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Synod Meeting — May 1990

The annual meeting of Synod took place on Tuesday, 22nd May, 1990 in St Jude's Free Presbyterian Church, Glasgow, when the retiring Moderator, the Rev. Lachlan MacLeod, Greenock, preached from 1st Chronicles 28: 20, "And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee: he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord."

The Presbyteries of the church were represented as follows:

NORTHERN: Revs. D. B. MacLeod and D. M. Boyd with Messrs W. McQueen, R. Ross, I. MacLeod, I MacLean, E. Sutherland and E. Morrison.

SOUTHERN: Revs. D. MacLean, L. MacLeod, A McPherson and G. Hutton with Messrs R. Campbell, A. Gillies, K. Gillies, R. K. MacCuish, J. MacDonald, I. MacKinnon, A. MacLennan, A. MacPherson, A. MacRae, D. R. McSween, R. Middleton and M. Nicolson.

WESTERN: Revs. A. E. W. MacDonald, A. MacKay, D. A. Ross and N. M. Ross with Messrs H. MacLeod, T. Maton, K. MacLeod, D. MacCuish, W. MacLeod and E. Ross.

SKYE: Revs. F. MacDonald, D. Nicolson, J. Tallach and A. Cattanach with Messrs M. MacKay, R. MacBeath, J. Campbell, R. Annand and D. J. MacLeod.

OUTER ISLES: Revs. A. Morrison, J. MacDonald, D. J. MacDonald, J. MacLeod and K. MacLeod, with Messrs J. Buchanan, A. J. Morrison, R. MacCuish, N. Thomson and R. Dickie.

ZIMBABWE: Rev. B. B. Dube and Mr N. Siziba.

CANADIAN: Mr N. MacPherson.

Letters of apology for absence were read from the following:— Revs. J. A. MacDonald, D. J. MacAskill, P. Mzamo and Messrs J. MacKay, F. Thomson, G. Schuit and A. MacKenzie.

A verbal apology was given in by Rev. D. Nicolson on behalf of Mr D. McPherson.

The first item of business was the intimation by the Convener of the Training of Ministry Committee, that Mr John Goldby, M.A., had passed the Exit Examinations and was ready to be taken on trial for licence by his Presbytery.

The Moderator intimated that his term of office had now come to an end. He thanked the Court for the help given him and called upon the Synod to nominate his successor.

Rev. Donald MacLean said that he had much pleasure in nominating the Rev. D. J. MacDonald of Uig congregation. He gave it, as his opinion, that Mr MacDonald had demonstrated in a very clear way that he is a very sincere and thorough going Protestant. "This is a quality," he said, "that is obviously lacking in Moderators of Church Courts in other Churches." Mr MacLean went on to observe that while there was a claim made by some to be reformed they made no claim to be Protestant. This, he maintained, was exhibiting an ignorance both of theology and of history. His desire for Mr MacDonald in connection with the duty of Moderatorship was that he would be given grace and strength to perform his duties.

Rev. F. MacDonald, in seconding the nomination, said, that to his mind this was an historic meeting of Synod in the light of our last stand in connection with the Cause of Christ in this land. It was proper that the man appointed to the chair at this time be a historian. His prayer was that Mr MacDonald be given grace to be exercised aright and that each member of Synod would be exercising humility as that had been brought before them in the sermon of the retiring Moderator.

The new Moderator, Rev. D. J. MacDonald, thanked the Court for the appointment and said:

"Thank you, fathers and brethren for the honour you have conferred on me — I hope I shall prove worthy of your confidence. May I ask for your forbearance during all the meetings of Synod and also crave your prayers that we may have a meeting of Synod that will be orderly, harmonious and spiritually and ecclesiastically profitable. Before we go on to the immediate business of this year's Synod perhaps we could profitably pause for a moment or two, and looking back dwell briefly on events which come particularly to mind in this memorable year. No doubt looking back

will be a feature of this meeting of Synod, with the well publicised happenings of last May still at the forefront of our minds. We ought to see these events as this Church being honoured in being called to testify against Popery and the insidious laxity in doctrine and practice which allows many to condone the unscriptural teachings of Rome. Tonight, as we look back on last year's Synod with thankfulness for the deliverance worked in our midst and for the triumph of truth over compromise let us look further back 300 years to be precise to the historic General Assembly of the Church of Scotland of 1690. There was at that time of course, only one Church in Scotland — the church established at the Reformation, the Church of Scotland Protestant and Reformed of which we the F.P. Church of Scotland are the true spiritual descendants.

The present Church of Scotland tries to convey the impression that it is Reformed but not Protestant (for that is a word that carries only odium in these degenerate times). These efforts cannot for a moment be given any credibility for if a Church is to desire the description 'Reformed' it must stand where the Reformers did on the basic principles that salvation is by Scripture alone — by Grace alone and by faith alone. No Church can even appear to hold these principles if it is not Protestant — maintaining the continuous Protest against the errors of the Church of Rome. After all that is where the word Protestant came from: it was a name given to those who refused to submit to claims of Rome: they protested against them. **It is a name, fathers and brethren, that we are not ashamed of.** To be Reformed means to be Protestant, therefore only a Church that is Reformed and Protestant can claim to be the true Church of Scotland. We, I repeat, are the true spiritual descendants of the Reformed Church of Scotland. By what right? We are not recognised as the National Church as they were — we do not have the numerical following that they had — but that is beside the point. The principles which were the constitutional foundation of the Reformed Church of Scotland are still ours — the Word of God as our final authority and the Westminster Confession of Faith as our subordinate standards.

Members of Synod will know that the present Church of Scotland has wandered so far from its foundations that it has had to produce a 'Statement of Faith' — to tell its ministers, office-bearers and members what they believe. We have no such problems — the rock solid foundations of the Church of Scotland of 1690 are still ours — even if **they** have lost sight of them. It is important for us all to grasp and perhaps this is particularly true of our young people that we as a Branch of the Visible Church are not just harking back to the ideals of a past age. We are claiming that

the standards of doctrine worship and practice which we are adhering to are the standards of the Word of God as these are embodied in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Because the Word of God declares eternal truths it is timeless in its relevance — as relevant tonight as in 1690, allowing no addition to it or taking away from it. Tonight as we gather we stand directly in a line that has remained unbroken for 300 years for the General Assembly of 1690 marked the permanent settlement of Presbyterianism in Scotland.

While we are not altogether uncritical of the Revolution Settlement of 1689 as such we cannot but see in the Assembly of 1690 a watershed in Scottish Church history. It marked the establishment of three great freedoms in the Scottish Church which it enjoys to this day and for which we ought to be humbly thankful to the Most High. 1) Freedom from Popery, 2) from Prelacy, 3) from Persecution.

1). Since 1685 Scotland had had a R.C. king and it seemed as if the king would impose his own faith on the Church and nation and bring Scotland as well as England once more under the dominion of Rome. The Glorious Revolution put an end to James' scheme and when the Scottish Church met in Assembly in 1690 the threat of Popery being imposed by the king had been removed. How sad that after 300 years of this freedom the present Church of Scotland seems ready to unite with Rome of its own volition. But let us beware of limiting the Lord. 1690 marked the removal of the fear of Papal domination and let us remember as the clouds seem to darken that 'our God whom we serve is able to deliver us'. As mighty to save in 1990 as he was in 1690.

2) Prelacy. The Presbyterianism of the Scottish Church as founded firmly on the Word of God had been established in 1560 and ratified again in 1592. Yet the Stuart kings had tried to control the Church by the imposition of bishops. 1690 marks the end of these attempts and since then the government of the Scottish Church has remained unmistakably Presbyterian. **Reformed, Protestant, and Presbyteryan** is a full description of her.

3) Persecution. For 25 years the Church in Scotland has gone through the fires of persecution. Many of the Covenanters had sealed their testimony with their blood, some had been banished, many had been imprisoned and the country had been ravaged by the persecuting zeal of the oppressors. It is not fashionable to speak plainly of these things, in this ecumenical age, but we as a Church ought to urge our people young and old, to acquaint themselves with the history of the Scottish Church and particularly the principles for which our godly predecessors contended and

were prepared to die. We have to grasp that our heritage is not simply to follow men — good men — even the best of men. We could say in this context that such as Knox, Melville, Henderson and Gillespie were the best of men. We adhere to principles and claim for ours the liberty to separate from those who turn aside from Scriptural principles. One tires of the criticism often levelled at us — ‘You are just following what men did in the past.’ If men of the past such as we have mentioned followed the principles of the Scriptures and this led them to believe certain things, worship in a particular way — behave in a certain way, we are proud to be followers of such.

Much has happened since 1690 and much which makes for sad reading as far as the Church of God in the world is concerned but as we dwell briefly on these aspects of 1690 — as we see the great changes that have taken place in society — in the world, in the Church — let us lift up our hearts with our hand to the Unchanging God. Let us remember that the Head of the Church is the One who is the same yesterday, today and forever. This is the One in whose name we are gathered — Whose Cause we are seeking to advance by our meeting.”

SYNOD SERMON. Rev. Fraser MacDonald said that he was sure that he spoke for the whole Synod when he said that they had listened with interest and profit to the sermon, delivered with the characteristic authority and clarity of Mr MacLeod. He moved that the sermon be printed in the Free Presbyterian Magazine.

On WEDNESDAY afternoon the Synod met again.

The LOYAL ADDRESS for 1990 was read and agreed upon.

LOYAL ADDRESS

To the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty. The Loyal and Dutiful Address of the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

May it please Your Majesty,

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, convened at Glasgow, this twenty-third day of May, 1990, desires hereby to express its continued, sincere and unfeigned loyalty to Your Majesty’s Person and Throne.

We rejoice in the fact that in the midst of all the political changes which have affected so many of the nations of Europe the stability of your Majesty’s throne remains unaffected and that your Majesty continues to hold such a high place in the affections of the people of this nation. It

is also a matter of thankfulness to the Most High that your Majesty continues to be blessed with health and strength of body and mind and consequently able to fulfil all the arduous, onerous duties devolving upon your Majesty as our Head of State.

We feel constrained to express to Your Majesty our sense of alarm and dismay over the manner in which the Church of England, of which Your Majesty is the acknowledged head, is drifting towards union with the Roman Catholic Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to Rome last December highlighted this movement and we find particularly deplorable his proposal that, in the interest of unity, the Pope should be accorded some kind of primacy over the Christian Church. We believe, as do all Your Majesty's loyal Protestant subjects, that the implementation of any such proposal would irreparably undermine the stability of Your Majesty's Protestant Throne and prove to be altogether contrary to the spiritual interests of all of Your Majesty's subjects. In line with our Protestant forefathers we adhere unreservedly to the statement of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the Pope of Rome which not only repudiates Papal pretensions to headship of the Christian Church but identifies him as "that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God." We pray that Your Majesty's eyes and the eyes of Your Majesty's advisers may be opened to view him in that light.

