

THE
Free Presbyterian Magazine
AND MONTHLY RECORD

Vol. LXXI

April, 1967

No. 12

GOD WHOM WE SERVE

The Christian is a sinner who has been divinely favoured with faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation; this salvation brings deliverance from sin and condemnation and the bestowal of the gift of God which is eternal life, upon the believer. In the riches of God's grace, the believer has in view to begin with and primarily the salvation of his soul. But accompanying and following this as a consequence according to the divine will, the believer is saved to serve God and his immediate Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. This is conspicuous in the history of believers both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Serving God obviously includes to begin with the following—confessing the Lord Jesus before men in the Church and the world. Christ declares that He will confess such before His Father which is in heaven. Then there is a life and conversation which becometh the gospel of Christ, in private and public, whereby there is manifested the marks of true godliness; and also a love to and a spiritual and diligent participation in the public and private exercises of God's worship. Do these points exhaust the extent to which service to the Lord may be engaged in? Certainly not! It may be that some Christians think that if they profess Christ Jesus, live carefully and personally a Christian life and attend the House of God regularly, that this is all the service which the Lord may require of them. There are too many circumscribed and inactive Christians in the Church of Christ; and no wonder that Paul writes "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And the divine Master said before Paul's day, "If any man serve me, let him follow me," and "If any man follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." The statements: "Let him deny himself," "Let him take up his cross," and "Be not slothful," and many similar injunctions in Holy Scripture, have great significance and relevance in the matter of serving the Lord here, in a world wherein the heavenly Master is greatly despised. And the Lord Jesus calls

upon His people "to let their light so shine before men, that men may behold their good works, and glorify, their Father which is in heaven."

Let us now glance at some of the ways in which God was served by those who were believers and feared Him, as recorded in the Word of God.

David as a youth when he came to visit his brethren in the camp of Israel, was urged in his heart to go out against Goliath. And when he did so, he said to the giant, "I am come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, Whom thou hast defied." He slew Goliath and thus served the God of Israel and Israel. And Obadiah who was the governor of wicked King Ahab's house and who feared the Lord greatly, took an hundred prophets and hid them in a cave and fed them. This was a practical and difficult service indeed rendered to the Lord's prophets. Then, when Hezekiah desired Israel to once more keep the passover, he sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. There was activity on his part with a view to the people attending upon what concerned the honour and worship of the Lord.

And when we come to the New Testament, therein is revealed the divine example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who went about everywhere doing good, among all kinds and classes of sinners, from the Pharisees to the publicans and harlots. He entered the Temple and the synagogues, but he also visited houses and went by the seaside and the mountain-side, bringing with Him everywhere the glad tidings of the gospel and His teaching regarding the Kingdom of God. In all this, as in His particular work of redemption, He was God's righteous servant.

As to others, who loved the Lord Jesus and served Him in various ways, we may refer to a few. After Lazarus was raised from the dead, Jesus came to Bethany. There they made Him a supper: and Martha served. It appears that the holy Person, character and conversation of Jesus, did not forbid or declare out of place, the making of a supper for Him, and those present. Martha manifested her attachment to the Lord in all that she did in serving. Another form of service meets us in the case of the man of Gadara, out of whom Jesus cast the evil spirits. This man besought Jesus that he might be with Him. But Jesus commanded him: "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee." What did the delivered man actually do? He not only went to his house, but "published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto

him." He served the Lord by witnessing to many others beyond his own family, as to the Lord's mercy and power in his own experience. Then Paul, of course, served the Lord by especially preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to sinners, as many others did. But where did he go with his gospel and teaching? Yes, into the synagogues. But also he made his way to the market daily to discuss the things of the kingdom with them that met with him at Athens, the city full of idols. Paul could say in the market, as in the ship during the storm, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." And now, just one more illustration of service as unto the Lord. When Aquila and Priscilla heard Appolos teaching the things of the Lord, "They took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." This wise service rendered to the Lord's servant, was done as unto the Lord Himself and for the furtherance of the gospel Kingdom.

One may say that those cases, in certain aspects of them, belong to past ages. Albeit, they do nevertheless reveal how God is to be served in distinctive ways, in addition to a personal and circumscribed conformity, by grace, to the whole duty of man, which is, to fear God and keep His commandments.

To serve God, may mean for the Christian a being brought into a very difficult and trying path of duty, constituting a trial of their faith, as in the experience of the three Hebrew children in Babylon whose words we quote, in part, as the heading of this article. Their duty to God was to refuse to bow down before the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar had set up and to be prepared to be cast into the burning fiery furnace as a consequence. This was of course a striking and outstanding trial of faith in the service of God. Yet those godly men said to the king, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King." And they were cast into the furnace, although preserved and delivered. And Paul and Silas, in serving the divine Master, entered into the spiritually dark area of Philippi and suffered in their persons at the hands of the enemies of the Gospel. These god-fearing men did not lead a sheltered life. The three Hebrew children and Daniel were public servants of the State in Babylon and of course Paul and Silas were missionaries, carrying the glad tidings of "the way of salvation" to the regions beyond. This is still the clear and required duty devolving upon the Church of Christ and Christians, to concern themselves, *in one way or another*, with the task of bringing the word of the truth of the Gospel to those who are still sitting in darkness and the shadow

of death. It is not of grace for the Christian to "sit back" and enjoy Gospel privileges, while remaining wholly indifferent as to whether the light of the Gospel reaches others or not. To serve God in respect of the "regions beyond" having the Gospel, may mean for some more thought upon appropriate Scriptures, more prayer, more giving of their temporal substance and even leaving their homes and friends. Serving God has meant for many of His people down through the ages, standing fast in defence of His holy Word and fundamental principles connected with His Church and Cause in the world. A seed shall serve Him; who shall not only believe in the Son of God unto salvation, but shall serve Him with an undivided heart and a willing mind.

NOTES OF A SERMON

Preached by the late Rev. John Martin, Staffin, at Waternish
on the Fast Day of the Glendale Communion, June, 1964
(taken down by a hearer)

"And ye shall seek me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."—Jeremiah xxix, 13.

I. Take notice of the place where these people were.

II. The promise given; when ye seek me ye shall find me.

I. The place where these people were was Babylon. It was the place where hard task-masters were, and they were where God's threat was fulfilled that He would take them down to the Chaldeans. These people were to chastise those who were named the Lord's people. It was a place far away from Judah's land where they had the privilege of God's worship, and where He was well-known. "In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel." (Psalm lxxvi, 1). Babylon was a place of idolatry, and these people mourned when they thought of Jerusalem, the place where they used to worship. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." (Psalm cxxxvii, 1). If you were to think of Zion to-day you would weep sorely.

Babylon may be taken as typifying a people in a state of nature. It is being in this state that keeps them from God, and that keeps them from having a desire after Zion or Jerusalem. When the soul is brought by the Holy Spirit to see Jerusalem he finds himself far from it. All that is before the mind of the wicked is this present evil world, but if the Holy Spirit would effectually call a soul, that soul would see that he was far off from Jerusalem

and peace with God. It is the Lord's true people who pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. These people have been brought to dwell in Zion in this world, and they know in their own experience what it is to have peace with God. The kings of Babylon, like all men in a state of nature, wanted Satan's peace, and would not stop until Zion would be brought down, but there is another day coming when all such would be brought down. However, when a soul begins to remember the Lord, the Lord is about that soul in a special way, and will use His preachers to awaken, direct, guide and encourage that soul. He has many ways of sending His messages to such. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." (Psalm xxxiv, 15). In Babylon, one would say that it was only foolishness to think of Zion, and that nothing would come of their desire to see Jerusalem, because of the power and obstacles that were between them and the object of their desire. In like manner, in the day the soul is quickened, he sees the power that is against him—the power of Satan, and the power of sin. This will cause him to be afraid that he will die where he is, and that whoever will sing Zion's songs, he himself will not be singing them like those who are truly in God's service. However, it is written "that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i, 6). Though your beginning was small your end will be very great. If your beginning was as small as a thought towards God—a single thought that it would be good to be of the Lord's people—see that you nurse it, and see that you do not quench the strivings of the Holy Spirit, and cause Him to depart from you. The thought is from God and not from yourself, and if it is the effectual work of the Holy Spirit, He will take it on to the day of Jesus Christ. It is a promising thing when a man begins to mourn over his state, and sees that he is far from God's peace. Ephraim mourned silently before God for his sins. We have no account of his mourning being made known to any but to God.

