

The Young People's Magazine

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The Westminster Confession of Faith

Last month we followed some leading Scottish churchmen to the meetings of the Westminster Assembly which began in London in 1643. We went on to look at one of the works the Assembly produced: the *Shorter Catechism*, which has been so much used, particularly in Scotland, for teaching children and others the basic doctrines of the Bible.

However, the most significant work which the Westminster Assembly produced was the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It is too long for most people to learn by heart. And in contrast with the *Shorter Catechism*, that was never its purpose. The *Westminster Confession* was just one of many documents produced at the time of the Reformation and afterwards, so that Christians could *confess* what they believed.

Most of the Protestant Churches in the various European countries which benefited by the Reformation in the sixteenth century – such as Germany Switzerland and the Netherlands – produced their own Confession of Faith. The Scottish Church produced the *Scots Confession*. In the next century, it was felt in England that a better Confession could be produced, building on all the previous ones. They hoped that the new Confession might be a basis for the various Churches, particularly in Britain and Ireland, coming together.

Another word to describe a document such as a Confession is a *creed*. What, we may ask, is the purpose of a creed? We may base our answer on four points made by the noted American theologian A A Hodge in his *Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith*.

1. After the time of the Apostles, when the writing of the Bible was complete, people did not have a very good understanding of its teachings. Various false teachers appeared, and gradually God raised up godly, learned men who opposed the errors of these false teachers. Augustine and Athanasius were among the most famous of these defenders of the faith in the early Christian centuries. They examined the errors, studied the Scriptures and put forward the truth. And, as the centuries went by, the Church's understanding of God's Word gradually developed.

Early on in the history of the Church, men put forward false views about

the doctrine of God. In opposition to these false views, other men drew from Scripture the true doctrine of the Trinity – that God exists in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then there were difficulties about the doctrine of the Person of Christ, and eventually it was made clear that the Bible teaches that He is “God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever”.

Progress was being made. But everyone should benefit by that progress, not just a few leaders in the Church. So gatherings of church leaders which met in places like Nicea and Chalcedon – in what is now Turkey – formed a creed. These creeds made it possible for the findings of these gatherings to be spread everywhere. They preserved for future generations what had already been learned about the teachings of God's Word.

Later on, at the Reformation in the sixteenth century, men like Martin Luther and John Calvin made great progress in understanding the doctrine of salvation in opposition to Roman Catholic errors. That understanding was preserved in the Confessions of the time. Over the next hundred years further progress was made in setting forth the teachings of the Bible. So, in God's providence, the 1640s in Britain was a specially appropriate time to draw up a Confession of Faith. And we should value the *Westminster Confession* as a means of preserving in a compact form the doctrines of God's Word.

2. The second point follows from the first. If a creed preserves a proper understanding of the truth of God's Word, we can go to that creed to learn these truths ourselves. A creed is not only for ministers, though it is very useful for them. Everyone has a duty to learn what the Bible teaches, and in a creed we can find a summary of these truths. Everyone should make use of the *Westminster Confession* when they are old enough to understand it.

3. Right through the history of the Church, many people have departed from the truth. Even after the Church has stated clearly and accurately what the Bible teaches on a certain point, such as the doctrine of God, there have always been those who put forward false teaching. Large volumes have been written about all the doctrines of the Bible, but if you want a clear, short statement of the truth, it is much easier to go to the *Westminster Confession*. And it has much more authority than a book written by an individual. Something produced by one person would never be called a creed; a creed is always the work of a group of able and respected men in the Church of God. It is probably true to say that the *Westminster Confession* was produced when there were more able and respected men in the Church than at any other time. Scots like Samuel Rutherford and Alexander Henderson, and Englishmen like Thomas Goodwin and Stephen Marshall, who were members of the Westminster Assembly, will always be respected for their godliness and their understanding of the Bible. And the *Westminster Confession* has added

authority because it has been approved by Churches in many countries, including Scotland.

We must remember that the Bible has final authority. What really matters is what the Bible teaches. But we should recognise that the *Westminster Confession* is firmly based on the Bible; it is an accurate summary of what God has revealed. So when we are confronted with false teaching, we may go to the *Westminster Confession* to find out what the truth is. Such a creed is valuable because it allows us to distinguish between true and false teaching.

4. The final point about a creed is that it acts as the basis of church fellowship. One obvious question about a Church is: What does it believe? And one might expect to be told: It believes the Bible. But people with very different ideas about doctrine all claim to believe the Bible. Hence the need for every part of the Church of God to state how it really understands the teachings of the Bible. A creed, besides the uses already mentioned, is a brief statement of how a Church understands the Bible.

