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Can These Bones Live?

FIFTY years ago it was a rare thing in the Highlands to see someone going about his worldly business on the Lord's day while other people, for the most part, made their way to church. Now it is comparatively rare to see people going to church on a Sabbath, especially on Sabbath evening, while others on the whole desecrate the Sabbath. Last year, Highland Games were held on a Sabbath in Beaulieu — the first time this had happened in the Highlands. Although there were several protests to the organisers, the Games were held on a Sabbath again this year. The roadside placards which advertised the Games said, "Remember Sunday. June 25th. Beaulieu Games", as if in defiance of the Commandment of God of which the organisers were made well aware: "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy..."

As it is in the Highlands, so it is in the nation — we are defiantly saying, by our conduct at least, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him?" It is tragic that our leaders, in the national churches and in Parliament, lead us in our downward course. Church leaders abhor the idea of giving a lead from the Word of God. Rather, as someone observed, they are "follow on leaders" who are led by public opinion. Hence, while it is shocking, it is not altogether suprising that some bishops state (in the Report on Cohabitation by the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility) that it is "unhelpful" to describe cohabiting couples as "living in sin" and that we are to avoid judgemental attitudes to fornication. Little wonder that the claim by the Chairman of the Board, the Bishop of Liverpool, that he is an evangelical, has moved one correspondent to the *English Churchman* to ask, "What kind of a conversion has a man experienced that enables him to produce a report which teaches the exact opposite of God's Revealed Word?"

When we look in the direction of our political leaders we see that they enact laws which encourage sodomy, open the floodgates to Sabbath

desecration, promote nationwide gambling, and "legalise" the horrendous slaying of unborn infants in the womb. Since the Abortion Act came into force in 1967, almost four million abortions, or about 400 for every day of the year, have been carried out.

There is no question but that ours is a decadent and brutal age. As a nation, we have turned our back on God and lost our bearings. We have cast off our moorings and are drifting on a sunless sea. Yet, we persist in saying to God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Would not the God of heaven be just in saying with regard to us, "Let them alone. Let them go their own way"? Eventual destruction would be the fearful result if He did so. How much then we should be pleading that the Lord would not leave us to ourselves but that He would return in the power of His Spirit to awaken us to be ashamed of our sins and to return to Him.

Is it possible that there can be such a national change of heart? Some, who are concerned about our declined morality and the signs of the Divine displeasure against us, fear that there can be no betterment but rather increasing acceleration in our downward course. As they survey the land full of the dry bones of spiritual death and moral desolation, and as they recollect that God said about Israel in her low moral and spiritual state, "These bones are the whole house of Israel," they cannot but say, "These bones are the whole nation of Britain. Our bones are dried and our hope is lost."

Is it possible that these bones can live? There is hope! The God who looks upon the sons of men and sees them in their sin and misery is the God who says, "My word 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." It seems impossible, when we have become a largely unchurched nation, that the Word of God will ever reach the ears of the people, let alone have any effect on them. However, we believe that the day will come — and it may not be as far away as some think — when the command of God, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord," will impinge on the consciences of the people.

The Israelites, who had rebelled against God and therefore became captives in Babylon, were brought by God to a new stage in their history. Under godly leaders such as Ezra and Nehemiah, their hearts were opened to the Word of God, and they covenanted to obey their God. Their returning to God was, of course, the result of the working of the Holy Spirit. Before this, God had promised, through Ezekiel, that He would put His Spirit within them, and Ezekiel therefore prayed, in words which

God gave him to pray, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live."

Therefore the Church is to persevere in preserving and proclaiming the Word of God, all the while praying for, and depending upon, the Holy Spirit of whom it is written, "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord." In the Lord's time, and by His power, these dry bones shall surely live.

The Editor

Synod Sermon

by Rev. Neil M. Ross, Retiring Moderator

This sermon, which is somewhat abridged from the original, was preached at the opening of the meeting of Synod in Inverness on Tuesday, 23rd May, 1995

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest," Joshua 1:7.

IT is especially this exhortation, "Be thou strong and very courageous," given by God to Joshua, to which I wish to draw your attention, the Lord helping me. The exhortation to be strong and courageous is found in several other places in Scripture. In this chapter alone we read in verses six and nine that God said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage;" and in the last verse we find the people saying to him, "Only be strong and of a good courage." Moses gave this same exhortation to both Joshua and the Israelites. To the Israelites he said, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them." He then "called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage." Joshua himself similarly addressed the people, saying, "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage." King David, not long before he died, said to his son Solomon, who was charged with the enormous task of building the temple, "Be strong and of good courage; dread not nor be dismayed." When Jerusalem was besieged by the Assyrians, King Hezekiah said to his people, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him."

Now, this exhortation, "Be strong and very courageous," is being

addressed to ourselves also by the Lord, when we gather as a Synod this evening in order to attend to business pertaining to His kingdom.

Let us now consider three matters about being strong and courageous.

First, we will think about the *persons* who are exhorted, "Be strong and very courageous," that is, not only Joshua but ourselves also.

Secondly, some *reasons* why we must be strong and courageous; not least, because of the onerous and solemn duties laid upon us.

Thirdly, the *encouragements* to be strong and courageous, which are found both in the immediate context and other parts of God's word.

First, with regard to the *persons* who are exhorted to be strong and very courageous, it is *Joshua*, of course, who is addressed in the first instance. In looking at Joshua's history we see that he left Egypt in the exodus, possibly when he was about thirty years old, and that he had the great honour and responsibility of being "Moses' minister" or "the servant of Moses". Therefore, being the principal assistant and deputy of Moses, he had much *authority* invested in him; and also he gained much *experience* during the forty years which elapsed from their departure from Egypt until they reached the border of Canaan. You will remember that it was Joshua who accompanied Moses part of the way up Mount Sinai, and who then faithfully waited forty days until Moses descended from the mount. Again, Joshua was one of the spies who went to search out the land of Canaan, and one of the two who came back with a good report. He was grieved at the rebellion of the people in wanting to go back to Egypt instead of going on to possess the land, and he actually risked his life in remonstrating with them. However, despite all the authority and experience which Joshua had, it was necessary that he be exhorted to be strong and courageous. And so the Lord's servants also in every age have to be similarly exhorted. It matters not how much useful they have been to the cause of Christ in the past, nor how much experience they have had, they must still be exhorted, "Be strong and very courageous."

Another fact about Joshua is that he was *courageous* above many, and also very *successful in time of war*. We read that "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword;" and undoubtedly he played a leading role in the conquest of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan. Yet it was necessary still to say to him, "Be strong and very courageous." The Lord's servants today are enabled to fight the good fight of faith and are overcoming various spiritual enemies, but they know that however many victories they have had they continue to need this exhortation.

We see also that Joshua had been *highly honoured* in the past; honoured

by his name being changed from Oshea, meaning salvation, to Jehoshua, meaning salvation is of God; honoured also by being installed as Moses' successor. We read that "the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him... and thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient." Nevertheless, it was necessary to exhort him, "Be strong and very courageous." The Lord's servants today are certain that it matters not how much the Lord has favoured them in the past or honoured them by blessing their labours, they have to be exhorted again and again to be strong and courageous.

Not only Joshua but *the people of Israel* also were so exhorted. We read in Numbers 21 that Moses, having exhorted Joshua, then "spake these words unto all Israel... Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, not be afraid of them." Well, it is clear that today God speaks in this manner to His people and to His church. This is confirmed in Hebrews, chapter 13, where the promise of the Divine presence which Joshua received when he was told to be strong and courageous, is applied to believers: "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; so that we" (that is, believers) "may boldly say, The Lord is my helper." To you, believer, the Lord is saying, "Be strong and very courageous." To the church in this dark day and degenerate age the Lord is saying, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." To us, as a branch of His church, He is saying at this time, "Be strong and very courageous."