There are plenty to-day in a captivity, worse than that of Babylon, who are at peace and well-pleased with their state—a state of nature. Man in a state of nature is happy with his state, and the truth is that no man in a state of nature in Britain, or anywhere else, believes this, that he is under the wrath of God. The Holy Spirit says that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I. Cor. ii, 14). However, in a day that the Spirit comes to the soul, that day he begins to think of himself, and also of God.

He sees that all his sins are committed in the sight of God and believes that there is a God. It is a great day for the sinner the day that he believes that there is a God. There were never so many people in Great Britain who profess to believe in God as there are to-day, but the god they have will allow them to live as they like. They live to themselves, but there is another day coming. Yet the God of the Bible hates evil, and He sees it a great sin when people trample the Lord's Day under their feet. We have nothing at all, personally, against these poor creatures but that they have no respect for God's Commandments. We see cars passing by the dozen in Staffin on a Sabbath morning, and it is very few strangers we see in church. If we keep these people within our gates, will we not be found condemned by the fact that we have not protected the Sabbath Day? That itself, along with other matters, is the downfall of this generation. This fact, of allowing visitors to go out of our houses on the Lord's Day, shows that there is no law in their homes. There are very few in our day who know the name of the Lord. It is God alone who knows where things will stop. One thing is very clear, and that is, that the Holy Spirit has been grieved away. How sad it is that people do not ask these strangers in their homes to keep the Sabbath. It is a sad state of affairs when people show no respect to the Sabbath, or even to man. We are going to eternity. If we were to stay here always, there would be no reason to trouble ourselves, but we are going to eternity. There were many things that we saw and went past us, but there is one thing that we cannot avoid, that is, to meet with God. He is to meet with us either as a God of peace or as a lion. Of others He said, "I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion; the wild beast shall tear them." (Hosea xiii, 8). Thus will God deal with the Sabbath-breakers of Scotland.

To-day, people will speak of a God of love as if He had no other attribute, but they shall find that there is no such a God. There is love in God, but there is also holiness and righteousness in Him. The Judge of all the earth will do right. If we do not believe in Him we shall die in our sins. It took those who were in captivity in Babylon a long time to think of God, and this was the case with many who were long in this world in the service of sin. The Lord's people have to confess that the time past of their life sufficed "to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, and abominable idolatries." (I. Peter iv, 3). They got to know that

those who are in the flesh cannot please God, and if we cannot please God through Christ, what glory has man when he goes down to the grave and to death? Any honour that man has will not follow him when he goes down to the grave. It is not so with God's people, for their works will follow them. When a soul is awakened he finds that he is in the midst of his idols. He sees that all his idolatry has come in between him and God, and he is quite convinced that all along he has been worshipping self and the flesh, and did not worship the living and true God. He realises now that if he dies in his present state he will be separate from God to all eternity.

II. The second thing that we were to consider is, the promise given: When ye shall seek me ye shall find me. They had a special duty laid upon them, that they would seek Him with all their heart. This is a duty laid upon all, and especially those who search the Bible, because He alone can cleanse us and clothe us, and in Him alone is there life. If we went from one end of the earth to the other, we would not meet with any that could cleanse us, and if we would search Heaven for angels they could not cleanse us. There is not one angel who could save us, but this Holy One has a fountain to cleanse, and a balm to heal the poor bruised people of God. "And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." (Psalm xxxiv, 22). In spite of all their fears none of them shall perish.

The first thing is to seek Him—and that implies that they know that He is not with them, or that they have found Him. What good would it do us to seek what we have already got? Our sins have separated us from God, so that, by nature, we have Him not. He is not a Saviour to men in a state of nature, nor a strong tower. He is a stranger to their souls, and you know that there is a difference between a friend and a stranger, literally, so there is a great difference between Christ as a stranger and Christ as the Friend of your soul. When a soul has gone from death to life, old things have passed away, "Behold all things are become new." II. (Cor. v, 17), but the soul to whom Christ is a stranger is still under the wrath and curse of God. He is on the broad way, but the people who are seeking Him, see a peace which they have not got.

They are seeking Him in the means of grace in private and public.

When God set up Zion, He also set up His ordinances where He would meet with those who wait on Him. If we got Christ for our souls in public, we would also seek Him in private. He met many a soul in private prayer, and in His own Word. Do

we search the Scriptures? Do we seek that Christ would make Himself known to us? The soul must be diligent in searching for Him. When one seeks anything, he keeps his eyes open, and searches diligently, and this also proves the value set upon that which we have lost. We would not search for it if we knew where it was. When the Holy Spirit comes, we will discover that we have lost communion with God. If we do not find Christ we are lost. Christ is the portion of His Israel; He is the Physician for soul and body. We lost our holiness by sinning against God in the day when Adam fell, and, to-night, in Waternish, everyone in a state of nature are lost. To have lost everything means that we have nothing at all. To-night, going to eternity, what have we got but that which will not stand us before God? Christ is a stranger. He said to others that the things belonging to their peace were hid from them. They have eyes for worldly things, but what is hid from them belongs to their peace. But in seeking, we seek for the One who opened the eyes of the blind; that is one of His prerogatives. We must seek.

You remember how Balaam spoke. He said his eyes were opened, but he did not have spiritual eyesight. But the one who seeks God, his eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit, and the day will come when he shall see the King in all His glory. What would it do for a blind man to seek what he lost, but those who seek, and are still finding themselves blind, the Holy Spirit has given them as much light as to convince them that they cannot do without Him. They seek Him in God's Word, and among His people, and they seek Him with all their heart. This morning we spoke of those whose hearts were divided, and try to do service to two masters. This is not the case with these people. They wish with all their heart that they would find Him in His own means. When a soul seeks with all his heart, this means that the soul will come down like Zacchaeus came down, and he came down at once. The Holy Spirit will bring the soul to the dust. He who is conscious of going to eternity, and seeking Christ, that soul will not labour in vain. Some complain of spending their labour in vain. That is true literally, and those who live to themselves will one day find that they have laboured in vain. They will say, in prospect of everlasting destruction, We have laboured in vain. How sad this is in a lost eternity, but it is little that many think of this to-day, with all the so-called happiness they have. That happiness will soon be lost at the Great Day, when they shall go to everlasting flames. They will say then, We have spent our labour in vain. And on that day,

to those who seek Him in this world, and who are mourning that they are not finding Him, He will say, A broken heart is an acceptable sacrifice, which I, the Lord, will accept. He will reward them. These people will be a wonder to themselves. He will pass over their sins, and cast them into the ocean of His forgetfulness. "As far as east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm ciii, 12). Their sins will never meet these people. While here, the enemy will remind you of them and you will grieve over them. David said, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness sake." (Psalm xxv, 7). But God will not set your sins before you for you will be perfect in Glory.

