him who receives, a respect for the name of Christ, such as involves a disposition to give it. The nature of the connection with Christ supposed in him who is the object of a kind reception is described in the words, *one such little one*. We do not mean to say in every case that this connection actually exists, that this character is really possessed. For we do not have the power to judge of this; we look only at the outward appearance, we do not look upon the heart. On the other hand, we are far from maintaining that we are to exercise no discrimination and that everyone who chooses to call himself a disciple of Christ is to be received and treated as such, for this were to open a door to the widest licentiousness and give encouragement to swindlers, hypocrites and impostors of every kind. We have no means to guide us to an infallible judgment in such cases. But, by an enlightened and cautious charity, we may find our way to what is becoming and useful.

To allow that a man is a disciple of Christ, when he is notoriously destitute of such a character, is to violate our Lord's rule and to do positive mischief

to His cause. At the same time, it is most injurious to indulge in a narrow-minded and censorious spirit and to forbid a man to do Christian works, because he does not belong to our party and hold our peculiar views. We cannot possibly receive anyone in the name of Christ unless we see something in him of the image of Christ. For to show respect to someone who is totally destitute of His Spirit is to degrade that name, not to put honour on it. We must see at least the appearance of the temper which our Lord puts as the test of discipleship, and if we do not see even the appearance, we lie open to the infliction of punishment for our carelessness, instead of being approved and rewarded as having done a good work.

He that thus receives a disciple, in the name of Christ, receives Christ. The disposition which leads him to show respect to the disciple would incline him, if occasion offered, to show respect to the Master. And therefore he is held as having done the latter when he does the former. In this language, our Lord strongly asserts the dignity of His people, the value He sets upon them, and the care He takes of them. He teaches that He and they are so bound up together that it is impossible to receive the one without receiving the other – that He is so deeply interested in them that whatever is done to them He regards as done to Himself: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me”. To receive Christ is an exercise of faith. For we do not see Him, and even if we did, it is not what meets the senses that is to be regarded but those spiritual excellencies in which He shines and which are palpable, not to sense, but only to faith. “In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing . . . .”

To receive Christ is an expression of love. For it is a cordial reception He claims. His language is, “My son, give Me thine heart”.

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## The Dunnottar Covenanters of 1685<sup>1</sup>

### 4. George Scot of Pitlochrie

*Rev D W B Somerset*

The Dunnottar prisoners were brought back to Leith on August 18, and 95 of them (67 men and 28 women), who still refused to take the Oaths of Allegiance and Abjuration, were sentenced to be transported to America. One of these was the well-known Patrick Walker, author of *Six Saints of the Covenant*. He was aged about 19 at the time, and had been in prison for most of the previous 14 months. That very evening, however, he succeeded in

<sup>1</sup>In the previous article, we described the prisoners' return from Dunnottar to Leith. Now we give an account of the preparations made for transporting many of them to America.

escaping, as he mentions briefly in his book: "I was with many others sent to Dunnottar Castle, and brought back to Leith the eighteenth day of August, and I escaped at eight o'clock at night, in a confusion, out of Leith Tolbooth".<sup>2</sup> He was a Cameronian and a great admirer of Donald Cargill and Alexander Shields. Like Shields, however, he left the Cameronians at the Revolution and joined the Established Church. It was claimed that this was what Cargill too would have done, had he lived.<sup>3</sup> Patrick Walker had no education but he had a remarkable gift as a writer. He died about 1745, 60 years after his incarceration in Dunnottar.

Patrick Walker's escape was soon followed by that of another prisoner, Robert Goodwin, who was a maltman from Glasgow. He had been in prison since April 1684, and in hiding for eight years before then. The charges against him were: not owning the King's supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, not promising to attend ordinances dispensed by bishops, and not declaring the Battle of Bothwell Bridge to have been rebellion. His escape was reported to the Privy Council on August 20, and a "diligent search" was ordered, but it does not appear that he was recaptured.<sup>4</sup>

A number of people were seeking to benefit from the transporting of Covenanting prisoners to America, and the Privy Council received two separate bids for the Dunnottar prisoners. The first of these we have already mentioned – that of Sir Robert Gordon, younger of Gordonstoun, and his brother Sir John, on July 9. The Privy Council had granted their request, but for some reason nothing further came of it. A short while later a second bid was submitted, this time from George Scot of Pitlochrie. He too received a grant of prisoners, 50 from Dunnottar and 50 from Edinburgh, but on August 7 he presented a further petition to the Privy Council complaining that his Edinburgh prisoners had been given away to someone else:

"Anent a petition presented by Mr George Scot of Pitlochrie, showing that whereas the petitioner, encouraged by the Council countenancing a design he had of laying the foundation of a plantation from this kingdom to America, hath laid out his stock for promoting thereof, the Lords of the Secret Committee, a fortnight ago, came to a resolution intimate to the petitioner that he should have fifty prisoners here (Edinburgh) and fifty in Dunnottar, whereupon the petitioner did enter in an agreement with some tradesmen in those prisons absolutely necessary for his said design, and gave them money to entertain them, not enquiring elsewhere after them, having them thus

<sup>2</sup>Patrick Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant*, London, 1901, vol 1, p 352.

<sup>3</sup>Maurice Grant, *No King But Christ*, Evangelical Press, 1988, p 251.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, ed R Burns, Glasgow, 1830, vol 4, p 48; *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland 1685-6*, third series, vol 11, Edinburgh, 1929, p 157.

secured; and now the Council having ordered one hundred seventy and seven prisoners here to be transported to Jamaica, in which number are these persons the petitioner trusted to, whereby his design will be altogether ruined, he not having time to provide himself of such otherwise; and there being yet several in those prisons not sentenced which may make up the said one hundred and seventy seven men to the Jamaica ship, and therefore humbly supplicating that order and warrant might be granted in manner and to the effect underwritten.”<sup>5</sup>

George Scot of Pitlochrie was a peculiar man. He was born in April 1643, a son of Sir John Scot of Scotstarvet by his second wife Margaret Melville. She was the daughter of Sir James Melville of Halhill and a niece of Lady Culross, Samuel Rutherford’s correspondent.<sup>6</sup> Scot of Scotstarvet (1585-1670) was a prominent lawyer and politician. He had supported the Covenanters in 1638, but lost his political position under Cromwell. Thereafter he engaged in literary work and was the author of a famous, eccentric work, *The Staggering State of Scottish Statesmen*. On 26 June 1663 his son George married Margaret Rigg, a daughter of the godly William Rigg of Atherney by his third wife Margaret Monypenny.<sup>7</sup> Rigg was dead by this time and his widow, Margaret Monypenny, had already become the third wife of Scot of Scotstarvet. Thus George was marrying his step-sister, and we have the unusual situation of a mother and a daughter married to a father and a son.<sup>8</sup>

Margaret Rigg was a godly woman,<sup>9</sup> and her sister Catherine, Lady Cavers, was one of the subjects in James Anderson’s *Ladies of the Covenant*. Margaret’s husband, however, steered an unequal course. For a considerable period he was a Covenanter, being fined twice in 1674, imprisoned for eight months on the Bass Rock in 1677, and fined again in 1679, for attending conventicles and for various other offences.<sup>10</sup> In 1679, however, he went down to London, where, according to himself, he had “the opportunity of frequent converse with several substantial and judicious gentlemen concerning the

<sup>5</sup>*Register of the Privy Council*, 1685-6, vol 11, p 137.