Let us go on to notice, secondly, *some reasons why we must be strong and very courageous*. Joshua had to be resolute and brave in order to lead the people. Moses said to him, "Thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it." Moses was now gone, and Joshua is commanded by God, "Go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them." What an awesome responsibility was laid upon Joshua. That burden was great because the people not only were numerous but also most difficult and fractious. They were a people who had rebelled repeatedly in Moses' day — a people who, as the Psalm tells us, were "unsteadfast and perfidious." So Joshua had great need of being strong and courageous to undertake this tremendous task.

Within the church of God today, ministers and elders, having the solemn responsibility of exercising *spiritual rule and leadership*, have to say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" When they have to exercise church

discipline, for example, they may meet with strong opposition, and perhaps be misrepresented and maligned. We can be certain of this: as surely as God is the God of order, so the evil one, Satan, is engineering opposition and confusion to cause disorder and division in the church. When the Lord's servants meet with opposition and feel their insufficiency they must heed this strengthening word: "Be strong and very courageous."

It is instructive to note in the last verse of the chapter that *many of the Israelites encouraged Joshua* to exercise rule and discipline in dealing with rebels. They said to him, "Only be strong and of a good courage." In the church today, there are those who, in seeking the good of Zion, and in praying for its peace and prosperity, are similarly encouraging the Lord's servants. What a great blessing it is to have people in a congregation and denomination who are prayerfully saying to the Lord's servants, as they seek to faithfully discharge their duties, "Be strong and courageous."

Again, Joshua and the people had to be strong and courageous because *they had to go in to possess the land*. We read in Deuteronomy 1:18 that God, having said to Israel, "Behold, I have set the land before you," then said, "go in and possess the land." Now, in this first chapter of Joshua, the command is repeated: "Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them." It was a land to which they were given a full right and title, as we see in verse three, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you;" and again in verse six, "Unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them."

Although the land was granted to them by God, they could not simply walk into it and take immediate possession. There were *obstacles* in their path. There was the River Jordan. God commanded them, "Go over this Jordan," even although the river was in full flood at that time. There were also *enemies* to be overcome. When God promised, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee," the implication was that they would be confronted and opposed by enemies. So Joshua and the people, in going forward to take possession of the land, were engaging in a perilous undertaking. Therefore the Lord exhorts them, "Be strong and very courageous."

Now, the Lord is saying to His church today that it is to press forward to possess the land: the ultimate land of the "better country, that is, an heavenly." The heavenly inheritance which is promised to the Lord's spiritual Israel will surely be possessed by them; but between them and the possessing of it there are many obstacles and powerful enemies. So it is imperative that they engage in battle. The church of Christ must be,

and is, the church militant. She is engaged in that holy war to which her Leader and Commander calls her, and in which He leads her. Only by courageously engaging in that war will the church militant ultimately become the church triumphant, and possess the heavenly Canaan of which the Lord says, "I will give it you."

There is another land to possess. The church of Christ must go out to possess the "world that lieth in wickedness". Christ commanded His disciples when he sent them out, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." So the church is called to go forth with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and possess the kingdoms of this world, so that they will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." Now, the promise given by the Lord to His church is that the land, in this sense, will surely be possessed. In other words, all the ends of the earth shall turn unto the Lord, all peoples shall worship him and all nations shall do homage unto Him. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," and the knowledge of His glory will cover the earth. His promise is that His spiritual Jerusalem, whose walls are very much broken down in this "day of small things", will yet be built up again and be a praise in the earth. It is clear that this will not take place apart from the church engaging in battle. The church, in going to possess the land must be contending for the faith. It must wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." How much, therefore, it needs to be exhorted, "Be strong and very courageous. Quit yourselves like men, be strong."

Again, Joshua had to be strong and courageous because he was *bereaved*. Joshua and the people were *mourning* the death of Moses, as the previous chapter says: "And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days." Their sorrow was great, and the sorrow of Joshua would have been especially great. Close indeed was the relationship between Joshua and Moses, and much did Joshua depend on Moses for guidance and instruction. It is likely that Joshua was thinking, "The prayers of Moses, the man of God, are now ended. His prayers for me and for the people have ceased." Joshua undoubtedly was sorrowful and lonely, but the Lord graciously draws near to him with this strengthening word, "Be strong and of a good courage." It was as if the Lord were saying to him, "The taking away of my servant should not make you despair but rather make you more earnest in doing the work to which I have called you." No doubt also Joshua would be feeling very inferior in comparison to that eminently able and faithful servant of God,

but the Lord was showing Joshua that He was to continue His work among His people although His aged servant was now gone, and that He would carry out His work even with weak instruments.

This evening we are very conscious of the sad fact that since we last met as a Synod the Lord has taken away from us by death those who were most useful to His cause. We mourn their passing away. They have been taken away to the rest which remaineth for the people of God, and unspeakably great is their gain, but, oh, how great is our loss. Also, others of our number who have been so useful hitherto are presently laid aside in sickness and weakness, and some of them are not likely to be actively useful to the cause again. When we mourn the loss of those who have been taken away, and are concerned about the diminished usefulness of others, we are to heed the Lord saying to us, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Joshua no doubt had to be exhorted for this reason also: he was probably feeling that he was *not as strong as he once was*, being now about 70. Today, some of the Lord's servants are in advancing years and saying with the Psalmist, "I have been young and now am old." Although they are conscious of declining strength and may have to say with Asaph, "My flesh and heart doth faint and fail," they are being encouraged by the Lord Himself to be strong and courageous in what remains to them of their labours. While they say, "My flesh and heart doth faint and fail," they must add, as Asaph did, "but God doth fail me never."

The main reason why we are to be strong and courageous is that *we have to be obedient to God's word*. "Only be thou strong and very courageous, *that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law*, which Moses my servant commanded thee." Now, the law that they were to observe was the Word of God — as much of it as they had then. It consisted, first, of the moral law, summed up in the Ten Commandments and by the great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" secondly, the ceremonial law, with its regulations and rites for the worship of God, and its revelation of the provision that was to be made in the Messiah for the redemption of transgressors; and thirdly, the civil law for maintaining order in the nation. To "do according to all the law" was simply to be obedient to the Word of the Lord. Now, God commands us today to *observe to do* according to His Word. When he sent His disciples to preach the gospel He told them also to teach the people "to *observe* all things whatsoever I command you", that is, to observe them in the fullest sense by being *doers* of His word.

We are required not only to keep the Word of God, but also to keep

it *fully*. "Observe and do according to *all* the law," or as the Saviour said, "Teaching them to observe *all* things whatsoever I command you." Many in the visible church are only partial doers of the word. They are like King Jehoiakim who cut the pages, piece by piece, from the scroll of the Word of God and cast them into the fire. Some who profess to be Christians do away with this or that part of the Scriptures. Some say, for instance, "This part about keeping the Sabbath holy is not really for us but for the Jews;" so they cut that piece out. Let us then be heeding these exhortations: "*Whatsoever* he saith unto you, do it. Observe and do according to *all* the law."

The Word of God must be followed not only in its entirety but also *without deviating* from it. "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left," Joshua was told. Now, this is precisely what is being said to us today. The same instruction is found in Proverbs: "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." We must guard against going to the extreme, on the one hand, of thinking that we can relax our endeavours because God is the God of grace, or, on the other hand, of relying on our own endeavours. We are to take care lest we be righteous overmuch, or on the other hand, lest we compromise the world or with branches of the church which have deviated from Scriptural doctrine, worship and practice. With regard to doctrine we must not turn to the extreme of the Arminian who says that man has some innate ability in the matter of his own salvation; nor are we to go to the other extreme of saying that man has no responsibility to obey Christ's command, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." With regard to the profound doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, we have to guard against the extreme of thinking (as many in the visible church do) that the Scriptures are basically the product of men; but let us not swing to the other extreme of speaking so as to suggest that the holy men of old whom God used to record His fully inspired and absolutely inerrant word, were impersonal machines. This, then, is God's call to us: "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left."

