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Comfort Ye My People

The prophets of the Old Testament Church were the messengers of God to the people. Oftentimes they were sent with heavy tidings of judgments to come and with a call to repentance to a backsliding people. It was a solemn task that was laid upon them and they were, after all, but men. Yet in faithfulness to God they delivered the Lord's message whether men would hear or whether they would forbear. They left the result with God. They had fulfilled their God-given task when they had delivered their message.

But, as the Scriptures so plainly reveal, it was not always with heavy and doleful tidings that they came. Sometimes it was tidings of a very different sort they bore. Surely this was so when the Lord sent His servant Isaiah with the message: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." What pleasant tidings these words must have conveyed to the hearts of a people who had so backslidden from their God that they had reason to fear that He would never any more look favourably upon them. While it is true, on the one hand, that the Lord will not suffer sin upon His people but will "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes," yet He will not cast off for ever. He is the faithful, Covenant-keeping God of His people. As He has His seasons for afflicting, so has He also His seasons for comforting His own. So has He promised to David when He said: "Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

There are times when the Church of God and especially the people of

God need comfort. This is true when they have passed through a season of great darkness, when the Lord has been hiding the light of His countenance from them, whether it has been for correction or for trial. The soul will then experience what the Psalmist felt when he said: "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" But with the Psalmist they will also have to say: "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." And when the Lord grants their request they have then to say: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

Another season when the Church of God needs comfort is when the Cause of Christ is low, such as when it is weakened by division and strife or in some other way. The people of God find such a time a trying time in their experience. The children of Israel when carried away into captivity lost their singing voice because of the low state of Zion. They said then: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" But another day was to dawn when the Lord turned their captivity as the streams in the south. They were then like them that dream. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." They also said: "The Lord has done great things for us whereof we are glad." What comforting times have times of revival and refreshing been to the Church of God, when it pleased the God of heaven to send a plentiful rain. It was then that God confirmed His inheritance when it was weary.

The Apostle in writing under divine inspiration to the Corinthians refers to the tribulation through which he and his fellow apostles and believers had to pass. Yet he acknowledged the comfort vouchsafed to them in their trouble. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The Lord is the Comforter of His people by His Spirit and through His servants. Though He does pronounce many woes against a backsliding people, yet in His own good time He will send comfort to His own, as He did through Isaiah.

Isaiah was to tell Jerusalem that her warfare was accomplished and her iniquity pardoned. She had received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. Now she was to be refreshed with comforting promises, not only of the Forerunner of the Messiah who was to prepare the way of the Lord, but of the coming of the Messiah Himself. What could be more comforting to any people than the revelation given in the Word of God concerning the divine Redeemer? "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

So it is also in our day. We have the comforting promises of God's

Word, which promises are all yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. By these we are to be comforted in the believing reception of them, knowing that He is faithful that promised, and that what He has promised He shall surely fulfil. What a comfort it should be to His tried and tempest-tossed people that He has said: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And if the Lord is with us and for us, then who can be against us? "Fear not," Elisha had to say to the young man, "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Let the people of God then take comfort in the assurance that the Lord has given to them, that "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever."

Sermon

by Rev. D. Macfarlane, Dingwall

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." — Is. 41: 14-16.

This chapter begins by the Lord calling upon the isles, whose inhabitants were Gentiles and idolators, to "keep silence" till He would speak to them by way of rebuking them for their idolatry. When the Lord spoke to them they were dismayed and afraid that their false gods would fall at the voice of the Lord, and they diligently set to work and helped one another, to keep up idolatry in defiance of God; "the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying it is ready for the soldering, and he that fastened it with the nails that it should not be moved" (verse 6). Idolaters are afraid of the Word of the living and true God, and the more He speaks to them, the more diligent they are to strengthen and establish their superstition. Then the Lord speaks to His own people, who were better taught of the privileges which He conferred upon them — "But thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away." (verses 8-9). In speaking from the words of our text, we shall notice —

I. The name by which God calls His people here — "A worm."

II. The promise He gives them to encourage and strengthen them against their enemies and

III. The result of their victory — “They shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.”

I. The name, “worm”. When the Lord speaks comfort to His people, He names them according to their condition. They were now weak and oppressed, and He calls them “a worm”.

(1) A worm is a very weak creature; so are the Lord’s people; they are weak in themselves, and sometimes weaker than other people. Without Christ they can do nothing, as He told them. They are sometimes weaker than at other times, and are brought very low in their own experience. In themselves they are helpless creatures, but their God says, “In me is thine help.”

(2) A worm is exposed to many dangers. A worm crawling on the road is in danger of being crushed to death by the feet of men or animals; and by the wheels of all sorts of vehicles. If you saw a worm live from year to year in the midst of such dangers, you would say it was a miracle it was still living, but God, who is the protector of life, cares even for the life of the worm. The Lord’s people are exposed to many dangers from Satan and his host of persecutors, and it is a wonder to themselves that they have not been crushed to death by these enemies, but the Lord who undertook for them from all eternity, preserves them alive in the world, till they are ripe for heaven.

(3) A worm is a loathsome creature. If you saw a pretty bird lying on the road, you would take it up in your hand, but you would not take up a worm, because you consider it loathsome. The Lord’s people are loathsome in their own estimation, because sin dwells in them. As a plague, it makes them hateful to themselves. They are loathsome also in the estimation of the world that hates them. They never take them up in their arms to show kindness to them; they hate them, avoid their company, and would put them to death if they could; but they are precious in the sight of God, and in the sight of one another.

(4) There are some worms that in winter can only crawl on the ground; but in summer they get wings, and you may see them flying in the air. So it is with the Lord’s people. Sometimes they cleave to the dust, and cannot rise above the earth, but at other times, when by the wings of faith and hope they rise in their thoughts and affections above the things of time and sense towards things above, where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God. We find this experience in the Psalms. The Psalmist is sometimes complaining that his soul cleaves to the dust, at other times

he is spiritually minded, and one would think that he was like Paul in the third heavens, but this is not an ordinary worm, it is the "Worm Jacob". From Jacob descended the twelve tribes of Israel, who were a type of the Church of God. There are some generations in which the Lord's people are fewer than in other generations, and then on many accounts they may be called worms. Have you ever considered yourself a worm, helpless and surrounded by enemies who seek to crush you to death, and yet preserved by Him who preserves man and beast, and have you been thankful to the God of providence for your preservation? This much at present on the first head.

II. The promise. The Lord prefaces the promise by a word of encouragement. He says:- "Fear not thou worm Jacob." This was a word in season for His people on that occasion did fear. "Fear thou not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel," because you are few in number. In times of persecution they are liable to many fears, and for fear of their enemies they had to hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth. Even Elijah, though a giant in faith, fled to hide himself from Jezebel, who threatened his life, but the Lord's almighty hands were about him to protect him from his enemy; and He came to him in his hiding-place, and spoke a word of encouragement to him, and told him that his enemies would be destroyed, as we are told they were; and Jezebel, who threatened his life, had a miserable death. Satan is busy in every age, harassing the Lord's people, while he leaves alone those who are his own children. He lulls these asleep, and is afraid that if he trouble them in the least they shall begin to cry to God for deliverance. There were others in the land in which Job lived, but Satan passed by these without disturbing them; but he did not deal with Job in that manner, and the reason was that Job was a true worshipper of God. The child of God has many fears, but God says — "Fear not." There is nothing that gives true comfort to one in trouble like the Word of the Lord. One may fear that God is not his God, but He that comforts says: "I am thy God." Are you afraid that He is not your covenant God? Many are not troubled about this important matter, because they are dead, but the Lord's people are not so. Some of His people have many other troubles and trials, but their hope that God is their God is not interfered with. This is a great blessing, and supports them to bear the trial, however severe. Job was tried to the quick, yet he did not doubt his interest in God as his Redeemer, so that he was able to say — "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." He had troubles in connection with his body, but he was sure of the salvation of his soul. If you are sure of the salvation of your soul, why are you afraid of what will

become of your body? for Christ said: "Fear not them that kill the body." The answer to this is that man is weak like a worm, and is liable to many doubts and fears, some of which are groundless, and are the result of distrust in God as the God of providence. Such fears are permitted as a trial, like the trial the Apostle Paul had when he got a thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan to buffet him.