<sup>6</sup>Scot of Pitlochrie published the *Memoirs* of his grandfather, Sir James Melville, in 1683, from a manuscript in his possession. They have often been reprinted.

<sup>7</sup>John Livingstone esteemed Rigg as “eminent for gifts and graces”, “Memorable Characteristics”, in W K Tweedie (ed), *Select Biographies*, Edinburgh 1845-7, vol 1, pp 341-3.

<sup>8</sup>Something similar occurred with Henry Duncan, minister of Ruthwell (1774-1846), responsible for the first Savings Bank, whom R M M’Cheyne used to visit in his childhood. His second wife, Mary Lundie, was already his son’s mother-in-law.

<sup>9</sup>She was described as “a worthy lady” by John Fraser of Alness (Duncan Stewart, *Covenanters of Teviotdale*, Galashiels, 1908, p 207), and an “excellent lady” by Wodrow, (vol 4, p 332). In August 1677 she was fined for attending conventicles (Wodrow, vol 2, p 361).

<sup>10</sup>Wodrow, vol 2, p 238, 244; vol 3, p 10. A good account of his life, written by James Anderson, is given in Thomas M’Crie et al, *The Bass Rock*, Edinburgh, 1848, pp 157-173.

American plantations".<sup>11</sup> One of these was probably the Quaker William Penn, who at that time was planning the formation of a colony in America to which persecuted Quakers could emigrate. His colony, which developed into the state of Pennsylvania, was established in 1682.

It occurred to Pitlochrie that he too might form a colony, this time for persecuted Covenanters, and by November 1684 his plans were sufficiently matured for him to petition the Privy Council for permission to transport 100 prisoners to America. His intention at this stage was to take only those who were willing to go, and by December he had found at least one volunteer, the field-preacher Archibald Riddell.<sup>12</sup> On December 24 he petitioned the Privy Council on Riddell's behalf:

"The Lords of his Majesty's Privy Council having considered a petition presented by Mr George Scot of Pitlochrie, desiring that, in regard the Council have granted him the benefit of some persons lately sentenced to the Plantations in order to their being transported thither, and that he is willing to transport Mr Archibald Riddell, prisoner in the Bass, liberty might be granted to him for some time to put his affairs in order and attend several processes now depending both for and against him before the Session upon the petitioner's being cautioner for him that he shall immediately after his liberty come to his own lodging in Edinburgh and confine himself there during his abode here, and in the meantime keep no conventicles and be by him transported to East Jersey in America, and never return to this kingdom thereafter without special licence from the Council, the said Lords do grant the said desire, and recommends to the Lord High Chancellor, Governor of the said Isle of Bass, to give order and warrant to his Deputy Governor of that Isle to deliver to the petitioner or his order the person of the said Mr Archibald Riddell, in regard the petitioner hath become caution to the effect foresaid under the penalty of five thousand merks Scots money in case of failure of any of the premises."<sup>13</sup>

Archibald Riddell (1635-1709) was the third son of Sir Walter Riddell of that ilk, the second baronet. His mother Janet was another daughter of William

<sup>11</sup>William A Whitehead, *East Jersey under the Proprietary Governments*, Newark, NJ, 1875, p 369.

<sup>12</sup>A letter from East Jersey in August 1684 says: "There are here very good religious people. . . . We have great need of good and faithful ministers. And I wish to God, that there would come some over here; they can live as well, and have as much, as in Scotland, and more than many get: we have none within all the Province of East Jersey, except one who is preacher in Newark. There were one or two preachers more in the Province, but they are dead, and now the people, they meet together every Sabbath day, and read and pray and sing psalms in their meeting houses" (Whitehead, p 439).

<sup>13</sup>*The Register of the Privy Council 1684-5*, third series, vol 10, Edinburgh, 1927, p.79.

Rigg of Atherney, mentioned above, and thus a sister of Pitlochie's wife and of Catherine, Lady Cavers.<sup>14</sup> She was "a lady highly extolled for piety and all the graces that could adorn the sex", and John Livingstone especially mentioned her on his deathbed as one who "had been very useful to him and his family". She had died about April 1681.<sup>15</sup> Riddell's sister Alison was the "excellent wife" of the field-preacher Gabriel Semple.<sup>16</sup> Riddell was "clandestinely ordained" by Presbyterian ministers sometime about 1670, and was one of the best-known of the field-preachers.<sup>17</sup> He assisted John Blackadder at the famous East Nisbet communion in 1678, and was apprehended in September 1680. The next four years he spent in prison, three of them on the Bass Rock. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that he was prepared to emigrate to America, where there was a great shortage of ministers.

By March 1685, Pitlochie had obtained a vessel to transport his party to America, and on 12 March he petitioned the Privy Council once again: "Anent a petition presented by Mr George Scot of Pitlochie, shewing that where the Council were pleased by their act the . . . day of November last to grant liberty to the petitioner to transport one hundred prisoners to his Majesty's plantations according to the list to be given in by him of their names to the Clerks of Council, he being obliged to return a certificate of their being disposed there under the hands of the governor of the place, and that afterwards the Council were pleased to signify their minds further thereanent that all heritors above one hundred pounds yearly of valued rent were excluded, and seeing the petitioner hath now freighted a vessel for transporting them and that by the Council's foresaid act they had condescended that such as should find caution to transport themselves with the petitioner should be liberated thereupon to have some time to order their affairs, and the petitioner being now to go to Stirling, Glasgow, as well as to other prisons, to intimate this to the prisoners; and therefore humbly supplicating the Council would order the

<sup>14</sup>It might seem strange that Riddell, born in 1635, was older than Pitlochie, his uncle by marriage, who was born in 1643. Riddell's mother, however, was married in 1630 or shortly afterwards, and must therefore have been born about 1613, the year after her parents' marriage. Pitlochie's wife Margaret, on the other hand, was the daughter of William Rigg's third wife, and was probably born in the early 1640s. Rigg died on 2 January 1644. In his *Ladies of the Covenant*, Glasgow, 1856, p 117n, James Anderson makes Margaret and her sister Catherine the granddaughters of William Rigg, and in this he is followed by Stewart, *Covenanters of Teviotdale*, p 102. It can easily be seen in Anderson's note, however, how the mistake has arisen. John Lamont states that Margaret was Rigg's youngest daughter by his third wife, *Chronicle of Fife*, Edinburgh, 1810, p 205.