Now, it is essential that we have holy resolve and gracious courage in order to observe and do what the Lord requires, and to follow the example of, say, godly King Josiah, who "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and *declined neither to the right hand nor to the left*." True, it is not easy to go straight on without deviating, especially when hostile opposition tries to make us swerve aside, but the Lord is repeatedly encouraging us to be strong and

very courageous.

Let us then consider, *in the third place, some of the encouragements to be strong and very courageous.* The teaching of our text is that if one resolutely follows the Word of God, he will have *prosperity and success*. "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left that thou mayest *prosper* whithersoever thou goest." The next verse says, "Observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way *prosperous*, and then thou shalt have *good success*." When a person or a church is obedient to God's will, as revealed in His Word, God will surely give prosperity and success, both spiritual and temporal, to that person or church. The prescription for spiritual prosperity is this: Adhere to the old paths. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls." If we compromise and deviate, then we shall not have prosperity but barrenness. If we fail to resolutely and courageously adhere to the doctrine, worship and practice prescribed by God in His word, then we will be on a downward course. The straight path we are to follow is a raised path, like a path on an embankment. It is a way that is raised above the world that lieth in wickedness. Now, if we deviate from this path we cannot but slide down into worldliness and wickedness. Some would have us believe that to adhere to the old path, and to keep on this narrow way is counter-productive and reactionary, but let us be sure that the old path and the good way prescribed by the Lord is the only way, and the highway, to spiritual prosperity and success.

There is also this encouragement to follow the truth: that in doing so we shall have prosperity in the further sense of being wise. The marginal note shows that the word "prosper" includes the idea of "doing or acting wisely". Would you know the man who is truly wise? It is the man who adheres to the truth. Moses told the Israelites, "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your *wisdom and your understanding* in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this nation is a *wise and understanding* nation." Oh, what do we have to say about our own nation? What wisdom is in us when we refuse to keep God's Word, and when we are saying that the Word of God has no relevance for us? As a nation, we cannot be wise or do wisely when we turn from the truth. To disobey and depart from the Word of God is the height of folly — the height of madness — the height of wickedness.

We find another encouragement in the context: *the promise of the Lord's presence*. The Lord said to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." What a great

encouragement this was to Joshua. The same encouragement was given to Zerubbabel and others. "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: *for I am with you*, saith the Lord of hosts." How great an encouragement this was to these servants of the Lord. The Lord is yet saying to His people and church that He is with them and will never leave them nor forsake them, and that therefore they are to take heart.

It follows that the church, because she has the Lord's presence, will surely *overcome her enemies*. This was the guarantee given to Joshua. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." Why? The Lord said, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." The Lord's people shall be more than conquerors because His presence shall go with them.

It also follows that the church, having the presence of the Lord, will surely *have the Lord's help*. There is an inseparable connection between having the Lord's gracious presence and having His help, as is shown by these words, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Therefore we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper."

And, of course, having the Lord's presence means this also for the church: she will have blessed experience of *the Lord's faithfulness*. When Joshua began his onerous work he received this promise from the Lord, "*I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*" At the end of his days, when he was 110 years old, Joshua could testify, "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel, all came to pass." Let us be strong and courageous, for He is faithful that promised. "My flesh and heart doth faint and fail," say the Lord's people and the Lord's servants, echoing the words of Asaph, but let them add, as Asaph did, "but God doth fail me never."

Now, the last encouragement which we mention is this: strength and courage are *graces* as well as duties. The fact that it is a duty to be strong and courageous is clear from what the Lord said to Joshua: "Have not I commanded thee. Be strong and of a good courage." Clearly, a duty is laid upon believers when they are directed thus, "Quit you like men, be strong," and, "Be strong in the Lord." The responsibility laid upon the Hebrew believers to whom Paul wrote was this, "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet." So the church is commanded to be strong and courageous, but at the same time she is to take encouragement from the fact it is not only a duty but also a grace. "Be strong," is the exhortation in 2 Timothy

2:1, but it continues thus: "in the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus;" that is, through or by the grace of Christ Jesus and by the gracious indwelling and influence of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from Him. "Be strong," is the exhortation in Ephesians 6:10, but it says further, "in the Lord" — not in yourself. "Be strong... in the power of his might" — not in your might. While the Lord is requiring us to be strong and courageous, he is also graciously promising grace, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Now, when strength and courage are graces, the implication is that we must be waiting on the Lord at the throne of grace, that we may "find grace to help in time of need." Therefore, we are counselled in Psalm 27,

"Wait on the Lord, and be thou strong,
and he shall strength afford
Unto thine heart; yea, do thou wait,
I say upon the Lord."

The sure promise of the Lord is that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Let us take courage from the truth that God is the God of all grace, and that in waiting on Him we will be made strong and courageous to do His will and walk in His ways, and also to overcome the opposition which confronts us.

Lastly, the church is encouraged to be strong and courageous by *the promise that the Lord will yet come to raise her up from her low state*. In Isaiah we have this precept: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." Then follows the promise, "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." Oh what a wonderful reviving is in store for the cause of the Lord. Let us then wait on Him for strength and courage to observe all things whatsoever He commands us. Sooner or later the church will have the Lord's promised help and deliverance, and also that prosperity and success which He promises to those who are strong in His strength. Let us look to Him to fulfil His word to us, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," so that we would be strong and very courageous. May He bless His Word to us.

The Difference Between Justification and Sanctification

Robert Traill

Robert Traill (1642 -1716) was a Presbyterian minister and a friend of such eminent ministers as William Guthrie and the younger John Welsh. Having fled to Holland from persecution in Scotland, he became an assistant to Nethenus, Professor at Utrecht University. He later held Presbyterian charges in London and Kent. A principal aim in his preaching was the promotion of practical godliness. This extract (slightly edited) is from Volume 4 of the Banner of Truth edition of his works and has been kindly given to us by a friend from Canada.

I SHALL add but two words of advice on this head, of the difference between *justification* and *sanctification*. Do not divide them. Do not confound them.

First, do not *divide* and separate them. No man can do so, but in dream and notion. Justification and sanctification God hath joined together, and no man can put them asunder. They are everlastingly united together, and every one that is a partaker of either is a partaker of both.

Secondly, do not *confound* them. I am persuaded that one of the main causes of the disorder that is in the spirits and conversation [conduct] of most Christians, lies in their confounding these two great blessings. They do not give them their proper place; they are not rightly exercised about them in their due sphere; therefore I shall offer a word or two of advice for preventing this confounding of them.

When you are seeking justification, let there be no mind of sanctification, I mean as to any merit; but when you are seeking sanctification, have a good mind to justification.

The reason [why you should have no thought of sanctification when you seek justification] is this: justification is an act of pure grace that we must betake ourselves to God for, as poor condemned sinners. If men will perplex us with qualifications, pray let it run this way (think of it like this), What is it that qualifies a sinner for justification? It is this only, that he must be a condemned sinner. God's law must condemn him, and the man must come into God's court with this sentence in his hand, "Lord, justify a poor sinner for Christ's sake; the law hath condemned me, and sentenced me to hell, and thither I must go except gospel grace relieves me in Christ Jesus."