How is the Lord preparing the worm Jacob for this? By making it a new threshing instrument having teeth. Threshing instruments have teeth in order to thresh the corn. When the Lord helps His people He will make them a new instrument. A new instrument can do better work than an old one. He promises to supply them with teeth to thresh the mountains. What are the teeth? The teeth mentioned here may be taken as the Scriptures, or to use the Scriptural figure, the Sword of the Spirit, by which they are to fight with their enemies and overcome them. Christ used this sword in His combat with Satan in the wilderness. He gave him heavy blows by saying: "It is written." Satan cannot stand the Word of God, its edge is too sharp for him. Some have found, when much harassed by the Evil One when they were engaged in speaking from or writing of the Word of the Lord, Satan had to keep behind the wall, so that they would like to be always day and night engaged in that exercise. When the worm was to be made thus a new threshing instrument it was to do a great work in the hand of the Almighty God. "It was to thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff." What are the mountains and the hills? Ungodly men in high positions in the world. Pharaoh was a great mountain, oppressing the Lord's people in Egypt, who were as helpless in themselves as worms. And what is a worm before this mountain? But when God took this worm in His own hand, it overcame and overthrew Pharaoh and his host, so that they were drowned in the Red Sea. Satan's kingdom is a great mountain, and is very strong in our day, but it shall be threshed down and beat small by the Church in the hand of God, the Church using the Sword of the Spirit to do this work. It is by the word of the Gospel the kingdom of Satan shall be destroyed. It was by the preaching of the Gospel that the kingdom of Satan in Europe was beat small at the time of the Reformation, and as this was so in the past, it shall be so in the future. We are sure of this, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Christ must increase, but all who are opposed to Him shall decrease. This is an encouragement to preach the Gospel. Every individual to whom the Gospel is blessed diminishes the kingdom of Satan. The hills may be taken to mean ungodly men, who have less power to injure the Church than kings, but both are to be beaten to dust

by the worm Jacob in the hand of God. When the mountains and hills are threshed, then the worm Jacob shall fan them. And in the process of fanning the wind shall carry them away.

Unbelief is a great mountain which often oppresses the Lord's people, though it gives no trouble to those who deceive themselves. Every time the Lord gives the victory to His people over it, that mountain is beat small, though it is not destroyed till the death of the believer. Have you ever stood at the foot of this great mountain, and were you afraid that you could never get over it to the rest that remains to the people of God? It stands before you daily till your death, and as you cannot remove it, you try to climb up to the top of it, "to see the King in His beauty and the land that is far off" (Isaiah 33: 17). Sometimes you succeed in reaching the top, and see the object of your desire, but at other times, before you can climb up half-way, you fall to the bottom again, and you may expect these ups and downs during your time in the wilderness.

The carnal mind is another mountain. "It is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The mountain is so obstinate that the teeth of the worm, sharp as they are, cannot take an atom out of it, so that it confronts you daily, and the only way to escape its evil influence is to be delivered from its reigning power as believers are; but it shall at last be overthrown and left behind them. It shall perish suddenly in a day. Doubts and fears are mountains and hills which oppress the Lord's people, and against which they have to fight in the state of imperfection, but they shall get the victory at last from these oppressors, and then they shall express their thankfulness with the Apostle Paul, saying: "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15: 57).

III. Their exercise after their victory over their enemies. God, who addresses them in our text, foretells what their exercise shall be — "Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel. They shall rejoice in the Lord. He is the fountain of their rejoicing and the cause of it. They could not rejoice when they were oppressed; they were sorrowful and mournful, but every time they get their victory over these enemies they are joyful, and they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and they shall ascribe all the glory to Him. They do this in the words of the Psalmist:-

Now blessed be the Lord our God,
The God of Israel,
For He alone doth wondrous works,
In glory that excel.

And blessed be His glorious name
To all eternity;
The whole earth let His glory fill,
Amen, so let it be.

If this be their exercise after minor victories, what shall we say about their exercise after their final victory? They shall then ascribe glory to God more perfectly than they could do in this world. Their joy shall be full in heaven, and their ascription of glory to God shall be perfect, and both shall continue without interruption throughout eternity. The worm Jacob shall be no more a worm, for He shall "raise up the poor out of the dust, and lift the needy out of the dunghill. That He may set them with princes, even with the princes of His people" (Ps. 113: 7-8). If this be the happy end of the Lord's people, is it not more desirable to be a worm than to be the potentates of the earth, who mind earthly things, and whose end shall, without repentance, be everlasting destruction? We are travelling on to eternity, and we are now on this Sabbath Day nearer death than we were last Sabbath. Are we more prepared to meet death now than we were then? Are we through grace overcoming the mountains and hills, or are these powerful enemies overcoming us? This is a question that concerns each and all of us; and it concerns especially the unconverted, who, if they die in that condition, must be lost for ever. The great majority in this generation are wholly engrossed with the things of the world, and neglect the things which pertain to their everlasting peace, but as Christ said — "What shall a man be profitted though he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Be awakened out of your indifference, and give no rest to yourself till you find rest in Christ, who says — "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11: 28). We leave these things with you, and knowing from God's Word the terribleness of being lost, we beseech you in the name of Christ to be reconciled to God. Amen.

The Saint's Rest

by Rev. Richard Baxter

This rest will be absolutely perfect. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. There is no mixture of corruption with our graces, nor of suffering with our comfort. There are none of those waves in that harbour, which now so toss us up and down. Today we are

well, tomorrow sick; today in esteem, tomorrow in disgrace; today we have friends, tomorrow none; nay, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup. If "revelations" raise us "to the third heaven", "the messenger of Satan" must presently "buffet" us, and "the thorn in the flesh" fetch us down, 2 Cor. 12: 2,7. But there is none of this inconstancy in heaven. If "perfect love casteth out fear," 1 John 4: 18, then perfect joy must needs cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. We shall there rest from all the evil of sin and of suffering.

Heaven excludes nothing more directly than sin, whether of nature or of conversation. "There shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie," Rev. 21: 27. What need Christ at all have died if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John 3: 8. His blood and Spirit have not done all this, to leave us after all defiled. "What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor 6: 15. Christian, if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed and watched against it so long? I know if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin, than have all the world. Thou shalt have thy desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts, which accompanied thee to every duty, shall now be left behind for ever. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness. All dark Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions reconciled. The poorest Christian is presently, there, a more perfect divine than any here. Oh that happy day, when error shall vanish for ever! when our understanding shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! His face shall be the Scripture, where we shall read the truth. Many a godly man hath here, in his mistaken zeal, been the means of deceiving and perverting his brethren, and, when he sees his own error, cannot again tell how to undeceive them. But there we shall conspire in one truth, as being one in Him who is the truth. We shall also rest from all the sin of our will, affection, and conversation. We shall no more retain this rebelling principle, which is still drawing us from God; no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence; no pride, passion, slothfulness, or insensibility shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affection, nor imperfection in our love; no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation; we shall rest from all these for ever. Then shall our will correspond to the Divine will, as face answers face in a glass;

and from which, as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his," Heb. 4: 10.