<sup>15</sup>Alexander Nisbet, *A System of Heraldry*, 2 vols, Edinburgh, 1984, vol 2, p 299; *Select Biographies*, vol 1, p 291; Wodrow, vol 3, p 264.

<sup>16</sup>Wodrow, vol 3, p 268.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas M'Crie (ed), *Memoirs of Veitch and Brysson*, Edinburgh, 1825, p 437.

liberation of such as the petitioner shall engage to transport with him, they being not heritors above one hundred pound yearly of valued rent; the Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council, having considered the foresaid petition, do grant the desire thereof, the petitioner first condescending upon the persons, time and security anent the persons desired to be transported'.<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime Pitlochie, with the encouragement of the proprietors of East Jersey, had written a book to promote emigration to the Province and to advertise his own scheme. This ran to 272 pages, and was published in Edinburgh in April 1685 with the title, *The Model of the Government of the Province of East-New-Jersey in America; And Encouragements for such as Designs to be concerned there*.<sup>19</sup> Pitlochie begins with a history of the settling of America, not neglecting the problem as to how wolves and bears got there after the Flood. The author considers it unlikely that men should have been at the hazard and expense of transporting them, and thinks that probably they arrived there by means of a now sunken land-bridge.

Next he discusses the divine warrant for forming overseas colonies, and at this point there is a curious difference between those copies of the book intended for Scotland and those for England. Scottish copies had a paragraph on page 37 beginning, "I find removal [emigration] likewise allowable in case of persecution", and referring to Jeroboam's sin in setting up the golden calves and in obliging the godly to move to Jerusalem. In English copies, however, the paragraph begins, "When people find themselves straitened in point of their opinion, no reasonable man will question their call to go where by law they are allowed that freedom". Evidently references to *persecution* and *Jeroboam* were too inflammatory to be published in England.<sup>20</sup>

Next the author is led to reflect on the possibility of "a reconciliation of the differences" between Presbyterians and Episcopalians, but concludes that this is "improbable in the highest degree". He can see no solution but for those of Presbyterian principles to retire with him to America. In proof of the intransigence of the Presbyterian and Episcopalian disputants, he gives the following strange argument: "If Mackquare and Brown<sup>21</sup> vent publicly the justification of their tenets, for the further encouragement of their own party in opposition to the other, the Bishop of Asaph<sup>22</sup> will not be behind with them,

<sup>18</sup>*Register of the Privy Council 1684-5*, vol 10, p 181.

<sup>19</sup>Fewer than a dozen copies of the original edition have survived, but most of the book was reprinted in Whitehead's *East Jersey*, pp 357-475.

<sup>20</sup>Whitehead, pp 375-6, 385-6.

<sup>21</sup>That is, Robert MacWard (died 1681) and John Brown of Wamphray (c 1610-1679), both of whom had written in defence of the Covenanters and Presbyterianism.

<sup>22</sup>William Lloyd (1627-1717) was Bishop of St Asaph from 1680-92. In a work on Church government in 1684 he had asserted that the first 44 of Charles II's supposed 109 royal

seeing rather than not to have the occasion of reaching them a blow, he chooseth affrontedly in the face of the world to cut off from his native Prince forty of his royal ancestors . . . [but] you may now see his gross ignorance in that particular laid open to the world by a very ingenious pen (Sir G McK).<sup>23</sup>

The book goes on to describe the commodiousness of East Jersey and its various townships, and concludes with 120 pages of letters from people who had already settled there. These have been of particular interest to historians. On the final page there is an invitation to anyone wishing to emigrate to East Jersey to apply, before May 12, to one of Pitlochrie's dozen agents, the names and addresses of whom are supplied. A reference is made to Mr Riddell and another minister Thomas Paterson who had already agreed to go, and the name of the ship is given as the *Henry and Francis* of Newcastle, the master being Mr Richard Hutton.<sup>24</sup> The intended date of departure was July 20. Persecuted Covenanters were given the additional encouragement that "the Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council have been pleased by an Act to condescend that such as are under bond, to appear before them when called, shall have up [be released from] their respective bonds, upon their going with him; whereby they are secured from the apprehension of any process to be in their absence, intended [prosecuted] against them on that head".<sup>25</sup>

In consideration of his services in writing this book, the proprietors of East Jersey on July 28 granted Pitlochrie 500 acres of land.<sup>26</sup> In spite of his efforts, however, the expedition remained greatly undersubscribed,<sup>27</sup> and it was in desperation at his predicament that Pitlochrie petitioned the Privy Council in July for Covenanting prisoners to make up the shortage. It is not surprising that the Covenanters regarded this as an extraordinary step of defection. Archibald Riddell and Pitlochrie's wife must have been horrified,

forebears were mythical. Sir George Mackenzie, the King's Advocate for Scotland, had published a reply in March 1685. Modern historians have generally taken Lloyd's side in the argument.

<sup>23</sup>Whitehead, pp 390-1.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas Paterson was minister of Borthwick, and married to a sister of the well-known Robert Traill junior. In the event he did not go to America.

<sup>25</sup>Whitehead, pp 474-5.

<sup>26</sup>Whitehead, p 362n.

<sup>27</sup>It was not easy persuading people to emigrate to New Jersey. An "advertisement" published in Edinburgh in 1684, after listing the abundance to be found there, the pleasantness of the voyage, and the names of several "persons of good quality and estates" who were intending to leave from Scotland that summer, concludes rather peevishly that it cannot "be reasonably imagined that the persons above-written are fools, to be imposed upon by lies and fancies; on the contrary there are none (save those that are wise in their own eyes, but are really ignorant) that are not undeniably convinced of the excellency of the design", *Bannatyne Miscellany*, Edinburgh, 1827-55, vol 3, pp 385-8.



but probably there was nothing they could do about it. Patrick Walker, one of the prisoners assigned to him, says succinctly that “Pitlochie, a professing laird in Fife, got a gift of [the prisoners] from the bloody Council, to carry them there to be his slaves,” and he quotes the “old saying”, that “cocks are free of [that is, free to take] other folks’ corn”.<sup>28</sup> The most charitable view of Pitlochie that one can take is that of William Moncrieff (c 1657-1723), minister of Largo, “who knew him well”. “He was”, said Moncrieff, “a professor, and nothing of vice or immorality known to him, but not deep drawn in religion, and a very foolish and unwise man in any matters he engaged in.”<sup>29</sup>

On August 18 Pitlochie received a grant from the Privy Council of 95 of the Dunnottar prisoners, and on September 5 his ship set sail from Leith on its disastrous voyage.