When I say that in seeking justification you should have no thought of sanctification, my meaning is only this: that when you come to plead at God's bar for justification, do not dream of bringing your sanctification with you, for it is altogether improper and impertinent at this court. Let

men varnish their doctrines which way they will, and cover them with what pretences they please, they do but murder souls who advise them to bring something with them to God for the grace of justification. ring thy sins with thee, and bring the curse of the law upon thy conscience, and lay these before the Lord, saying, "Lord, here is an undone sinner, have mercy upon me, for Christ's sake." There should be nothing else heard there but that.

But when you come for sanctification, you have good reason to mind justification, for it flows from it. When you would try your justification, in God's name try it by your sanctification... The reason is that it is but a trying the tree by its fruit. If the question be, Am I a pardoned, forgiven, accepted sinner in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Christ? If that be the question, try it by your sanctification; for all who are justified by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are also sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Now, sanctification, being the work of God in us, is far more easily discernible than justification, which is an act of God about us. Justification is the sentence of a judge. Sanctification is a gracious work of God on the heart and soul of a poor sinner; and that may be more easily known. Therefore try your justification by your sanctification. In short, they who bring sanctification as a title to their justification, they err the breadth of God's whole heavens: and they who claim to have the blessing of justification, and cannot justify it by the practice of sanctification, do but deceive themselves. "If any man," saith the apostle, "abideth in him, he ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked," 1 John 2:6.

I would only add, it is the *Spirit of God* alone that can make the word of God, and the truths of it, powerful upon us. It is He alone who can lead us into them, and make us know spiritually and savingly the great blessings of justification and sanctification; our acceptance with God through the righteousness of another, even Christ; and our being adorned by the Spirit of God with a holiness of His own implanting in us.

We must not make our holiness our righteousness, nor our righteousness our holiness. Our righteousness belongs to another, and only the benefit of it accrues to us; our holiness is the work of the Spirit in us: and Christ is the root of both. He is the person we are justified by or through, and His Spirit is the root of all holiness in us; and both give us the possession of eternal life. Justification, by the sentence of the judge, is the ground of eternal life; and sanctification is that which makes us meet for it in His time and way.

Trinitarian Bible Society Report

A large gathering of members, friends and supporters of the Trinitarian Bible Society met in Westminster Chapel, London, on Saturday, 10th June for the Society's Annual General Meeting. After Rev. John Shearer of Nuffield preached, several reports were presented to the meeting. Some extracts from the first of these reports, that by Mr D. P. Rowland, the General Secretary, are given below.

"IN RECORDING the activities of the Society during 1994 in this, the 164th Annual Report, we desire to ascribe all praise, honour and glory to Almighty God for the inestimable treasure of the Holy Scriptures that He in His infinite wisdom and grace has been pleased to give unto mankind, and for the provision, guidance and encouragement granted to the Society during its long history of publishing and distributing the Divine Word. Especially, we acknowledge with profound thankfulness the Lord's remarkable provision for the work of the Society during the year."

In referring to the purchase and refurbishment of their new premises, Tyndale House, he acknowledged "the Lord's goodness in so ordering His providence that the whole of the removal process, including the sale of 215/217 Kingston Road, was completed within a twelve months period."

In dealing with the **circulation of the Scriptures**, he said that in the Lord's goodness the Society was enabled to distribute more than 431,000 Bibles and 138,000 New Testaments during the year. In addition, more than 157,000 Bibles and 4,676,000 New Testaments were distributed under royalty arrangements. The total number of Scriptures published during the year was in excess 7,863,000. These Scriptures were published in more than 37 languages and distributed in 118 different countries.

More than 1.6 million items of Scripture (including 45,000 Bibles, 24,000 New Testaments and 800,000 Golden Thoughts Calendars) were distributed *free of charge*. Their value totalled £317,174 including costs of distribution. A considerable proportion of the Society's resources were also used to supply many thousands of Bibles, New Testaments and other Scripture items at *subsidized* prices. These were primarily supplied to countries where it is difficult for the people to purchase Bibles at the full retail price.

"Whilst it is very humbling to realise that someone in the world is receiving a copy of the Bible bearing the name of the Society every minute of every day of the year," said Mr Rowland, "we are not so concerned with statistics as we are to follow with prayerful interest the copies of God's Word that are placed in the hands of men, women, boys and girls throughout the world."

With regard to **finance**, the income of the Society during the year amounted to £1,930,756, of which £726,116 came from gifts, including

legacies. The Society's total expenditure totalled £1,837,874, of which the cost of the Scriptures sold and granted was £1,123,347.

The Report then deals with **editorial and distribution work**. With regard to *English language scriptures*, it notes that many Christians, living in countries where English is not the native tongue and where standards of education are rudimentary, continue to appreciate the Authorised Version of the Bible for its accuracy of translation and theological fidelity. Letters have been received by the Society from countries in Eastern Europe and Africa, India, China and elsewhere telling of how the writers prefer the Authorised Version of the Bible to the less literal translations available to them in their own languages.

More than 1.7 million Scripture items, including just less than 156,000 Bibles in the Authorised Version, were distributed throughout the English-speaking world. Many auxiliaries, supporting churches and other friends of the Society have been encouraged by the wonderful openings they have found for the placing of Bibles in schools, old people's homes and other institutions. Many appreciative letters have come from recipients.

With regard to *European language Scriptures*, the Society has been greatly encouraged by the reception given to its Portuguese Bible published early in 1994. More than 130,000 copies were distributed during the year for circulation in Brazil, with copies also going to Portugal, Mozambique and other areas of the world where the Portuguese language is spoken.

"The Society's members and friends will rejoice with us," said Mr Rowland, "that after over twenty years of preparation this Bible is now being so widely circulated. May the Lord's rich blessing continue to rest upon it that it may prove to be the means of much spiritual light and life to Portuguese speakers throughout the world. Gideons International have continued to use the Society's edition of the Portuguese New Testament for their work in Brazil and during the year published just under 4.6 million copies under a royalty agreement with the Society."

Under royalty agreements with other distributors, more than 157,000 Spanish Bibles were printed for distribution primarily among the Spanish-speaking peoples of Central and South America.

With regard to *Scriptures in non-European languages*, The Society has distributed editions in Afrikaans, Arabic, Chad Arabic, Fila, Gio, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Kabyle, Kashmiri, Kikaonde, Kisanga, Lisu, Malayalam, Ndebele, Pokot, Simte, Tamil, Telugu, Xhosa and Yoruba during 1994. "Although complete Bibles and New Testaments are not available in many of these languages," Mr Rowland added, "and in some of these languages the quantities of Scripture items circulated were very few, it is nevertheless

encouraging to be in a position to supply a Gospel, a Scripture Calendar or other Scripture item when the opportunity arises, knowing that the Lord is able to use even the smallest portion of His Word to the glory of His Name and the furtherance of His Kingdom."

Editorial Work continues on preparing new translations and revisions of the Holy Scriptures for publication by the Society. Many of these translations and revisions have been in the course of preparation for a number of years. Those engaged in the work would appreciate the prayers of the Lord's people.

In **thanking members, supporters and staff**, he said, "One of the Society's strengths over the years has been the prayerful support of its members and friends, and we take this opportunity again of thanking individuals, churches and auxiliaries throughout the world for remembering the work of the Society on a regular basis at the Throne of Grace."

He also said that although the Society's practice is not to appeal for funds, this is not because it does not need a substantial income to maintain and extend its work. (The total expenditure on the publishing and distribution of the Holy Scriptures by the Society in 1994 averaged out at a cost of more than £1,000 per working hour). Rather, the Society believes that its friends will be inclined by the Lord to provide, as they are able, for the work. During 1994 the Society has once again been deeply conscious of the faithfulness of the Lord in providing through His people all its needs, and it thanks Churches and congregations for making regular reference to the Society in their public prayers and meetings.