Our sufferings were but the consequences of our sinning, and in heaven they both shall cease together. We shall rest from all our doubts of God's love. It shall no more be said, that "Doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed, but growing in good ground".* They shall now be weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. We shall hear that kind of language no more, "What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my Father? — that my heart is upright? — that my conversion is true? that faith is sincere? I am afraid my sins are unpardoned; that all I do is hypocrisy; that God will reject me; that he does not hear my prayers." All this is there turned into praise. We shall rest from all sense of God's displeasure. Hell shall not be mixed with heaven. At times the gracious soul "remembered God, and was troubled; complained, and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted;" Divine "wrath lay hard upon him, and God afflicted him with all his waves," Psa. 77: 2,3; 88: 7. But that blessed day shall convince us, that, though God "hid his face from us for a moment," yet, "with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on us," Isa. 54: 8. We shall rest from all "the temptations of Satan." What a grief it is to a Christian, though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord! What a torment to have such horrid motions made to his soul! such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! sometimes cruel thoughts of God, undervaluing thoughts of Christ, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture, or injurious thoughts of Providence! to be tempted sometimes to turn to present things, to play with the baits of sin, and venture on the delights of flesh, and sometimes to atheism itself! especially, when we know the treachery of our own hearts, ready, as tinder, to take fire, as soon as one of those sparks shall fall upon them! Satan hath power here to tempt us "in the wilderness", but he entereth not "the holy city"; he may "set us on a pinnacle of the temple" in the earthly "Jerusalem", but the New Jerusalem he may not approach; he may take us up "into an exceeding high mountain," but the "Mount Sion" he cannot ascend; and if he could, "all kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," Matt. 4: 1,5,8 would be a despised bait to a soul possessed of the kingdom of our Lord. No, it is in vain for Satan to offer a temptation more. All our temptations from the world and the flesh shall also cease. Oh the hourly dangers that we here walk in! Every sense and member is a snare; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a snare to us.

* Dr. John Preston

We can scarcely open our eyes, but we are in danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us; of coveting the honours and riches of some, or beholding the rags and beggary of others with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if deformity, to loathing and disdain.

How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart! How constant and strong a watch does our appetite require! Have we comeliness and beauty? What fuel for pride? Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason, and gifts of learning? Oh how prone to be puffed up, to hunt after applause, and despise our brethren! Are we unlearned? How apt then to despise what we have not! Are we in places of authority? How strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, make our will our law, and cut out all the enjoyments of others, by the rules and model of our own interest and policy? Are we inferiors? How prone to grudge at others' pre-eminence, and bring their actions to the bar of our judgment? Are we rich, and not too much exalted? Are we poor, and not discontented? Are we no lazy in our duties, or make a Christ of them? Not that God hath made all these things our snares, but through our own corruption they become so to us. Ourselves are the greatest snare to ourselves. This is our comfort, our rest will free us from all these. As Satan hath no entrance there, so neither any thing to serve his malice? but all things there shall join with us in the high praises of our great Deliverer.

As we rest from the temptations, we shall likewise from the abuses and persecutions, of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will "avenge their blood, on them that dwell on the earth," Rev. 6: 9,10. This is the time for crowning with thorns; that, for crowning with glory. Now, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. 3: 12; then, they "that suffered with him, shall be glorified with him," Rom. 8: 17. Now, we must "be hated of all men for Christ's name's sake," Matt. 10: 22; then, Christ "will be admired in his saints" that were thus hated, 2 Thess. 1: 10. We are here "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men; as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things," 1 Cor. 4: 9, 13. Men "separate us from their company, and reproach us, and cast out our names as evil," Luke 6: 22. But we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory; and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or not. We can scarcely pray in our families, or sing praises to God, but our voice is a vexation to them, how must it torment them then, to see us praising and rejoicing, while they are howling and lamenting! You, brethren, who can now attempt no work of God, without

losing the love of the world, consider, you shall have none in heaven but will further your work, and join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. Till then, "possess ye your souls in patience," Luke 21: 19. Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with Christ," 2 Thess. 1: 6,7.

We shall then rest from all our sad divisions and unchristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived at variance upon earth! There is no contention, because none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. If there be sorrow or shame in heaven, we shall then be both sorry and ashamed to remember all this carriage on earth; as Joseph's brethren were to behold him, when they remembered their former unkind usage. Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions! O happy day of the saints' rest in glory, when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one heart, one church, one employment for ever!

We shall then rest from our participation of our brethren's sufferings. The church on earth is a mere hospital; some groaning under a dark understanding, some under an insensible heart, some languishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness; some crying out of their poverty, some groaning under pains and infirmities, and some bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities. But a far greater grief it is, to see our dearest and most intimate friends turned aside from the truth of Christ, continuing their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing will awaken them out of their security; to look on an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister, wife or husband, child or friend, and think how certainly they shall be in hell for ever, if they die in their present unregenerate state; to think of the gospel departing, the glory taken from our Israel, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and blowing out the light that should guide them to salvation. Our day of rest will free us from all this, "and the days of mourning shall be ended: then thy people, O Lord, shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of thy planting, the work of thy hands, that thou mayest be glorified," Isa. 60: 20,21.

Then we shall rest from all our now personal sufferings. This may seem

a small thing to those who live in ease and prosperity; but to the daily afflicted soul it makes the thoughts of heaven delightful. Oh the dying life we now live! as full of sufferings as of days and hours! Our Redeemer leaves this measure of misery upon us, to make us know for what we are beholden, to mind us of what we should else forget, to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery. Grief enters at every sense, and seizes every part and power of flesh and spirit. What noble part is there, that suffereth its pain or ruin alone? But sin and flesh, dust and pain, will all be left behind together. Oh the blessed tranquility of that region, where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! O healthful place, where none are sick! O happy land, where all are kings! O holy assembly, where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants, but to their supreme Monarch! The poor man shall no more be tired with his labours: "no more hunger or thirst," cold or nakedness; no pinching frosts, or scorching heats. Our faces shall no more be pale or sad, no more breaches in friendship, nor parting of friends asunder; no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings: "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes," Rev. 7: 16, 17. O my soul, bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle, it will be thus but a little while; the sound of thy Redeemer's feet is even at the door.

We shall also rest from all the toil of duties. The conscientious magistrate, parent, and minister, cries out, "Oh the burden that lieth upon me!" Every relation, state, and age, hath variety of duties; so that every conscientious Christian cries out, "Oh the burden! Oh, my weakness that makes it burdensome!" But our remaining rest will ease us of the burdens.

Once more, we shall rest from all these troublesome afflictions, which necessarily accompany our absence from God. The trouble that is mixed in our desires and hopes, our longings and waitings, shall then cease. We shall no more look into our cabinet, and miss our treasure; into our hearts, and miss our Christ; no more seek him from ordinance to ordinance; but all be concluded in a most blessed and full enjoyment.