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## Mary Washing the Feet of Jesus<sup>1</sup>

*Robert Gordon*

A very short time before His death, the Saviour was in Bethany. This village had very recently been the scene of a miracle involving a wonderful manifestation of divine power. Its inhabitants had seen a dead man laid in the grave, as if to sleep until the trumpet shall sound and the dead arise to judgement. And they had seen the same individual, called by the voice of Christ, burst the bonds of death and appear again among the living. Now we find Him entertained in the dwelling of one spoken of as “Simon the leper”. It would seem we are to understand that he had suffered under the distressing malady of leprosy but had been restored to health by Christ.

**Those around the table.** It was a goodly company that assembled round the table of Simon in Bethany. Indeed, what company was not so when Christ deigned to take a seat, however worthless the individuals who composed it? But here the company was goodly because it was godly. There He sat, who was “the brightness of [His Father’s] glory, and the express image of His Person,” full of grace and truth, the Son of God, and yet the Friend of sinners. The Apostles were there, who, with all their failings incident to humanity, had been His obedient disciples, had been taught by Him, and had learned the law from His lips. There sat Simon, once an outcast, an object of loath-

<sup>28</sup>*Six Saints*, vol 2, pp 45, 100.

<sup>29</sup>*Bass Rock*, p 163.

<sup>1</sup>Abridged from *The Christian Treasury* of 1863 and based on Mark 14:1-8 and John 12:1-8. Gordon (1786-1853) was an Edinburgh minister whose fine work in four volumes, *Christ in the Old Testament*, has been reprinted by Free Presbyterian Publications.

ing, but now restored to communion with his fellow creatures. There was Lazarus, in his own person the most illustrious proof of Christ's sovereignty over death. Martha was there, waiting on the guests out of love and gratitude to her Redeemer; and her sister Mary, she who had "chosen the good part", which was not to be taken from her.

We are not told anything of the subjects that occupied their thoughts, or the truths of which they spoke. But we do know that they were important, for Christ was there. We must believe that they were instructive, for He was a Teacher sent from God, who spoke as "never man" spoke. The thought may pass through the minds of some: Would that we had been there! How great was their privilege to gaze on the living Christ, to listen to divine truth from divine lips! It is ever so; we could, we think, arrange our circumstances better than God has done. It would, doubtless, have been an unspeakable privilege to have sat at the feet of Jesus and to have learned of Him, if we could have done so with the clear views of His person and work which we have now. But we ought to remember that believers today are in possession of the full revelation of God and that their faith has been nourished as it could not have been in the days of the Son of man.

The holiest of God's people will be ready to confess that, even with all the light they enjoy, they are prone to turn backward or fall away from their confidence. What then, let them honestly say, would have been their condition in the difficult circumstances that shook the strong faith of Peter, and for a time overwhelmed the earnest and holy love of John? The disciples, highly favoured as they were, knew Christ in all the fulness with which we may know Him – not during His life on earth, not after His resurrection, but after He had ascended to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God – after the promise had been fulfilled that the Comforter would come and teach them all things. It was after Christ had departed that the apostles knew what they had enjoyed, and what they had lost.

**The alabaster box.** Of all that took place at the supper here described, only one incident has been recorded. Mark informs us that, as Christ "sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head". John tells us that the woman was Mary, the sister of Martha, and adds that "she anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped them with her hair".

We ought to bear in mind that it was customary for the servants of a house to wash the guests' feet with water. There are two remarkable particulars here: first, that the washing should have been performed by a guest, and not by a servant; and, second, that a costly ointment should have been used, not water. We can be at no loss to understand the motive for the action. From all

we know of the history of Mary, it is plain that a double motive of love and gratitude towards Christ led her to do this. She had known the mercy and power of Jesus as the Saviour of sinners; she had experienced the mighty relief which a sense of the pardon of sin produces, and in the strength of undying affection and reverence towards Him, she gave open manifestation to the feelings that filled her soul.

There were some present, however, who did not share her emotions. John intimates that the individual who objected to the action was Judas Iscariot. Many present, hearing the language of disapproval from one whom they knew was a recognised follower of Jesus, joined him in condemning what they had seen. "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" they said, "for it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor." The question must have sounded harshly in the ears of her who was the object of blame. And because it was an offence to this faithful disciple, it must have been an offence to Christ also. And He did not pass it over. Addressing those who murmured, He commanded them to let her alone, distinctly pronouncing His approbation of what she had done and reminding them that they had the poor always with them but they did not always have Him. And He followed up this announcement with the striking words: "She hath done what she could".

**Mary's gratitude.** The words of Christ intimate His approval of Mary's conduct. There were two grounds for that approval. First, she had done what she could to show her gratitude and love to Christ as her Saviour. We know from the Gospels that, along with Martha, she had been privileged to enjoy much of His society, and to listen to Him while He spoke of the things pertaining to God and to their eternal welfare. In the peaceful retirement of Bethany, He had frequently sought a little repose from His laborious work and He had bestowed on them the knowledge of everlasting life, enabling them to feel that He was able and willing to make them wise unto salvation.

We know also how earnestly Mary had listened to His instruction, and with what a deep sense of its value she had sat at His feet to hear His word. Our Lord Himself has informed us how she had profited by her opportunities: "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her". Had she not then good cause for gratitude towards Jesus? He had done far more for her than the greatest earthly benefactor. If they who had been restored by His power to bodily health and strength were bound to manifest their gratitude for what they had received, in a far higher sense was she whose soul He had delivered from death and who had been made to feel that the leprosy of sin was no longer hurrying her to eternal ruin. And she exhibited this gratitude in circumstances where it could scarcely be mistaken.

All who sat round Simon's table owed something to Christ. One owed health, another life itself. Many, if not all, owed the salvation of their souls; all had been privileged, at least, to hear the gospel proclaimed. In such an assembly, it was surely not out of place for any to give outward expression to their feelings of love to Jesus. In Mary's conduct, we see a visible representation of a feeling which ought to have been present in every heart – reverential love. She had already shown her confidence in the Saviour by listening submissively to His instructions and by believing His words. She was exhibiting, in her daily walk, her affection for Him, who furnished the test of true discipleship in the declaration: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments". In what other form could her love have been more appropriately and plainly brought out than by the action she performed? By the deed itself and in her manner of doing it we may form an estimate of the strength of the feeling that prompted it, and so understand the words of Christ: "She hath done what she could".