As loyal subjects we earnestly desire that, under Your Majesty's reign, the righteousness which exalteth a nation would be established. This embraces the observance of the Christian Sabbath and in this connection we respectfully plead with Your Majesty to set a good example.

May the favour of the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Governor among the nations" and the One "by Whom kings reign and princes decree justice," be extended to Your Majesty, Your Majesty's Consort, the Duke of Edinburgh and all the Members of the Royal Family.

On behalf of the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

(Rev.) D. J. MacDonald, MODERATOR

Various Reports were read and these are to be found in the Proceedings of Synod.

In connection with the Training of Ministry Report, Rev. Donald MacLean spoke of the great and deep necessity for constant prayer that the Lord would raise up and equip men by calling them effectually by His grace and then by calling them to the work of the ministry. The Lord, he observed, is able to do this and the duty is ours to have it as a burden.

In connection with the Report on the Leverburgh Home of Rest it was noted that there was a deficit for the year. Rev. John MacLeod drew the attention of the Synod to the proposal of the Committee to extend the Home and to introduce nursing-care beds.

Rev. Donald MacLean said that there was no point in spending time discussing the technicalities of the project but that the Committee should be encouraged to pursue the policy of making the Home more viable. The Forsyth Bequest, he added, made specific reference to the Highlands and Islands.

The Synod went into Private Session and a result from this meeting was that Mr B. Russell who had been suspended from his studies as a student of the Church and had been removed from the roll of students by the Presbytery of Australia and New Zealand, was declared to be no longer a student of the church. His views on baptism and on the practice of elders holding services were at variance with the views of the Church.

At the same private meeting the following appointments were confirmed:

1. Mr Donald MacDonald, Glasgow as General Treasurer of the Church.
2. Messrs Sinclair Wood & Co. as the Church Auditors.
3. Messrs Coopers & Lybrand of Bulawayo as Auditors and Accountants for the Zimbabwean Mission Accounts.
4. Mr James F. MacLaren as the Church's Legal Agent.

The Synod met again in public in the evening of WEDNESDAY, 23rd MAY, 1990

The Clerk of Synod read the replies he had received from the various persons to whom last year's Synod had sent Resolutions.

Having read all these Mr MacLean stated that these letters of acknowledgment showed the amount of work done at last year's Synod in Inverness although from the "Press" it would seem as if only one item of business was done. He pointed out that having gone to the trouble of circulating these resolutions to the media not one section of the media had taken any notice of them.

In connection with the reply received on the matter of the syllabus for the Standard Grade Religious Examination in which the Department stress the necessity for a broad familiarity, Mr MacLean gave it as his view that this was an attempt to throw dust in our eyes.

Mr MacLean then referred to the action taken by the Church of England when Dr Runcie attended a Mass in Rome, contrary to the Constitution of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England. Mr MacLean observed that the media did not speak of the action of the Church Society

that dealt with the matter as being bigotry and narrow mindedness. He asked why were the media silent when a Society in the Church of England does what we have done in condemning a Protestant going to Mass? The reason, he replied, is that there is a hatred to church discipline. No scriptural step of discipline was taken in connection with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Synod then went on to move a motion in connection with the presence of the Secretary of State for Ulster attending Requiem Mass.

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland feels bound as a matter of Christian duty to record its strong protest against the action of Mr Peter Brooke the Secretary of State for Ulster, in being present at the Requiem Mass for the late popish Cardinal Tomas O'Fiach.

The Synod respectfully point out, **FIRSTLY**, the Second commandment forbids any form of idolatry, and so condemns the worship of the wafer as the Son of God. **SECONDLY**, that the sacrifice of the Mass is most dishonouring to the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. **THIRDLY**, the countenance given to the Mass by ministers of the crown is fitted to bring God's displeasure on the nation.

The Synod resolves to send a copy of this protest to the Prime Minister and to Mr Peter Brooke.

In connection with the **SABBATH OBSERVANCE REPORT** the Rev. John MacLeod drew the attention of the Committee of the need to avoid overlapping. It was his opinion that where a Court of the Church were engaged in protesting against any breach of the Sabbath Observance there was no need for action of the Committee. He thought that the sphere of the Committee was National while the Presbyteries were responsible for things taking place within their bounds.

In presenting the **FINANCIAL REPORT** for the year the Rev. A. E. W. MacDonald reminded all concerned that they were but stewards and were to act at all times responsibly.

The Rev. Donald MacLean noted that the computerisation of accounts had been accomplished and that this was a big step forward. The Church, he added, were indebted to the General Treasurer. He observed that the salary of the ministers had been increased by £430 and of missionaries by £250 and expressed thankfulness to the people for this state of affairs. He further noted that as has been said ever since the inception of the Free

Presbyterian Church, if the Church will prove faithful to her trust, the Lord will take care for it.

The following Motions of thanks were approved by the Synod.

1. The Synod expresses its thanks to the General Treasurer for his work during the part of the year from the date of his appointment to 31st December 1989 and feel especially indebted to him for his diligent work after taking over in particularly difficult circumstances.
2. The Synod expresses its thanks to the Church Auditors Messrs Sinclair Wood & Company C.A., Gordon Chambers, 90 Mitchell Street, Glasgow G13 1N6 for the work in conducting the audit for the year ending 31st December, 1989 and reappoint them for the ensuing year.

The Motion for a DAY OF PRAYER was brought in by Rev. Fraser MacDonald. Mr MacDonald said "We have listened with interest and profit to the comments made on and related to the Religion and Morals Report. I would refer to a very common and subtle device of Satan to stumble us in our duty. The devil says it is SO easy to condemn. That is not so, however; what is much easier is to condone, for by so doing we avoid the criticism, the odium and the reproach of the world. Never was there a greater need to be a witnessing Synod. We heard the late Rev. James MacLeod say in his own day, "God is not going to bless indolence and a mere bewailing of our spiritual and moral plight." What can we do then? We can and do protest at local and national level but above all else, we ought to do what the godly of all generations did in hours of crisis, namely — have recourse to prayer. These two methods go hand in hand."

He then moved:

"That Wednesday or Thursday the 12th or 13th December 1990 be held as a day of humiliation and prayer throughout the church, at home and abroad, to crave in the spirit of penitence for an outpouring of the blessed Holy Spirit as the only remedy for the decadence of the age."

The Synod considered that the Magazines were distinctive witnesses for the truth. Mr K. Gillies thought that it would be a good thing if a section of the Free Presbyterian Magazine was taken up with "Protestant Notes."

Reference was made to the proposed "Centenary Volume" and Rev. D. MacLean called upon the older people of the Church to search for matters of interest in connection with the early days of the Church which may be in their possession.

At this juncture the Clerk of Synod read a letter from Mrs MacLennan, F.P. Manse, Dornoch, acknowledging last year's Synod Tribute to her late husband.

He then proceeded to read acknowledgments of donations made by last year's Synod to the various organisations noted below and the Synod agreed to give donations this year as stated.

Ockenden Venture (£500).

Aid to Persecuted (£500) — The Clerk of Synod suggested that this donation be transferred to the Trinitarian Bible Society for Russian Bibles and this was agreed.

Care Trust (£600).

Reformation Translation Fellowship (£300).

L.D.O.S. (England) (£500).

Christian Witness to Israel (£750).

The Synod agreed that there should be no donation to the National Viewers nor to the Blythswood Tract Society.

Rev. D. M. Boyd suggested that the Care Trust donation should be going to Care Campaign. Rev. D. J. MacDonald suggested that the Religion and Morals Committee would gather more information re Care Trust and present it to next year's Synod. To this the Rev. D. M. Boyd replied that the Committee had already done its work.

At a later meeting of Synod it was agreed that the £500 usually given to the Blythswood Tract Society be given to the Sticing Hulp Oost Europa Group to help with the production of the "Shorter Catechism" in Russian.

TRIBUTES TO DECEASED MEMBERS OF SYNOD were read as follows:

Synod tribute to the late Mr Donald MacLachlan, Glasgow

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, met at Glasgow on this 24th day of May 1990, wishes to place on record its deep sense of the loss occasioned by the death of Mr Donald MacLachlan, an elder of the Glasgow (St Jude's) Congregation, on 6th June 1989.

From 1972 until his lamented death Mr MacLachlan was on several occasions a member of Synod and was prayerfully and intelligently interested in the work of the Church at home and overseas. His love for, and loyalty to, his Saviour were consistently evident in his unfeigned attachment to the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which is the testimony of Jesus. He prayed earnestly for the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom and rejoiced to hear of the salvation of sinners whatever their race and colour.

He mourned over the backslidden generation in which his lot was cast, and particularly over the manifest decline in true religion in the land of his nativity.

Mention must be made of his intense interest in the controversy which led to the Secession of May, 1989. He prayed much for the vindication of the Church's witness against the Papacy, and when news came of the Synod's momentous decision, he said simply, "Now we must give thanks."

The Church mourns the loss of witnesses of the calibre of Donald MacLachlan, but desire to be submissive to the Divine will. "Help, Lord: for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." (Psalm 12: 1).

To his sorrowing widow and family circle the Synod extends its heartfelt sympathy, desiring for them the blessing of the "Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."

Synod tribute to Mr Angus MacLeod, elder, North Harris

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, met at Glasgow, this twenty-third day of May, 1990, desires to place on record its sincere sense of sorrow and loss on the death of Mr Angus MacLeod, elder, North Harris.

Angus MacLeod was born in Collam in 1908 and departed, we believe, to be forever with Christ, on the twentieth day of January, 1990. He first publicly professed his faith in Christ on the occasion of the September communion in Tarbert in 1954. Eight years later he was elected to the office of the Deaconship and two years after that to the office of the Eldership. As an office-bearer he adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour taking a great interest in the affairs of Christ's cause in his own congregation and further afield. Notwithstanding the fact that, for many years, his hearing was much impaired, he performed his duties in an exemplary manner. This affliction he bore with admirable Christian cheerfulness and resignation. In his latter years he was almost stone deaf but as a faithful servant he continued to do all that he could in the service of his Master.