The last jewel of our crown is, that it will be an everlasting rest. Without this, all were comparatively nothing. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven, to think of once losing heaven; as it would be a kind of heaven to be damned, had they but hopes of once escaping. Mortality is the disgrace of all sublunary delights. How it spoils our pleasure, to see it dying in our hands! But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! where we shall be "pillars in the temple

of God, and go no more out," Rev. 3: 12. While we were servants, we held by lease, and that but for the term of a transitory life; "but the son abideth in the house for ever," John 8: 35. Our earthly paradise in Eden had a way out, but none, that ever we could find, in again; but this eternal paradise hath a way in, but no way out again: see Luke 16: 26. O my soul, let go thy dreams of present pleasures, and loose thy hold of earth and flesh. Study frequently, study thoroughly, this one word — eternity. What! live, and never die! "Rejoice, and ever rejoice!" O happy souls in hell, should you but escape after millions of ages! O miserable saints in heaven, should you be dispossessed, after the age of a million of worlds! This word, everlasting, contains the perfection of their torment, and our glory. Oh that the sinner would study this word, methinks that it would startle him out of his dead sleep! Oh that the gracious soul would study it, methinks it should revive him in his deepest agony! — And must I, Lord, thus live for ever? Then will I also love for ever. Must my joys be immortal? and shall not my thanks be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never cease thy praises. If thou wilt both perfect and perpetuate me and my glory; as I shall be thine, and not my own, so shall my glory be thy glory. And as thy glory was thy ultimate end in my glory; so shall it also be my end, when thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end. "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever," 1 Tim. 1: 17.

Thus I have endeavoured to show you a glimpse of approaching glory. But how short are my expressions of its excellency! Reader, if thou art a humble, sincere believer, and waitest with longing and labouring for this rest, thou wilt shortly see and feel the truth of all this; thou wilt then have so high an apprehension of this blessed state, as will make thee pity the ignorance and distance of mortals, and will tell thee, all that is here said falls short of the whole truth a thousand-fold. In the meantime, let this much kindle thy desires, and quicken thy endeavours. Up, and be doing; run, and strive, and fight, and hold on; for thou hast a certain glorious prize before thee. God will not mock thee; do not mock thyself, nor betray thy soul by delaying, and all is thine own. What kind of men, dost thou think, would Christians be in their lives and duties, if they had still this glory fresh in their thoughts? What frame would their spirits be in, if their thoughts of heaven were lively and believing? Would their hearts be so heavy? their countenances be so sad? or would they have need to take up their comforts from below? Would they be so loath to suffer, so afraid to die? or would they not think every day a year, till they enjoy

it? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we "enter not into the rest because of unbelief," Heb. 3: 19.

(Extracted from *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* by Richard Baxter)

A Dual Portrait of the Church of God — Her Sorrows and Joys

by Rev. J. A. MacDonald

As we were drawing near to the end of 1989 we witnessed many things which grieved us, causing us to realise that we were walking in the midst of trouble. We saw our cities, towns and villages festooned with decorations while Christmas trees were set up in prominent places — all in the name of religion — yet all contrary to the Word of God and to the teaching of the Reformers such as Calvin and Knox. These Romish symbols grieve the Most High, while they please the Man of Sin, who has proved himself so heathenish that he stoops to kiss the ground during his travels all over the world. If the ordinary citizen were to be found kissing the ground one would question the state of their mind, but when the Man of Sin undertakes such foolish acts the world is informed about it.

It was while troubled about these heathenish celebrations that our mind was led to consider the contrasting experiences of the people of God who, though they have to walk through the midst of trouble on their pilgrimage journey to the heavenly Jerusalem, yet in the midst of it all enjoy seasons of revival in their souls, bestowed on them by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. The Lord's people have in every age and generation been subject both to joys and sorrows, times of trouble and times of deliverance. God's Word gives us precious instances of this for our comfort and consolation in our walk through this wilderness.

Lazarus, Mary and Martha were among those who, in the face of strong opposition, loved and served the Lord and owned Him as their own sure portion. Notwithstanding their love to Him, that did not prevent them from having to walk in the midst of trouble. No doubt they often thought of what the Comforter said to His disciples: "In this world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The Saviour was told of Lazarus' sickness: "He whom Thou lovest is sick." But we are also told that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourges every son whom He receiveth." So it is with the Lord's people. It is through His love to them that they are to follow on to know the Lord, even to the end of the journey.

Blessed Stephen was a type of the Church as we see him wrestling on to glory through wind and storms. Stones were used by his enemies to effect his death, but in reality it was for him the opening of the gates of glory. He reached his desired haven. Again, how sad at heart Cleopas and his companion were when on their way to Emmaus as they spoke one to another about the death of Christ. As they talked and were sad, they were joined by a stranger who noticed that they were cast down and sad and enquired the reason for this. While conversing with them He opened to them the Scriptures which concerned Himself — and no wonder that “their hearts did burn within them.” This person was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself though their eyes were holden until He made himself known to them in the breaking of bread. This was after they had constrained Him to abide with them because it was toward evening. No doubt when reflecting on their ignorance in not recognising Him, they would also have noticed the print of the nails in His blessed hands as He broke bread with them, confirming to them that their Saviour was indeed risen.

Moses from birth met with tribulations, and when he was come to years “he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”, though this would have freed him from many of this world’s troubles. He chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” It is clear that affliction must be the lot of the children of God, because He has promised that He will “wipe away all tears from their eyes” at the end of the journey. Any other view of the Church of God will prove a false one.

The disciples were troubled as they toiled all night but caught no fish. Down hearted they took the boat ashore. Christ came and told them to cast their nets once again on the Sea of Galilee. They obeyed and then caught a great draught of fishes. It was a time of sorrow for them on another occasion when they had no money to pay the tribute. But again they obeyed the command of Christ. Peter took a hook and cast it into the sea and there was the fish caught which contained the piece of money. The Saviour said to him: “That take, and give unto them for me and thee.” Matt. 17: 27.

The Word of God declares that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Psalm 30: 5. How clearly is the Saviour’s love for His Church manifested in the midst of the trouble. “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” Isaiah 63: 9. He proves Himself to be a very present help in time of trouble. Think of Him when Paul was in the midst of those proud swelling waves in the Sea of Adria that stormy night. The Lord did not rebuke the waves. They were as much under His control as

when He had stilled them so miraculously on other occasions. Instead He used these mountainous waves to break the ship in pieces, so that the broken planks were the lifebelts used as the means of saving the lives of the passengers. Have you ever, dear friends, taken hold of these wonderful promises as planks for your own souls? — “I have loved thee with an everlasting love”, — “Fear not, little flock”, — “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee.” What about the plank God gave to Joshua: “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.” What a timely plank the poor thief on the Cross obtained from his dying Saviour: “This day wilt thou be with me in paradise.” In the midst of trouble what a precious plank this is to lean on when all is dark: “All things work together for good to them that love God.”