Seek me, and ye shall find me. The promise is, ye shall find me. Keep seeking until ye shall close your eyes in death, and you shall find Him. God, the Father, has a hold on them, and Christ says that none shall pluck them out of his Father's hand. Christ has a hold of them also, and He will be with them for evermore. How happy the people are who are saved by the Lord. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Deut. xxxiii, 29).

"In Judah's land God is well known,
his name's in Israel great;
In Salem is his tabernacle,
in Sion is his seat."

—Psalm lxxvi, 1.

THE PAGANISM OF CREMATION

1. An Abomination To The Lord

Cremation is of pagan origin. To burn their dead was and still is the recognised custom of heathen peoples. Cremation was virtually unknown in Britain until late in the 19th century, and did not obtain legal sanction until early in the 20th century. Its introduction coincides with the apostasy of the latter days, "when men will not endure sound doctrine—and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4, 3, 4). Hence the paganism of our day, of which cremation is one of the proofs. Cremation belongs to the worship of Molech, all the rites of which were an abomination to the Lord. Against

them He gave repeated warnings to His people Israel. "Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 18, 30). The rites of Molech worship are specifically mentioned as "one of these abominable customs" (v. 21). How solemn the judgments threatened! "For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people" (Lev. 18, 29). "And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name" (Lev. 20, 3). Hundreds of years afterwards the prophet Jeremiah declares, "For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire: which I commanded them not neither came it into my heart" (Jer. 7, 30, 31).

Families and individuals may consider themselves modern, and abreast of the times in having their dead cremated, but neither the fatuities of modernism, nor the worthless prayers of ministers officiating at cremation services, can avert the judgments of the Most High. What God has said shall stand: "And I will set my face against that man."

2. Excuses For Cremation

Two main stock arguments are put forward by the advocates of cremation, writes James Griffin in "Cremation Historically and Theologically Considered." These are: (1) Sanitation; (2) Land accommodation.

1. Human and communal experience throughout the centuries belies the "Sanitation" argument, which resolves itself into mere theorising without a vestige of fact to support it. In many of our ancient churches lie buried some members of eminent families of long ago, but there is no evidence whatsoever of any worshipper in those churches ever having contracted any kind of infectious disease with the added danger of spreading an epidemic. Nor are there any authentic instances of pollution of water supply such as to provoke epidemic diseases in people living in close contiguity to a cemetery or a graveyard. It is reasonable, therefore, to maintain that, having through the centuries in which there were neither legal obligation nor legislative and administrative activities to enforce laws of sanitary procedure, the nation escaped without

any recorded outbreak of diseases from the incidence of public burials, the possibility of any such experience in these days of advanced knowledge in the science of sanitation would surely be exceedingly remote.

2. Land is available for extension of pleasure pursuits, for building purposes and for various forms of industrial and social development. Why land for burials should be excluded from the category of uses for which land is unrestrictedly obtainable, requires some adequate explanation. It would be a staggering revelation to consider, and to compute, how many bodies could be buried in the acres which the crematoria of this country now cover! Those acres alone, if applied to burials instead of buildings, would undoubtedly provide sufficient burial space for generations yet unborn!

3. Burial Scripturally Defended

"There is no trace of cremation in the Word of God," writes A. J. Pollock in "Pagan Cremation or Christian Burial." For human beings to be burned with fire, according to the Scriptures, is reserved as a punishment for the wicked, and not an act of respect of the living to the dead, as Christian burial is.

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3, 19). These were the words of God addressed to Adam, and form part of the sentence He passed upon him for his sin in partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is plainly stated that death is the penalty of sin. It is as plainly stated that just as Adam was created out of the ground so he is to return unto the ground. God ordained burial in the earth as the way of the disposal of the bodies of the dead. "Till thou return unto the ground" was and is God's decree for sinful men. Cremation goes right against this basic law of God and thereby stands condemned for all time. Let there be no mistake about that (p. 9).

"The late Dr. Edwin Slossen (a chemist of international fame) has recorded his conviction that 'the greatest miracle of the Bible is its chemical accuracy. The first book of the Bible says man was made out of dust of the earth and this is literally and scientifically true. In the dust of the earth there are 14 different chemical elements and in the body of man there are those same 14 chemical elements.' The perfect correspondence suggests that for some purpose or reason which none can precisely fathom, God ordained that the body with its elemental correspondences with the soil shall 'return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken;

for dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.' " (Gen. 3, 19). "Cremation Historically and Theologically Considered," by James Griffin (p. 7).

There is not a single instance of any of the Lord's people in either the Old Testament or the New being cremated. They were all reverently buried. We read that Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab against Beth-peor by God Himself (Deut. 34, 6). The divinely-inspired Apostle, in writing of the resurrection body of believers, says: "It is sown (not cremated) in corruption: it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness: it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15, 42-44).

"Know ye not," said the apostle to the Corinthians, "that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid" ((I Cor. 6, 15)). Cannot the question be pertinently put. Shall I then take the members of Christ, and prostitute them at death to pagan form of burial? God forbid. In either case the giving over of the body to fornication or to cremation is a shameful and gross violation of God's revealed will. Flowers and prayers and beautiful singing cannot alter the solemn fact that cremation is an abomination in God's sight, a pagan practice to be shunned and abhorred.

Surely the burial of the Saviour in the grave is the last word on the subject for any believer! The Church of God has in the infallible Word an account of the burial of the Lord. Through His death and resurrection He robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. The grave, He has bequeathed as a place of rest for the bodies of His people until the resurrection of the Last Day (John 6, 40), when "all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5, 28, 29).

"Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain" (Jer. 10, 2, 3). Let us rather learn of Him who hath said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14, 21). (No. 32: A Westminster Standard Publication. For further copies write to Westminster Standard, 183 Rutene Road, Gisborne, N.Z. 2d.)

FRIENDLY VISITS

by Matthew Henry

(Continued from page 310)

Lay before you (my brethren) the example of the Lord Jesus, and as He was so let us be in this world; walking as He walked—as in other things, so in this: let us make visits as He did, with a design to do good, according as the sphere of our activity is. His lips dropt as a honey-comb, and fed many; let our's do so too, as we are able. Wherever He was, still He was about His Father's business; and let us, though unworthy such an honour, still endeavour to be so employed. When He visited His friends, He sympathised with them in their griefs, comforted them under their afflictions, reproved them for what was amiss, and entertained them with edifying and instructive discourse, taking rise for it usually by an admirable yet imitable art from common occurrences; and these things are written for our learning: *Go thou and do likewise.*

And that we may be thoroughly furnished, like the good householder, who brings out of his treasury things new and old, let us daily pray to God for that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand His way in everything. There is no one grace that we are more particularly directed and encouraged to pray for than this; (Jam. i: 5) *If any man lack wisdom* (and which of us is there that does not?) *let him ask it of God, who gives liberally and upbraids us not* with our former follies, our present necessity, or the frequency of our addresses and applications to Him. Solomon, who in his youth made wisdom his choice, wisdom his request, had that granted him, and abundance of other good things added thereto. In putting up this petition, let us, therefore, be not only constant and earnest, but very particular: Lord give me wisdom to direct me in such a case that is difficult and doubtful! Lord enable me to behave myself wisely in a perfect way towards my family, and my friends and neighbours whom I visit, and to walk in wisdom also toward them that are without, that my profession of religion and relation to Christ, may never suffer damage or reproach through any imprudence or indiscretion of mine; in any visit, given or received.