Angus MacLeod was a highly intelligent but humble Christian in whose company one was not long left in doubt as to Whose he was and Whom he served. When called upon to do so, and for many years, he took services in the North Harris congregation and his labours in that connection were much appreciated. Right to the end he was willing to spend and be spent in the service of His Master. He was, we believe, a wrestler at the throne of grace and on that account his loss to the Church on earth is all the greater. "Help, Lord: for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

The Synod would express its sincere sympathy with his sorrowing son and daughter and prays that the Father of Mercies and the God of all comfort will uphold and sustain them in their loss.

Tribute to the late Murdo MacIver, elder, North Tolsta

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland met in Glasgow in May, 1990, place on record its deep sense of loss over the death of Murdo MacIver, elder, North Tolsta. Murdo gave abundant evidence that he had undergone a saving change. He like many other office bearers of the Church was frequently called upon to address the congregation during the minister's absence in other congregations. On these occasions his addresses were very much appreciated by the Lord's people. He gave abundant evidence that he knew, experimentally, the doctrine of free and sovereign grace.

In public prayer he carried the people with him and the Lord's people testified of the special savour of these petitions. He gave evidence of being one who understood the awe of being in the presence of the Almighty at the throne of Grace. His departure to be with his Saviour is our loss and his gain. We believe that he is now with the One who loved him and gave Himself for him and of whom he could say that "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He was a burning and shining light in his Master's service. The Synod extends its heartfelt sympathy to his widow, two sons and two daughters.

But as for me, I thine own face
In righteousness will see;
And with thy likeness, when I wake
I satisfy'd shall be.

Psalm 17: 15

Tribute to the late Mr Angus Maclean, Ness

This worthy man was called to his eternal rest at the beginning of June, 1989. After falling from a ladder he did not regain consciousness.

"We speak," said Mr Spurgeon, "of certain persons as having died by accident, and we sometimes bewail the deaths of Christian men as premature; but in the deepest sense it is not so. God hath marked out for us the place where and the time when we must resign our breath."

Angus Maclean was a man that feared the Lord; and was highly respected in the Ness congregation and in the whole parish. By the grace of God, he kept his garments clean in an evil day.

The Church mourns the passing of such men as Angus Maclean, and has reason to cry: "Help, Lord: for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." Ps. 12: 1.

The Synod expresses its heartfelt sympathy with his widow and family.

At a later meeting of Synod the following tribute was paid to **the late James Tallach, Gairloch**, who spent many years working with our African Mission:—

“The Synod would place on record its sincere appreciation of the much valued work done in the African Mission by the late Mr James Tallach, Gairloch, son of the late Rev. John Tallach our first white missionary to Africa.

For many years Mr Tallach gave of his time and talents, engaging himself in all that is involved in the day-to-day running of a Mission. Added to this, Mr Tallach acted as an interpreter and being in complete command of both the Sindebele and the English language — and having a true zeal for the glory of God in the salvation of souls, he performed this duty in a most able and spiritual manner.

At a period when the Mission could not afford to pay any reasonable wages, Mr Tallach gave countless hours for very little monetary return. His eye was not on the rewards of a temporal nature but he served the Lord Christ.”

The Synod met again on THURSDAY evening.

The Convener of the Foreign Mission Committee gave in his Report, and in seconding this Report the Rev. Donald MacLean took note that this would be the last Report of this Committee to be submitted by Mr McPherson who had intimated his retiring as Convener of the Committee. Mr MacLean stated that whatever changes may take place in this Committee it is encouraging to know that the work of our Mission in Zimbabwe still goes on. He referred to the fact that the congregations in Zimbabwe were growing despite the fact that the government of that country has no great appreciation for Christian principles. He further observed that the work being done by Mission staff was being done in the strength of grace in the fulfilment of the promise “My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.” On behalf of the church Mr MacLean thanked Mr McPherson for the work he had done as Convener of the Committee.

The two Dutch Deputies from Mbumba Zending were introduced to the Synod: Mr Reijers and Mr Scholten.

Mr Scholten addressed the Synod

Address to the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 24th of May 1990, Glasgow, on behalf of the Mbumba Zending

Mr Moderator, Members of Synod, Dear Friends,

It is a privilege for Mr Reijers and me, to be here, in your midst, with our wives, and to get the opportunity to speak some words to the Synod.

The committee of the Dutch "Mbumba Zending" is glad to tell you, that the Most High inclines the hearts of many people in Holland to give generously for the Free Presbyterian mission work. We hope that He may use this support and that His kingdom may be built up in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Kenya.

May we be made partakers thereof. May the Lord take us and make us vessels unto honour, according to the good pleasure of His will. We have no right to anything. By nature we are nothing but enemies. What a wonder that the Most High wants to reconcile enemies with Himself, through Jesus Christ.

The work of the church of God continues through weal and woe. There are many disappointments, which at times are discouraging. The Lord Jesus has spoken: In the world ye shall have tribulation. But He added something to that: Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Therefore the work of the church cannot be idle in the Lord. The King of the Church stands firm for His own work.

From eternity the Most High had thoughts of peace, and not of evil, towards wandering sons of men. He has chosen His people, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, and has given them to Christ for His possession, who must be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into His kingdom. Therefore His servants must proclaim to them that they must repent from their evil works and believe in the Son of God.

He Himself brings them to the light of the gospel and to the true conversion, so that they will bow in the dust before Christ and believe in Him. He leads them by means of the preaching of His Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our eyes must be opened again and again, to see this. We are often of doubtful mind, when we see little or no change in those to whom the gospel is preached; no feeling of guilt, no fruit worthy of repentance. We are of doubtful mind, when we see these dark times, when we see the sad state of the church, the breaking up, the disintegration. The psalmist says: We see not our signs. Then we are inclined to sit down in dismay.

But the King of the church guarantees His own work. It is His unchangeable purpose, that those who are His possession, by virtue of His own purpose according to election, must be brought to conversion. He has spoken: I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

We see not our signs, as result of our blindness, but they are there. There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.

May the Holy Spirit bind it upon our hearts and teach us this. May the Most High bless and establish the work of our hands, so that in the harvest time our hearts may be filled with joy and thanksgiving, all to the glory of His name.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

The times are anxious. The judgment begins at the house of God. May the Lord enable us, that we do not go in our own strength, but that we may realize that our help is in the eternal God. He is a very present help in trouble. Where else can we get our help from? Where else can we turn at a time like this?

May the Lord strengthen you in your work and bless you in our congregations, here in Scotland and abroad. May he bless all the mission workers. May He be with us and grant us what we each stand in need of, and that He may do things and help us to His honour and glory.

Fathers and Brethren, pray for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon us personally, upon our families, congregations, mission work, but also upon our poor countries.

Thanks for your listening.

Rev. D. B. MacLeod referred to his visit to the annual meeting of the Mbumba Zending in Holland and said that it was a privilege for him to be there where 7,500 had gathered and a collection of 130,000 guilders made.

Rev. B. B. Dube from Zenka, Zimbabwe addressed the Synod and conveyed to the Synod the good wishes of the Mission.

Rev. A. McPherson presented several of the Mission reports and took opportunity to refer to the work that had been done for the Foreign Mission by Rev. D. MacLean in years past and expressed the thanks of the church to him for that. Mr MacLean replied and mentioned his satisfaction that Dr Haag had settled so well.

Rev. A. E. W. MacDonald stated that he was surprised that no report had referred to the death of Mr James Tallach who had laboured for many years in the African Mission and to whom the Synod was much indebted. He introduced a Tribute which the Synod adopted.

The Synod then proceeded to attend to the Reports of the DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE. Note was taken of the death of a son

of Rev. J. van Dorp, Gisborne, and the Synod agreed that a letter of sympathy be sent to him.

Rev. D. A. Ross spoke of his trip to Eastern Europe and the Report here given is a supplement to his report in the "Proceedings of Synod."

Report of visit to Eastern Europe, 1990 — by Rev. D. A. Ross

As planned, Mr Edward Ross and I left for Eastern Europe on 17th April and sailed from Hull to Rotterdam the following day. In Holland we collected new clothing and shoes from some friends, and then Russian and Hungarian religious books kindly donated by Stichting Hulp Oost Europa.

Having crossed into Czechoslovakia we delivered Czech Bibles to a distribution centre in Prague. Here I was told that since liberation they have been receiving a considerable amount of Bibles. It was distressing to discover that the Pope was to arrive in Prague next day.

In Hungary, the following day, we were met by old friends, and that night we handed over 1000 Bibles and some literature (for Hungarian speaking people in Russia) to a pastor from the Reformed Church in Russia. Along with his wife and an elder, he had come from Russia to meet us. In a wonderful way they got a permit for importing all the Bibles to Russia, which obviated the laborious work of taking them across in small amounts. With joyful gratitude they set off in two very heavily laden cars in the hope of arriving in Russia by dawn.

After a quiet weekend in Hungary we met the guide who was to lead us into Romania. Two long days of hard driving took us to north east Romania, an area which had not been reached by the loads of relief goods coming from Western Europe. Because some relief goods left at government institutions had not reached the people, we gave clothing, medicines and food to Church centres. Deep appreciation was expressed for this kindness shown by the Scottish people.

Our crossing into Russia was tedious because of inexplicable delays at the border, but having crossed we were met by our next guide at the appointed place. Next morning we distributed Bibles and books to some of the unregistered congregations of the Baptist Churches in Odessa.

We went on to Kiev to hand over 1000 Bibles to a Baptist Church which had just finished building a new church but had no Bibles for the large congregation. After a quiet weekend we spent Monday distributing Bibles and literature to several church groups. One Russian man, pondering the smallness of Scotland in comparison to Russia and the efforts by Scotland to supply Bibles to Russia, said it seemed to him "like a mosquito attempt-

ting to feed an elephant!" These Russians are amazed at all the trouble and expense to which our small church goes to bring them Bibles and, needless to say, are anxiously hoping that we will continue the good work. I promised them that if the Free Presbyterian Church sees fit and is able to supply more Bibles that that would be done, and I asked them to obtain further permits in the meantime.

Our next stopping place was Lvov where we spent the night after visiting a family belonging to the unofficial Baptist Church. They were quite moved by our visit and by the gift of Bibles and books.

Next day, in Ushgorod, we met the Russian pastor who had met us already in Hungary. We were delighted that he had succeeded in getting his precious load of Bibles safely into Russia. Indeed, the Hungarian customs officials waived certain requirements, which our friends assured us was truly an answer to prayer. This pastor has a flock of 3000 and preaches to between 800 and 900 every Sabbath. Since *perestroika* and *glasnost* children are allowed to come to church and he has a service for them on a weekday, when the church is packed. Because of the scarcity of pastors this pastor has another 7000 people under his care and evidently he works night and day as much as flesh and blood can endure. He was very excited about having obtained the Bibles, and he hopes, if possible, that we will be able to help them further.