*Honouring the Redeemer.* But there is another view of Mary's conduct to which the judgement pronounced by our Lord also applies. She also did what she could to honour her Redeemer. This might be clearly seen in the value of the gift; it was no common perfume she poured upon His head and feet, it was no inexpensive oil which she could easily spare. Observe too how, after the anointing, she wiped His feet with the hair of her head – humbling herself so that she might exalt her Saviour. She chose to sit at His feet and fulfil those duties to Him which it was the business of the attendants to perform. And, as if even that had not been enough, as if her humility was not yet deep enough in the presence of Christ, she wiped the ointment from His feet with the hair of her head. And this was done in the presence of the whole company, all of whom might see every part of the transaction. May we not then with good reason say that thus also she had "done what she could"?

But that was not all. By this deed she honoured the Saviour in another sense, in a way that, as far as any reader of God's Word can see, neither Simon or the other guests understood. Christ said, "She is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying". Do these words not tell us plainly that Mary had a full understanding of a great truth of which the others were ignorant? Only a very short interval of time was to elapse before He was to die on the cross; in the clearest manner He had announced His approaching sufferings; again and again He had declared that by the hands of wicked men He was to be crucified and slain. Yet that solemn truth had never penetrated into the minds of the disciples; up to the last hour, the death of their Master was as unlooked for as, when it did come, it was unwelcome.

But it was not so with Mary. With earnestness of love, she had listened to

all that the Saviour said; and when He told of His final sufferings and intimated how they were to end, her heart, at least, understood and believed it all. She had no strong worldly prejudices to overcome; she had never cherished the ambitious desires which the chosen twelve had manifested on more than one occasion. And as the time drew near when He must accomplish His decease at Jerusalem, she apprehended that there could be no place for her among the cruel men near the lifeless body of her Redeemer and that He, as a malefactor, might be carried to His grave without the ordinary marks of outward respect. With a simplicity dictated by a holy faith, she resolved to bestow on the still-living Jesus what she had reserved to use as the last mark of reverence for her crucified Saviour.

How strikingly does this view of the transactions explain the language of the text, "She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying!" And how well merited, if we may so speak, does it make the words that follow: "Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her".

*A test of our conduct.* While we look with admiration at the faith of this disciple of Christ, and are filled with something like awe when we think of her holy confidence in resigning to His death Him whom she loved, let us employ it for a moment as a test of our conduct. On how many of us could Christ pronounce the verdict that we have done what we could for Him? Let the best of us meditate on the many opportunities we have enjoyed of serving Him, and we shall be constrained to admit that we have done but little either to manifest our love for Him or to consult for His honour and glory. We have not the means, it is true, of doing as this disciple did. His true body and reasonable soul, still in being, are far removed from our view. But in many ways we can imitate her example. As true penitents, we may humble ourselves in His presence and pour out our hearts before Him. The mourning sinner's cry for deliverance, addressed to Him as the Surety and Substitute of the guilty, redounds to His glory, as it expresses firm belief in His finished work.

To those who have found relief in casting themselves on Christ and feel their obligation to Him, one path of duty is made plain. They will readily acknowledge that they have been made partakers of the highest blessing which it is possible for sinful human beings to partake of. Let their life then bear witness to the truth of this; let their daily walk illustrate their belief. There is a proneness to sink back again into comparative indifference, after the first sense of relief from guilt and fear is past. Christ and His salvation, once the subjects of earnest meditation by day and night, become less inter-

esting, because the need of them is less painfully felt than it was when the soul was conscious of sin and misery. Then there was no room for anything of earth: its pleasures or its cares. There was a blank in the heart which must be filled up from heaven, or the blackness of despair must settle heavily over it. But when the blank has been filled by the knowledge of God's mercy in Christ, and the first feeling of gratitude is past, there is a great danger.

It is not that believers will willingly forget what they owe to Christ, or of set purpose strive to blot out from their heart the remembrance of a suffering Saviour, but they are not careful to guard against the insidious power of worldliness. The remaining corruption of their heart would lead them to think more highly of their justification than of their sanctification, and to forget the words of the Saviour: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples". Instead of resting satisfied as if he had already attained or were already perfect, the believer should be aiming at higher acquirements than he has yet reached, striving to perfect holiness in the fear of God. When this purpose is in the heart day by day, he will be astonished to find how many opportunities he enjoys of testifying to his love for Christ, and of honouring Him who bought him. And the more unreservedly he gives himself to Christ – devotes his body and soul, his talents, wealth and influence to the cause of the Saviour – the more he will feel the joy of His salvation.

In thus openly manifesting his love and devotedness to Christ, he must expect to be assailed with practically the same question as was addressed to Mary of old: "To what purpose is this waste?" Let him not be shaken by it but remember that it was the question of Judas. Whatever our position in life is, whether we are able to do much or little for Christ, as men count ability, we can all do something if we really have the desire to do it. The man of talent can give his exertions, the man of wealth his substance, the poorest can give the cup of cold water which his Divine Master has promised never to forget. Thus labouring for Christ, the highest and the humblest alike may hope to receive the fulfilment of the promise: "Them that honour Me, I will honour"; and they may look forward humbly to the time when the Judge of all the earth will pronounce on them the verdict of highest praise: They have done what they could.

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There is a great deal of difference between these: bearing of a man's cross with patience when it is laid upon him, and taking up his cross when it is laid before him. Properly a man is said to take up his cross, when there is sin laid on one side, and there is a cross and an affliction laid on the other side; now, either you must commit this sin, or you must endure this cross or affliction. Nay then, says a true disciple, rather than I will commit that sin I will endure this affliction, and so he takes up his cross.

*William Bridge*

## Scottish General Assemblies

### Church of Scotland

*Rev N M Ross*

“In the opinion of some,” says a report in *The Scotsman*, “this year’s General Assembly . . . was duller than previous years, but succeeded in avoiding needless confrontation.” Yet one can avoid confrontation by delaying a decision about important but potentially-divisive issues – which is what the Assembly did on the issue of homosexual relationships. It is deplorable that it did not decisively apply the teaching of the Word of God to the subject. Little wonder that *The Scotsman* headline was: “Kirk once spoke in a voice of thunder. Does it no longer know what to say?”

Last year’s Assembly agreed to the Legal Questions Committee’s proposal to allow ministers to conduct church services for same-sex civil-partnership ceremonies, but its decision had to be approved by a majority of the Church’s presbyteries before it could be ratified by this year’s Assembly. Presbyteries have now spoken – 36 of the Church’s 45 presbyteries voted for disciplining any minister who conducts such a service of “blessing”. That ought to have been an end of the matter, but the Assembly has now agreed to allow ministers to bless such partnerships but without exempting them from possible discipline for doing so.