"It is appreciated that in one very public area of the work the Society is understaffed," he continued. "There are areas of the United Kingdom (especially in Scotland and Northern Ireland) which are not adequately covered by speakers and it is therefore hoped that, in the providence of the Lord, it will be possible to employ suitable men to add to the number of those who speak on the behalf of the Society to supporting churches."

In speaking about **the Committee**, he said that "because of continuing ill health, Mr A. J. Levell resigned from being President of the Society at the close of the year. Following eleven years as Chairman of the Committee, Mr Levell has continued his active interest in the Society as President and until his illness attended most meetings of the Committee. Mr Levell has kindly agreed to continue his association with the Society as a Vice-President.

"Sadly, in January 1995 the Rev D. B. Macleod passed away. Mr Macleod had joined the Committee of the Society in 1962 and has been

a Vice-President since 1974. His prayerful association, support and practical endeavours to further the interests of the Society in Scotland and elsewhere were greatly valued. We extend our sympathy to the bereaved family... The Rev K.M. Watkins, the minister of the London congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, was recently invited to join the Committee and has kindly agreed to serve the Society in this capacity. The Committee will value your continued prayers."

In concluding, Mr Rowland said, "Whilst the world remains and any of our fellow-beings have not in their hands Protestant or uncorrupted translations of the Holy Scriptures, there will be a need for the work and witness of the Society. Vast numbers are without a Bible or even a portion of the Holy Scriptures in their own language. Many languages only have Bibles that are based on a defective form of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Some languages only have translations that are plagued with erroneous notes whilst other languages only have Bibles available in a 'story book' form. An appreciation of the Bible as the divine volume of absolute truth given by inspiration of God is that which is largely lacking among peoples denominated Christian..."

"Indeed, wherever in the world one looks there is a desperate need for sound versions of the Word of God to be translated, published and distributed prayerfully. In our day, professed atheism and false religions abound. Roman Catholicism, Islam and numerous other evil systems of man-made religion appear to be on the ascendancy. There is a need in our day for a clear, distinctive, uncompromising and unashamed testimony to the uniqueness, the Divine inspiration and the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. The world, being in a chaotic state with all its false philosophies and consequent God-dishonouring beliefs and practice, needs the Word of God in all its glory and purity. It needs faithful and reliable translations of the Word of God. It needs godly and valiant preachers of the whole counsel of God. Above all, it needs the Lord to arise in His mercy to grant the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit to attend His Word, that sinners throughout the world will be brought to humble themselves before the Most High God. May the people of God continue to beseech Him at the Throne of Grace, echoing the prayer of the Psalmist, 'And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and Amen' (Psalm 72:19).

"May the Society's prayerful desire, expressed by the words, 'The Word of God among all nations', be more fully accomplished in the future. The prayers of the Society's members and friends of the Lord's guidance and overruling will be greatly valued."

John Welsh

3. A Rich Harvest of Souls (continued)

Rev. K.D. Macleod

WE have already noticed Welsh's efforts to civilise the town of Ayr, but what of more directly spiritual fruits? David Dickson, who was inducted to the neighbouring parish of Irvine in 1618, reaped a rich harvest of souls during his ministry there. But he bore the humble testimony that the grape-gleanings of Welsh's time in Ayr were far above the vintage of Irvine in his own. And Kirkton declared of Welsh, "If either his spiritual experiences in seeking the Lord, or his fruitfulness in converting souls, be considered, they will be found unparalleled in Scotland", though Welsh's biographer warns us not to overlook Robert Bruce, minister of Edinburgh's St Giles' Church, who was said by the eighteenth-century historian Robert Wodrow to have gained to Christ many thousands of souls. It is significant too how, in a letter from the loneliness of his exile in France, Welsh wrote of the latter part of his time in Ayr, when the population was only around 3000, "I had my choice of many hundreds unto whom I might have been bold to communicate both the desolations and comforts of my soul". And one suspects that it was not every believer to whom Welsh would thus have opened his heart. But these days of great spiritual blessing were to come to a sudden conclusion.

From London King James pursued even more earnestly his policy of removing the Presbyterianism of the Church of Scotland, and likewise his vendetta against those who were most prominent in protecting the purity of the Church. The General Assembly of November 1602 had agreed, with the King's consent, that they should meet at least once every year. However, only three weeks before the Assembly appointed for July 1604 in Aberdeen, the King ordered that it be postponed till July of the following year. In the interval he made a second round of appointments to bishoprics. Welsh made his position plain from the pulpit: "I know there will come a shaking time, and the glory of the world will bewitch many; but tell me, received ye the Spirit of God by this lordly ministry of the prelates, or by the pure ministry of His servants?" And he went on to speak of the new hierarchy: "It could not be from heaven, having no Scripture warrant; its lordly titles were expressly prohibited by Christ, who said to His disciples, 'Ye shall not be called such; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister'." So he warned his people, "Prepare you for crosses; you cannot tell how soon they will come, for

I am thinking there is something to follow on the back of this that stars are falling from heaven to earth (see Rev 12:3,4) and that these golden apples (the revenues of the bishoprics) are offered to ministers, and men are become earthly-minded that were wont to be capable of spiritual things. As the Lord lives, I think there must be a fiery trial to follow.”

At short notice it was made known that the King wished the 1605 Assembly also not to meet. Welsh, however, and two fellow-commissioners from Ayrshire made their way to Aberdeen, five others arriving with them on July 4. Having reached Aberdeen, they discovered that some of their northern brethren had met two days before, and in their own words, “sanctified the meeting with prayer”. The two different dates were given deliberately by the authorities to cause confusion and minimise the effect of any meeting. With John Forbes as moderator, the Assembly transacted no business except to appoint another meeting for the end of September.

Up to this point Straiton, the King’s commissioner for Church affairs, had offered no opposition, but he now ordered them to dissolve the Assembly on pain of being put to the horn. After prayer the 18 members present obeyed. They had made their point, which was no more than to ensure that the meeting of Assembly was actually held. Those who arrived late took steps to identify themselves with what had been done. Straiton, however, afraid for his own position, made his way to Edinburgh and falsely claimed that he had caused a proclamation to be made at the market cross in Aberdeen forbidding, the day before they gathered, the meeting of Assembly. And he persuaded the Privy Council to denounce as rebels all who had been present at the Assembly, Welsh among them.

(To be continued)

Obituary

Mr Donald Morrison, Portree, Isle of Skye

DONALD MORRISON, Ashlea, Portree, affectionately known as Donnie, was born on 13th December, 1947. He was born from above in 1965, and professed his faith in the Divine Redeemer at the early age of nineteen years. As a consciously guilty, lost sinner, when he could see nothing but eternal condemnation as his condign portion, he had been brought by the Lord, graciously and in His holy sovereignty, to cherish the hope of the prodigal son. He was wont to say that he had the hope that he had received the kiss of reconciliation through the sacrificial death of the Christ of God.

Donnie's love to the Saviour and to the souls of his fellow men, could not be hidden. Of a most attractive character, he soon became well known and endeared to many throughout the Church as well as in the Island. In his public prayers there was a spiritual savour and sweet fragrance in the very way he used the name of Jesus. His exercises had a spiritual dimension, and it was very evident that he was taught by the Holy Spirit. Before he was stricken by the trouble to which he ultimately succumbed, he was a sweet and melodious precentor in the praise of God's house.

Just how many Bibles, books and tracts Donnie gifted to all and sundry are not recorded, but they afforded telling proof of his concern for the souls of his fellow sinners. Of a happy disposition, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, he was a good companion. Although Donnie knew the holy liberty of the Gospel by the Son who made him free, he was no stranger to the experience of the Psalmist when he said:

My wounds do stink, and are corrupt;
my folly makes it so.