There is no doubting the fact that there are many fine Christian people in those parts, but alas, as in other sections of the Christian church, there are worldly people professing the Christian religion. However, on the whole, there is a great desire to receive the Word of God. In the West, to our shame, we have little desire for the Word of God. When the East stretches out its hand to receive Bibles we should do all in our power to meet its needs. The Trinitarian Bible Society and others are doing that, but it is only a drop in the ocean of need.

We acknowledge the kindness of the Trinitarian Bible Society in giving 2000 Bibles at 50% discount, bringing the cost down to £3500. We also took a few hundred extra Bibles and New Testaments; a grant of 1000 copies of the booklet *The Way of Salvation*, from the Scripture Gift Mission for distribution to Churches in Romania; a quantity of books from the F.P. Bookroom in Glasgow, and books received from friends.

While there are large congregations to be found in the Eastern bloc we came across others struggling to exist. One reformed pastor returned from church very downcast to tell us that it was only himself and an old lady who were present; while another said that out of a congregation of 200, only himself and the bell ringers turn up at the Sabbath morning service.

Spiritual death is everywhere and what need therefore for the prayer, "The whole earth let his glory fill. Amen so let it be."

We left for Italy next day at 3 a.m., travelling through Hungary and Austria to reach Udine, North Italy, at 9.30 p.m. The following day we arrived in Fornaci di Barga where we had a warm welcome from the Marchi ladies, and later from Emelie and family. Some in this small group are not certain which way to go in connection with the secession in the church. Others are firmly on the side of the church, and we pray that they will all be of that mind. We hope that someone in our church will learn the Italian language with a view to helping this mission work. We are concerned also that something should be done to provide an Italian translation of the Psalms in metre.

On Monday we left at 5 a.m. and arrived in Nunspeet, Holland, to enjoy the much appreciated hospitality of Miss Peta van de Ridder, a former colleague on our African Mission. Next day, in Dordrecht, Mr Martin van Driel kindly helped us to pick up a large load of reformed books in the Russian language, generously given to us by Sticing Hulp Oost Europa at small cost.

We are much indebted to Sticing Hulp Oost Europa for printing some excellent books in Russian. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is one such book. Indeed, in Russia we met one of the men who was involved in this translation. I enquired from him about his undertaking to translate *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, *The Shorter Catechism* and *The Mother's Catechism* into Russian, but since then I have discovered that a Russian translation of *The Westminster Confession* and *The Shorter Catechism* are being printed in America. However I have asked our Russian friend to translate *The Mother's Catechism* in the hope that the project will be considered favourably by the Church.

I have also asked a man in Hungary to consider translating *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, *The Shorter Catechism* and *The Mother's Catechism* into the Hungarian language for use among Hungarian speaking people in Russia. If his response is favourable, I hope that the way will be opened up for our Church to undertake this work.

In the meantime, we must be praying that the little we do will be blessed to the saving of sinners and to the opening of doors for the spread of the Reformed Faith in those parts; and that all would redound to the glory of Christ, the great Head of the Church.

The work of sending relief to Romania, in the form of clothing, medicines and food, will go on for some time, but this important work is not as important as transporting Bibles and good literature. There are

many groups sending relief, and on a few occasions we met fleets of relief trucks coming and going. It is for the Church to decide if it wishes to engage somewhat more in this most necessary work.

It is with deep gratitude that we thank all those in our own and other denominations who contributed so liberally to the expenses of this mission journey. We also thank those who gave clothing and other useful articles for relief in Romania.

Above all, we have cause for great gratitude to the Most High for graciously preserving us over the long and wearisome miles we travelled round Europe. We believe this was in answer to many prayers.

It was most interesting to meet the descendants of those missionaries who worked alongside the renowned Rev. John 'Rabbi' Duncan in Budapest. They laboured diligently. We should do likewise by using the opportunities afforded us, for the night cometh when no man can work.

The Clerk of Synod read the following STATEMENT which had been approved at an earlier meeting of Synod.

Statement by the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, May 1990

At its meeting in June 1989 the Synod issued a Statement repudiating the unfounded charges levelled by the Organisation known as the Associated Presbyterian Churches (APC), with respect to alleged departures by the Synod from the principles and constitution of this Church.

On the question of Church Buildings and Manses, the Synod took the view that ordinary principles of moral integrity exercising the consciences of those who had separated from the Church, should lead them to vacate the Church buildings and Manses belonging to the Church from which they had separated. The Synod, meeting in 1990, note that there are very few instances in which the consciences of these individuals have caused them to vacate property to which they have no legal or moral right. In the world of business, an employee of a Company, who has the use of a house as part of his employment contract, as a matter of honour vacates the house when he resigns the employment of the Company. He certainly would not wait to be evicted by a sheriff. The Ministers of the APC, until the date of their leaving the Free Presbyterian Church in May 1989, were in effect employees of the Church and, as such, they had the use of a Manse. When they left the employment of the Free Presbyterian Church, ordinary principles of ethics should have obliged them to vacate their Manses. It would appear that the ethics of the business world are, in this

regard, superior to those of the APC, and that the profession of the APC to have very tender consciences is belied by their conduct.

On occasions when pressed to return property such as Congregational cars, APC Ministers have sought to excuse their refusal to return this property, which manifestly does not belong to them, by appealing to the Deed of Separation which they signed. This Deed sets out the Constitution of the APC Organisation. An examination of this Deed demonstrates quite clearly that the Constitution of the APC is not the same as that of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, as its signatories would like people to believe. In fact, theirs is a fundamentally different Constitution, as the following clearly shows.

It will be agreed on all sides that the Westminster Confession of Faith is a foundation document of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. All Office-bearers, including Ministers, Elders and Deacons, in conformity with the Church's Constitution, own and believe the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith to be founded on the Word of God, and acknowledge the same as the confession of their faith. This they do without any reservation, mental or expressed. In the case of the APC Office-bearers, however, their subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith is **not** without reservation. According to the Deed of Separation, the documents said to form their Constitution, including the Westminster Confession of Faith, are accepted "insofar as each and every one of the documents is consistent with the Holy Scripture." In this way, an express reservation has been introduced which modifies the relationship of Office-bearers in the APC to the Confession which they have subscribed. It is clear, therefore, that the Constitution of the APC is not only different from the Constitution of the Free Presbyterian Church, but is a departure from it, just as surely as the introduction of the Declaratory Act into the Free Church in 1892 vitiated the Constitution of that Church, and was the occasion of the Free Presbyterian Church coming into separate existence.

It is instructive to remember a similar Case which arose in the Relief Church in 1790 — the Case of the Rev. John Smith. He proposed to subscribe the Confession insofar as it agreed with Holy Scripture. To prevent heretics from obtaining access to the Denomination under the guise of subscribing to the Confession of Faith, insofar as it agreed with Scripture, the Synod of the Relief Church passed an Overture to the effect that any person ordained in that body should receive the Westminster Confession of Faith as the confession of his faith 'simpliciter'.

To illustrate this particular point in the present circumstances let us sup-

pose that a Minister of the APC came to the conclusion that the Pope was not the Antichrist. If challenged on such a view by being confronted with the fact that the doctrine declaring the Pope to be the Antichrist is the teaching of the Confession, he could escape Church discipline by saying he did not believe the Holy Scripture to say that the Pope was the Antichrist.

Since it is thus obvious that the APC Constitution is not that of the Free Presbyterian Church, and the Church property is bound to the Constitution, both Church Buildings and Manses should be vacated by Ministers of the APC and other property returned.

The Synod realises that there is a course open to it to recover its Church property by litigation. Having considered the Opinion of Senior Counsel, the Synod has sound reasons for believing that such litigation would be successful, were this course to be adopted. The Synod, however, resolves, in the light of I Corinthians 6, that it will not take this course of action. The Synod, of course, reserves the right of the Church to defend any claim against its property.

Having come to this conclusion, the Synod will take no steps to enter into any form of negotiation with people who, in its view, have no moral or legal right to property which they hold, and which their consciences, as yet, do not require them to vacate. We leave them in the hands of the God of the whole earth Who will deal with them in His own time and way. In the meantime we will obey the injunction of His Word, "to suffer yourselves to be defrauded," I Corinthians 6: 7.

After expressing thanks to the Glasgow congregation the Moderator brought the meeting of Synod to a close.

RESIGNATION OF CLERK OF SYNOD. The Moderator read the following letter:

13 Kingsborough Gardens
Glasgow
G12 9NH
22nd May 1990

To the Moderator,
The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Dear Mr Moderator,

As the Synod know, I indicated towards the close of the Synod in May 1989 that I doubted if I would be able, for health reasons, to continue

as Clerk, and that the Synod should be giving prayerful consideration to the appointment of my successor.

The separation which took place after the Synod removed those who had been a source of trouble to the Synod on various issues and occasions.

This event has confirmed my view that now would be an appropriate time for me to resign as Clerk, so that my successor could commence his duties in a more united Synod.

As I will, the Lord sparing me, be seventy-five next month, and as I have been Clerk for the past thirteen years, I feel that the providence of God points to my resignation, which I now tender, through you, to the Synod.

Earlier this year I indicated my intention to the Church Interests' Committee, and Clerks of Presbyteries were asked to advise their respective Presbyteries of my intention. By these means, nothing has been done in haste, and I hope the Synod will be guided by the Lord in choosing my successor.

I should like to thank the Synod for its support and co-operation during my Clerk-ship, when the Synod was called upon to pass through some troublesome times. It has been a great honour for me to serve you, and I hope the Synod, as the Supreme Court of this branch of His Church, will continue for many years to come, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Should the Synod think it appropriate in view of present circumstances, I would be willing to continue as a member of the Church Interests' Committee.

Yours sincerely,

(Rev.) Donald MacLean.

At an earlier meeting of Synod the Rev. D. B. MacLeod had been appointed successor in office to Rev. Donald MacLean.

Mr MacLeod now took the Clerk's chair and in doing so he said — "Mr Moderator, I would thank the Synod for the honour that they have conferred upon me and I realise the weightiness of this task that has been laid upon me. It is an encouragement to me that Mr MacLean, who has served the Church so faithfully for many years, will be available yet and be at hand to give all the assistance he can. And I am glad also to have the assistant clerk Mr MacDonald who has served the Church in this capacity so well for so long. Above all I would seek to look to the Lord for grace and strength to fulfil the duties that are laid upon me."