The whole issue was dealt with in the report, *A Challenge to Unity*, by the Mission and Discipleship Council, whose convener is Rev Angus Morrison. The report was presented by Rev Peter Donald, the convener of the Council’s working group on sexuality. Although meant to guide the Church in the theological examination of the issue of homosexual relationships, it avoided a definitive conclusion; instead it proposed further discussion.

The Church’s press release on the report said that, “as a part of its remit, the working group listened to gay and lesbian Christians, including two Church of Scotland ministers who have entered into civil partnership with their same-sex partners”. It is hard to believe that such a statement could be issued by the Church. The report does cite Scripture but there appears to be a greater readiness on the part of the Church to heed other voices. The same press release poses this incredible question: “When is it legitimate to read certain scriptural texts as teaching one thing but to believe that the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to set aside that reading?” If such theological perplexity lies behind the report, the result must be confusion at least.

In what was described as a “confused” debate in the Assembly, Rev Peter Donald claimed that the report was not side-stepping the issue but rather

moving it forward. He told the press that the decision showed “a willingness to move more towards an acceptance of homosexuality”. On that point there was certainly agreement from Rev Peter Johnston, spokesman for OneKirk, which is in favour of blessing civil partnerships. He said, “We are so aware that the Church is divided on this issue and so we can understand why the Church is wanting to wait. There are steps in the report which are a step further than what has been said before, which is encouraging from our point of view.” The liberal wing of the Church has once again been successful in ratcheting up support for its objectives, albeit by just a few notches.

Others besides the press see the report as a case of sitting on the fence and intended to forestall contention. Rev Ian Watson, secretary of the Evangelical group, Forward Together, told the press after the Assembly decision, “They haven’t grasped the nettle. . . . I think people are quite angry at how quite anodyne the report is. People were looking for guidance during the civil partnership [debate] in presbyteries, and a lot of people voted our way [in presbyteries] because they said the Legal Questions [Committee] hadn’t given them the theological guidance they needed.”

Another indication of the Church’s declension was the shocking statement of Rev Kathy Galloway, leader of the Iona Community, when she presented the report of the Community’s Board to the Assembly. “One of the great joys for us this year . . . has been”, she said, “the opportunity to share in the celebrations of those of our members who have entered civil partnerships. . . . About 10% of our membership and staff are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. They are fully and openly part of our common life . . . and we pray equally for their chosen partners and respect their choices.” It is truly appalling that in the supreme assembly of a Church which was once renowned for glorying in the cross of Christ there should be such glorying in what is shameful.

Another disturbing aspect of the Assembly is its enthusiasm for ecumenism. The appointment of Rev Sheilagh Kesting as Moderator of the Assembly does not auger well for the Church in this respect. She is the first woman minister to be appointed to the moderator’s chair but she is also a dedicated ecumenist who has been secretary of the Church’s Ecumenical Relations Committee. She has stated that her ecumenical experience will feature in almost everything she will do as Moderator and that she will continue to work with Cardinal O’Brien, the leader of Scotland’s Roman Catholics, in tackling sectarianism.

The report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations, presented by convener Rev Bill Brown, stated that the Church of Scotland has signed a covenant with the United Free Church. Also, as the Church of Scotland and



the Free Church of Scotland move closer, they have issued a joint statement making mutual commitment to co-operation in such important areas as church planting, theological education, pulpit exchanges, and shared sacramental celebrations. It is difficult to comprehend how the Free Church, which stoutly professes to be Reformed, can commit itself to such co-operation with a Church that has drifted so very far from its Reformed moorings.

It was gratifying to see that the report of the Church and Society Council has highlighted the evil of gambling. It noted that the total amount gambled in the UK in 2005 was £53 billion; it described a culture of gambling which distorts hope and suggests people's problems will all be solved if they could only win the jackpot, but which leads to people running into debt, experiencing difficulty holding down a job, putting their homes and relationships at risk, and leading to health breakdowns and even to suicide.

However, the Church of Scotland's attitude to homosexual partnerships overshadows all other aspects of the General Assembly. While it made pronouncements on such issues as the Iraq war, renewable energy sources and human trafficking, it once again failed to address this issue properly, and its decisions on the matter are symptomatic of deep spiritual malaise. An editorial in *The Scotsman* says of the Church, "As with many organisations, it finds it relatively easy to pronounce on political matters not within its direct control, but grows more hesitant and uncomfortably tongue-tied on matters closer to home".

The refusal of our national Church to follow Scripture and to "think God's thoughts after Him" (to use Augustine's phrase) results in a perilous groping in the dark. The Church is in grave danger. May God grant that it will yet turn again "to the law and to the testimony" (Is 8:20). When the Church of Christ has to contend for the faith in the face of hostile forces steadily closing in on it, its battle cry must be, "Thus saith the Lord". "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor 14:8).

### **Free Church of Scotland**

*Rev D W B Somerset*

All the Lord's people have a concern for the unity of the Church of Christ. For scriptural and for practical reasons they feel the necessity of maintaining unity as far as possible. The revealed will of Christ is that His people should manifest a visible unity, and every division is liable to weaken the Church and to impair its witness in the eyes of the world. Where divisions have occurred, true Christians yearn for the healing of the breach and continue to feel a love for their brethren presently separated from them. They long for the day when

the “watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion” (Is 52:8).

At the same time, Scripture teaches that there may be a necessity for separation. For instance, Christians are not permitted to sit under false teaching: “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Prov 19:27). This prohibition would presently apply, for example, to the teaching of many Church of Scotland ministers who do not proclaim the scriptural doctrine of the atonement. It would be sinful, and harmful to one’s soul, to attend their ministry. Equally it would be sinful to listen to the numerous female ministers in the Church of Scotland, whose very lives are a repudiation of the scripture, “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim 2:12).

God permits such errors to spring up in the visible Church in order to test His people and to discover whether their attachment is to a building and a denomination, or whether it is to the truth. “There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor 11:19). The church at Pergamos was condemned, and warned to repent, for having in it “them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes”, while the Ephesian church was commended for hating the “deeds” of these people (Rev 2:15-16, 6).

In recent years the Free Church and the Church of Scotland have been discussing ecumenical relations, and this year a Joint Statement prepared by their combined Ecumenical Committees was adopted by the two General Assemblies. The ministers representing the Free Church in this matter have included Revs Iver Martin, Fergus Macdonald, Alex MacDonald, James Maciver, David Robertson, and Kenneth Stewart.