I troubled am and much bowed down;
all day I mourning go.

As some of us know, it is easier to serve than to suffer. Donnie was to learn this painfully. He endured with much courage and submission a long and protracted period of sickness. He was severely tried in body and mind but his greater trouble here was "the body of sin and death".

Many were impressed by his witness locally and elsewhere. Our dear friend loved the Lord's people everywhere but was most loyal to his own denomination. He had a good grip of what the fathers of the Church stood for. His admiration for them was not hero worship, as some might have thought, but an appreciation of the unspeakable debt of gratitude we owe to their courage and fidelity.

Donnie passed away to his everlasting rest on 24 June 1994. To his sorrowing mother and brothers we extend our sincere sympathy. Our prayer is that his God may be their God.

F. M.

Book Review

WATCHING UNTO PRAYER by *Robert Murray McCheyne*. Free Presbyterian Publications. Paperback, 80 pages, price £3.95. Obtainable from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.

THIS PUBLICATION comprises 28 meditations, which constituted

Robert Murray McCheyne's contribution to *The Christians's Daily Companion* (published in 1843). These meditations were extracted from the original volume and published by FPP under the title *Helps to Devotion* in 1988. They have now been reprinted under the present title.

The first four readings, which are concerned particularly with the Second Coming of Christ, are notable for the awe-inspiring solemnity of the warnings directed at the consciences of the ungodly, and for the intense warmth of the words of consolation addressed to the godly. To the ungodly he says, "O! thou that obeyest not the gospel, where wilt thou hide from the lightning of His eye?"; to the godly, "Welcome light afflictions, which are but for a moment. Welcome sweet cross, that I must bear for Jesus. Roll round swift years. Hasten the day of His espousals — the day of the gladness of His heart and mine."

In readings 5 to 24, in which the author deals with redemption and its application by the Holy Spirit, it is seen that doctrine, experience and holy living are all accorded their rightful place. This does not, however, preclude warnings, vividly and earnestly delivered, to those to whom the gospel has come "in word only." An example of this can be found on page 28: "Oh! My soul art thou contented to receive the gospel in word only? Can a hungry man be fed by the smell of viands? Or can a beggar turn rich by hearing the sound of money? And can my hungry soul find rest by hearing the tinkling of the gospel cymbals? Alas! It is fearful thing to drop into hell under the sound of gospel mercy."

In the final section McCheyne refers to such varied aspects of the gospel ministry as the divine call to the ministry, the divine determination of a minister's sphere of labour, the manner of his preaching, the accountability of gospel hearers, etc. Conspicuous in these last four readings is his sense of the awesome responsibility resting on his own shoulders. For example, he concludes the 25th reading with these words: "When I consider the urgent need of unconverted, the shortness of time, the awfulness of eternity, and the mercy that has come to my own soul, I am forced to cry, Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel'," (1 Cor.9:16).

Much could be written about the lucidity, conciseness and simplicity of his style and language. There are many passages to be savoured. The whole is imbued with the fervency of a pastor's heart.

The book is attractively and tastefully bound. Inside its covers there is a treasure-house of spiritual gems, and therefore, it merits a wide circulation. May it prove a blessing to many!

A. G.

Mission News

Zimbabwe Mission

EACH LETTER that comes from the Mission speaks of the sadness felt over David Ndlovu's death. David died a few days after the Mbumba communion, following a lengthy illness and as he was being taken to the hospital in Bulawayo. He was buried near his home at Lutsha, a few miles from Mbumba. There was a very large gathering of men, women and children (someone suggested about one thousand all told), some of whom came a long distance. Rev and Mrs Mazvabo and two elders travelled two hundred miles from their homes in New Canaan.

Everything was organised in a very orderly way. Rev. P. Mzamo gave a solemn address on Revelation 7:13, 14, "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Mr Mzamo warned most solemnly that there is a heaven and a hell, and how necessary it is to be prepared for heaven by being washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Last February, Mbumba Mission Hospital took delivery of a new ambulance. The previous Landrover ambulance had been involved in an accident late one evening as it was transferring a patient, an expectant mother, from Mbumba Hospital to Bulawayo Hospital. An ant-bear ran against the side of the vehicle, distracting the driver and causing him to lose control. The back door opened and the patient was spilled out, but mercifully no one was hurt. Sometime later the patient returned from Bulawayo and came to the hospital to show her lovely, healthy baby.

In John Tallach Secondary School at Ingwenya, there is a dire need for teachers, as was stressed by its Head Teacher, Miss Marion Graham, in conversation recently during her furlough at home. Miss Etta MacLennan has retired, and two others of the European staff are due to retire at the end of this year. Anyone who has a degree which includes teaching subjects such as English, Mathematics, Geography, etc., and who is interested in mission work, would be welcomed very much there, even if only for the short period of two years. Most people who go to work there find it a most interesting and rewarding experience, whether in education or health care.

Kenya Mission

WE WERE delighted to receive a letter from Sengera, Kenya, telling us of the friends there, and of the work being done. The staff have been extremely busy, having little time even for meals. The hospital has been given a new name: Omarembe Health Centre, 'Omarembe' meaning 'peace'. The nursing sister who writes says that the hospital would not have opened in mid-April had it not been for Mr Ian MacLean's expertise in supervising the completion of the building programme. The staff are very grateful to him.

All went well on the opening day, Monday, 17th April, after many preparations, including the interviewing and selecting of prospective staff. Their first patient was an old asthmatic lady, who in the late afternoon insisted she was feeling better and wished to go home. Nothing would persuade her otherwise. The first babies to be born there were twin girls, and they were appropriately named Truus and Christine after Sister Truus and Dr Christine who were in attendance.

The hospital has a ten-bedded female ward, a four-bedded labour ward and nursery, a six-bedded post-natal ward, an eight-bedded male ward and a ten-bedded children's ward. There is also a theatre for minor operations, two examination rooms, medical dressing rooms, a laboratory and more besides.

There is a very great need for trained nursing staff, both from within Kenya and overseas. Two Kenyan health workers are employed, and it is hoped that the Kenyan nurse-midwife, who had been there as a locum for five weeks, may return at a later date. Besides the nursing staff there are patient attendants, laboratory workers, a clerk and domestic staff.

So far, there is no electricity at Sengera, although the Mission has already paid 1.8 million shillings to the Electricity Board for power to be installed. (There are about 100 Kenyan Shillings to £1 sterling). Water from the tanks under the building is pumped by hand twice daily into the upper storage tank. "Patience is required," they say, as they wait for the Board to take action.

The church is about a ten-minute walk away from the hospital, at the foot of a steep hill, so it is not so convenient for the patients and some of the staff to be at the services on Sabbaths. It is hoped that there will eventually be a service in the hospital each Sabbath.

The letter closes with these words: "We value your prayers for the work that has been begun in this densely populated part of Kenya."

J. N.

Dr. Christine MacDonald

SINCE the above news items were written, Dr. Christine MacDonald has had to be flown home from Kenya at very short notice because of severe illness. She was taken to the Tropical Diseases Hospital in London where, in the kindness of the Lord, she made good progress and is now convalescing. It was necessary, of course, that her husband, Mr Donald MacDonald the Administrator of the Kenyan Mission, come home with her and their baby daughter.

Because of these circumstances, Rev. John Goldby has returned to Kenya to work on the mission for five weeks until 9th August. Our prayer is that he would be preserved and helped in his going to assist the Mission in its present difficult situation.

N.M.R.