The Holy Spirit shall lead and guide His Church — a multitude which no man can number — as He brings them through various furnaces, as it is written: “I will bring the third part through the fire.” The other two thirds were left to the freedom of their own will, as Judas and Demas were. Hear what Christ Himself says: “Father, I will that they also, who thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” John 17: 24. We rejoice that it is written: “Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.” Psalm 21: 2. For 33 years He passed through sorrow upon sorrow without ever a complaint. We hear him addressing His Father thus: “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me to the dust of death.” (*Agus gu h-uir bhais thug thu me*). Psalm 22: 15. We hear Him also admiring His beloved church saying: “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

Recently, as faithful Free Presbyterians, we were obliged to walk in the midst of trouble in defence of the witness raised in 1893. We say emphatically, without fear of friend or foe, that we have not deviated in any way from the stand taken by Rev. D. MacFarlane and Rev. D. MacDonald at that time. No one can reflect on the troubled Cause of Christ without praising the Lord for the witness and standards raised in our midst by the Rev. Neil Cameron, who was taken by the Lord from his worldly calling as a shepherd — away from the sheepfolds to preach the everlasting gospel to the lost souls of the house of Israel. We also think of the godly Rev. D. Beaton, Oban, who set and maintained such high standards as Tutor to the students of divinity of our beloved Church, and by the grace of God these have been maintained by those who have subsequently taken up this office. Whenever we think of those once professed Free

Presbyterians who chose to leave a Church which still maintains those standards, the solemn words of Holy Writ come flooding into our mind with ever increasing force: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." The Lord who sees the hearts of all men knows those who have His glory in view.

What need there is in the light of all this of prayer for revival. The prophet Habakkuk prayed: "Revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Hab. 3: 2. The Holy Spirit can revive us, as David knew well: "Restore me thy salvation's joy" was his prayer. David also prayed for revival: "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" Psalm 85: 6. Peter's earnest prayer was that "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5: 10. The day shall come when the Lord shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of His people. Oh how sweet that is which the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians for their reviving: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning". Psalm 30: 5. We see David fully confident of his being revived by God when he said so often: "Thou wilt revive me", and again when he says in Psalm 23: "He restoreth my soul."

No doubt Simeon would have many doubts and fears on his way to the temple. Yet what reviving of heart and soul he received when he took the child Jesus in his arms, saying: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace . . . for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." David was afraid of the sleep of death overtaking him when he prayed: "Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." Psalm 13: 3. The man at the pool of Bethesda was revived when he received the command: "Take up thy bed and walk." he rose and carried his bed. It is obvious from the Psalms how the Church was revived even to the extent of singing: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Psalm 73: 25. Thomas was revived when, in the face of his unbelief, he saw the print of the nails. He acknowledged with joy: "My Lord and my God." Oh to be revived like Ruth when she pleaded with Naomi: "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee." Mephibosheth was revived as he dined at the king's table, although he was lame on both his feet. Job was revived when he was enabled to say: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

When we look at the history of the Covenanters we are reminded of how they were sustained and revived in midst of trouble. We will close with what comes to mind with regard to them. A group of Covenanters who had just been released from prison in Edinburgh were marching down Princes Street in that city singing lustily from Psalm 124, and in particular from these words:

“The raging streams, with their proud swelling waves,
Had then our soul o’erwhelmed in the deep.
But bless’d be God, who doth us safely keep,
And hath not giv’n us for a living prey
Unto their teeth, and bloody cruelty.”

It is recorded that the judge who had passed the prison sentence on them happened to be passing and confessed that the solemnity of what he had witnessed touched his conscience.

The Lord shall reign until all His enemies shall be made His footstool.

Peace in Jerusalem

Some thoughts on Psalm 122: 6, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”.

by Rev. K. D. MacLeod, South Harris.

Psalm 122 is one of the Songs of Degrees, which were sung by the Israelites as they made their way up to Jerusalem for the stated feasts of the Lord, the Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. It is not difficult to imagine the spiritually minded Israelite rejoicing at the thought of seeing Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen as the place where His house was to be built, and as such the centre of Old Testament worship. It was there that the sacrifices were offered, which taught that “without shedding of blood (there) is no remission of sin”, but which taught also that there is forgiveness through guilt being transferred to a substitute. And so the believing Israelite could in Jerusalem enter all the more feelingly into the great provision that his God had made for the salvation of sinners through the great Substitute yet to come.

As the Israelites were taught by this Psalm to remember their duty of giving thanks to God at their feasts in Jerusalem, so their minds were directed also to their duty of praying for the peace of the city. And as they thought of Jerusalem, their capital city, they would surely think of, and pray for, their whole country. But, as pilgrims ascending to one of their Lord’s feasts, they would think more particularly of the Lord’s cause on earth as centered in Jerusalem, and their minds would go out to their Father in heaven seeking for its peace in their own time and in their own

land, to which land the Church of God was then almost entirely confined. We cannot believe, however, that believing Israelites could confine their prayers to their own generation. Nor can we believe that those well instructed in the revelation that God had given to His people at that time could confine their hopes and desires to their own land. Well might they express their hopes and desires in words suggested by those of Psalm 72: 8, which speak so wonderfully of Messiah's kingdom, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

Without doubt to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to express one's desires for harmony there, but it goes much further. *Shalom*, the word translated *peace*, includes also *prosperity* and *well-being*. To this day the Jews greet each other with "*Shalom*". So we can see that in this Psalm the Israelites were being taught to pray for the well-being of Jerusalem, and with it the well-being of God's cause in every age and generation. So we also in our generation are to pray, not only for the harmony, but, more generally, for the well-being and the prosperity of God's cause, both today and throughout all future ages till the end of time.

It goes without saying that peace within God's Church on earth is eminently desirable. Paul's counsel applies both inside and outside the Church, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12: 18). But it is only in the Jerusalem above, where "there shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22: 3), that there can be perfect peace; and it is quite clear that Paul recognises this. To speak the truth is often to run the risk of stirring up opposition and controversy, and while we must, according to the Master's counsel, be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10: 16), we must also be faithful to God's testimony. Israel were condemned at one stage in their history for desiring preaching that would not disturb their consciences. "This is a rebellious people," was the Lord's complaint, "lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord; which say unto the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Is. 30: 9,10). And the prophets who would listen to such a request, and as a result kept back any part of God's revelation, even for the sake of peace in Israel, would quite clearly have been at fault.

We need not therefore be surprised to find a faithful apostle like Paul stand against Peter, his fellow-labourer, when in a moment of weakness he went wrong. Peter refused to eat with the Gentiles because he was afraid of the Judaisers. We can be sure that Paul, who could counsel others to live at peace as far as possible with everyone, had as much dislike as anyone could possibly have to the coldness that might have come between him

and his brother-apostle. He had a full-hearted love for peace between the brethren; of course he had. But he had a greater love for the prosperity of Peter's soul and for the well-being of God's cause on earth, and he could see that it was through Peter coming once more to act rightly that there could be genuine and lasting harmony in the Church.

None of these comments is intended to encourage or excuse needless controversy. It is only intended to be a reminder that there are times in the history of the Lord's cause in the world, when His people have a duty to take a long-term view, when they have to engage in present controversy or conflict, with a view to the well-being of the Church in the longer term. There is a time when harmony for the present can only be at the expense of truth.

Where, humanly speaking, would the cause of God in Europe be today, were it not for Luther's willingness to buckle on his armour to fight his Lord's battles? Where would that cause be in Scotland today had the leaders of the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland in the early 1840s not been willing to engage in conflict with those who were prepared to have the Church subject to the State? Certainly the controversy resulted in a split in the Church, the Disruption of 1843, but their stand was a testimony to the sole headship of Christ in His own Church, without which the Church in Scotland could not have been expected to prosper.

