

# The Free Presbyterian Magazine and Monthly Record

Vol 101

July 1996

No 7

## Synod Sermon

*by the Rev. Alexander McPherson, Retiring Moderator*

This sermon was preached at the opening of the meeting of Synod on Tuesday, 21st May, 1996.

*Text: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:10-12.*

THE first three chapters have been taken up with the great themes of God's eternal love and grace, the uniting of sinners to Christ, and their participation in the benefits of salvation. Then, in his usual way, Paul goes on to the practical side of salvation, important truths regarding the Church, personal piety, and Christian duty in various relationships. Allusions have been made to the opposition to be expected from the world and the flesh, but now Paul comes suddenly to speak forcibly of the third enemy that believers will be sure to meet with in their Christian course. He states in the strongest terms a warning of satanic opposition that can only be overcome by divine help.

I believe that this warning is specially applicable to us now. There is general agreement that Christ's cause is low just now, and that that decline has been going on for a long time. We speak of a "cloudy and dark day", but I suggest that a stronger description could well be applied. If we lift our eyes from the local situation to scan the Visible Church, then our nation, and beyond that the whole world, we will have reason to think that this is a critical period in the history of the Church. So much so, that the Church of God is at so low an ebb that it only just exists.

Is there any particular reason for this calamitous situation? I use that adjective because, amongst other things, I have in mind the six thousand millions of men, women and children dying in their sins, and no word reaching them of salvation through Jesus Christ; not only heathens,



Mohammedans, atheists, Romanists and so on, but people with Christian connections. Mankind today, apart from a very tiny proportion of God's people, is a vast mass of unregenerate souls firmly under the power of the prince of this world, that is, the devil. He has been permitted to extend his power to such an extent that the cause of Christ has been reduced to its present alarming level. This awesome satanic power is what the text brings before us.

Some years ago the Moderator of another Church devoted his opening address to an appraisal of the dangers threatening his church's witness at that time. It was an honest and pretty thorough examination, and ended with the need to cry mightily to the Lord for help and preservation. In due course his address was severely criticised for being too negative and pessimistic. What was needed, said the critic, was to hear of "growing faith, increasing love and tested endurance." In my opinion, time and events have proved the preacher's warning to be appropriate, and I have the less hesitation in pointing plainly to the demonic author of the present perilous situation.

Let us consider, **first**, the description given here of satanic power; **secondly**, let us glance at the working of this power; **thirdly**, note the present results of these satanic activities; and **fourthly**, the response to all this.

### **First: Consider the description given here of satanic power**

Through Paul, the Holy Spirit informs us here of the malice and power of the devil. This spiritual being appears in the Bible as evil with no redeeming feature. He entered Eden and seduced our first parents into sinning, to their own and the whole race's ruin. Modern religious thought pooh-poohs that idea. The devil is just a mythical being, the personification of evil and suffering. Scripture references are just figures of speech. The devil has become for many a figure of fun with sinister overtones.

But because God's Word is truth, and speaks of the devil being as real and personal as God, we disregard modern thought and face the fact that Satan is an angel who fell, and is engaged in constant warfare with his Maker, being permitted to do so. And the devil is not solitary. He is the leader of other spirits as wicked as himself, and he has a world-wide kingdom of sinful human beings — he is "the god of this world."

Satan has had power in the sphere of nature, as recorded in the Book of Job. He is the power behind witchcraft. He can take possession of men, affecting their minds and bodies. He is the active element in spiritism, and I believe, in aspects of modern charismata. What else is certain is that he is always involved in keeping men at sin, in tempting them to sin, and in trying



to win believers back to his service. Hence Paul's reference to "the wiles of the devil."

We are warned, however, that we have to contend with a whole empire of evil. Thus, we are shown here to look beyond "flesh and blood", that is, men, to the invisible hosts who serve the devil. Men can be bad enough, but at their worst they are not devils, nor does common grace allow them to become completely devilish. Yet when we see devilish behaviour, as at Dunblane and Tasmania, let it remind us of the spirits of hell who seek to affect men and make them resemble themselves. See now, how they are described.

"Principalities", mighty spirits leading the devil's hordes. The idea, speaking in military terms, is of commanders of corps, divisions and brigades. The term "principalities" begins to throw light on the numbers under their command. The term "powers", or potentates, teaches that these commanders are not leaders in name only, but possess authority over their followers. It is an organised force of demons that we face, not a rabble.