Report of Visit to Ukraine

Rev. G.G. Hutton

ON MONDAY, 17th April, Mr Alistair MacRae and I set off from Inverness in a 7 ton van laden with 1186 Russian and Hungarian Bibles, 4800 Gospels of John and 60 Russian New Testaments. Additional literature included 1700 Shorter Catechisms in Russian and 2700 gospel tracts. We also carried a considerable selection of English literature, including Bibles and theological books. While our particular mission was to distribute sound versions of the Scriptures and good reformed reading material in Hungary and Ukraine, we also took a large quantity of donated clothing and food, and some medicines, for many of the poor and deprived people with whom we expected to come into contact.

Having crossed by ferry from Dover to Rotterdam, we then drove through Holland, Germany and Austria before entering Hungary. There we delivered a number of Bibles and quantity of food to some grateful friends. The Bibles were for use in a gypsy church, a member of which came a long distance to meet us and collect the Bibles. After spending a night in the Hungarian city of Miskolc, we headed for Kiev in Ukraine, for which the major part of our load was destined.

Just more than a week was spent in Keiv, including three frustrating days overcoming many difficulties with customs officials and bureaucrats before we were allowed to distribute our goods. The problems with the officials however, were compensated for by the warm welcome and gratitude of the people to whom we brought help. While in the Keiv region,

we endeavoured to preach the Gospel through an interpreter to a congregation of around thirty in a large hospital and also to a small gathering of people in a private home in the city of Borispol.

While our efforts appear to be such a small contribution to meet such an extensive need, we trust that the Word of God, which remains among the people long after we have left them, will prove in their experience to be indeed the "power of God unto salvation". Only the mighty arm of the Lord can break the power of the idolatrous Orthodox Church and destroy the residual influence of atheistic Communism in this part of the world. It is to Him we look for the fulfilment of His own promise, that His glory shall yet fill the whole earth.

In the kind providence of the Lord we returned safely to Inverness on 4th May, thankful for His gracious help in carrying out our tasks, and for His loving care over us during the thousands of miles of often difficult and trying driving conditions.

Notes and Comments

The Roman Catholic education system in Scotland

THE the head of Roman Catholic Church in Scotland warned the Government in February to keep its hands off the content of religious education in Roman Catholic schools. The Church of Rome is ensuring that its right to separate education and government funding, gained by the notorious 1918 Education Act, remains inviolate. It therefore has appointed a field officer (a former headmaster) for the Catholic Education Commission, and also plans to have a representative on each of the 32 new local authority councils in Scotland.

The Herald of 9th May makes this valid point: "Given that church attendance figures have been declining rapidly since the 1960s, the separate Roman Catholic schools may well come to represent the church's only sphere of influence left over Roman Catholics, and if the Act is ever repealed by Parliament, then [the priests] will lose all control, power, and influence over their flock and thus will have no-one left to manipulate, threaten, and coerce into submission."

Because the Act has fostered Romanism, "the sense now prevails," says the same Herald article, "that Roman Catholicism has triumphed not only socially but also, and much more significantly, politically." Rome will never be satisfied with anything less than total triumph. Let us never cease to pray for the downfall of this soul-deluding system and for the spiritual liberation of the multitudes under its dominion.

The Scottish Sabbath caricatured in the pulpit

THE minister of Inverness Old High Church, in a recent sermon, "has made a call for people to mark the Sabbath" by desisting from taking part in commercial activities on that day. Six days are enough for buying and selling as traders and customers, he is also reported to have said.

However, it seems that he has no time for the Scriptural Sabbath-keeping which once prevailed in the Highlands and which he regards as legalistic. He caricatures the "Scottish Sabbath" by comparing it to the Jewish Sabbath as that was legalistically kept under Pharisaical rules.

A Christian use of the Sabbath, he said, could include recreation and sport. He qualified this by saying, "Our freedom for enjoyment can only go to the point where we don't infringe anyone else's similar right."

What many ministers in our national church need to preach is God's inalienable right to require us to sanctify His Sabbath "by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."

Let us pray that the Lord would raise up ministers in the nation who would obey His injunction, "Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Only then will our land see days of spiritual blessing again.

The worsening of the National Lottery mania

SINCE the National Lottery was established, about an extra 15% of the adult population in England has been drawn into gambling, bringing the total of gamblers up to 89%. In Scotland the figure is higher. It is expected that the introduction of the "bigger grid" National Lottery ticket will pressure people into spending even more than they already do.

One tragic result is an increase in gambling addiction. Ian Brown, senior lecturer in psychology at Glasgow University, says, "From what we know in the field of alcohol and drugs, the easy access to a great deal more gambling will inevitably increase the number of people who have problems with it." Gamblers Anonymous groups are seeing a significant increase in the number of people seeking help because of their addiction.

Another bad effect (as was predicted) is the drop in the number of people who voluntarily give to charities — in Scotland the drop is 16%. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations says charities may lose up to £212 million annually.

The prevailing gambling mania manifests a marked nationwide despising of the God of providence. The gambler is not the man who prays, "Give

us this day our daily bread,” but depends on what he calls “luck”. If he wins anything by gambling he cannot have it with the blessing of God, and therefore his gain is loss. “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it,” Proverbs 10:22.

Increasing deterioration in broadcasting standards

THE BBC’s recently announced drama programme for the coming year includes films which feature such shocking examples of violence, sex and foul language as drew gasps from a preview audience of journalists.

The Broadcasting Standards Council which, in its annual report, has detailed a record number of complaints, condemns the proliferation of sex, violence and bad language on TV. Lady Howe, who chairs the Council, said: “I share the astonishment of many complainants at the broadcasters’ persistent failure to curb such incidents.”

Charles Denton, head of BBC drama, has arrogantly stated that the BBC does not need to be reminded by the Council about standards in these matters. Channel 4, despite numerous protests, from individuals and organisations, including our Religion and Morals Committee, persisted in showing the blasphemous film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*

It is appalling that such blasphemy and filth is beamed into millions of homes, and it is high time that the Broadcasting Standards Council be given more power in dealing with offending broadcasters. Meantime, we should not hesitate to protest against offensive material — not that we expect anyone with Christian principles to be watching TV plays, but that they would note and complain about those instances which are brought to their notice.

Church Notes

Some items of interest from the meeting of Synod

COPIES of the *Proceedings of Synod* are now available from the F.P. Bookroom, price £2.50 plus postage. The following items of Synod business, more or less as they have been conveniently summed up for us by Rev. D.M. Boyd in his newsletter, *Auldcastle View*, given below.

The Rev. Alexander McPherson was appointed the Moderator of Synod for 1995-6, and the Rev. John MacLeod was appointed Clerk of Synod. The Rev. Neil M. Ross was appointed Editor of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* for a period of five years. Two theological tutors were appointed: the Rev. Donald D.M. Boyd as the Systematic Theology Tutor, and the

Rev. Kenneth D. Macleod as Tutor in Hebrew and related subjects. The new Convener of the Dominions and Overseas Committee is the Rev. Donald A. Ross, while the Rev. John L. Goldby was appointed Convener of the Sabbath Observance Committee. Both Homes of Rest Committees have new conveners; the Rev. Alexander Morrison was appointed Convener of the Harris Home of Rest Committee, and Mr Alistair N. MacRae is the Convener of the Ballifeary Home of Rest Committee.

The Synod also passed three Resolutions which had been submitted by the Religion and Morals Committee. The Resolution on the British Constitution and Coronation Oath expressed our concern about increasing calls for the changing of the terms of the Protestant Constitution of the nation. The Resolution on the "Evangelicals and Roman Catholics Together" statement which was signed by a group of Roman Catholics and professed evangelicals, including Dr James Packer, warns against the collaborating with the Roman Catholic Church which the statement endorses. The Resolution on the so-called Toronto Blessing, states our opposition to this bizarre phenomenon in the Charismatic movement.