But how can anybody be sure that, as one generation follows another, the Church will continue to teach the truth? Clearly it is necessary for all who become teachers in the Church – especially ministers – to promise to keep to the Church’s creed. These teachers must make an honest promise, or else they sin against God, who sees into our hearts. But those who do not keep to the creed of a Church are also acting dishonestly towards those they claim to be in fellowship with.

Two months ago, we looked at the movements which brought about the beginning of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland as a separate body. Why did Rev Donald Macfarlane protest against the changes in what was then the Free Church? The Church had changed its relation to the *Westminster Confession*. This meant that the Free Church no longer valued the clear understanding of the teachings of Scripture which had been handed down from earlier ages. The *Westminster Confession* was no longer to be a basis for teaching the people of the Church; it was no longer to be the document which would distinguish between truth and error; there was no longer a clear, scriptural basis for fellowship between professing Christians in the Free Church. And something had to be done.

We should still very much value what Mr Macfarlane, and those who followed him, did in maintaining a clear witness for the truth in Scotland in 1893. Clearly our first loyalty should be to the Scriptures, but we should value the *Westminster Confession* as a clear and accurate statement of what the Scriptures teach. May Free Presbyterians always remain faithful to these two standards which show what we should believe: first the Bible, and second – as based on the Bible – the *Westminster Confession of Faith*!

The Apostle of the North

1. The Scotland of His Time

Rev D W B Somerset

This is the first part of a paper – given at this year's Youth Conference – on John Macdonald, once a well-known minister in the Highlands. His preaching was much blessed to the conversion of souls.

John Macdonald was born in 1779 and died in 1849. His life spanned a very interesting period of Church history in Scotland, and he himself played a leading part in it. It was a period of revival, and no minister of the time was more active or more used of God than he was.

We begin by looking at the state of the Church and the social conditions of his time. The eighteenth century, when John Macdonald was born, was the great century of Moderatism in the Scottish Church. The Moderates controlled the Church and dominated its General Assembly and pulpits. It is difficult to define *Moderatism* – if you look in books you get different definitions – but one thing is clear: Moderatism was generally anti-evangelical. Some of the Moderates were fairly orthodox, but many were not, indeed some of them were openly liberal and even heretical. Broadly speaking, the Church of Scotland split into two parties, the Evangelicals and the Moderates. Most of the Moderates were not evangelical in the biblical sense – that is, they did not really believe that sinners could be saved simply by trusting in Christ according to the command: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”. They believed that good works contributed towards one's salvation, and in this way they undermined the gospel and corrupted it.

But perhaps the real defining feature of the Moderates was that they were opposed to reform. Some of them were more evangelical than others, but none of them wanted to see the Church of Scotland reformed in any major way. They insisted that there should be room in the Church for liberals and heretics. In 1824 Thomas M'Crie wrote, “It would be a hopeless task to obtain the conviction in the General Assembly of a minister chargeable with error in doctrine or immorality in practice”. This was the effect of Moderate control. Anything went in the Church of Scotland; you could not obtain a conviction against a liberal or a heretic. Some of these Moderates were fairly scriptural in their outlook, but they shielded other people. They would not allow unsound ministers to be disciplined. This seems to be a common feature in Church history: there are men who appear to be have scriptural views themselves but will defend others whose views are dangerously unscriptural.

The great issue of the time, however, was patronage, and, “What are his views on patronage?” was the touchstone of whether a man was a Moderate or an Evangelical. Since 1712, when patronage was restored, the right to choose a new minister belonged to the patron of the parish, not to the ordinary people. The patron was generally a local landowner or the Town Council or, in many cases, the King. The Evangelicals believed that, according to Scripture, the congregation, the communicant members, should have the right to choose the new minister, but the Moderates defended the existing position in which the patron chose the new minister.

From about 1800 onwards there was an awakening in the Church of Scotland. It is difficult to put a date on it, but the number of Evangelical ministers started to increase and their party increased in strength in the General Assembly. In 1805 the Evangelicals had a significant victory in the Assembly in the “Leslie case”, their first victory in over 50 years. The dispute was about the appointment of a new Mathematics Professor at Edinburgh University; in those days the Church was involved in these things. The Town Council elected John Leslie, but the Moderates on the Edinburgh Presbytery – which had the right to advise the Council about the appointment – did not want him, for political reasons. The case was fought all the way up, through the Edinburgh Presbytery and the Synod, to the Assembly, where the Moderates were defeated by 96 votes to 84.