PRESENTATION TO THE REV. DONALD MACLEAN. The

Moderator asked Mr MacLean to accept a gift in token of appreciation of the Synod for his services given to the Church. He referred to the troublous times through which the Clerk had guided the Synod and said that the Church ought to recognise the grace and strength given him by the Lord in his work.

The Rev. Donald MacLean responded:—

“Thank you very much Mr Moderator. I did not expect that a gift of this kind would be given to me. I deeply appreciate the thought of the Synod in making this presentation to me of which I knew nothing. It has been a great honour to me and a great pleasure to serve the Church as Clerk of Synod. I thank the Synod for their co-operation and support during the years. There comes a time when one must conclude that Providence is directing one to step aside. I would like to acknowledge with thanks to the Most High the Lord Jesus Christ for the strength that I was given during these times both physically and spiritually. We read of the psalmist saying ‘Thou hast caused men ride over our heads yet Thou has brought us to a wealthy place.’ We as a Church are being brought to a wealthy place and that wealthy place is to enjoy the favour of the Most High, and I hope that will continue and that the Lord will be with us, and that He will open the windows of heaven and pour out the Holy Spirit of promise for the sake of the Divine Head of the Church, and many souls be born again in Zion and it will be said ‘That this man and that man there was born’ and that our congregations will be full of souls who are saying, as they listen to the Word of God preached and as they worship in our congregations, ‘all my well springs are in thee’.”

Synod Sermon

by Rev. Lachlan MacLeod, Greenock, Retiring Moderator

And David said to Solomon his son, be strong and of good courage, and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed; for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord, 1 Chronicles 28: 20.

We are told in chapter 22 that the Lord made known to David that the house of the Lord, or temple, was to be built on the site of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. We are also told that David at that time “called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the Lord God of Israel.” It was in David’s heart to build that house himself, but he was not allowed because (as we are told here in chapter 28) he was a man of war and had shed blood; but the Lord told him that one of his sons would build the house.

In chapter 23 we are told that “when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel”. Probably that was just a public intimation that Solomon was to be his successor. As you know, Solomon was not the eldest son of David; he was one of the younger sons, but he was the one chosen by God to be king. So David made public intimation of that fact sometime before the events recorded here, in chapter 28.

We now see, in chapter 28, that “David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies,” and so on. All these officers he called to Jerusalem on this occasion to make known again in a public and a formal manner, that the Lord had chosen Solomon to be his successor and to build the temple. David informed the people, “God said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.”

David, having then exhorted the people to keep all the commandments of God, proceeded to address Solomon particularly: “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.” His words to Solomon are affectionate, simple and very direct, as he directed him to know God, reminded him that God is the all knowing God, encouraged him to seek the Lord and faithfully warned him of the consequences of forsaking Him.

David then handed over the pattern or plan of the temple. “David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof. . . .” This pattern or plan “he had by the spirit,” that is, by inspiration, as is confirmed by verse 19: “All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.”

Finally, David encourages Solomon, as our text shows: “And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed; for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.”

In considering this verse, we may notice first: **Solomon’s need of being encouraged** (he had great need of being encouraged at this time), and secondly **the encouragement that he was given**.

First, **Solomon needed encouragement** because of *the nature of the work* which God called him to engage in. It was the work of building “an house

for the Lord God of Israel". No man before him had been asked to do such a thing. The Lord had said (as we read in 2nd Samuel 7, verse 6), "I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle." For centuries the Lord had been pleased to dwell "in a tent and in a tabernacle"; but the time had now come when He was pleased to allow a house to be built for Him.

No earthly architect planned this house. God Himself revealed the pattern to David, and it had to be a house "exceeding magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all countries," (1 Chr. 22: 5). For this reason great care and skill would have to be exercised in the building of it, just as great skill and wisdom was required for making the tabernacle in the wilderness. Furthermore, as the first verse of the next chapter says, Solomon was "yet young and tender" — he was inexperienced, and certainly inexperienced in this kind of work. So we can easily understand his need of being encouraged when, in his youth and inexperience, he was called by the Lord to build this wonderful house.

Again, Solomon had need of encouragement *in prospect of his becoming the ruler of the kingdom*. David was old and would soon pass away or "sleep with his fathers", and all the responsibility, not only for building of the temple but also for governing of the kingdom would fall on Solomon's shoulders. We see in 2nd Chronicles 1, verse 10, that he prayed, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?" Obviously, Solomon was very conscious of his need of wisdom and very aware of his shortcomings as far as such a charge was concerned.

But perhaps the greatest reason why he needed encouragement was that *there was opposition to him*. He had enemies, and they were not the usual enemies of Israel — the Philistines, Edomites or Ammonites. The enemies that he needed protection from were his own kith and kin — his brother Adonijah and his cousin Joab. Adonijah did not accept God's word that Solomon was to reign after his father. We see in 1st Kings 1, verses 5 to 7, when David was "stricken in years", and was in fact on his death-bed, "Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king; and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he was also a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest; and they following Adonijah helped him." They were in opposition to Solomon, and certainly, they were not concerned

about building the temple or about the cause of the Lord. They were wholly taken up with their own selfish and worldly plans.

We may now notice a few facts about Solomon's opponents, Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar. At this time *Adonijah* was probably the eldest living son of David. He was also "a very goodly man" — no doubt popular at court and with the people. He got much of his own way, for "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" (1 Kings 1: 36). In other words, he had not been disciplined as he ought to have been — and this was not to David's credit because, as the Word of God says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." It is also evident that he was proud and ambitious, for he "exalted himself, saying, I will be king". How great was the audacity of this man! Although it was clearly revealed from heaven that Solomon was to be king in the place of David his father, and although David gave public intimation of it, that did not deter Adonijah from proclaiming, "I will be king". He conferred with Joab and Abiathar the priest, and they fell in with his plans. His choice of these two men shows Adonijah to have been a very shrewd man, for at this time Joab was out of favour with David, and that was very likely true of Abiathar as well; and of course both of them were in a strong position to influence the people to follow Adonijah.

The second person in this group was *Joab*. Being the son of Zeruiah, David's sister (1 Chr. 2: 15,16), he was David's nephew and the cousin of Adonijah and Solomon. From what we read about Joab in the Word of God it sometimes appears that he was a good man and that he had the fear of God. In a speech before a battle with the Syrians he said, "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good," (2 Sam. 10: 12). Also, in advising David regarding the numbering of the people, his advice was right. But despite all that, Joab was not good. In fact he was far otherwise — he was a wicked and treacherous character, as is clearly seen in his conduct regarding Abner and Amasa (2 Sam. 3: 27 and 20: 9,10). David later said to Solomon that Joab, in killing Abner and Amasa, "shed the blood of war in peace," that is, he murdered them. He did not then flee to a city of refuge but went about as if he had done no wrong. Being in command of the army he was so strong and had such influence that even David could not deal with him, and he could get off even with murder. When people get into such a position that they think they are above the law (and that is what Joab was thinking) that is dangerous indeed in any society. But Joab knew well that because of his conduct he

had fallen into disfavour with David. I believe that as long as David was king, Joab felt that his life was not safe and feared that David would deal with him when he would get the opportunity. It would therefore be quite easy for Adonijah to get Joab on his side.

The third person in this group that opposed Solomon was *Abiathar*, who was the high priest in Israel for many years during David's reign and was greatly respected and honoured by the people of Israel. Since the day that he escaped from the city of Nob (1 Sam. 22: 20-23), when Saul slew the priests of the Lord, Abiathar was with David, faithfully remaining with him during the years he had to flee from place to place, persecuted and hunted by Saul. Even when Absalom rebelled, Abiathar remained faithful to David. When Solomon later passed judgement on Abiathar (1 Kings 2: 26), he took this fact into consideration. "Thou art worthy of death," Solomon said to him, "but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted." It is very difficult to see why such a man, one of the priests of the Lord, one of the ministers of the sanctuary, should join with such a person as Adonijah. But on the other hand we can readily understand how useful it would be to Adonijah to have his father's old friend, Abiathar the high priest, on his side. He would then be able to say to the people, "Surely this man would be on the right side. Surely the party that he is with is the right party." That would make good propaganda.

The three of them together, Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar, made a powerful group and were a force to be reckoned with at this time, Joab, as general of that highly organised army of Israel, had great influence over the soldiers, and he could get them, probably to a man, to follow him. Abiathar, as the high priest, no doubt had great influence over the priests and the Levites. These two groups — the army, and the priests and the Levites — made up a very powerful opposing force indeed; and certainly Joab and Adonijah were ruthless men. So there was danger here.

David was told of the rebellion of Adonijah and his supporters, first by Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and later confirmed by Nathan the prophet (1 Kings 1: 11-27). First, David reassured Bathsheba that Solomon would be king; "Even as I swore unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day" (1 Kings 1: 29,30). David then called for "Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king" (1 Kings 1: 32-36), and he commanded them to anoint Solomon as king.

David did *not* suggest to these officers that they should confer with the rebels to see if some arrangement could be made — some compromise whereby they could divide the kingdom so that Adonijah would have part of it and Solomon would have part of it. Neither did he give orders to Benaiah the son of Jehoiada to wage war with them and to fight it out to the end. What he did was this; he ignored them; just ignored them. Having renewed his promise to Bathsheba and having instructed these other officers to have Solomon anointed king, he just treated the rebels as if they did not exist; he never said another word about them on that occasion.

In having Solomon anointed to reign in his stead, David was in the path of duty, carrying out what he knew to be the mind of the Lord. The Lord had revealed to him that Solomon was to be king, so he instructed his officers to anoint him; but the others he left in the hands of the Lord at that time.

On the other hand, the conduct of Adonijah and his supporters, was *against* God's revealed will. Now, when people are going against the Word of God there is danger. In all things we come short, but if men knowingly and boldly go contrary to God's revealed will, then they are on dangerous ground indeed as Psalm 68 says:

“But surely God shall wound the head
of those that are his foes;
The hairy scalp of him that still
on in his trespass goes.”

The word of God was against them and they were opposed to the Word of God. That, as I said, is a dangerous situation to be in.

Now, **secondly**, we shall consider **the encouragement itself**. The encouragement is a wonderful encouragement: “And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed; for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.”

“Be strong and of good courage, and do it” — there was need of this word being spoken to Solomon for, as we have seen, there was much to discourage him — plenty to cause him to fear and be dismayed. He was young and inexperienced, and he had to face subtle foes.

But there was one good reason why Solomon should have been neither afraid nor dismayed, and that was this promise of the presence of the Lord: “The LORD God, even my God *will be with thee.*”

Now, David, in speaking these words, was speaking *from the Lord*. David was not saying, “I *hope* that the Lord will be with you and I *pray*

that the Lord will be with you.” David was speaking as a prophet for as well as being a king he was a prophet (Acts 2: 30), and he was speaking these words from the Lord to Solomon his son.