This great host are called "the rulers of the darkness of this world." They actually rule, under Satan, this dark world of ours; dark because of spiritual ignorance, sin and misery. Think of the thousands of millions of human beings, each acting in his own way and invariably sinfully, yet behind each the influence of evil spirits. When we speak of Satan's dark kingdom, we have to think of a more extensive and longer-lasting empire than any other we know. The Bible records a little of its first four thousand years. It is sustained by the edicts of rulers, by fake religion, and by men's self-seeking and aversion to their Maker.

Lastly, Paul calls it "spiritual wickedness in high places", meaning, countless wicked beings in the eternal world, unseen, intangible, but everywhere, and greatly to be feared for their power and malignity.

All this, then, is the Christian's worst foe. And by a change of metaphor, Paul stresses that for the individual believer, it is not an army arranged in ranks that he faces. It is not even a hand to hand combat, but so close an encounter that it is called "wrestling", in which two persons grapple and attempt to lay each other helpless on the ground. In satanic power we meet a foe who can affect the faculties of our souls; yes, can come as close to us as the Holy Spirit.

Does the inspired description give us a clearer view of the enemy of our souls, and the would-be destroyer of Christ's Church? Christ says, "the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." He uses every means to prevent poor sinners obtaining spiritual life through Christ, and aims at



destroying the means of grace which the Church provides. Hence, the Church, Christians in God-appointed union, is the devil's great target. Do we see what the strength spoken of in verse 10 is needed for?

**Secondly: Let us glance at the workings of this power.**

The text clearly has its main application to individual Christians but, as we have seen, its language brings before us a world-wide system of opposition to God and His cause, and it is that aspect we are emphasising at present. The fact that the Church of Christ is in an exceptionally weak condition at present, is due to the power that has been allowed to him whom Scripture calls, "that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). It was as the prince of this world that he assured Jesus that he would give Him all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them if Jesus would fall down and worship him. The devil has had a hand in all opposition to God from the Fall, both in individuals and men in the mass.

What I wish to do now is to glance, and that is all, at the methods Satan has used to oppose and persecute the Church of God. It is certain that Satan did not expect God's speedy, merciful intervention in Eden, nor the sentence that a descendant of Eve, his first victim, would bruise his head. Undaunted, though, the devil wrought in the souls of the majority of men in the antediluvian period rebellion against, and disregard of, God, and hatred of God's worshippers. These were reduced at last to one family.

After the flood and after Babel, the devil pursued a new method, the encouragement of men to forsake allegiance to Jehovah and to worship imaginary gods through idols. With the exception of Israel whom God chose as His own nation, the whole world was idolatrous. The many attacks made on Israel by heathen neighbours were dictated by hatred of Israel's God. Idolatry had such an appeal for the mind of fallen man that the system has persisted in great strength to the present day in Asia.

In due time Christ came, and the gospel went forth to the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. Most of the Jews rejected Christ and opposed His followers, and heathendom did not take kindly to the new religion. In these ways Satan did what he could to prevent the spread of Christianity.

Gnosticism, a conglomeration of Jewish, Christian and heathen features, arose in considerable power in the second century, having all the marks of a Satanic attempt to neutralise the truths of the Gospel. It did not last long, but some of its features appeared later in Romanism. I pass over the heresies which arose in the second, third and fourth centuries, and the resistance to them by individuals and councils. Arianism and Pelagianism were the principal. Some who defended the faith at that time had no hesitation in



identifying Satan as the ultimate author of these attempts to undermine the gospel.

Romanism has been called Satan's masterpiece. It is noteworthy that it was a gradual development, unlike the rise of idolatry which seemed to have affected all the tribes and nations at the same time. Another aspect of this new devil-inspired movement was that where in the first two centuries after Christ, the attack was on basic doctrines like the Person of Christ and total depravity, the new campaign took the form of altering things from their original biblical positions to concepts more agreeable to the carnal mind. When we look at the history of the Visible Church, say, between the third and seventh centuries, we can detect changes that replaced the Apostolic Church with the Popery that lorded it over millions of unenlightened souls in the appropriately-named Dark Ages. Teaching elders began to be regarded as much superior to ruling elders, and this led to the supremacy of bishops and to autocratic church government. Ministers came to be looked on as sacrificing priests, and this led on to transubstantiation. Bishops came to be robed in costly vestments and, favoured by the state, became arrogant. Jerome produced the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible whose errors suited the Papacy. Eventually the Bishop of Rome became accepted as the Universal Bishop, the first Pope, and this man-created office soon aspired to temporal power. Its holders claimed to be Peter's successors and Vicars of Christ on earth. Purgatory became accepted as a doctrine, and so on. By the 16th century, the Romish system had become a complete caricature of the Church, operating in a way that left its members, the nations of Europe and South America in spiritual darkness; and would have gone on longer had not God set in motion the Reformation. By that great movement, true Christianity revived, prospered and spread far afield. Satan sought to minimise the damage to this part of his unholy empire through the Council of Trent, but Papal power is nothing like what it was, though still a soul-ruining system holding millions in spiritual bondage and attempting by clandestine methods to regain the place it had lost.