After this the Moderates had to be more careful; they could not assume that they had an automatic majority in the Assembly. Indeed the number of evangelical ministers continued to increase, and from about 1830 onwards it was the Evangelical party that was dominant in the General Assembly. Although in 1824 Thomas M’Crie complained that it was a hopeless task to obtain convictions for immorality or heresy in the General Assembly, things had changed so much by 1831 that a minister was actually deposed for heresy: John McLeod Campbell was put out of the ministry for his views on the atonement and death of Christ. Then in 1833 Edward Irving, a famous early charismatic, was also deposed, for his views on the person of Christ, especially on His human nature. The continuing increase in the strength of the Evangelical party was a sovereign work of God. He was bringing converted men into the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

All this led on to the great struggle with the State over patronage. Once the Evangelical party had become more powerful than the Moderates, they tried to throw off the yoke of patronage and this led to the Disruption in 1843. Those who had the power – the patrons and their friends – did not want to give it up, and the judges supported them in a series of court cases. By 1843 the Evangelicals decided that it was wrong for the Church of Christ

to tolerate this unbiblical interference in the appointment of ministers any longer. They believed that it was right for the Church to be established – that is, to be supported by the government of the country – but that the State was breaking the conditions under which the Church had been established in Scotland, and that the problems were so serious that the time had come to leave. So in 1843, at the Disruption, 470 ministers out of about 1200 left the (Established) Church of Scotland to form the Free Church.

It is interesting to note that although the Evangelical party had a majority in the Assembly, those who were prepared to leave found on the day of the Disruption that they were not a majority. Men who had previously supported them decided that they did not want to leave their manses and salaries after all. There is a strange book called *The Wheat and the Chaff Gathered into Bundles* which goes through all the ministers in the Church of Scotland and comments on how they behaved up to the day of the Disruption. The “wheat”, of course, consists of the Free Church ministers, and one sort of chaff, “chaff of the first class”, consists of the Moderates. The worst sort of chaff, however, is “chaff of the second class”! This consists of the ministers who supported the Evangelical party up to the Disruption but then stayed in the Established Church.

So this was the state of the Church of Scotland during John Macdonald's life. The Moderates were more powerful at the beginning, both in the Lowlands and in the Highlands, but they gradually lost their power through the effects of a revival of true religion.

We should now say a little on the social conditions of his time. These are important because they illustrate the difficulties John Macdonald had to contend with over matters like travel. The distance he travelled is almost incredible, given how difficult it was to go from place to place. You will find that one of the things old books mention about a place is that it had a bridge. Why should a bridge be so significant? We would hardly regard it as very interesting today. But, of course, if we had to wade through every river we came to on our way to this conference, carrying all our stuff on our backs – and with a fair risk of being drowned if there had been heavy rain – we would be delighted to hear that a new bridge had been built. The Duke of Sutherland, who was partly responsible for the notorious Clearances, did some good things, one of which was to build 134 bridges in the Highlands and 450 miles of road. There were other things about the Highlands at this time which show that conditions were difficult, but we can only list some of them: very few roads, very few carriages, often a shortage of food, famines from time to time, a shortage of books and schoolmasters – so that many people could not read.

For Younger Readers

Sent by God

Your minister is a preacher. He stands up in the pulpit to speak about the Bible. He explains to you what the Bible says.

But why has he come to speak to you? Has anyone sent him? Or has he just decided himself to become a minister and to speak to you about the Bible?

All real ministers are sent by God. God has given us the Bible. And He sends ministers to help us understand what it means.

The Bible tells us that we do what is wrong – we sin against God. But it also tells us that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to die for them so that their sin could be taken away. Ministers help us to understand these things. And they call on us to believe on Jesus Christ.

If the minister had to go back to God to tell Him about the congregation, what would he have to say? What would he have to say about you?

What if God was to ask your minister, “Do these children listen when you speak about Me?” What would the minister have to say?

Could he say about the children in his congregation, “Yes, they always listen. When I speak about sin, they know it is wrong. I can see that they now hate it. They love Jesus Christ. They believe in Him as the only Saviour. They have learned how wonderful it is that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And, as I preach about Him, I believe that they are worshipping”?

How good it would be if your minister could speak like that! But can he really do so? If you knew that your minister went back to God to tell Him about how you listen, would it make any difference? Would you pay more attention?

But God sees you when you are in church. He knows if you are paying attention or not. He knows if you are listening or not. Always remember, as you sit in church, that God sees you. He knows what you are thinking about. He knows if you are thinking about what the minister is saying, or about something else. And God is displeased if you are not listening to the minister. God is displeased if you are thinking about something else. Never forget that it is God who has sent your minister.

The Book of Ruth

66. Testifying to God's Grace

Rev Keith M Watkins

Ruth 3:18b. "And she told her all that the man had done to her."

Ruth returned home full of all that Boaz had said and done to her. She was not slow to tell Naomi everything: "she told her all that the man had done to her". No doubt the older woman listened with great interest to all that Ruth had to say. After all, it was Naomi who had told Ruth to go and see Boaz. How they must have rejoiced together!

The Lord's people have something to tell as well: not what Boaz has done for them, but what Christ has done for them. Remember that Ruth's experience with Boaz can be looked on as a picture of the believer's experience of the Saviour. As Ruth told Naomi about Boaz, so the Lord's people can talk about the Lord Jesus. It is good when the children of God are enabled to tell all that the Man Christ Jesus has done for them.