It was *the LORD God Himself* who was to be with Solomon. “The LORD God will be with thee;” said David, speaking of the covenant God of Israel. Here was truly great encouragement for Solomon — that he would have the presence of *the LORD God* the LORD Jehovah; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God who had done so much for Israel in ages past; the God who had come down and redeemed them from Egypt; the God who had opened up the Red Sea before them and preserved them for forty years in the wilderness; the God who brought them into the land of Canaan and gave them that land for an inheritance. This was the God that was to be with him. This was the One who was to help him now. “The LORD God shall be with thee.”

David also said, “*even my God*” — “The LORD God, even *my* God, will be with thee.” This God was David’s own God. This God was his portion. It was of this God, the God of Israel, that David said,

“Thou my sure portion art alone,
which I did chuse, O Lord;”

This God was his Saviour and Deliverer in troublous times; the God who stood with him in many a difficult situation; the God whom David proved over and over again to be the promise-keeping, prayer-hearing, prayer-answering and faithful God. Solomon no doubt knew what great things God had done for his father, and he was aware of what this God, the God of Israel, meant to his father. Well, this God was now to be with Solomon as he had been with his father.

Furthermore, the Lord was *not to forsake Solomon*. David said, “He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord” — as much as to say, “The Lord will be with you every day, Solomon. The Lord will be with you every step of the way until the house is finished.”

This promise is *still the same*, friends. The Lord still promises to be with His servants today. Whatever you are called upon to do for the Lord, He will enable you to do it. The apostle said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” It is to Him that we must look, and it is to Him that I hope we are looking as a Synod and as a Church at this time.

Now, in giving this encouragement to Solomon, through David his servant, *God was just doing what He has been pleased to do through all ages*. When God calls a people to difficult duties, He is ever ready to strengthen

and encourage them and He is ever ready to speak a word in season to them when they are weary, just as He has always done to His people in the past.

Many instances of God encouraging His servants could be given from the word of God, but I am thinking just now of *Moses*. He was the meekest of men, and I believe that when he was looking after the sheep of Jethro he did not think he would be asked to do any great work for the Lord. Yet, he was the man chosen by God to go to speak to Pharaoh. "Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" But then the Lord said to him, "Certainly *I will be with thee*." This promise, that the Lord was to be with him to help him all the way, was his encouragement in all his trials during the forty years in the wilderness.

This was also true in *Joshua's* case. When he was called to take the place of Moses, the Lord said, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, *so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee*." The Lord had been with Moses, and Joshua knew that; and Joshua's great encouragement now was this; "As I was with Moses, *so I will be with thee*." And again, in the case of *Gideon* when he was called to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, his reaction was something like that of Moses, "I am the least in my father's house," he said; as if to say, "Who am I that I should do this." But the Lord said to him, "*Surely I will be with thee*" (Judges 6: 15-16).

The same is seen in connection with the prophets. How afraid *Jeremiah* was, but the Lord who called him also told him that he would be with him. "Be not afraid . . . for *I am with thee* to deliver thee." And the Lord was with him all the way, and strengthened and encouraged him.

Then you come to the New Testament and to the time when the Lord sent out His apostles into all the world. They were poor fishermen from Galilee, but this was their great encouragement. "Lo, *I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*;" and how true He was to His word. When we read the history of the apostles in the Book of Acts, we see the Lord constantly fulfilling His promise. The Lord was with them at Pentecost; yes, and he was with them all along the way.

In *post-apostolic times* and right down through the history of the church of Christ, there has been the fulfilment of the promise, "Lo, I am with

you alway." The Lord, as it were, is repeating this promise to generation after generation. See Luther standing up against the might of the Papacy and of the Holy Roman Empire; but the Lord was with him, saying to him, as it were, "Lo, I am with you alway."

The Lord has been with His servants down to the present moment. Here tonight, on the 22nd May, 1990, these words are as true as ever. They were full of meaning and authority when the Lord spoke them to the apostles. They are full of meaning and authority now, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Lord knows full well our circumstances here tonight. We may be despised by the secular world and by much of the religious world. Christ says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

I hope we do not want the acclaim of the world. "Know ye not," wrote the apostle James, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God". "If God be for us who can be against us" — that is where we stand.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1: 29). Those who by grace are kept faithful to the Word of God must be victorious in the end. If we are on the side of the Word of God — the side of the truth, then no matter what opposition and suffering we may meet with in the world, we will triumph, in the end.

In the Free Presbyterian Church we have the Word of God, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms, — the doctrines which were owned and acknowledged of God and blessed by Him in ages past, and which will yet be blessed in Scotland and throughout the world. May we be encouraged by that as a Synod tonight; and may we render our thanks to the Most High, who until now has enabled us, although we are perhaps numerically smaller, to hold fast that which He has committed to us.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

"Be strong and of good courage, and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed; for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord."

May the Lord add his blessing.

Inestimable Love

by John Flavel (Author of Divine Providence)

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," — John 3: 16.

In these words are to be considered, first, the original spring or fountain of our best mercies — the love of God. Secondly, the mercy flowing out of this fountain, and that is Christ, "the Mercy", as He is emphatically called (Luke 1: 72), the marrow, kernel, and substance of all other mercies. "He gave His only-begotten Son." Thirdly, the objects of this love, or the persons for whom the eternal Lord delivered Christ, namely, "the world". This must respect the elect of God in the world; such as do, or shall actually believe, as it is exegetically expressed in the next words: "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." Those whom He calls the world in that, He styles believers in this expression; and the word world is put to signify the elect because they are scattered through all parts, and are among all ranks of men in the world: these are the objects of this love. Not angels, but men were so loved. Fourthly, the manner in which this never-enough celebrated mercy flows to us, from the fountain of divine love, and that most freely and spontaneously. "He gave," not He sold, or barely parted from, but gave. Nor yet doth the Father's giving imply Christ to be merely passive; for as the Father is here said to give Him, so the apostle tells us that He gave Himself: "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2: 20). The Father gave Him out of good will to men, and He has willingly bestowed Himself on that service. Hence we learn that *the gift of Christ is the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God to sinners, that ever was made from eternity to them.*

How is this gift of God to sinners signalled in that sentence of the apostle: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4: 10)! Why doth the apostle so magnify this gift in saying: "Herein is love, as if there were love in nothing else? May we not say, that to have a being, a being among rational creatures, therein is love? To have our life carried so many years like a taper in the hand of Providence, through so many dangers, and not yet put out in obscurity, therein is love? To have food and raiment convenient for us, beds to lie on, relations to comfort us, in all these is love? Yea, but if you speak comparatively, in all these there is no love, to the love expressed in sending or giving Christ to us: these are great mercies in themselves; but compared to this mercy, they are swallowed up, as the light of candles when brought into the sunshine. Nay, herein is love, that God gave Christ for us. It is remarkable that when the apos-

tle would show us, what is the noblest fruit that most commends to men the root of divine love that bears it, he says: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v 8): this is the very flower of that love.

The method into which I will cast this precious point, shall be this: I. — To show how Jesus Christ was given by the Father. II. — How that gift is the fullest and richest manifestation of the love of God that was ever made to the world. III. — And then draw forth the uses of it.

I. How was Jesus Christ given by the Father, and what is implied therein.

(i) His designation and appointment unto death for us; for it was done according to the determinate counsel of God (Acts 2: 23). As the lamb under the law was separated from the flock, and set apart for a sacrifice, though it were still living, yet it was intentionally and preparatively given, and consecrated to the Lord; so Jesus Christ was by the counsel and purpose of God, thus chosen, and set apart for His Service: and therefore God calls Him His Elect, or chosen One (Isa. 42: 1).

(ii). His giving Christ, implies a parting with Him, or setting Him (as the French version hath it) at some distance from Himself for a time. There was a kind of parting between the Father and the Son when He came to tabernacle in our flesh: so He expresseth it: "I came forth from the Father, and am come unto the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16: 28). This distance that this incarnation and humiliation set Him at, was properly as to His humanity, which was really distant from the glory into which it is now taken up, and in respect of manifestation of delight and love, the Lord seemed to treat him as one at a distance from Him. Oh! this was it that so deeply pierced and wounded His soul, as is evident from that complaint: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Why art Thou so far from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not" (Ps. 22: 1, 2).

(iii). God's giving Christ implies His delivering Him into the hands of justice to be punished; even as condemned persons are, by sentence of law, given or delivered into the hands of executioners. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2: 23). Thus He is said to deliver Him up to death for us all (Rom. 8: 32).

(iv). God's giving of Christ, implies His application of Him, with all the purchase of His blood, and settling all this upon us, as an inheritance and portion. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6: 32,33). God hath given Him as bread to poor starv-

ing creatures, that by faith they might eat and live. And so He told the Samaritan woman: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4: 10). Bread and water are the two necessities for the support of natural life; God hath given Christ, to be all that, and more, to the spiritual life.

II. Let us see how this gift of Christ was the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God, that ever the world saw: and this will be evidenced by the following particulars.

(i). If you consider how near and dear Jesus Christ was to the Father: He was His Son, "His only Son," saith the text; the Son of His love, yea, one with Himself; the express image of His person; the brightness of His Father's glory: "Unto us a Son is given" (Isa. 9: 6), and such a Son as He calls "His dear Son" (Col. 1: 13). In a certain famine a poor family being ready to perish with hunger, the husband proposed to the wife to sell one of the children for bread to relieve themselves and the rest: the wife at last consented, but then they began to think which of the four should be sold; when the eldest was named, they both refused to part with that, being their first-born and the beginning of their strength. Then they came to the second, but could not yield that he should be sold being the very picture and lively image of his father. The third was named, but that also was a child that best resembled the mother. And when the youngest child was thought on, that was the Benjamin, the child of their old age; and so they were content rather to perish altogether in the famine than to part with a child for relief. And you know how tenderly Jacob took it, when his Joseph and Benjamin were rent from him. What is a child, but a piece of the parent wrapt up in another skin? And yet our dearest children are but as strangers to us, in comparison of the unspeakable dearness that was betwixt the Father and Christ. That He should ever be content to part with a Son, and such an only One, is such a manifestation of love, as will be admired to all eternity.