The Joint Statement begins with an amazing assertion: “As Churches in the Reformed tradition, Scripture is vital to all we do”. The Church of Scotland is not a *Reformed* Church in the ordinary use of language. It is not Calvinistic, nor even predominantly Evangelical, although doubtless one could quibble that it is “in the Reformed tradition” because it used to be these things 170 years ago, and because it continues to pay lip-service to the Westminster Confession. But one cannot even pretend that Scripture is “vital” to all that the Church of Scotland does. In what way was Scripture “vital” to the Church of Scotland on May 19, when Rev Sheilagh Kesting was elected as Moderator? This was done in open defiance of Scripture, and it happened three days before the Free Church adopted the Joint Statement. Until March 1 Miss Kesting had been the secretary of the Church of Scotland’s Ecumenical Committee, and possibly even had a hand in drawing up the Joint Statement.

The Statement goes on to cite some passages from the Bible in support of Christian unity. The first passage is John 17:20-3: "That they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me". These words are quoted endlessly by ecumenists, and in the present document they occur three times in as many pages. The significance of quoting Scripture is not clear, given that many in the Church of Scotland openly reject its authority. Having deliberately ignored other verses, they are not then entitled to appeal to those which happen to suit their purpose. "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee" (Ps 50:16,17).

Another passage which the Statement cites in support of unity is Galatians 2:11-14, when Paul withstood Peter to his face because he separated himself from the Gentiles. More relevant, however, would have been an earlier verse in the Epistle: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (1:9). If someone comes to us who does not have the doctrine of Christ, John says, "Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10-11). And Paul says that Christians are not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor 6:14).

The Statement then goes on to quote sections from the Westminster Confession on the subject of Church unity. But again the question arises, what is the significance of quotations from the Westminster Confession in the mouths of those who reject its principal doctrines? The first chapter, and one of the longest, in the Confession is on the inspiration and authority of Scripture, but many of the Church of Scotland's public actions declare plainly that the majority in its courts do not believe this chapter. In 2005, the Free Church Ecumenical Relations Committee reported to General Assembly that "the doctrine of Scripture was critically important in defining the differences between the two Churches". It seems that these differences are now to be forgotten.

Having laid these foundations, the Statement goes on to reflect on the "scandal of divisions" in the Presbyterian Churches, and to suggest a number of practical ways forward. The word "union" is not used, and it is not the immediate intention, but there is nothing in the Statement to suggest that the process is to stop short of union. There is to be a "developing process" with an "expanding framework for dialogue", and one can only think that some people on the Ecumenical Committees must be considering union. It is little short of astonishing that this Statement should have been adopted by the Free Church, and one can only wonder at the rapid changes that are taking place in the denomination.

In his address to the Assembly, the new Free Church Moderator, Rev John

Ross, took a different line. He at least showed he was aware that the Church of Scotland is grossly liberal, and he noted with dismay that Miss Kesting “rushed to indicate her willingness to lead the Kirk down the road to the acceptance of [homosexual] weddings”. His suggestion was that the “confessional congregations” of the Church of Scotland should come out and form a new denomination with the Free Church. His description of this new denomination, however, was far from reassuring: it was to be confessional, caring and contextual, and it would not be obsessed with doctrine. There would be no place in it for congregations which were “unwilling to change”. One change that might be necessary would be in the nature of “sung worship”.

We do not have space to comment further, but there is clearly a crisis of identity in the Free Church at present. The Special Committee on Worship is preparing a *Handbook* which should be ready next year and the issues of musical instruments, the role of women in worship, and “scripture songs” are in the air. The Moderator’s dismissive remarks on doctrine contrast with the words of Rev Kenneth MacRae, a former Free Church minister in Stornoway, at the end of his life: “Some think that doctrine is dry, but I *love* it; I *love chunks* of doctrine, *chunks* of it. It is so full of Christ, full of Christ!”

“Till I come,” said Paul to Timothy, “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. . . . Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim 4:13,15,16).

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## Obituary

### Mrs Mary MacRae

Mary was born at Quidinish in the Isle of Harris in 1913. She was the eighth child of a family of nine. Her father Donald MacLean (see *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church*) was the son of a godly mother. He came to the liberty of the gospel at the age of 40 after being deeply taught by the Holy Spirit. He was the Free Presbyterian missionary in Finsbay, Harris, for seven years before being appointed missionary in Applecross, where he remained until his death at the age of 72. Mary was only five when the family removed to Applecross. She was only 16 when her father passed to his eternal rest. Her mother Ann MacCuish was also a professing woman from Harris.

At 23 Mary was married to Neil Gillanders and the young couple set up home in Applecross. A year later, in 1938, Mary’s husband, his brother and

a friend were fishing in Applecross bay, evidently within sight of their home. A sudden storm blew up and Mary, concerned for their safety, opened her Bible. Her eye fell on the words of Psalm 107:29: "He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still". This encouraged Mary to think that all would be well, but the boat capsized and Neil and his companions were drowned, leaving Mary a widow. This solemn providence had a lasting effect. In 1998, on returning from a church service in Applecross with a friend, Mary spoke of the sweetness of Psalm 107. She then said that it was 60 years from the previous day since the men were drowned, and it was evident that she still felt this loss deeply, even after such a long time. In 1944 Mary was married to her second husband, John MacRae. This was to be a long and happy marriage, and they were blessed with eight children – four boys and four girls.

In June 1963 she met with the Kirk Session of Applecross with a view to sitting at the Lord's Table for the first time. Besides other things, two Scriptures were made precious to her: "I waited patiently for the Lord: and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings" (Ps 40:1,2), and, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Is 1:18). Mary was readily granted church privileges, and her exemplary Christian conduct was noted.

Latterly Mrs MacRae suffered from failing health but it was always a pleasure to visit her at home in Applecross. She was one of the Lord's tried people. God's grace in Mary was seasoned with salt to the end. We gathered that she was often awake in the night, when she found the Psalms of David to be a rich source of spiritual help. Mrs MacRae was a highly intelligent lady, in whom grace was mingled with a warm, loving disposition. As long as she was able, Mary entertained visitors and friends in her home in Milltown, Applecross.

We first met Mary at an Applecross communion in the late 1970s. A number of the Lord's people of long experience were present and it was edifying to be among them. Mary loved the means of grace and remained a faithful member of the Applecross Congregation to the end. The last time we saw her was in Raigmore Hospital, with her sons and daughters around her bed. She knew the end was near and her mind was on eternity. Mary passed away there on Thursday, 11 July 2002. Although her passing was a great loss to her family and to us all, we believe she has gone to be with Christ, which is far better. Her remains were laid to rest in Applecross on 16 July 2002.