In Psalm 66:16, the psalmist invites us to hear his testimony: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul". Spiritual things – what Jesus has done for his soul – will be the main focus of every believer's testimony. He may be very grateful to the Lord for healing his body, for providing his food and so on. But the chief part of his testimony is what Christ has done for his soul.

The psalmist loved to record what the Lord had done for him. In the opening verses of Psalm 40, he was in a horrible pit full of miry clay – meaning a state of great spiritual trouble. But he began to pray, and the Lord heard his cry. He was lifted out of that pit, and his feet were set upon a rock. He was saved from sin! He was brought to rest on the Rock Christ Jesus, through faith. And then he rejoiced with the new song of one who had experienced God's saving grace. He hoped that, through his testimony, others too would be saved: "many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord".

Then there was the woman with the issue of blood. Secretly she touched the hem of Christ's garment and was instantly healed. When Jesus insisted that someone had touched Him, the disciples were amazed, for a great crowd was pressing upon Him. But He knew that He had been touched in a special, believing way, and He wanted the woman to testify to what He had done for her. She did not really want to tell anyone about it, but when she realised that she could not hide, "she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched

Him, and how she was healed immediately” (Luke 8:47). She told all that the Lord had done for her. The Lord’s people should not be reluctant to make known His grace towards them.

The Saviour rejoices when His people speak to one another of these things. Malachi tells of how “they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name” (3:16). Imagine all the words that are spoken in this world. God hears every one of them. But some words are so precious to Him that He remembers them in a special way. Those are the words of His people when they speak of Him and of what He has done for them. That is real Christian fellowship!

The Lord’s Table is an opportunity for the believer to express what the Lord has done for him. By sitting there, he is saying that he is sitting down by faith under the shelter of Christ’s finished work for sinners. By breaking and eating that bread, he is saying that Christ crucified is to him the Bread of life, without which his soul would starve and die. By drinking that wine, he is saying that only through Christ shedding His blood on the cross can he escape eternal death. Sitting at the Lord’s Table is saying as much as any poor sinner could ever say about what the Lord has done for him!

God’s people have been ready to testify for their Saviour even in times of persecution. It has cost them dear to witness for Him. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, stoned to death because of his fearless testimony to Christ. Years later, when the Roman Empire persecuted them, all God’s people had to do was to deny Christ and they would escape suffering. But that they would not do. Indeed they could not. He was their Saviour and they had to witness for Him, even at the cost of their lives. The devil tried to destroy them, but “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11). The Reformation martyrs, the Scottish Covenanters and various missionaries were no different: they could not deny what Jesus had done for them.

If you are a true believer, witnessing for Christ and what He has done may cost you something too. It probably won’t mean that you will lose your life. But you may lose some friends. Or you may lose peace in your family. Some people lose their jobs for Christ – when, for example, their employer requires them to work unnecessarily on the Lord’s Day. But all real Christians know that Christ even gave His life for them. And the love of Christ constrains them to think about Him like Paul: “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Of course, there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Ruth did not tell everyone in Bethlehem what Boaz had done for her. In Psalm 66, the psalmist wanted those who feared God to hear his testimony. We need to be careful before we open our hearts about the Lord’s closest dealings with our souls. Many would not understand. To use the words of Christ: we are not to cast the “pearls” of deep, spiritual experience before unbelieving “swine” who are not in a right mood to hear. They will only trample underfoot these precious things.

But if you have grace in your soul, there is no excuse for *never* speaking of the Lord and what He means to you. “His name shall be called Wonderful” (Isaiah 9:6). Who will call Him *Wonderful* if His people do not? If they keep silent, will the world not begin to suspect that there is nothing special in Christ?

Before we leave this subject, there is a most important question for us all. Ruth could speak to Naomi because Boaz had indeed done great things for her. True believers in Christ can speak from experience of what He has done for them. But what about ourselves? Do we have any experience of the grace of Christ? Has He done anything for our souls? In a court of law, a witness who has seen nothing and heard nothing will be dismissed. To be a witness for Christ, we must have seen something of His glory and heard His voice in the gospel. We must have felt the working of His grace. Only then can we say, “The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Psalm 126:3). Make sure that *you* have something to say about Christ.

For Junior Readers

Christian's Book

Have you ever read *The Pilgrims Progress*? Perhaps you know that it was written by John Bunyan. He describes the journey of a pilgrim from this world (Bunyan calls it the City of Destruction) to heaven (which he calls the Celestial City). This pilgrim's name is Christian and the story is an allegory – something like a parable, a story with a spiritual meaning. If you have a copy of *The Pilgrims Progress*, perhaps you should look it out and read it. If you have read it already, perhaps you should read it again.