In the declension that followed in the original Free Church should James Begg and John Kennedy, to name but two of the worthies of the time, have chosen a peace-at-any-price policy? Their's was a testimony for truth, however unpopular it may have been in many quarters and however disruptive in itself of the peace of the Church. But should we not look elsewhere for the real cause of the absence of genuine harmony at that time? Did it not lie with those who introduced unscriptural practices and false views of Scripture into the Church? So also it is not those who were instrumental in founding the Free Presbyterian Church who are to be accused of disrupting the peace of the Church, but those who passed the Declaratory Act in the Free Church and thereby demonstrated their unwillingness to submit to the plain Word of God. In each division of the Church of God including the most recent, what has to be asked is, Who is departing from the testimony of God's Word? We certainly cannot believe that the Free Presbyterian Church has yet been allowed to depart from its moorings.

It is a solemn thought that the Saviour Himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10: 34). So often the result of faithfulness even to the Prince of Peace is disharmony with our fellow-creatures. Where then shall such a

thought send us? Where better than to the throne of grace? And let us go with the realisation that when the Church will come to the zenith of her prosperity, then it is that there will be greater peace than at any time in her history. We are told that "they shall see eye to eye when God shall bring again Zion." (Is. 52: 8).

It is when God revives His Church that we can expect to see widespread harmony between brethren and the breaking down of those barriers which were the result of error both in doctrine and practice. Yet times of revival have often been times when the Devil has made special efforts to disrupt the harmony of the Church. With what longing then should the Church look forward to the time when Satan shall be bound up for a thousand years. Then, not only will sinners in vastly greater numbers than ever before be brought out of Satan's dark kingdom into the glorious liberty of the children of God, but Satan's freedom to sow discord in the Kingdom of God on earth will be drastically reduced. Likewise, because of the greatly increased understanding of the Scriptures that will be more universally given, the differences between professing Christians over matters of doctrine and practice, to go no further, will substantially melt away; "they shall see eye to eye."

We are to come to God in prayer pleading the promises that He has given us, as when He spoke through Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh" (2: 28). Certainly Peter recognised on the Day of Pentecost the fulfilment of this prophecy. But at Pentecost there could have been only a beginning of that fulfilment. And though the gospel has now reached almost every part of the inhabited world in the mercy of God it still cannot be said that the world has seen the fulness of blessing that the Scriptures encourage us to believe is yet to be given. In one of his visions Daniel saw a stone which was to smite the image which represented various world powers; it was then to become a great mountain and to fill the whole earth. The stone, we are told, represents the Kingdom of God. But however the subjects of this Kingdom are spread out over the greatest part of the earth, such expressions surely hold out to us something more wonderful still, the major part of mankind coming under the sway of the gospel. These prophecies and promises are sure, and they are left on record in the Scriptures both to encourage us and to stimulate us in prayer.

Time and again there are recorded in the Bible the petitions of the saints of old as they poured out their hearts in desire to God for the spiritual prosperity of His cause on earth. It was natural to their renewed souls to do so, and they doubtless remembered the call, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem". We can feel the intense earnestness of Jeremiah as he cried,

“O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name’s sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee. O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name; leave us not” (14: 7-9). Such prayers are left on record for us to echo, and so that our own petitions might be moulded by them, though first sent up to heaven so long ago. And what gracious heart can fail to echo the plea of Habakkuk, “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (3: 2). We can take encouragement too from the fact that there are so many prayers sent up to heaven in generations past which have not yet had their full answer. Surely even those inspired prayers which we have just quoted are to have a fuller answer than yet they have had.

Surely also it is to encourage His children to pray for the peace of Jerusalem that it is added, “They shall prosper that love Thee”. If spiritual prosperity is the highest form of prosperity — and it is — then that is assured to all who love God; absolute perfection is promised to them, all of them, when they are brought to glory. Yet they will also have as much of this world’s goods as their Heavenly Father sees will be good for them — and that is sufficient. But it is those who are most advanced in spiritual things who will be most exercised in prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, and they will have their reward — not least in the increased prosperity of their own souls.

If the main thing we are to look for is the spiritual prosperity of God’s Church on earth that, of course, includes its harmony. Peace, after all, is one of the fruits of the Spirit. And, in praying for the prosperity of Zion, perhaps we are to look for growth in grace, the inward and outward manifestation of holiness, in the lives of those who are already believers, even before the numerical increase of the Church. We live in a time when there is a tendency to think of numbers as all-important, a tendency illustrated by the adoption of unscriptural means of evangelism, as, for example, equating true conversion with a “decision for Christ” by going forward to the front of an evangelistic meeting. But it is God’s usual way of working to raise the standard of godliness in His Church at more or less the same time as He enlarges it by bringing in multitudes of the unconverted. But both aspects are certainly included when a believer prays sincerely for the peace of Jerusalem.

How much should we pray? The answer can only be, "Keep not silence and give Him no rest till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Is. 62: 6,7).

Obituaries

Mr Donald MacLennan, Missionary, Dornoch and Rogart

The scarcity of godly men and women is one of the proofs that this is a "day of small things". The removal by sudden death of Donald MacLennan, missionary at Dornoch at Rogart, on the 21st day of November, 1988, left that district much the poorer, for he was an outstandingly godly man where such were not numerous. Both Mr MacLennan's parents came from Northton in Harris, but his father was a shepherd in Cromult, Assynt, when he was born. It was in Sutherland that he grew up, and after schooling began to learn the skills of gamekeeping. After his short term of National Service, mainly in Germany, he served as a gamekeeper in the estates of Ledmore, Dunrobin and Skibo.

On the Sabbath evening of the Rogart communion of 1953, Donald began to think about the state of his soul. The text was, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." But it was a verse that came to his mind as he awoke one morning, that set him seeking salvation in full earnest. The words were, "Kiss ye the Son, lest in his ire ye perish from the way" (Ps. 2: 12, Met. version). His serious frame of mind became acute when at the Rogart communion on the following year, he took as addressed to himself the preacher's words, "Go home and pray that the Lord will have mercy on your soul." Thereafter, the solitudes of the northern hills often found him on his knees seeking mercy which was eventually granted him through the words, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

The Lord has various ways of calling sinners effectually, and it would be unwise to state dogmatically that any of these ways lead more than others to a wholehearted, consistent Christian life. Yet it has been noticeable that where in effectual calling the evil and danger of sin and the power of unbelief have been deeply impressed on the person, this process has often produced strong Christian principles and a close following of the Lord. So it was in this case. To Donald MacLennan all his days afterwards, sin was exceeding sinful. Cheerful in temperament though he was, and ever ready to see the humorous side of things, no-one could miss seeing how gravely he regarded sin, and how clearly he saw the need of

salvation from it. From the time of his conversion he regarded the things relating to Christ and his cause as the main things in life, and achieved by grace a nearness to God through which he obtained His mind in connection with many matters. And in full consistency with that, he bemoaned his carnality and lack of the spiritual mind which he much admired in others.

In 1958 Mr MacLennan made a public profession of faith, and four years later was ordained an elder in the Dornoch and Rogart congregation. The latter step was taken only after much heartsearching, but several portions of Scripture came to his mind with such force that he felt it is duty to accept the office. Likewise, it was only after what he believed to be divine promptings, that he offered himself to the Northern Presbytery as a full-time missionary. In November, 1967 he was appointed to labour in the then vacant charge of Dornoch and Rogart, and with his likeminded wife and young family took up residence in the Evelix Manse.

He gave himself heartily to his new work, and although he had a natural gift of public speaking, he put a lot of work into preparing for the services, often having three of these on a Sabbath. He was a diligent visitor of the flock under his care, and on his hospital visits he spoke to all the patients. His upright character, sincerity and friendly nature gave him acceptance with all he met. At the same time, he was a shrewd judge of character and a keen discernor of right and wrong, true and false. In the church courts he took the side he considered right irrespective of how many others took it.