It was decided by the Synod that one of the two overseas divinity students, Mr Patrick J. Cassidy of New Zealand, should do his theological course in the United Kingdom. Upon passing his entrance examinations, he will commence his studies in this country this year, God willing.

The Synod approved a Scheme for Housing of Retired Ministers which will allow ministers on their retirement, or ministers' widows on the death of their husbands, to apply to the Finance Committee for assistance in the form of a loan, or rent assistance, or other options arising out of consultation. The Scheme is flexible to accommodate the varying needs of ministers or their widows and will be financed out of the Forsyth Legacy.

The Skye Presbytery Clerk

AT the meeting of the Skye Presbytery on 13th June, 1995, the Presbytery regretfully accepted the resignation, because of ill health, of its Clerk, Rev. Fraser MacDonald, M.A., Portree. The Presbytery, at the same meeting, appointed Rev. James R. Tallach, M.B., Ch.B., Raasay, to be its Clerk.

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

NORTHERN: At Dingwall on Tuesday, 12th September, at 1.30 pm.

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 19th September, at 6.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 19th September, at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Tuesday, 3rd October at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 5th September at 1.00 pm.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND: At Auckland on Tuesday, 26th January 1996, at 2.30 pm.

ZIMBABWE: At Bulawayo on Tuesday, 10th October, at 2.00 pm.

Visit to Fornaci di Barga, Italy

AT the time of writing this notice, we [that is, the Rev D. A. Ross and Mr Lucio Strata of our London Congregation] hope, in the kind providence of the Lord, to fly to Italy, on 15th July to spend two Sabbaths in Fornaci di Barga, at the request of the Dominions and Overseas Committee. It is planned that two services be taken each Sabbath in a room booked for this purpose in a local hotel, as has been done on past occasions, and that Mr Strata will interpret. During each week there will be a prayer meeting and Bible class.

By the time this notice appears we expect we will have returned, God willing, from Italy. Nevertheless, we would value the prayers of the Lord's people for the Lord's blessing to be upon yet another brief time of preaching the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to needy souls out there.

Until now, in the goodness of God, the door of opportunity for our work in Italy has been kept open. However, this may not continue, and therefore there is all the more need that we seek in prayer that this work, which has made very little progress over the years, be countenanced in mercy by the Most High, and that He would cause it to grow.

Rev. Donald A. Ross

Eastern Europe mission work — Notice of next visit

PENDING Presbytery approval, plans are being made to go to Eastern Europe for our usual second annual visit, God willing. It is intended that Rev. D.A. Ross and Mr E. Ross will go for almost three weeks in order to be in Kiev for two Sabbaths, possibly the last in October and the first in November.

During their visit in April and May, Rev. G.G. Hutton and Mr A. MacRae met with more disappointments than we usually meet with. However, despite various problems which arise we are still being enabled by the Lord of the harvest to spread the good seed of the kingdom by going with the Word of God to those who, as far as we can see, would otherwise be denied it.

The Church does this work with the assurance that the great Head of the church directs us thus, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Therefore we need not fear that the work is in vain

or unprofitable. His word shall not return unto Him void, (Isaiah 55:11).

We look forward to your continued prayerful support of this important work. Donations may be sent to Mr R.A. Campbell, The General Treasurer, The Free Presbyterian Church, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

Rev. Donald A. Ross

The Editorship of the Magazine

AMONG the heavy responsibilities which the late Rev. D.B. MacLeod assiduously and faithfully discharged was the editing of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* for the long period of just more than 25 years.

In taking up this heavy work of editorship of the Magazine, to which I was appointed by the last Synod, I can only echo Mr MacLeod's words when he took up the editor's pen for the first issue in January 1970: "I feel very unfit for the task which the Church has laid upon me, but desire to undertake this work in the strength of Divine grace. The Lord alone is able to give all needed grace and wisdom and strength." I would ask the Lord's people to please remember me in prayer with regard to my weighty editorial responsibilities.

We are bound to seek that the blessing of the Lord would rest upon the work of the Magazine because, as need hardly be said, the Magazine is a principal element in the witness of our Church — a witness which is based foursquare on the Word of God. Second only to the Scriptures in our witness is the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is based entirely on the Word of God, and to which we unreservedly subscribe.

The Free Presbyterian Magazine therefore seeks to maintain, propagate and defend "the faith which was once delivered to the saints" and handed down to us at no small cost. Such a witness necessarily entails bearing testimony against the evils of the age in which we live, and against the false and soul-deluding religions, especially Romanism, which are growing in power by the year. Our chief aims are that God would be glorified, His kingdom made a praise in the earth, sinners saved by grace, and the people of God built up in their "most holy faith".

Of course, this magazine is also published (as the first issue stated in May 1896), "specially in the interests of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland". Therefore it is expected that a major proportion of its input will be from the ministers and elders of the Church. For example, we hope to transcribe from tape a selection of sermons of our ministers: certain sermons have already been commended by friends for publication. It is

true that transcribing and editing sermons is very time-consuming but we know that a large section of our readership wishes to have such material. We look to our brethren to do what is in their power to assist us, not only by allowing publication of their sermons but also by producing articles, especially of a topical nature.

All communications for the Editor are to be sent to: Rev. Neil M. Ross, Free Presbyterian Manse, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, Ross-shire, IV15 9JB. Tel. No. 01349 864351.

The Editor

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE General Treasurer, Mr R.A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, wishes to acknowledge with thanks the following donations:

Eastern Europe: Mrs J. Bouman, Can.\$150, per G.S.; Anon, £50 for where most needed.
Foreign Mission Fund: Mrs J. Bouman, Can.\$100, per G.S.; Anon. (June), Can. \$100, per G.S.; Anon. Glasgow, £100; Anon. £50 for where most needed; Two friends, Dingwall, £300 for Zimbabwe famine relief.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations wish to acknowledge the following donations:

Dingwall: In memory of our dear mother, £100 for Church Funds, from the Clark family, Invergordon, per Rev. N.M.R.

Dornoch etc: A lover of the Cause, £1,259.00, for where most needed.

Glasgow (St Jude's): Anon., £30 for Congregational Fund per Rev. D. MacLean; In memory of loved ones, £50, where most needed; JC, £25 for communion expenses; Miss AC, £215 for Church door collection, per K.Gillies; From a friend, £10 for communion expenses per R.A. Campbell; Anon., £50, £60, £100, all for Bus Fund; M.M.A., £10 for Bus Fund; Mrs J. McL, £20 for Church Door Collection per Rev. D. MacLean; Anon., £10, £30, £40, £70, £25, £100, and £5, all for the Trinitarian Bible Society; Anon., £40, £40, £40, all for Eastern Europe; Interested, £50 for Eastern Europe; Anon., £80, £100, both for mission work in Africa and Eastern Europe; F.M. Toronto, £20 for Foreign Mission and Dominions and Overseas Fund.

Glendale: Anon., £30 for congregational funds; Anon, £100 for Property Fund; Anon., £400 for Sustentation Fund; all per collection plate.

Inverness: Anon., £20 for Sustentation Fund, envelope in plate; R.McR. £10 for Synod catering expenses per Mrs C.S.; From the Estate of the late Mrs Marjory I. MacAulay, £1,000 for congregational funds per Anderson, Shaw and Gilbert, Solicitors; Anon., £20 for Church bus maintenance; Anon., £20 for Sustentation Fund; Anon., £10 for Church Bus Maintenance; these last three per envelope in collection plate.

Larne: A friend, £30, Where most needed; Envelope in plate, £20 for Congregational Fund; Anon., £30 for communion expenses; all per J.A.F.

South Harris: In remembrance of a loving mother, £100 for the Sustentation Fund, per Mr D. MacKenzie.

Staffin: Envelope in plate, £10 for communion expenses; Anon. £20 for the Congregational Fund.