The very first paragraph tells us about the pilgrim. He was “clothed with rags . . . with his face [away] from his own house, a Book in his hand and a great burden upon his back”.

What was the book? It is very soon obvious that the book is the Bible, the Word of God. At once you can see that Christian thinks and acts as he does

because he takes the Bible seriously. Throughout *The Pilgrims Progress*, much of the language comes from the Bible. So we can see how it is used to direct Christian's steps and to support him in trouble. The Bible is indeed precious. It is the only book that can guide you safely into the truth you most need to know. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Surely if God has given you a book which is able to make you "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15), you should value it highly and study it regularly. Shouldn't you read it more, commit it to memory more, and pray over it more?

Psalm 119 particularly speaks about the excellence and the usefulness of this book. Ten different words are used in this Psalm to refer to the Bible:

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| 1. God's law | 6. His Word |
| 2. His way | 7. His judgements |
| 3. His testimonies | 8. His righteousness |
| 4. His commandments | 9. His statutes |
| 5. His precepts | 10. His truth |

These words show us that there are many different ways in which you can speak about the excellence of the Word of God. But we are all spiritually blind by nature. We cannot understand the Word of God without His help, nor can we benefit from it. So you must go down on your knees and cry to God to help you understand the Bible and to make it precious to you. You must ask the Holy Spirit to show you its meaning, to make it a lamp to your feet and a light to your path as you start out on life's journey.

You should try to follow the advice given by a writer of long ago. He wrote like this: "My dear young friends, let me plead with you to make a right use of your Bibles. Wonderful as this book is, it will do you no good to have it unless you use it properly. You ought to use your Bible as the sailor uses the compass when he is at sea. The compass is set down before the man who stands at the helm or the rudder to steer the ship. He keeps looking at the compass in order to find out how he is to steer the vessel, so that he may reach his destination safely.

"And just in the same way the Bible must be our compass. If we read it and study it carefully, then we shall always know what to do – especially if, like David, we read it with the prayer, 'Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law'. This blessed compass will always point us in the right direction. It will guide us safely through all the dangers that are before us in the voyage of life. It will lead us to Jesus as our Friend and Saviour. He will pardon our sins. He will change our hearts, and bring us to His heavenly home at last."

If you would follow this advice, you will be like John Bunyan's Pilgrim. You will have your back to the city of Destruction, the Bible in your hand, and your face set towards heaven. Nothing could be better. *J van Kralingen*

Following God and His Word

This is a letter written recently by an anxious father to his children. It has been slightly shortened.

I have been asked, by someone who has your welfare at heart, to set out from Scripture a few principles for dress. I have hesitated for many weeks, although I am sure Scripture is a light to the path and a lamp to the feet of those who seek after truth with their whole heart (Psalm 119:105). Eventually I have done so because I have seen what confusion it causes when matters clearly set out in Scripture are treated as "matters of conscience" as if our fallen conscience should be set on the same level as God's Word (John 5:39). As the godly in our land become fewer, and the churches become more worldly, the sober example of a walk after Christ is less often seen. The Lord bless each of you with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4) and not just an outward conformity to truth.

Man is totally fallen. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [is] only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22). When our first parents became corrupt, they were given clothes to hide their nakedness (Genesis 3:21). Amidst the sorrows and havoc this disobedience brought among their seed, we get further glimpses through Scripture of this principal reason for wearing clothing, which is a picture of the great need of a covering for the nakedness of our souls (Isaiah 30:1 and Ezekiel 16:8, for example). How vital to be found completely covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness in that awful day when the flood of God's wrath overwhelms the wicked! Would you wish to have one sin left exposed then? Would you not wish to have a complete covering?

Think of the parable of the man who had not on a wedding garment. There will be no trifling then as to how much flesh we can expose and still be "respectable", or how close we can keep to the fashions of the world. I just note in passing that the only example I can find in Scripture of anyone painting their face, apart from the harlot in Ezekiel 23, is that of Jezebel on the day she died (2 Kings 9:30). How useless was that covering to her in the solemn hour when God's wrath fell upon her! The apostles consistently teach, in the practical part of their epistles, modesty and sobriety of dress (as in 1 Peter 3:1-7 and 1 Timothy 2:9). By contrast, it is evil to use clothing

so tight and revealing, or short and scanty, as to draw attention to our poor sin-cursed bodies.

In eternity there will be no distinctions except that between the righteous and the wicked. What a rebuke the Lord of life gave to the religious people of His day: “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:28)! However, on earth each of us has a position in life: masters and servants; kings, magistrates and subjects; husbands and wives; parents and children (1 Peter 2:11-25). It is an evil spirit let loose in the earth that tries to destroy these distinctions. Such is the spirit of communism (a delusion of Satan which has drenched parts of the world in blood since 1917).