Then, in December, 1970, after he had proved himself to be a most useful home-missionary, he was stricken with a heart-attack that brought him to death's door. Recovery was slow, but he was encouraged to resume his duties by the words, "Feed my sheep". As time went on, it became apparent that his health was permanently impaired, and that there was need for restricting his activities somewhat. Nevertheless, he worked on for another 14 years. Then in April, 1985, Donald suffered another attack which further reduced his strength. From December, 1986, when he conducted his last service, he was in delicate health and had to rest a great deal. Even then, however, he ordered his days so that prayer, meditation and reading all had their allotted times, and as often as he was able, attended public worship. During this last period, he concerned himself less and less with temporal things, and while bemoaning his personal unworthiness, looked forward to the great change that would transform his soul into the holy condition he longed for. He attended the communion service at Dornoch on the 20th December, 1988, and the next morning col-

lapsed and died in his own home. He was 58 years of age.

The Evelix Church was filled with mourners on the day of the funeral, for Mr MacLennan had been respected as a good and godly man. Among them were many of the Lord's people including ministers, for they knew better than most the loss to Christ's cause in the North of Scotland. They grieved also the passing of one whom they had ever found friendly and affectionate, spiritually-minded and upright, and a lover of Christ's Church. He had mourned over the low state of Christ's cause in his area. The burial took place at Proncynain Cemetery, Dornoch. To his widow who had so tenderly cared for her husband throughout his long period of poor health, and his four daughters, and one surviving brother, we tender our sincere sympathy.

A. McP.

The Late James Tallach, Gairloch

James Tallach, a son of our esteemed African missionary the Rev John Tallach was born in the Mission about sixty years ago. Brought up among the Africans he spoke their language perfectly and understood their way of thinking.

In very early life James was wrought upon savingly by the Holy Spirit and brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and lived to testify to this.

The early missionaries were accustomed to long periods of service and in the case of the Tallach family it was protracted even longer because of the intervention of the Second World War. This had the advantage of integrating most closely with the Africans. When eventually Rev. John Tallach his wife and family came to the U.K. James began training as a carpenter. Upon completing his training he returned to Africa and sought employment in Bulawayo and found it although not in connection with his trade. After a few months in Bulawayo he was invited to work in the Mission and to this he agreed, although the wage was very meagre, as at that time and for several years after there was no affluence in the Mission. James laboured from early morning until late at night, exposing himself to the burning heat of the African sun. His duties were multifarious and he was able to attend to most needs.

In connection with the church services he acted as an interpreter where his full knowledge of both English and Sindebele made him most acceptable, while his zeal for the salvation of souls led him to engage in the work with assiduity.

From 1959 until 1962 I had the privilege of having him as a member

of the Mission staff and a member of the Church there. He was of a most retiring disposition and although the Synod of 1962 ordered that he be elected to the office of elder he refused to accept while he showed all willingness to help.

For several years he acted as Treasurer to the Mission in addition to all his other duties and this he did efficiently and with integrity. After several years, some difficulties arose in the Mission which led ultimately to James' returning to this country.

At home here in Gairloch he settled with his wife (whom he had met and married in the Mission) and family. Once and again he refused the office of eldership but was ready to engage in holding services, which services were greatly appreciated by the people of God. He was specially gifted in prayer and his prayers were almost invariably sweet and unctuous, full of expressions of love to the Saviour and of longings to be away from the wilderness of this world. There was never any thought of remuneration for his spiritual labours.

As already noted he was of a retiring disposition. This led him to do nothing more on the question day but read the portion given out. The last communion he attended, however, was to prove an exception and to the surprise of us all and to the edification of the church he did speak to the question and his emphasis was on that occasion on the sovereign grace of God taking hold of one and passing by another.

In his duties in the church, as in his work in the world, James was constant and dependable. When the church passed through its last great trial; in connection with the witness raised against Romanism he was greatly exercised and although he saw many whom he respected highly, defecting, he abode firm to the end. He died on Friday, 16th June 1989 and was buried in Gairloch on the Wednesday prior to our communion here.

To his devoted wife we tender our deep sympathy (as we do to all his relatives) and our prayer for the family of three sons and one daughter is in the words of the psalmist!

“Instead of those thy fathers dear,
Thy children thou may'st take
And in all places of the earth
Them noble princes make.”

Psalm 45 verse 17 Metrical version.

Alfred MacDonald

Notes and Comments

Sabbath-breaking Ullapool

It is tragic that in the village of Ullapool, where so many of the Lord's people were in times past and where many eminent servants of the Lord faithfully preached the Gospel and warned sinners of the wrath to come, a majority of the people voted in favour of the Sabbath opening of the new leisure centre. The result of that poll will be a grief to the God-fearing who are still left in the village. The desecration of God's holy day has spread through the land like a cancer removing from the hearts of men any fear of the Most High. Men, encouraged in many cases, though not in this instance, by godless ministers regard the day as one for secular recreation, instead of the day which God has given to men for His worship and service. In our day men are bold in sinning but God will yet bring down the high looks of transgressors. As certainly as God punished Israel and Judah for their desecration of His Sabbaths so will the Lord in His own time punish the inhabitants of Sabbath breaking Ullapool and other Sabbath breaking cities and towns and villages for their iniquities. "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." So it is also with communities and towns that rebel against the Lord.

Licensing Proposals and the Sabbath

Proposed Government legislation aims to extend licensing hours and to allow off-sale premises to open on the Sabbath. It is sad to think that the Government should have any hand in breaking down the Sabbath which is one of the bulwarks of the nation. It is good to know that in this particular matter the Church of Scotland has expressed itself strongly opposing such extension of Sabbath drinking and trading. One of their spokesmen said: "The proposed legislation is unnecessary, unwanted and will harm our society." With this we agree. Apart from the claims of the divine law, which is ever the paramount matter, yet the well being of society would be advanced by severe restrictions on the drink trade on weekdays, as well as a total ban on Sabbath drinking. What a support such legislation would be to the Police Force when so many crimes and road tragedies are drink related. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Religious Education in Schools

The Scottish Office has drafted proposals for religious education and religious observance in schools and has asked for comments on these by

Churches and other organisations. No doubt our Religion and Morals Committee will be sending in its comments to the Scottish Secretary. The Scottish Education Minister, Mr Ian Lang, stressed that religious education has a fundamental place in schools and indicated that it was time to see that place fully recognised and strengthened. He also is of the view that religious observance complements religious education and should have a regular place in the life of the school.

It is good to see that the Government is concerned over this matter but how to provide for it is another matter. We know that much that goes by the name of religious education and religious observance in schools is often of such a nature that it is harmful instead of helpful to pupils, and gives a completely distorted view of what true religion is about. The low state of religious education in the schools at present stems from two factors. The first is the terrible decline in true religion over many generations occasioned by the assaults made on the Word of God by those who were supposed to be the preachers and expounders of that Word. A more recent cause of decline in religious education is the result of what is called the multiracial society. Such a place is now given to heathen religions that Christianity can only be spoken of apologetically. Yet only Christianity has the true answer to the needs of men and women in the closing decade of the twentieth century as surely as in the opening decades of the first century of the Christian era. Only when Christianity is given its rightful place in schools can we expect men and women of real stature to arise in the nation. Without Christianity men and women remain in darkness and so do boys and girls at school. Let the Bible get its rightful place in the schools of our land and in the Churches of our land and a great revolution would take place. There is no substitute for it.