And lest this wisdom should degenerate into that which is worldly, and err by an excess of caution, let us pray to God for a spirit of holy boldness and courage also, that we may be enabled to appear and act for God and godliness in all companies, and upon all occasions, with that pious zeal which becomes the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, that all we converse with may see, that we serve a Master whom we are neither ashamed or afraid to

own; and that we have ventured all our credit with men, upon the security of that promise of God, *Them that honour Me I will honour.*

PROTEST RE SEXUAL OFFENCES BILL

The Religion and Morals Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, taking into consideration the fact that the Sexual Offences Bill was passed without a division on its Second Reading in the House of Commons on Monday 19th December 1966, and alarmed at the prospect of the Bill becoming law, herewith renew our Church's solemn and emphatic Protest against the legislation contained in it.

The Courts of our Church have already indicated that any attempt to legalise the abominable sin with which the Bill deals would be viewed by us with abhorrence, and would be regarded as an exceedingly grave and retrograde step. Notwithstanding, (1) the many plausible reasons brought forward in support of the Bill, (2) its favourable reception by dignatories in Church and State, and (3) the approval now given to it by the House of Commons, we remain implacably opposed to it, being convinced that the temporal, moral and spiritual interests of our land demand that it should never become law.

We feel obliged respectfully to warn the Government of the danger we expose ourselves to as a nation in allowing any scope to practices of this kind. Scriptures specifically and repeatedly warns us of the danger of tolerating this particular sin, and of the severe judgments which inevitably follow it. In Jude, for example, we read: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The warnings of Scripture regarding the God-provoking nature of this sin can only be disregarded by us at our peril.

The Committee are further persuaded that the Bill, if it becomes law, will diminish the legal restraints to this heinous sin, will give legal protection to those who indulge in criminal and unnatural lusts, and consequently give encouragement for the further extension of this particularly depraved type of human conduct. We support whole-heartedly the maintenance of all existing legal safeguards which in any way deter from the practice of sodomy, and which tend to preserve our nation from the moral pollution of it. We regard it as vital to the very life and existence of the nation that these safeguards be maintained.

We regret the fact that the Government did not use its large

majority in the House of Commons to quash this Bill, and we believe that it will not prove to its honour that it did not do so. Weighty responsibility lies upon the promoters and supporters of the Bill for the solemn consequences which must follow should it become law.

We respectfully urge the Government to act even at this late hour to prevent this outcome by rejecting the Bill on its Third Reading.

Copies of this Protest have been sent to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Scotland—D. B. MacLeod, Convener.

COMMON MARKET

(Letter sent to the Prime Minister)

Sir,

The Religion and Morals Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, noting the present series of talks between our Government and several European Governments, preparatory to a further application to join the Common Market, desire to bring to the Government's notice our continued opposition to this proposal.

We oppose it, among other reasons, on the following grounds:—

1. That the Party which made entry into the Common Market one of the main promises of its election manifesto was ignominiously defeated at the last General Election indicating, we think, the lack of popular support for this movement.

2. That the signing of the Treaty of Rome would involve a degree of loss of sovereignty for which, we believe, the Government has no mandate without first consulting the wishes of the people through a referendum.

3. That entry into the Common Market would mean political and economic ties to a group of nations which are predominantly Roman Catholic in character, and that this would jeopardise our Protestant constitution and heritage.

4. That the most optimistically hoped for political, technological and economic benefits through entry to the Common Market would not outweigh the loss we would sustain through the subversion of our national Protestant character and institutions.

5. That the spiritual and material prosperity of our country does not lie in an alliance with the nations of Europe, but in an unfeigned return to the God whom we have forsaken, and whose favour, as a nation, we have forfeited. "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 3, 7).

The Committee further noted with profound regret your visit, accompanied by the First Secretary, to the Pope at the conclusion of the recent discussions in Rome, and the exchange of gifts which took place at that meeting. Having regard to the unique and blasphemous claims of the Pope of Rome to be Christ's Vicar on earth, and to possess spiritual and temporal jurisdiction over rulers and nations, we cannot but view all such recognition of this usurper of Christ's prerogatives as prejudicial to the secular and religious interests of our country. We protest against this visit to the head of a system which is attempting, by all the means at its disposal, to bring our nation into the same fetters of ignorance, superstition and idolatry from which, through the mercy of God, we were delivered at the time of the Reformation.

We further deplore the Sabbath desecration connected with the present series of talks, through travelling to meetings on the Lord's Day, in direct violation of the divine precept—"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." This disregard for God's honour would itself render any hoped for benefit from the discussions null and void. "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Samuel 2, 30.

On behalf of the Committee

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) D. B. MACLEOD, Convener.

TRIBUTE

The Late Mr Robert Watt, Elder, Inverness

On learning of the removal from our midst to his eternal rest after a lingering illness of our highly esteemed and well loved friend, Mr Robert Watt, for many years a member of this Court, the Northern Presbytery feel that some expression of the high regard in which we held him and some recognition of his Christian character and services should find a place in the records of this Court.

Mr Robt. Watt was a man of ripe christian experience, who bore clear testimony throughout the greater part of his life to the grace of Christ bestowed upon him, and having finished his course after serving his master faithfully for nearly 40 years, he was called into the Master's presence to receive the reward of his labours.

A native of Lyster near Wick, Caithness, he was called early in life to follow Christ, and manifested from the outset a strong, lively faith, was sincerely and warmly attached to all who feared the Lord, and was zealous in every good word and work in further-

ing the Cause of the Gospel. He was no stranger to the devices of the devil and had his own share of the afflictions of life, having suffered again and again family bereavement in the loss of 4 sons and 2 daughters, which, however, he bore quietly and meekly, recognising it as being the Lord's will. He became an elder of the Inverness congregation, and almost at once on assuming office, began to hold services in the congregations around Inverness, particularly in the Tomatin congregation, where his labours were greatly appreciated. Here he laboured diligently till failing health compelled him reluctantly to resign at the end of June 1966, as he himself expressed it, "after 20 years with the congregation as a poor weak sinner in the Lord's service." He served also as member of both Presbytery and Synod, and also gave valuable help on the Church's Committees.

The cause of our Church has been made very much the poorer by the loss of this affectionate and humble-minded Christian. His public exercises, and especially his public prayers were always edifying to listen to, for often he obtained access to the Throne of Grace. He was a most peaceable man, exemplifying the cheerfulness of true piety. He was never heard to complain of life's troubles, which he bore with meekness, and during his last illness he gave evidence that he was fast maturing for the heavenly country and often expressed a longing to go to be with Christ. We believe he now rests from his labours and his works do follow him. May the Lord raise up children to take the place of the fathers. "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men"—Ps. xii, v.l.

The Court wishes to express sympathy with his like-minded widow, and with the surviving members of his family. That the God of their fathers may be their God, is our sincere prayer.

The Late Mrs Kenneth MacRae, Lochcarron

"Mark thou the perfect, and behold the man of uprightness;
Because that surely of this man the latter end is peace."

These are the words of Scripture (Psalm 37/verse 37 metrical version), which we seek to follow in recording the removal from time to eternity of the late Betsy Matheson of Lochcarron on 18th July 1966.

Although this woman was blessed with a godly upbringing, she being the daughter of the respected Donald and Jessie Matheson of Drumbuie, Kyle; it was not on that privilege that she rested her soul for eternity, but she came to experience the power of the Truth bringing her to the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, which is life eternal. In the light of the Day of Judgment and of eternity she felt her need of the Son of God the

Mediator, and she was enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit secretly operating within her soul, to trust in Him alone for her salvation.