(ii). Let it be considered, to what He gave Him, even to death, and that of the cross; to be made a curse for us; to be the scorn and contempt of men; to the most unparalleled sufferings that ever were inflicted or borne by any. It melts our bowels, it breaks our heart, to behold our children striving in the pangs of death: but the Lord beheld His Son struggling under agonies that never any felt before him. He saw Him falling to the ground, grovelling in the dust, sweating blood, and amidst those agonies turning Himself to His Father, and, with a heartrending cry, beseeching Him: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. 26:

39). To wrath, to the wrath of an infinite God without mixture; to the very torments of hell was Christ delivered, and that by the hand of His own Father. Sure then that love must needs want a name, which made the Father of mercies deliver His only Son to such miseries for us.

(iii). It is a special consideration to enhance the love of God in giving Christ, that in giving Him He gave the richest jewel in His cabinet, a mercy of the greatest worth, and most inestimable value. Heaven itself is not so valuable and precious as Christ. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Ps. 73: 25). Oh what a fair One! what an only One! what an excellent, lovely One, is Christ! Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colours, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one; oh what a fair and excellent thing would that be! And yet it should be less to that fair and dearest well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes and fountains of ten thousand earths. For God to bestow the mercy of mercies, the most precious things in heaven or earth, upon poor sinners; and, as great, as lovely, as excellent as His Son was, yet not to account Him too good to bestow upon us, what manner of love is this!

(iv). On whom did the Lord bestow His Son: upon angels? Nay, but upon men. Upon men His friends? Nay, but upon His enemies. This is love: and on this consideration the apostle lays a mighty weight. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. . . . When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. v 8,10). Who would part with a son for the sake of His dearest friends? but God gave Him to, and delivered Him for enemies. O love unspeakable!

(v). How freely this gift came from Him. It was not wrested out of His hand by our importunity, for we as little desired as deserved it. It was surprising, preceding, eternal love, that delivered Him to us: "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4: 10). Thus, as when you weigh a thing, you cast in weight after weight, till the scales break, so doth God, one consideration upon another, to overcome our hearts, and make us admiringly to cry: What manner of love is this! Thus I have showed you what God's giving of Christ is, and what matchless love is manifested in that incomparable gift.

III. Next we shall apply this, in some practical inferences.

(i). Learn hence the exceeding preciousness of souls, and at what a high rate God values them, that He gave His Son, His only Son out of His bosom, as a ransom for them. Surely this speaks their preciousness: all the world could not redeem them; gold and silver could not be their

ransom; so speaks the apostle: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1: 18,19). Such an esteem God had for them, that rather than they should perish, Jesus Christ shall be made a man, yea, a curse for them. Oh then, learn to put a due value upon your own souls: do not sell that cheap, which God hath paid so dear for: remember what a treasure you carry about you; the glory that you see in this world is not equivalent in worth to it: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matt. 16: 26)?

(ii). If God has given His own Son for the world, then it follows that those for whom God gave His own Son may warrantably expect any other temporal mercies from Him. This is the apostle's inference: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things" (Rom. 8: 32) "All are yours, and ye are Christ's" (1 Cor. 3: 22-23), that is, they hold all other things in Christ, who is the capital, and most comprehensive mercy.

To make out the grounds of this comfortable deduction, let these four things be pondered, and duly weighed in your thoughts.

(i). No other mercy you need or desire, is, or can be so dear to God as Jesus Christ: as for the world with its comforts, it is the dust of His feet. He values it not, as you see by His providential disposals of it, having given it to the worst of men. "All the Turkish empire," saith Luther, "as great and glorious as it is, is but a crumb which the Master of the family throws to the dogs." Think upon any other outward enjoyment that is valuable in your eyes, and there is not so much comparison between it and Christ, in the esteem of God, as is between your dear children and the lumber of your houses, in your esteem. If then God has parted so freely from that which was infinitely dearer to Him than these, how shall He deny these, when they may promote His glory and your good?

(ii). As Jesus Christ was nearer the heart of God than all these, so Christ is, in Himself, much greater and more excellent than all of them. Ten thousand worlds, and the glory of them all, are but the dust of the balance if weighed with Christ. These things are but poor creatures, but He is over all, God blessed for ever (Rom. 9: 5). They are common gifts, but He is the Gift of God (John 4: 10). They are ordinary mercies, but He is *the* Mercy (Luke 1: 72). If God has so freely given the greater, how can you suppose He should deny the lesser mercies? Will a man give to another a large inheritance, and stand with him for a trifle? how can it be?

(iii). There is no other mercy you want, but you are entitled to it by the gift of Christ; it is, as to right, conveyed to you with Christ. The world

is yours, yea, all is yours; for ye are Christ's. "For all the promises of God in Christ, are yea, and in Him, Amen." (2 Cor. 1: 20). With Him He hath given you all things richly to enjoy (1 Tim. 6: 17).

(iv). If God has given you this nearer, greater, and all-comprehending mercy when you were enemies to Him, and alienated from him, it is not imaginable He should deny you any inferior mercy when you are come into a state of reconciliation and amity with Him. So the apostle reasons: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5: 10).

If the greatest love hath been manifested in giving Christ to the world, then it follows that the greatest evil and wickedness is manifested in despising, slighting, and rejecting Christ. It is sad to abuse the love of God manifested in the least gift of providence, but to slight the richest discoveries of it, even in that peerless gift wherein God commends His love in the most astonishing manner, this is beyond description. Blush, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, there is no guilt like this. But are there any such in the world? Dare any slight this gift of God? Indeed, if men's words might be taken there are few or none that dare do so, but if their lives and practices may be believed, this, this is the sin of the far greater part of the Christianised world. Witness the lamentable stupidity and supineness; witness the contempt of the Gospel; witness the hatred and persecution of His image, laws, and people. What is the language of all this, but a vile esteem of Jesus Christ?

Let me a little expostulate with those ungrateful souls, that trample under foot the Son of God, that value not this love that gave Him forth. What is that mercy which you so condemn and undervalue? is it so vile and cheap a thing as your conduct speaks it to be? is it indeed worth no more than this in your eyes? Surely you will not be long of that opinion! Will you be of that mind, think you, when death and judgment shall have thoroughly awakened you? Oh, no: then a thousand worlds for Christ! Or think ye, that any beside you in the world are of your mind? You are deceived, if you think so. To them that believe He is precious (1 Pet. 2: 7), throughout all the world, and in the other world they are of a quite contrary mind. Could you but hear what is said of Him in heaven, in what a dialect the saved of the Lord do extol their Saviour, or could you but imagine the self-revenges, the self-torments, which the damned suffer for their folly, and what a value they would set upon one tender of Christ, if it might but be hoped for, you would see that such as you are the only despisers of Christ. Beside, methinks it is astonishing, that you should

despise a mercy in which your own souls are so dearly, so deeply, so everlastingly concerned, as they are in this gift of God. If it were but the soul of another, nay, less, if but the body of another, and yet less than that, if but another's beast, whose life you could preserve, you are obliged to do it, but when it is thyself, yea, the best part of thyself, thine own invaluable soul, that thou ruinest and destroyest thereby, oh, what a monster art thou, to cast it away thus! What! will you slight your own souls? care you not whether they be saved, or whether they be damned? is it indeed an indifferent thing with you which way they fall at death? have you imagined a tolerable hell? is it easy to perish? are you not only turned God's enemies, but your own too? Oh see what monsters sin can turn men and women into! Oh the stupifying, besotting, intoxicating power of sin! Perhaps you think that all these are but uncertain sounds with which we alarm you; it may be thine own heart will preach such doctrine as this to thee: Who can assure thee of the reality of these things? why shouldst thou trouble thyself with an invisible world, or be so much concerned for what thine eyes never saw, nor didst ever receive the report from any that have seen them? Well, though we cannot now show you these things, yet shortly they shall be shown you and your own eyes shall behold them. You are convinced and satisfied that many other things are real which you never saw, but be assured that "if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness" (Heb. 2: 2-4)? Perhaps you say, if they be certain, yet they are not near, it will be a long time before they come. Poor soul! how dost thou cheat thyself! It may not be one twentieth part so long a time as thy own fancy draws it forth for thee, thou art not certain of the next moment.

Suppose what thou imaginest: what are twenty or forty years when they are past? yea, what are a thousand years to vast eternity? Go trifle away a few days more, sleep out a few nights more, and then lie down in the dust; it will not be long ere the trump of God shall awaken thee, and thine eyes shall behold Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, and then you will know the price of this sin. Oh, therefore, if there be any sense of eternity upon you, any pity or love for yourselves in you, if you have any concerns more than the beasts that perish, despise not your mercies, slight not the richest gift that ever was yet bestowed among men, and a sweeter cannot be bestowed to all eternity.

Mbumba Zending Meeting — 1990

The annual Mbumba Zending Meeting was held this year in Geldermalsen, Holland on Saturday, 5th May. Seven thousand five hundred people assembled to hear the addresses given by several Dutch ministers. Rev. B. B. Dube and Rev. D. B. Macleod also addressed the gathering, their addresses being translated into Dutch. It was very heartening to see so many gathered together in connection with the Mission work of our Church in Africa. On this occasion the collection amounted to 130,000 guilders (approx. £70,000). The meeting began at 10.30 a.m. and apart from an hour and a half break for lunch, continued until 4 p.m.

The visiting ministers and elder were welcomed by Rev. W. Verhoeks (Arnhem), the vice-chairman in the following terms:—

“Dear Mr Macleod, Mr Dube and Mr Siziba,

“On behalf of the board and all the friends of the Mbumba-Mission in Holland, we give you, as deputies of the Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland and in Zimbabwe, a hearty welcome at this Missionday. We are glad, that you could find time and opportunity, to be able to accept our invitation to be present here this day.

“For you, Mr Macleod and Mr Siziba, it is the first time, you attend our annual Missionday, and so you yourself can now see the interest of the people in Holland in the missionwork of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland; while you, Mr Dube, for the third time are in our midst. But the most important thing would be, that the Lord was in our midst. It is a privilege indeed, that the Lord in these times, when love is waxing cold, will incline the hearts of the people, to keep up the work of the mission, might it be not only with material support, but above all by prayers.

“We do hope, that you feel yourselves at home among the Dutch friends, notwithstanding the difficulty to follow the addresses because of the barrier of language, and that we may have a blessed day, for encouragement to continue with the work of the mission, might it be in the favour of God.

We wish you, personally and your Church, God's indispensable blessing in all your missionary-work in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, that it may increase with the increase of God, in converting dead sinners to the living God.”

It was a privilege for the deputies to be present on this occasion and have an opportunity of meeting a number of the godly in Holland. During our stay much kindness was shown to us by the Dutch friends. May the Lord reward them richly. These ties with Christians in Holland is not of recent origin for the Church in Scotland. In times of persecution in Scotland, Holland proved a place of refuge for many of the persecuted.