The Scottish Law Commission and Marriage

The Scottish Law Commission is at present reviewing certain of the laws relating to marriage and has produced a discussion paper for comment and advice. Again we have no doubt that our Religion and Morals Committee will be giving in its views on these matters. To some extent in our day the institution of marriage has so broken down in certain quarters that legislation is being enacted to try to keep pace with the great changes which are taking place and which in most instances are detrimental to the institution of marriage. Recently the Lord Chancellor stated: "One wants to have a law of divorce which reinforces the institution of marriage, which I believe is a fundamental institution in our society." The draft Bill on which the Law Commission is working aims to help divorcing people to

sort out disputes over children, money and property without bitterness through the use of conciliation services. To make way for this, however, the law would have to be reformed to remove the element of fault. How far removed has divorce become from Christian standards when no one is looked on, nor is any enquiry made, as to the guilty party. It may be that even proof of irretrievable breakdown will not be insisted on. Yet the rightness or wrongness of any subsequent marriage hangs upon the question of who was the innocent party, according to the Word of God. When a nation departs from Christianity what a morass it falls into. Only a return to Scriptural standards can bring the nation out of it.

The Vatican and Gorbachov

The Vatican is now to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The announcement was made after Mr Gorbachov was elected the first Executive President of the Soviet Union. The Vatican's envoy to Moscow is the man who played an important role in negotiating full diplomatic relations with Poland. The Pope has received assurances that the Uniate Church in the Ukraine would be granted legal rights.

This alliance between Moscow and the Vatican has already had far reaching results. What may lie ahead, who can tell? What we do know is that the Vatican has ever been after increased power and, no doubt, even an alliance with atheistic Russia could promote such an end. Yet for all the schemes of the Roman Catholic Church for her own aggrandisement, we know what her end shall be. The Word of God makes that very clear. She is to fall and her end is to come speedily. May the Lord hasten that day.

Child Abuse

The Department of Health is investigating reports of ritualistic abuse of children. The director of child care services in the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children stated that fear and intimidation are often part of the abuse children suffer. The Society helped 54,000 children during the year. Of these 5,204 cases were of physical abuse, 4,532 of neglect and 3,680 of sexual abuse. The low spiritual and moral state of the nation has given rise to evil cults and devil worship. From these many evil and vicious practices flow. Only a return to the Word of God and the practice that is according to godliness can rescue the nation from these evils. It is good to know, however, that every effort is being made to discover and prevent such abuse of children by wicked men and women.

Church Notes

Meeting of Synod

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will meet at St Jude's, Glasgow on Tuesday, 22nd May at 6.30 p.m. (D.V.) when the Retiring Moderator, Rev. L. MacLeod, will conduct public worship.

Synod Meeting

This will be the first annual Synod since the separation of 1989 took place. In view of this there will be, no doubt, matters arising relating to that event as e.g. the continued occupation of some of our Churches and Manses by those who, of their own volition, renounced the jurisdiction of our Church Courts. Many other matters affecting the interests of Christ's Cause in our midst at home and abroad will also be discussed and decisions taken relating to them. The prayers of the Lord's people are craved that the Synod may be guided of the Lord in all that comes before it and in all decisions taken.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Australia and New Zealand: At Sydney on 4th May at 2.30 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 12th June at 12 noon.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 12th June at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 19th June at 6 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 26th June at 11 a.m.

Dornoch Communion

It has been decided to hold a Communion in Dornoch on the third Sabbath of June (D.V.)

L.D.O.S. Essay Competition

The Clifford Frost Award has been established with the objective of encouraging Christians to consider and write on the subject of the Lord's Day.

There are two sections. One for young people between the ages of 12 and 18 with cash awards up to £50. The second, for adults, with cash awards up to £200. An additional gift will be made to the winner's Church in each section.

Entrants are invited to submit an essay of between 500 and 1,000 words (young people's section), 2,000 and 2,500 (adult section). The closing date for entries is 30th September, 1990.

Further details and application form available from: The General Secretary, Lord's Day Observance Society, 120 Wandle Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 6AE.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr D. MacDonald, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Church Funds: Anon. £500 per Rev. D. MacLean — for where most needed.

Leverburgh Home of Rest: Anon. £100.

Centenary Fund: Anon. £25.

Chesley Congregation: G.S. £100.

Foreign Mission: Anon. C.A. \$200.00.

Eastern Europe: For Bibles, Medicine and Clothing as follows:— I.T. £20; A.M.A. £100; C.A.M. £20; Anon. £100; J.M.Q. £50; G.M. £40; M.C.C. £25; A.C. £100; R.R.B. £50; I.S. £50; P.M.D. £50, last ten per Rev. D. Ross; Bracadale Congr. £100; Shieldaig Congr. £100.

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

Dumbarton: Anon. £20 for T.B.S.; Anon. £20 for Sust. Fund; Anon. £7; Anon., Glasgow £10, (last three by envelope in plate); J.C., Glasgow £20, per M.H., last three for Communion Expenses.

Glasgow: D.R. and A.M. £500 for Congr. Fund and £500 for Sust. Fund; Anon. £5 for Sust. Fund; Anon. £5 for Benevolent Fund; Anon. £25; Anon. £10; Anon. £10; Matth. 6: 3 £10; M. McA. £10, all for Bus Fund; Envelopes in Plate at Retiring Collection for T.B.S. £10, £10, £10, £25, £60, £100.

Inverness: From the Estate of the late Miss Mary M. Macaulay Inverness, per Aitken Nairn, Solicitors, £100 for Congregational Funds; Anon. £100 for "Spreading the Word"; Anon. £10; Anon. £10, last two for bus maintenance; Anon. £10 for Publications Fund, all per envelopes in plate.

Lochcarron: Mr and Mrs T. MacA. £5, where most needed, per Rev. A. MacKay; Friend, Lochcarron £20; Friend, Kyle £5; Mr T. MacG. £10, all for Romanian Bibles.

North Harris: Anon. £5; M.M., Tarbet £10, both in plate; I.M.L. and M.M., Cluer £20; Friends, Grosebay £10, last two per Rev. J. McL., all for Communion Expenses; Anon., Stockinish £10 for Church Door Collection, per Rev. K.D.M.; M.M., Stockinish £50; M. and C.M., Stockinish £10; Friend, Stockinish £5; Friends, Stockinish £10; Friend, Stockinish £5, last five for Sust. Fund; Friend, Stockinish £5 for petrol; Friend, Stockinish £10 for Communion Expenses, last seven per Rev. J. McL; N.S., in memory of Angus MacLeod, £20 per R. McL.

Portree: Anon. £8; Anon. £4; Anon. £10; Anon. £10; Anon. Braes £20, all for Church Bus, all by envelope in plate; Two Friends £50 for Sust. Fund; Tolsta Friend £10, "where most needed"; Tolsta Friend £20; Tunbridge Wells Friend £15, last two for Congr. Purposes, last four per F.M.

South Harris: Anon. £70 for trip to Eastern Europe; Friend, Stockinish £10 for Congr. Fund, both per Rev. K. MacLeod; Friend, Northton £100 for Manse Fund; Friend, Northton £100 for Sust. Fund, both per A. MacCuish.

Staffin: Anon. £50, "where most needed" (envelope in plate).

Stornoway: Anon. £5; Anon. £20; Anon. £10, all for Communion Expenses, all in Church Plate.

Tain: D.H. £600 for the Congr. Funds of the Tain F.P., Church from an adherent of the Congregation, "in loving remembrance of my late wife."