Evidences of this inward experience were not lacking in her life. In her hospitable home at ' Millbank ', Lochcarron, she showed her love to the brethren and her desire to serve the Lord in providing for the Lord's people as they had need.

Her loyalty to the Church was of such a nature that manifested a heart appreciation of the doctrines and practices within its pale, and was not a mere sentimental regard for a hereditary institution. Her regularity in attending the services of the church both on week-days and on the Lord's days was not a mere ritual observance of external formalism but a seeking to be enriched in her soul's experience for eternity with what she might hear there from time to time. Nor was she unable to distinguish the seasons and times of refreshing to her own soul in the ordinances. Of the ministers now departed she recalled with special delight the ministrations of the Rev. Donald Macleod of Shildaig and of the Rev. Archibald Beaton of Gairloch. Aware that what we are in secret that we are before the Lord, and no more, her private life was according to her public profession and in secret she was given to prayer to reading and to singing the praises of the Lord who redeemed her soul from death.

The illness of which she died was of a very short duration and during that period it was evident to those around her that she was seeking by grace to appreciate, by the exercise of a living faith, the promises of God's Word, and that promise in Isaiah 43 verse 1 which has been such a comfort to many of the Lord's people in affliction, " When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee;" was in a special way upholding her.

The husband and family which she has left will no doubt fulfil what is written in Proverbs 31 verse 28, " Her children arise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praiseth her."

—A. MacD.

POSADH AN ANAMA RI CRIOSD

Leis an Urr. Eideard Pearce (A.D. 1672)

II Cor. xi: 2

Caib. I. *Anns am bheil dol a stigh air a dheanamh do'n chuspair a tha fa'r comhair, a bhunait air a suidheachadh, agus na nithean a tha sinn gu bhi'g amharc a stigh anna, air an toirt air adhart.*

'S e daimh cùmhanta nuadh ri Criosd, gu cinnteach a' nì is cudthromaich, agus anns am bheil an luach is àirde do chlann nan

daoine. 'S e a nì e a tha'n a luidh aig bun fìor shonas, araon ann an ùine 's ann an sìorruidheachd: as eugmhais, mar a tha diadhair foghlumaichte ga chur gu maith, cha'n eil sinn 'n ar Crìosduidhean, cha'n eil annainn ach closaichean Chrìosduidhean; nì motha a dh'fhaodas sinn suil a bhi againn buannachd thearnaidh bho nì air bith a rinn na dh'fhuiling Crìosd air son peacaich bhochd. Agus tha'n daimh so, a tha cho cudthromach agus cho luachmhor dhuinn, air a chur fa'r comhair aig amaibh fodh riochd rìgh agus iochdarain; uime sin, tha Rìgh nan Naomh air a ràdh ri Crìosd; aig amaibh fodh riochd athair agus a chlann, uime sin tha'n t-Athair sìorruidh air a ghairm dheth; agus is iad a bhriathran Fein ri Dia an t-Athair: "Feuch mise agus a chlann a thug Dia dhomh." Aig amaibh fodh riochd Ceann agus buill; bh'uathe so tha Crìosd air a ghairm 'n a Cheann a chuirp, na h-eaglais; agus air an laimh eile tha e air a ràdh gur e creidmheach corp Chrìosd, agus 'n am buill do aon a cheile. Agus gun a còrr ainmeachadh: aig amaibh (mar 'n a ar ceanteagaisg, II Cor. xi: 2, agus bitheanta an àiteabh eile) tha e air a chur fa'r comhair fodh riochd fear agus bean, fear-phòsda agus bean-phòsda, na mar phòsadh an anama ri Crìosd mar aon Fhear-phòsda, agus fodh'n riochd so, le Dia a bhi ga'm a chuideachadh, labhraidh mì beagan, agus cha bhi ann ach beagan, gun an còrr ach a bhi deanamh slighe do rùn sònraichte a th'agam 's an amharc, a chùim a bhi cosnadh agus a tàladh anamaibh bochda a stigh do chùimhnanta ceangal pòsaidh ris an Fhear-phòsda bheannaichte so, an Tighearna Iosa Crìosd.

'S e, uime sin, a' nì a tha fa'r comhair a bhi labhairt air a phòsadh a tha eadar Crìosd agus creidmheach; agus a chùim an t-slighe fhosgladh nì's fearr a chùim so, faodaidh sinn beachdachadh air gu'm bheil pòsadh trì-filte eadar Crìosd agus sinne.

(1) Tha'm pòsadh pearsannta, agus is e sin, eadar Pearsa Mhic Dhé, dara Pearsa na Trianaid, agus ar nàdur-ne: tha *Calvin* a gairm so "am Focal air a dheanamh 'n a fheoil"; oir mar a tha'n soisgeulach ga chur, "Rinneadh am Focal 'n a fheoil" (Eoin i: 14). Tha sinn gu coitchionn ag ràdh ri so, aonadh dà nàdur ann an aon phearsa.

(2) Tha'm pòsadh diomhair ann; agus 's e sin eadar Pearsa Chrìosd, an Dia-duine, agus pearsa chreidmheach mar a tha iad air an talamh, Crìosd slàn agus an creidmheach slàn air an deanamh 'n an aon; 's e so a' nì ris am bheil an t-Abstol ag ràdh, a bhi air an ceangal ris an Tighearna, agus a bhi dhe'n aon spiorad Ris (I Cor. vi: 17), agus their sinn gu coitchionn aonadh spioradail ris.

(3) Tha'm pòsadh neamhaidh a tha eadar Crìosd agus an eaglais a tha shuas ann an glòir; nì da-rìreadh a tha'n a choimhlionadh

air na dhà a dh'ainmich sinn air thoiseach; agus chanain ri so an t-aonadh glòrmhor; agus ciod e sin cha'n urrain dhomh innse, ach tha dòchas agam a thà mi dol a dh'fhaicinn.

Anns a cheud aon dhiubh so tha 'n a luidh bunait ar 'n uile aoibhneas; anns an dara aon, tha sinn air ar toirt gu bhi seilbheachadh ceud-thoiseachadh a bhi comh-phàrtachadh dheth; leis an treas aon, tha sinn air ar cur ann an làn sheilbh, agus a mealtuinn dheth gu bràth. Nis cha'n e cheud aon na an aon mu dheireadh, ach an dara aon dhiubh so a tha'n t-Abstol ann an so a labhairt air 'n uair a tha e 'g radh, " Rinn mi ceangal-pòsaidh eadar sibh agus aon fhear." Nì, a reir sin, a nì mi 'n a chuspair an t-searmoin a tha tighinn; nì is e mar an ceudna suim a' nì a tha'n t-Abstol a ciallachadh, a dh'fhaodas sibh a ghabhail anns na briathran aithghearr so, 's e sin, gu'm bheil pòsadh beannaichte, na daimh pòsaidh, eadar Crìosd agus creidmhich; na gu'm bheil creidmhich pòsda ri Crìosd mar an aon Fhear-pòsda.

" Rinn mi ceangal-pòsaidh," arsa an t-Abstol, " eadar sibh agus aon Fhear;" cha'n ann ri mòran, ach ri aon; agus co E sin? Co ach Crìosd, an Dia-duine: agus mar sin thà na h-ath briathran a cur an ceill, " Rinn mi ceangal-pòsaidh eadar sibh agus aon fhear, chùm 'ur cur mar oigh fhior-ghloin an làthair Chrìosd." Tha'n nì ceudna air a chur fa'r comhair ann an Sgrìobhturan eile." An tì aig am bheil a' bhean nuadh-phòsda, is e am fear nuadh-phòsda e " (Eoin iii: 29). Tha Eoin Baiste ag ràdh so a thaobh Chrìosd agus na h-eaglais; agus a ris, " Thig an so," tha'n t-aingeal ag ràdh ri Eoin, " nochdaidh mise dhuit a' bhean nuadh-phòsda, bean an Uain " (Tais. xxi: 9), 's e sin an eaglais, neach is e ceile Chrìosd: ach stadaidh mi aig a sin.