Address at Mbuma Zending Mission Meeting

by Rev. D. B. Macleod

I wish to thank the Mbuma Zending Mission Committee for inviting me to come here and address you on this occasion. I wish to convey to you the greetings and thanks of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland for your continued support of the Mission work of our Church in Africa. The generous support which you give to our Mission is greatly appreciated both in Scotland and in Africa. Without your support our activities in Africa would be greatly curtailed. Most of all we value your prayerful support of our Mission work. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5: 16. Such prayerful support is absolutely necessary, for it is in dependence upon divine grace and help that our ministers and missionaries labour in Africa, looking to the Lord, the God of all grace, who alone can command the blessing for His Jacob.

As you well know, Mission work today is a difficult task because of the many forces at work, seeking to oppose the spread of the gospel, and the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world. Satan is ever active endeavouring to maintain his own kingdom through blinding the minds of those who are the slaves of sin in order to keep them in bondage. False religion deceives multitudes in the world, particularly Popery, Moham-medanism, Hinduism, and all the many other false religions and cults spread abroad in our day. Communism, though lately receiving a set-back, still holds millions under its sway.

There is no answer to all this but the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else can rescue from the slavery of sin and unbelief but the gospel in its saving power. Without the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, sinners must perish in their sins. Therefore the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace must be proclaimed in its fulness to sinners. The Church of God, even in such a dark day as this, when iniquity abounds on every hand and the love of many waxes cold, must prove faithful to her commission received from her glorious Head, who is now exalted at God's right hand. That commission is unequivocal in its demands: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16: 15. Nothing short of the discipling of all nations to the obedience of Christ, is the imperative charge of the Divine Redeemer to His Church on earth. He has laid the foundation in His death for spiritual and saving blessings to be conveyed to sinners scattered throughout the nations of the world,

even to the whole election of grace. When He sends His word to any land it is in order that sinners may be saved. This has been so in Zimbabwe and in other nations in Africa and in other parts of the world. He has declared in His own word: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isaiah 53: 10,11.

It is the faithful proclamation of the doctrines of God's word that will be blessed by the Holy Spirit to the good of never-dying souls — doctrines such as man's total ruin by the Fall, redemption by Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. These must be declared to sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. They need to know by the teaching of the Holy Spirit that they are sinners, utterly lost and ruined, helpless and hopeless, unable to deliver themselves. "When he (the Spirit of truth) is come, he will reprove the world of sin." John 16: 8. Poor sinners have to learn by divine teaching that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God". John 3: 5. He has to be taught that he needs to become a subject of the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. For who but the Holy Spirit can work saving faith in the heart of a poor lost sinner and bring the sinner to saving belief of the truth? Who but the Holy Spirit can make a poor lost sinner willing to embrace Jesus Christ in the gospel? For "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"? Psalm 110: 3. Who can lead the sinner into the transcendent glory of the divine Redeemer, and into the depths of His sufferings on the accursed tree of Calvary, but the Holy Spirit, as He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the soul? Who but the Spirit of God can teach the soul the deep things of God by revealing His sovereign electing love, in His embracing a people from all eternity out of the fallen race of Adam to be a people for Himself to show forth His glory? So, too, who can set forth the glory of the Redeemer as the risen, exalted, glorified One at God's right hand, and as the great Intercessor for His people within the veil? Who can tell people what eye hath not seen nor ear heard of the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him? The Scripture gives the answer — "God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit" 1 Cor. 2: 10.

On us in particular as Churches, which have been for centuries in possession of the word of God and the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, is this duty laid that we carry this glorious gospel of the blessed God to those

who sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death. Like the lepers in the siege in Samaria who discovered that the Syrians had fled, and began at first to keep all the spoils to themselves, we must be brought to say with them: "We do not well: this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household". 2 Kings 7: 9. The door of opportunity, in the mercy of God, is now open in Africa, in Eastern Europe, and elsewhere in the world. Let us, in the strength of divine grace take up this task. May there be those who in answer to the question, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" have their hearts drawn out by the Spirit of God to reply, "Here am I; send me". Isaiah 6: 8.

From my visits to Africa in 1987 and 1988, it was evident to me that the Lord has His people there to whom His Word has been blessed. Such are true followers of Jesus Christ. Your work, then, and labour of love in supporting our Mission work in Africa by your temporal, but above all by your prayerful support is not in vain. We pray that it may long continue. "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Galations 6: 9. And to God be all the glory.

Notes and Comments

Divorce Law

What governed the whole question of divorce in the past was the marital offence. Divorce was granted on proof of adultery by the other party or on the ground of irremediable desertion. In 1969 a new concept was introduced — irretrievable breakdown of marriage. It proved a very fertile breeding ground for divorce and the number of divorces has risen to a high number annually. Inevitably this has posed further problems — what of the children? They were always on the losing side.

It is thought now that the question of guilt or fault should be wholly set aside and an agreement be arrived at of most help to the children. While it is proper that the interests of the children should be preserved in a divorce settlement, yet leaving aside the question of guilt or fault tends to bring marriage down to a low level — a mere agreement to live together as long as convenient. What need there is for the restoration of right moral principles in the nation. This would secure the whole family — parents and children. To bring this to pass in our land would require a religious awakening. May the Lord grant it in His mercy.

Sabbath Trading

Convictions against two D.I.Y Stores for Sabbath trading have been quashed by the High Court. The action had been brought against the Stores by Peterborough City Council. The appeal judges said they had to take into account a recent European ruling on Sabbath trading. Three weeks earlier Kirkless Borough Council obtained a temporary injunction against a firm involved in Sabbath trading. In the first two cases it is evident that European Legislation has been detrimental to the interests of the Sabbath. Every effort is being made by large organisations to break down the barrier of the Sabbath. It is good that they do not always get their way, though they get it too often.

Amendments to Abortion Laws

Two University lawyers have warned against the effect of amendments relating to late abortion, tabled at the Committee Stage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill which would result in the legalisation of abortion until birth in a wide range of cases.

The effect of the amendments will be, they state:

(1) There will be four grounds for abortion: the first (abortion in the interests of the health of the woman or her existing children) will have an upper time limit of 24 weeks; the remaining three (where the balance of risk to the mother's life favours termination; to prevent 'grave permanent injury' to the woman's health; and in cases of suspected 'serious' foetal handicap) will allow abortion up to birth.

Consequently, abortion because of, for example, suspected 'serious' handicap (which in the view of some doctors includes harelip or cleft palate) will be permissible during the 40th week.

(2) Where a pregnancy is terminated on any of the four grounds, and the foetus is fully capable of surviving the operation and living normally, steps for the sole purpose of ensuring that the foetus does not survive the abortion will be lawful.

(3) If abortion on any of the four grounds results in the delivery of a living and viable foetus, it will be lawful to destroy it during birth for any reason at all, from harelip to hair colour.

It is to be hoped that these dangers will be avoided before the Bill becomes law. Those responsible for abortion legislation have enough to answer for already without widening the door any further for the destruction of the unborn.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (DV)

Western: At Laide on 11th September at 6 p.m.

Zimbabwe: at Bulawayo on 9th October at 2 p.m.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., £25 through C.A.F. per Rev. A.M.P.

Eastern Europe Fund: Anon., Australia £92.34 per D.A.R.; G. & E. J., Chesley Cdn \$100.00.

Church Magazines Fund: Anon., £5 for free distribution of Church Magazines.

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

Barnoldswick: Anon., £20 for Congr. Purposes; C.J.M. £12.

Dingwall: Mrs G., £20 for Sust. Fd.

Edinburgh: A Friend, Harris £25; Anon., Raasay £20; T.C., Glasgow £20; Anon., £50 all for Comm. Exps.

Glasgow (St. Jude's): Anon., £5; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; Inverness Friend £30; J.C. £40, all for Cassette Copier, last two per M.M.; Anon., £100 for Manse Expenses for Congr. Fd; Matth. 6: 3 £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; M. McD £20; J.C. £30 all for Bus. Fund; Anon., £5 for Sust. Fd; Anon., £50 for Foreign Missions; Anon., £10; Anon., £20 both for New Canaan Bdg Fund; Anon., £150 for Zimbabwe Church Bdg; T. McL. £5; Miss D.M. £10, both for T.B.S.

Fort William: Anon., £30; C.C. Glasgow (Psalm 12: 1) £20; Anon., Glasgow £5, all for Congr. Fund; Anon., £50; Mrs K. £20, both for Comm. Exps; K.G. £10 for Church Bus.

Lochcarron: For Romanian trip per E. Ross C. M. £10; C.F. £40; Friend, Applecross £50; Friend, Kishorn £10 per Mrs K. M. for Congr. Fd; Friend, Carnoustie £40; Friend, Stornoway £20.

Laide: Envelope in plate £9; Miss M. B. £50 (envelope in plate); Friend per D.A.R. £20; Miss A. McA. £50 (envelope in plate) all for Church Door Coll.; Friend in Coll. plate £40; D. MacA. £20 in coll. plate for Sust. Fund; Friend, Tigh-na-Faolin for Russian trip £30 per D.A.R.; Corstorphine Friend £100 per D.A.R.; Friends, Cove (envelope in plate) £40; Envelope in plate £15; Friend, Ullapool per D.A.R. £10; Friend, Kinlochbervie per D.A.R. £50; last five for Bibles for Russia; B.M. Stornoway per A.C. £10; M.A.M., Stornoway per A.C. £10; Raasay Friend per C.R. £20, last three for Romanian Mission; Envelope in plate £35 for Eastern European Mission. Rev. D. Ross acknowledges the following:— J. & I.M., Gairloch £10; D.M. £20; P.L., Shieldaig £10; A.M., Gairloch £100; W.M., Laide £20; W.M. Laide £20; C.M., Gairloch £10; K. & I.M. Gairloch £80; A.M., Stornoway £10; F. & A., Laide £30; M.B. Gairloch £15, all for Eastern Europe Mission.

North Harris: Friend, Stockinish £10 "where most needed", per Rev. K.D.M.; Friend Stockinish £10; Friend, Stockinish £5, both for Door Coll. and both per R.M.C.

Portree: Friend £30; Portree Friend £100, both "where most needed" and both per F.M.; Anon., £40; Anon., £10; Anon., £4; Anon., £10, all for Church Bus and all by envelope in plate.

Staffin: Anon., (Portree Postmark) £10 for Comm. Coll. per Rev. A.M.C.

Stornoway: Miss K. A. MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish £40 for Sust. Fd per Rev. J. MacLeod.