*(Rev) J L Goldby*

## Notes and Comments

### Increasing Attacks on Christianity

Richard Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*, is just one indication of virulent antipathy to Christianity. Other similar titles such as *God Is Not Great – How Religion Poisons Everything* by Christopher Hitchens, *The End of Faith* by Sam Harris, and *Breaking the Spell* by Daniel Dennett are, like Dawkins' book, at the top of best-seller lists. When these all-out attacks by atheist writers are so popular it seems to some that the demise of Christianity, and biblical Christianity in particular, is not far away.

This impression is strengthened by the increasing violence perpetrated globally against Christians (of all hues, as well as biblical ones) by Islamic groups, Hindu extremists and totalitarian states. It seems that Christianity is the object of hatred as never before when, for example, "Islamophobia", "racism" and "homophobia" are widely condemned, while few objections are voiced to what someone has termed "Christophobia" – an irrational fear of Christianity and consequent attacks against it.

On the other hand, we may say that these attacks are an indication that Christianity is not the spent force that secularists, humanists, evolutionists, and atheists would have us believe it is. A spokeswoman for one publisher says that religion has been one of the fastest-growing categories in publishing in the last 15 years, and the rise of books by atheists is "the flip-side of that". "It was just the time," she said, "for the atheists to take the gloves off".

The wonderful fact is that, however ferocious and frequent the attacks of the foes of Christianity may be, they will not succeed in eradicating it. Christ Himself assures us that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. Not only so, but Christianity will itself prevail. The Kingdom of Christ will expand until it covers the globe. The prophecy will certainly be fulfilled: "The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (see Daniel 2:34,35,45). NMR

### Looking Down on the Earth

In an article in *The Scotsman* of 21 April 2007, Stephen McGinty recalls the evening in December 1968 when three astronauts in Apollo 8 entered the orbit of the moon and were able to transmit to Earth images of our planet: "Stuck for words to describe a spectacle never before seen, they reached for the Bible and each man read from Genesis. Frank Borman, the Apollo 8 commander, ended with: 'And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that it was good'."

The article records the comments of some astronauts as they reflected on

their view of the Earth from the heavens. We note the following quotations from five different sources. “The sheer beauty of it just brought tears to my eyes.” “I see the deep black of space and this just-brilliantly-gorgeous blue and white arc of the Earth, and totally unconsciously, not at all able to help myself, I said, ‘Wow, look at that’.” “It was the only colour we could see in the universe. We’re living on a tiny little dust mote in a rather insignificant galaxy.” “From up there, it looks finite and it looks fragile and it really looks like just a tiny little place on which we live in a vast expanse of space.” “All of the teachings of the Bible that talk about the Creator and His creation take on new meaning when you can view the details of the Earth from that perspective. So it did not change my faith per se, the content of it, but it just enhanced it, it made it even more real.”

In his very useful and readable book for the scientifically-lay person, *He Made the Stars also* (Day One Publications), Dr Stuart Burgess notes the common motivation for space exploration and for the ambition to discover extra-terrestrial life and identifies it with the rejection of God and with man’s desire for the control of his own destiny and for his own glorification, which inspired the attempt to build the tower of Babel (Gen 11). He illustrates from scientific data the centrality of the earth and of the human race in the universe, how the earth is designed for life and how the stars are designed for the earth. “Even although the earth is small in comparison to the universe, the Bible teaches that the Earth has been uniquely prepared for life and is centre-stage of the universe” (pp 16,17).

It is noteworthy, but not at all surprising to those who believe the truth of the Bible, that, whatever motivates space research, any certain conclusions drawn from it only go to confirm us in that sense of wonder and worship which characterised the psalmist as he looked out into space from earth: “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? . . . O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth” (Ps 8:3,4,9). “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s; but the earth hath He given to the children of men” (Ps 115:16). It is a great wonder that the universe exists for the good of human beings on the Earth. It is an even greater wonder that human beings on this little Earth are at the centre of the wonderful works whereby God shall be glorified eternally. “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?” (2 Chron 6:18).

More wonderful than anything that will be discovered in space is the fact that the man Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, God with us. “Here is a vast wonder, the framing of a soul and body to be the everlasting rest and home of God

Himself” (Alexander Stewart, *The Tree of Promise*, p 55, FPP edition). The work of redemption accomplished by Him for sinners on Earth is the greatest demonstration of the glory of God. That is what gives the Earth its central place in all the works of God and what makes it truly beautiful in the estimation of His people, even though it is now “made subject to vanity” on account of the Fall of man (Rom 8:20). HMC

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## Church Information

### Aberdeen Congregation

At its meeting on Saturday, 5 May 2007, the Kirk Session of the Aberdeen Congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland resolved to hold a second Communion, annually, on the last Sabbath of November, DV.

*Alistair N Macrae*, Session Clerk

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## Acknowledgement of Donations

**The General Treasurer** acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

*College & Library Fund:* A Friend, Newcastle, Is 43:10-12, £40.

*Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Old High St Stephen’s, Inverness, £150 for Ingwenya School and £150 for Thembisio Children’s Home; The Tan Family, Singapore, \$231 for Israel Mission.

**Congregational Treasurers** acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

**Aberdeen:** *Communion Expenses:* Mr & Mrs MacLeod, £20. *Congregational Funds:* North Uist Friend, £25. *Where Most Needed:* Raasay Friend, £10.

**Edinburgh:** *Church Repair Fund:* Anon, £200. *Communion Expenses:* DM & AM, £75. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £100.

**Gairloch:** *Church Repairs:* Anon, £60.

**Glasgow:** *Bus Fund:* Anon, £10, £10, £20, £20, £20, £20, £20, £20. *Communion Expenses:* Mr JMD, Greenock, £100. *Congregational Funds:* Anon, “In memory of the late Mrs MacIver”, £100 per Rev RML; Mrs CMD, Stornoway, £30 per KH; Anon, £200. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £25, £40, £45, £48, £48, £50, £50, £50, £50, £50, £55, £55, £60, £60, £60, £100, £145. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* for Israel: Anon, £12, £50, £100, £300. *TBS:* Mrs M C, £60; Anon, £440.

**Greenock:** *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £20, £20, £25. *TBS:* Anon, £20, £20, £25, £40, £40.

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**Lochcarron:** *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £25, £30, £20; Friend, Applecross, £40, £35, £55.

**North Harris:** *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £30, £30. *Congregational Funds:* J McDowall, £20.

**North Uist:** *Sustentation Fund:* Harris Friend, £40. *Where Most Needed:* Anon, “In memory of the late John M MacDonald, Clachan Farm”, £50 per Rev DMD.

**Raasay:** *Congregational Funds:* The estate of the late Mrs M MacKenzie, £1000 per AN.