Ciod e'n daimh pòsaidh so eadar Crìosd agus creidmhich, agus, mar an ceudna, Cionnas a tha e air a thoirt mu'n cuairt? Is e so na prìomh nithean a thà sinn gu bhi rannsachadh, a chùim a bhi soilleireachadh na tha fa'r comhair; agus, uime sin, theid mi air m' adhart gu bhi beachdachadh orra.

Caib. II. *An ceangal pòsaidh eadar Crìosd agus creidmhich air fhosgladh suas; agus ciall a' nì air a chur sìos ann an coig nithean.*

Ach ciod e'n daimh pòsaidh a tha'n so eadar Crìosd agus creidmhich? Tha'n t-Abstol, ann a bhi labhairt air, ag ràdh gur e diomhaireachd mhòr a th'ann: a deir e, " Is diomhaireachd mhòr so: ach tha mi a labhairt mu Chrìosd agus an eaglais " (Ephes. v: 32). Tha mi a labhairt mu'n phòsadh spioradail a tha eadar Crìosd agus a shluagh; nì, da-rìreadh, is e diomhaireachd mhòr, is e th'ann ach nì uaigneach follaichte; nì a tha follaichte bho reusan dhaoine, agus gun a bhi air a thuigsinn ach le foillseachadh

bho Dhia, agus solus an Spioraid Naoimh. Cho fad agus a thuigeas sinn e, faodaidh sinn an cùntas aithghearr so gu coitchionn a ghabhail dheth. Is e th'ann ach an ceangal spioradail na'n daimh a thà eadar Criosd agus creidmheach, eadar Pearsa Chriosd agus pearsachan chreidmheach, ag eirigh bho E bhi gabhail còmhnuidh anna le a Spiorad, agus an dùnadh-san Ris tre chreidimh. Dh'fhaodadh mòran a bhi air a ràdh gu bhi fosgladh suas a cho-dhùnadh choitchionn so; ach gabhaidh mi thairis air, agus bheir mi dhuibh fìor nàdur a' nì a tha fodh'r comhair, gu sònraichte mar a tha e'g giulainn na coig nithean so ann. I. Tiodhlac saor agus saoi-bhir. II. Aonadh dlùth agus càirdeil. III. Co-chomunn milis agus maireanach. IV. Aignuidhean làidir agus blàth. V. Fois agus tlachd do aon a cheile gu bràth.

I. Tha'n daimh pòsaidh a tha'n so eadar Criosd agus creidmheach, a giulain maille ris tiodhlac saor agus suilbhear; gach aon ga thoirt fein do'n aon eile. Ann am pòsaidhean thà gach aon ga thoirt fein do'n aon eile; tha'm fear ga thoirt fein do'n a bhean, agus a bhean ga toirt fein do'n fhear; thà iad ag aontachadh a bhi gabhail a cheile anns an daimh sin, agus mar sin a bhi ga'n toirt fein da cheile. Mar sin anns a phòsadh spioradail so, eadar Criosd agus a shluagh, tha iad ga'n toirt fein da cheile; tha iad ag aontachadh a bhi gabhail a cheile, agus mar sin ga'n toirt fein suas da cheile. Tha Criosd, air an aon laimh, ga thoirt Fein do'n anam; is leatsa mi, tha E 'g ràdh ris an anam, leatsa gu bhi ga do ghràdhachadh, gu bhi ga d' shaoradh, gu bhi ga do dheanamh sona annam-sa, agus maille rium; bithidh Mise, le'm uile shaoibhreasan agus ionmhasan gu h-iomlan agad-sa gu sìorruidh. " Bithidh mise mar an ceudna agadsa " (Hosea iii: 3). 'S e so cainnt a ghraidh pòsaidh do'n anam. Agus O! cia cho milis 's a tha chainte sin. Ciod is urrain Criosd a thoirt do dh'anamaibh bochd coltach ris Fein? Ann a bhi ga thoirt Fein, tha E toirt an tiodhlac is fearr is urrain neamh na talamh a thoirt seachad. Ann a bhi ga thoirt Fein, tha E toirt beatha, tha E toirt sìth, tha E toirt gràs, tha E toirt fireantachd, tha E toirt deagh-ghean Dhé, tha E toirt neamh, tha E toirt na h-uile nì. O'n tiodhlac milis! Air an laimh eile, tha'n t-anam ga thoirt fein do Chriosd; Is leatsa mi, a deir an t-anam ri Criosd, bithidh mise air do shon-sa, agus cha'n ann air son neach eile; mar sin thà e air a ràdh, " Thug iad iad fein air tùs do an Tighearna, agus 'n a dheigh sin dhuinne a reir toile Dhé " (II Cor. viii: 5). Thug iad gu saor agus gu toileach iad fein suas do Chriosd, chum gu'm biodh iad air a shon, agus air a shon gu bràth: Iosa mhilis, mar a tha mi, agus na th'agam, tha mi ga thoirt dhuit-sa. Tha mi bochd, 'n am thiodhlac suarach, tha'n t-anam ag ràdh, gu neo-chrìochnach neo-airidh air gu'n gabhadh tusa rium; tha na nithean is fearr a th'agam

tuilleadh 'us dona, tha na h-uile nì th'agam tuilleadh 'us beag air do shonsa; ach do bhrìgh gur e do thoil-sa gairm air a shon, agus gabhail ri leithid de thiodhlac bho mo laimh, tha mì le'm uile anam ga mo thoirt fein, mo neart, m'ùine, mo bhuadhan, m'ùile, seachad gu bràth dhuit-sa. Agus ged is fìor e, gur e tiodhlac suarach so, gidheadh is beag a thà sibh a smuainteachadh cia cho tlachdmhor, cia cho taingeil 's a tha Crìosd a gabhail ris, agus cìod e'n luach a tha E cur air. Tha so uile air aideachadh agus air a chur an ceill le ceile Chrìosd.'" Is leamsa mo ghràdh, agus is leis-san mise " (Dan. ii: 16).

(R'a leantuinn)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Non-denominational Schools in West Germany

In the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg, West Germany, the Parliament approved a Bill to make all public schools non-denominational. There was some opposition to the Bill, which included eight Roman Catholic members. But the report states that most of the Roman Catholic members disregarded the advice of their bishops and voted for the reform whereby all public schools will take both Roman Catholic and Protestant pupils. They will study together, but will be separated for religious instruction. The Vatican, it was said, expressed "painful astonishment" over the reform. And here in Scotland, since the 1918 Education Act, there are separate Roman Catholic schools in parts where Roman Catholics are resident in large numbers. Protestant ratepayers help to finance these separate schools, and the Free Presbyterian Church protested vigorously when these separate R.C. schools were first established. But now some of the Germans are doing away with this R.C. Church privilege as to special schools. We do not know the real reasons for this action in Germany. It could be finance or political reasons which brought about this reform. The Vatican does not like R.C. children and Protestant children being taught their ordinary educational subjects together. No desire for unity here!