Such also is the spirit of feminism, which tries to destroy all God’s distinctions between man and woman (Ephesians 5:21-32, 1 Timothy 2:9-15, 1 Peter 3:1-7). This feminism is not the mind of the Holy Spirit, however. After exhorting servants to be obedient to their masters (1 Peter 2:18), He draws attention to the perfect example of the Lord of glory, “who made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:7), who His own self bare His people’s sins in His own body on the tree, that they being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness (1 Peter 2:24), leaving us an example, that we should follow in His footsteps (v21). Our pride must be abased (painful though it be to the flesh) if ever we are drawn tenderly and humbly after Christ. I will briefly name five distinctions between man and woman, much despised in this day when feminism, already rampant in the world, is boldly marching into the churches.

1. “Every man praying having his head covered dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head” (1 Cor 11:4,5). How can anyone truly pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”, if he is hardening his heart against the Holy Spirit’s express directions? The apostle gives the principle: “I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man (echoing Genesis 3:16), and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3).

2. “Doth not even nature teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering” (1 Corinthians 11:14-15).

3. “Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5:33). “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church” (Ephesians 5:22-23). What a high and holy standard that is for the husband! We love ourselves very dearly – our reputation, comfort, income, position, and the “respect” due to us. Only as grace is given can men love their wives even as

themselves. Nevertheless, the standard is pure, as is all of God's Word.

4. Only men are to be pastors and ministers in the Church of God. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak. . . . And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home" (1 Corinthians 14:34,35). "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression (1 Timothy 2:13-14). No suggestion here that the first 12 chapters of Genesis are a myth, but sober reality. The Lord Jesus sent 12 men, then 70, to preach; and the ministers the apostles ordained in the churches were all men. How can any preach unless they be sent? How can any minister reprove, rebuke and exhort with all authority unless sent by the Holy Spirit? Sooner or later, all other ministers will approve themselves to their hearers by flattering the flesh, and "a man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet". It is also the husband's solemn responsibility to engage in family worship. Perhaps a sober consideration of Proverbs 31 might, with the Holy Spirit's guidance, give an understanding of the "ministry" of women and how important a sphere of labour it is.

5. Holy Scripture also makes a clear distinction between male and female in dress: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5). As John Calvin points out, this text is one of around 24 in Exodus to Deuteronomy which enlarge on God's teaching of the Seventh Commandment. It is exceedingly solemn to despise any of God's precepts. The Lord Jesus endured such suffering as no tongue can tell (Hebrews 2:10) when the wrath of God fell upon Him because of a broken law, to which He gave perfect obedience (Romans 5:19). That is our *only* hope of eternal life. Feminism is all about removing God-given distinctions between men and women. The items of clothing that, throughout Western society, have distinguished between men and women for hundreds of years are trousers and skirts. This is a clear distinction, still universally used today on buildings. God has made a clear distinction between men and women, but feminism rejects God and His Word. Those who fear God wish to cleave to His precepts. Thus, in their walk, and especially in His house, they honour Him by acknowledging this God-given distinction. "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"

We grieve the Holy Spirit when we show some outward attachment to His people while following the fashions of this world. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). How solemn to hear

one and another say, "Well, X does it". Judas and Demas seemed to be pillars in the church in their day, and are now where they earnestly desire water to cool their tongues (Luke 16:24). We are safe only when we follow Christ and His Word. Let God be true and every man a liar. The Lord grant each of us grace to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and a heart to choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Hebrews 11:24).

God's Care for His Children

Mrs Andrade was living in rented accommodation. One day, her landlord came to see her and told her that very soon he would need her house and that she would have to move out. She committed her difficulty to the Lord and waited on Him, for she knew that He would help her.

A few days before she had to move out, she still had not found anywhere to live. One morning her brother came round, and she told him of her plight. He said he could offer her a little house in the city suburbs, quite far away. And two days later he came to help her move. When they arrived at the house, she was disappointed to see that it was almost derelict; it needed major repairs. The plaster was coming away from the walls, the windows were falling off, there were no locks on the doors, and the place was very dirty. But she decided to stay, as she had very little choice. He unloaded the small van and helped her to put her furniture inside. Then he left.

She started to clean the rooms and soon it was evening. At first she thought she would be frightened on her own, because this house was quite far from all her relatives. And she knew that she would not be able to lock the doors. But once again she remembered the Lord's promise: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:7), and she committed her situation to the Lord. She told me that she felt such peace and she soon fell asleep. We read in Psalm 4: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety". How precious to see the promises of God being fulfilled!

The next morning she was up early. After committing her day to the Lord in prayer, she started to tidy up her new house. She said that by the afternoon it was already looking like home. Mrs Andrade was so grateful that the Lord had once again helped her in such a marvellous way.