Vatican does not Agree to Joint Services

A World Week of Prayers for Christian Unity at the end of January included people in the city of Rome. It was proposed that there should be joint-services of prayer in non-Roman Catholic Churches with Roman Catholics taking part. This suggestion was rejected by the Vatican. The "Holy Office" replied that it did not consider it opportune for this year to hold such forms of common prayer. The Archbishop of Canterbury

could visit the Pope officially and thereafter agree to set up a joint-commission to study the doctrine of the Roman and Anglican Churches with a view to the union of the two Churches. But joint-prayer services in non-Catholic Churches are not agreed to. All this must be, or should be, very confusing to the ecclesiastical enthusiasts for closer relations with Rome, who in Scotland, eagerly attend meetings with the Abbot of Nunraw and other Roman clergy.

The Harvest of the Sea

The time for harvest-thanksgiving services is long past as far as last year is concerned and we are now into the Spring of 1967. But we were deeply interested at the time of writing, to read the astounding figures as to fish landed by British vessels during 1966. The figures are: nearly 18 million hundredweights of fish, valued at nearly 62 million pounds. Here we are faced with the provision God is making from the ocean, in His good and wonderful providence for our temporal needs as a people. The miserable atheist does not perceive the existence and provision of the God of heaven and earth in all this. But the true Christian will exclaim: "O that men to the Lord would give praise for His goodness then, and for His works of wonder done unto the sons of men." Farmers are not the only people who should be expected to take a prominent interest in Harvest Thanksgiving from year to year. All those having any connection with the fishing industry should also be expected to have an interest in Harvest Thanksgiving at the appropriate time. Of course we are all wholly dependent upon the hand of God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, to sustain us by providing for us in His providence. How few evidences there are of man's gratitude to the Lord! God is not in all the thoughts of the vast majority of the people of this favoured nation of ours. The rich man who died and lifted up his eyes in hell, of whom the Lord Jesus speaks, had plenty from the Lord in providence here; but he did not live to the praise of the Lord here. In eternity he had not even water to cool his tongue. Let us pause and consider these things.

Ski-ing in Scotland on the Lord's Day

The weekend and the Lord's Day are still the popular times for ski-ing in the snow-clad hills in parts of the Highlands of Scotland. And in this area the Lord's Day is a forgotten day, the God of the Sabbath is also forgotten as to His Word and worship. But the God of the Sabbath sees all from His dwelling-place. We were prompted to refer to this subject again by reading

recently the following: "One of the most entertaining and light-hearted events in the ski-ing calendar takes place on Sunday, when teams from the various sections compete for the Scottish Ski Club's Trophy at Glenshee." This news item is just commonplace information to us regarding the regular and deplorable activities of the enemies of God and His law. The Word of God declares that in perilous times men shall be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." This mark of such times is with us.

Crime on the Increase

The Home Secretary, Mr Roy Jenkins, has stated: "Crime is on the increase almost everywhere, and with each increase we forfeit some small part of our claim to be a civilised community." There is just as serious an aspect of the state of the nation in the growing increase in irreligion. The fool who says now in his heart that there is no God is to be met with everywhere and in increasing numbers. Such may shudder at the very thought of being involved in criminal activities of any kind. Yet they live in complete disregard for God, the Bible, the House of God and the Lord's Day, etc. The increase in crime testifies against us as a nation, that we are a backsliding nation; and our increased practical atheism is also a terrible indictment against us that we have departed from God. Crime as such, and as it affects adversely others in their property or persons is certainly something for those in authority to endeavour to deal with, to curb and prevent and to punish. But when do we hear of an outcry against irreligion as such, in connection with the public worship of God being forsaken, for instance? There is no dissent in high places against the frequent political conferences of recent times, held on God's holy Day by members of Government. Talks were held on the Lord's Day with the Prime Minister of Malta by members of the British Government. Bills have been debated in both Houses of Parliament and have received much support, even from Churchmen, which Bills, in our opinion condone crimes, other than "bank robberies," such as the sin of Sodom, freedom to act on the Lord's Day as on any other day. Then there are laws which have greatly encouraged gambling and the establishment of "gambling dens," and so on. There are crimes and crimes. All sin is transgression of the divine law; and there is a great increase in all kinds of practical ungodliness. The Christian who protests against *all* kinds of sin gets little support from those in authority, who are concerned about theft, violence, fraud and so on. Christ can be despised, but that is of no consequence to many.

Plowden Report On Primary Education

The Central Advisory Council for Education (England) were asked three years ago to consider primary education in all its aspects. Lady Plowden was the Council's chairman. The Report was published in January and will no doubt be the subject of much discussion among the teaching profession, even in Scotland. From a brief but detailed account of this Report in the press, we take note of two points. Religious Education is discussed and it appears that the Council were divided about religious education in the primary schools. A minority thought it should not be taught. But the majority view included a recommendation that parents should be told of their right to withdraw children from the daily act of worship and from religious education. We are aware of the difficulty everywhere of getting suitable members of staff in schools to teach religious education. But apart from that as a consideration, there is a move by certain types of people to have Christian religious education eliminated from our State Schools. However inadequate the instruction in Bible Knowledge may be in English and Scottish schools, it will be a sad day if the Bible is altogether banished from our schools, especially the primary schools, where the young children are being taught. The outlook of some therefore is, provide for the children every necessary book, but not the Bible. And the Bible states: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." The other matter we note is, that the Report recommends that corporal punishment should be forbidden in State schools. The Council are so strong on this point that they ask that the law be amended to give power to deny registration to any private school in which it is a recognised practice. This again is a trend of our times. Young offenders to-day must be dealt with gently. Adult offenders must not be punished but treated with a view to their reformation. Hence, even the murderer is not subjected to the death penalty. Many teachers, we are glad to say, will not at all agree with the abolition of corporal punishment, but maintain that it is necessary and proper in certain cases of bad conduct within the school. Scripture teaches that the "rod" is called for in certain cases.

CHURCH NOTES

Communions

January—Fifth Sabbath, Inverness, Auckland. *February*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; third, Stornoway; fourth, North Uist, Kyle of Lochalsh. *March*—First Sabbath, Ullapool; second, Ness, Portree and Tarbert; third, Finsbay, Lochinver; fourth, Kinlochbervie, London and North Tolsta. *April*—First Sabbath, Breasclate, Portnalong and Fort-William; second, Fearn, Gisborne, N.Z.; third, Greenock; fourth, Glasgow; fifth, Wick. *May*—First Sabbath, Kames and Oban; second, Scourie; third, Edinburgh and Broadford. *June*—First Sabbath,

Applecross and Auckland; second, Shildaig; third, Lochcarron, Glendale, Helmsdale, Dornoch and Uig; fourth, Gairloch and Inverness. *July*—First Sabbath, Lairg, Raasay and Beaul; second, Staffin, Tomatin and Tain; third, Halkirk, Rogart, Flashadder and Daviot; fourth, Bracadale, North Uist and Plockton; fifth, Achmore. *August*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; second, Portree and Stratherrick; third, Bonar, Finsbay and Laide; fourth, Stornoway, Thurso and Vatten. *September*—First Sabbath, Ullapool, Breasclete; second, Strathy; third, Tarbert, Stoer and Vancouver (Canada); fourth, Applecross. *October*—First Sabbath, Tolsta, Lochcarron, Fort-William; second, Dumbarton, Gairloch and Ness; fourth, Gisborne, N.Z., Greenock, Lochinver; fifth, Wick. *November*—First Sabbath, Oban and Raasay; second, Glasgow and Halkirk; third, Edinburgh, Dornoch, Staffin and Uig. *December*—First Sabbath, London.

Mission Communion.

Zenka: last Sabbath of February and August. Ingwenya: last Sabbath of March and September. Mbumba: last Sabbath of April and October. Donsa Dam: last Sabbath of May. Somakantana: last Sabbath of July.

Theological Conference 1966

This Theological Conference for ministers, office-bearers, etc., was held in Glasgow on Wednesday, 7th, and Thursday, 8th December, 1966, and was well attended, considering the time of year. The following papers were read and followed by discussion:—

“The Marrow Controversy.”—Rev. L. MacLeod, Greenock.

Ecclesiastical Order in the Roman Catholic Church.—Rev. A. MacDonald, M.A., Gairloch.

Points in Church Law and Constitution.—J. P. MacKay, Esq., Q.C.

To Whom should Baptism be Administered?—Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow.

The Deacon—his appointment, authority and duties.—Rev. A. Cattanach, Finsbay.

The Consistency of the Scripture Representation of Man's Nature as Two-fold.—Rev. A. MacPherson, Dornoch.

When the matter of having a Theological Conference was raised at the Synod in 1964 and obtained the Synod's approval, it was pointed out that its purpose was to fulfil the conception of the Presbyterian Exercise which formed such a useful part of meetings of Presbytery in former days in the Church of Scotland. The General Assembly required that some controverted head of doctrine be handled in the Presbytery publicly, and disputed among the brethren, every first Presbytery of the month. The usual practice was to give a portion of Scripture to one of the ministers and he was required to prepare a paper on it dealing with all the difficulties it involved. The paper was then discussed by the members of Presbytery. A typical instance of this exercise is to be seen in Boston's Works, Vol. IV, page 209, where he gave a paper on

the subject "Duties of Husband and Wife," Text Ephesians v, 33.

Since members of Presbyteries in our Church have to travel such distances, the Presbyterial Exercise is not a practicable possibility and the Theological Conference is an attempt to fulfil its purpose in our present circumstances.

The Conference affords an opportunity for discussing points of interest, refreshing memories on subjects such as Romanism, etc., and generally building up the knowledge of those attending in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. The study of these themes has also produced an atmosphere of fellowship among the brethren which has been indeed very encouraging.

Student

At a meeting of the Western Presbytery at Kyle of Lochalsh on 14th March, 1967, Mr Douglas Beattie, Ullapool, was received as a student, studying for the Ministry of the Church.—John Colquhoun, *Presbyterly Clerk*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF DONATIONS

The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Kelvindale, Glasgow, W.2, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:—

Sustentation Fund.—Mr R. MacLeod, Workington, £3 18/-; Mrs J. Ross, Inverness, in memory of her dear parents, £3; Mr K. Lamont, Lesmahagow, £5, all per Mr J. G.

Foreign Mission Fund.—Mr N. Nicolson, Portree, for Schools, 18/-; Mrs L. Cotton, Delhi, Canada, £2 13s 10d; Mr J. Van Noppen, Norco, California, £17 5s 10d; Two Friends, Fort William, £5 for Mbuma Hospital, all per Mr J. G.

Home of Rest Fund.—Anon, £1; Mr J. Livingstone, Muir of Ord, £5; Anon, Portree postmark, £20; Anon, for car expenses, £3, last three per Rev. A. F. M.

Dominions and Colonial Mission Fund.—Miss I. MacDonald, Eston, £13 3s 2d.

Mission to the Jews Fund.—Mr J. Van Noppen, Norco, California, £17 5s 10d, per Mr J. G.

The following lists sent in for publication:—

Glendale Congregation.—The Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks, £5 from Well-wisher for Foreign Mission Fund.

Stornoway Congregation.—Mr D. J. MacLeod acknowledges with sincere thanks, £10 from the joint Tain and Fearn congregations for Hall Fund, per Dr. H. G.

Portree Congregation.—The Treasurer acknowledges with grateful thanks, £10 from "Portree adherent" for Manse Repair Fund; £2 for Foreign Mission, £2 for Home of Rest, £2 for T.B.S. and £2 for Welfare of Youth Funds, from Mr D. Graham, Portree.

Broadford Congregation.—Mr J. MacLean acknowledges the following for Manse Building Fund: "In memory of my dear parents," from Miss C. MacLean, Faolin, £20; Mantelpiece Box, £5 10/-; A. MacKinnon, Mossfield, Elgol, £10, 2nd donation; A Friend, Elgol, £5, last two per Mr L. MacKinnon.

Dunoon Congregation.—Mr H. MacPherson acknowledges with thanks, £5 from Glasgow Friend, per Rev. L. MacL.

Ingwenya Mission.—Mr J. Tallach acknowledges with sincere thanks 60 dollars from Toronto Ladies; 1,000 dollars from "A Friend of the Rhodesian Mission."

Inverness Congregation.—Mr Wm. Mackenzie acknowledges with thanks from the estate of the late Mr Roderick Mackenzie, elder, Ballifeary House, Inverness, the sum of £50 for the Home Mission Fund and £1,343 3s 9d for the Foreign Mission Fund.

Raasay Congregation.—Mr N. MacLeod acknowledges with thanks, for Congregational Fund, £1 from Raasay friend, per R. MacLeod, and £2 for Sustentation Fund from two Raasay friends, per Treasurer.

St. Jude's Congregation.—Mr J. Gillies acknowledges with thanks: £2 for T.B.S. from M. R., per W. D. F.; Friend, for purchase of congregational bus, £125; Friends, for church buses, £50, both per Rev. D. McL.; Anon, for College and Library Fund, £6; Mrs McC., Glasgow, £1 for Sustentation Fund, per J. H.; Friend, £5; W. B., £15, both for buses, per Rev. D. McL.

Fort William Church Extension Fund.—Mr I. Matheson acknowledges with thanks: £5 from Friend, Staffin; Mrs MacDonald, Tyndrum, £1; Friends, Portree, £4, per Rev. J. A. McD.; Friend, Inverness, £2; "The Lord giveth the increase," £5; Mrs Munro, Dalreichart, £1; N. McLennan, Lochportan, £1; F.W. House to House Collection, £302 5s 6d.

Greenock Manse Purchase Fund.—Mr A. Y. Cameron acknowledges with grateful thanks, £10, Anon, Portree postmark, per Rev. L. McL.

Bracadale Manse Building Fund.—Mr D. Morrison thankfully acknowledges £125 collected in Carbost by Mr J. MacAskill, and £52 collected in Portnalong by Mr P. K. MacAskill.

Kinlochbervie and Scourie Manse Fund.—Rev. A. F. Mackay acknowledges with thanks, £10 from Mr A. Beaton, Vancouver.

Northton Congregation.—Mr A. Morrison acknowledges £10 for Sustentation Fund and £10 for Home Mission Fund from Mr A. MacCuish, Glas Island lighthouse.

Uig Congregation.—The Treasurer acknowledges with thanks, £2 from Mrs MacLeod, Carlway, per Mr M. Smith, and £5 from A Friend, Stornoway, for maintenance of minister's car, per Rev. D. J. MacA.

London Church Building and Manse Purchase Fund.—Mr J. Campbell acknowledges with grateful thanks, £2 16/- from Mr J. R. Munro, Hamilton, Canada, and £25 from Anon, in memory of Rev. J. P. MacQueen, per Rev. R. MacDonald, Vancouver.

The Publications Treasurer, Mr J. Grant, Palmerston Villa, 4 Millburn Road, Inverness, acknowledges with many thanks the following donations:—

Publications Fund.—Mr A. H. D., Luton, 7/-; Mr N. M., Arrochar, 18/-; the following for sending books to hostels, etc.: Anon, £1 2s 6d; Miss M. B., Hamilton, 17/-; Mr G. M., Dumbarton, 18/-.

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