As the days passed, she realised how far she was from the shops. Because she did not have a fridge she had to go out every day and walk a long way to

buy milk and bread. Walking in the hot sun made her feel quite ill. She became anxious about her health, as she needed to work in order to earn her living. She was very happy in her new home except for this problem of distance.

One day, as she was meditating on the goodness of God towards her, she looked round her tiny kitchen. She noticed an empty space which was just big enough for a small fridge. In her heart she wished she could have a fridge, but that was out of the question, for she could not possibly afford to buy one. She told me that she immediately rebuked herself for her covetousness – after all the Lord's kindness in finding her a place to live.

The next day she went out to deliver some dresses she had made and to do some shopping. It was an unusually hot day and, when she came back home, she was feeling very tired and unwell. When she went into the kitchen to put her shopping away, she looked at the little empty space. She was astonished to see that it was no longer empty; it had been filled with a small fridge! She told me that she knelt down immediately and, with tears running down her face, she thanked the Lord for His unspeakable kindness. She did not try to work out who might have left her this fridge, for she knew it had come from the Lord. Those who believe in the Lord know that their lives are ordered by His providence. In question 11 of the Shorter Catechism we have this definition of providence: "God's works of providence are His most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and their actions".

It was only later that Mrs Andrade found out how the fridge appeared in her house. A friend had seen an offer of a nice fridge in a shop and, after she and her husband had discussed the matter together, they decided it would be a good idea to buy a new one and give the old one to Mrs Andrade. So they brought the small fridge to her little house. As she was out, they just pushed the door open and placed the fridge in the empty little space in the kitchen.

The provision of that much-needed fridge for Mrs Andrade was also the work of God, who is always watching over those who love and fear Him. Would you not like to have such a mighty and loving God on your side? How blessed are those who hide under the shadow of His wings for every difficulty, who sit under His love and protection!

If you seek the Lord, you will find Him. Then you too will enjoy the privilege of having such a God. The psalmist says: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Psalm 18:2). May you come to Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will have God on your side strengthening and protecting you, directing and loving you. But, above all, your soul will be safe in the Lord Jesus for eternity.

C Johnson

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

Prizes and Awards 2002-2003

Senior Section

Prizes: *Blunsdon Hill:* Sarah Woodhams. *Bracadale:* Johan Campbell. *Halkirk:* Andrew and Cherith Sutton. *Inverness:* Ben Fiddes. *Kyle:* Caren Whear. *London:* Anna Rowland.

Awards with Merit: *Blunsdon Hill:* Jo Woodhams. *Bracadale:* Andrew Campbell. *Cranbrook:* Corinne Bailey. *Farr:* Andrea MacQueen. *Glasgow:* Jacqueline Freeke. *Kyle:* Joanne Whear. *Matfield:* Adrienne Woodhams. *South Harris:* Iain MacLean.

Awards: *Fort William:* Johanna MacKinnon. *Gairloch:* Kathryn MacKenzie. *Inverness:* Christine Boyd, Joanne Murray. *North Uist:* Margaret Macdonald, Ryan Macdonald.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Joanna Mackenzie. *Inverness:* Chloe Fiddes. *London:* James G Munns, Naomi Rowland, Josie van Kralingen. *Portree:* Rachel MacCuish. *South Harris:* Stewart MacLean.

Awards with Merit: *Bracadale:* James Campbell. *Farr:* Ruth M MacQueen. *Fort William:* William S Mackinnon. *Glasgow:* Marion Macleod. *Guildford:* Joanna Risbrider. *Inverness:* Hanna J Schouten. *London:* Rebecca Munns. *North Uist:* John A Macdonald. *Peasmarsh:* Alexander Bailey. *Stratherrick:* Jillian M Fraser. *Swordale:* Sara Macleod. *Westerham:* Edward Hanks.

Awards: *Kyle:* Paul Whear. *London:* Lydia Martin. *North Uist:* Rhoda Cameron, Kathleen Macdonald. *Portree:* Finlay MacRaid. *Scaynes Hill:* Sam Main. *South Harris:* Donald Morrison. *Stornoway:* Kimberly Ferguson, Stephen M Macdonald, Angus D Macleod.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Bonar Bridge:* Rebecca and Sandy Campbell. *Bracadale:* Neil Campbell. *Dingwall:* Kathryn Mackenzie. *Dunoon:* Esther Maley. *Glasgow:* Donald Macleod. *Inverness:* Lois H Fiddes, James Fraser. *London:* Elizabeth Munns, Alexander Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Anne R Dickie. *Swordale:* Murdo S Macleod. *Ullapool:* Susannah C Mackenzie.

Awards with Merit: *Dingwall:* Beverly Mackenzie. *Farr:* Caitlin R MacQueen. *Glasgow:* Neil Freeke, Kenneth Gillies. *Highworth:* Becki Woodhams. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell. *London:* David Rowland, Jeremy and Justin van Kralingen. *Larne:* Philip Acton. *North Harris:* Cailean, Eilidh J and Sara McCombe. *North Uist:* Flora Macdonald. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail Main. *Stratherrick:* David Fraser.

Awards: *Guildford:* Matthew Risbrider. *Inverness:* Aonghas Murray, Jonathan Schouten. *London:* Abbie Martin. *North Tolsta:* Chrisann Macleod. *North Uist:* Kerri MacInnes, John Cameron. *Scaynes Hill:* Martha Main. *Stornoway:* Karina Ferguson. *Tomatin:* Lois V Cameron-Mackintosh. *Ullapool:* Siobhan McCulloch.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Alastair Mackenzie, Sarah MacLean. *Edinburgh:* Jonathan MacDonald, Eilidh Logan. *Glasgow:* Hugh Gillies. *London:* Constance Turnbull. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie. *Shieldaig:* Jennifer Goldby. *Stornoway:* Alasdair Gillies. *Stratherrick:* John Fraser.

Awards with Merit: *Bonar:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Neil Gillies. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Natalie Macaskill. *Larne:* Alison Sharp. *London:* William Munns. *North Uist:* Christina Macdonald. *Raasay:* Mairi J Gillies. *Stratherrick:* Roma Macrae. *Ullapool:* Stuart McCulloch.

Awards: *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Daviot:* Alasdair MacQueen. *Fort William:* Rachel M Mackinnon. *Glasgow:* Catherine Freeke. *Inverness:* Catherine Schouten. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *Larne:* Deborah Acton. *London:* Rupert Turnbull. *North Tolsta:* Sean MacLeod. *North Uist:* Alastair Macdonald, Laura MacInnes. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

Lower Primary Section

Barnoldswick: David Martin, Rebecca and Robert Ross. **Dingwall:** Alasdair MacLean, Andrew and Graham MacLeod, Ruth Macleod. **Edinburgh:** Catriona Logan, Daniel and Isla Macdonald. **Farr:** Finlay and Muriel Macrae-Cramp. **Fortrose:** Jerusha and Sarah Nixon. **Gairloch:** Rebecca McBride, Donald and Rachel Mackenzie, Catherine and Mairi Wyatt. **Glasgow:** Ewen and Fiona Beaton, Donna Chisholm, Ian Gillies, Iona Gillies, Kate Gillies, Rachel and Ruairidh Macleod, Callum and Peter Macpherson. **Inverness:** Jonathan Fiddes, Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton, Peter Schouten. **Kyle:** Nathan Whear. **Larne:** Cameron and Renwick Sharp. **Lochcarron:** Malcolm Stewart. **London:** Claudia, Edward and Oliver Martin, Andrew and Edward Munns, Benjamin, David and Rachele Strata, Jemima, Jeremy, Joseph and Lucy Turnbull, Amy van Kralingen. **North Tolsta:** Sheena Mackenzie. **North Uist:** Margaret Cameron, Fraser MacDonald, John A Macdonald. **Peasmarsh:** Alistair Bailey. **Salisbury:** Jill Buchanan. **South Harris:** Catherine Macleod. **Stornoway:** Leah Beaton, Cirsty and Sarah Gillies, Lauren Macdonald, Andrew MacQuarrie. **Stratherrick:** Ewen Fraser. **Uig:** Murdo George Mackay. **Ullapool:** Lewis Mackenzie. **Those who did only Exercise 3:** **Barnoldswick:** Emma Norris. **Dingwall:** Laura MacLean. **Croydon:** Andrew Hickman.

Looking Around Us

How Not to Speak

Some months ago police charged a prominent television personality with a serious offence. Recently the case came to court and no evidence was offered against him. He was free to go. Almost in tears but clearly relieved, he spoke to the media about the difficulties of the time when he was under investigation. He said that he had been “to hell and back”.

But that most certainly was not a suitable way to describe even the most terrible difficulties anyone can experience in this life. It is only as people have become more unbelieving about the truth of the Bible generally, and about the doctrine of a lost eternity in particular, that they refer to hell as carelessly as they do.

Hell is a most awful reality. Think about how the rich man spoke in the Saviour’s parable. He wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to “dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame”.

He was asking for just the smallest amount of water possible, but there was no possibility of getting it. Such mercies are only for this life. And if we reject the greater mercy of salvation through the one and only Saviour Jesus Christ, there can be no hope of the smallest blessing in another world.

Let no one refer lightly to hell. And let no one ever think of wishing that anyone might go to hell. But let us seek earnestly to find the way – Christ Himself – which leads away from every possibility of ever being in hell, the way which leads to everlasting blessedness in heaven.