During the eleven centuries that Satan, through heathenism on the one hand and Romanism on the other, kept the greater part of mankind under his control, it was ignorance, superstition and fear that he preyed on. Then in providence the Renaissance of the 14th and 15th centuries saw the beginning of a spirit of enquiry into classical literature, physical science and philosophy, all contrary to the repressive attitude of the mediaeval church. Next, there came about in the 18th century what has been called the Age of Reason and The Enlightenment in which learned thinkers began to regard



human reason as the best source of knowledge, superior, some thought, to scriptural revelation; and by the end of the 18th century, scholars like Semler and Eichorn had embarked on a destructive criticism of the Old Testament. To them there was no supernatural, no divine inspiration, and Christ was no more than a teacher. One can see how Satan changed his tactics to suit the human condition, as divine providence led men out of the period of intellectual darkness. If rational enquiry was to mark a new era, then let it be directed towards and against the Word of God and the Reformed religion. Human agents were available and became willing tools of the devil. The work of rationalistic biblical criticism became the apparatus that well-nigh extinguished the Church of God.

The 19th century saw an intensification of antagonistic criticism. First the Old Testament, then the New were attacked on the pre-supposition that there had been no such thing as verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. From what is known of the early German "higher critics" and those who followed them, they gave no sign of possessing saving knowledge. Claiming to be Christians, they in fact were under the power of the god of this world; and although, no doubt in ignorance of that fact, willingly engaged in the work he set them of destroying the reputation of the Scriptures as God's Word. Satan lured them with the hope that they would make great names for themselves as independent-minded scholars, and they had their reward as far as that was concerned. What they left out of account was the wages of the sin of denying the divine authority of Scripture.

Do I need to remind you that our existence as a branch of Christ's Church came about from the invasion of English and Scottish churches by rationalistic biblical criticism?

Following the great success of the higher criticism, the next attack on the Church of God was by the theory of evolution. Having done much to get rid of the Word of God, the devil saw the opportunity by the use of this theory to assail the very idea of the existence of God. If it could be shown that dead matter became living things of a simple sort, and then these become more complex by a process of descent with modification until at last all the living things we know came into existence; and this process occupying millions of years, the biblical account of a six-day creation by a spiritual being of infinite wisdom and power would be relegated to the realm of myth. Having disposed of a divine Creator, this new theory in combination with the new doctrine of God resulting from biblical criticism, would lead to views of a God much gentler in disposition than the Jehovah of the Jews. God could be regarded as a Universal Father. If the Church



could be persuaded to embrace that sort of God, it would gladly gloss over the question, What godlike qualities does the Universal Father have? He did not create; He does not work miracles; He treats sin lightly; He does not condemn sinners to hell; His main concern is how people behave towards each other in the world — and so on. Satan reasoned correctly that the combination of biblical criticism and evolution would bring the Church into doctrinal confusion and worldliness, and become a section of humanity as much under his power as heathens and Romanists, and be doomed to perish with himself everlastingly.

Ideas about living things evolving obtained long before Darwin's time, but the modern theory began with the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species by Natural Selection" in 1859. His particular interest was in the way evolution took place. His view can be summed up as the survival of the fittest and eventual modifications of these. Developments of and alterations to Darwin's theory took place, but whatever the forms, theories they remain. No evidence has emerged, yet many scientists accept the theory of evolution even while they cannot explain the why and wherefore of it. Nevertheless its widespread acceptance by scientists whose word has come to be more and more relied on, has affected men's beliefs about God, religion, morality and the nature of man himself. The species has been exalted above the individual members, leading to socialism and communism. Evolution's direct opposition to Biblical Christianity has played a strong part in the decline of the latter and the strengthening of Satan's kingdom.

As already said, for more holy and wise purposes, Satan is allowed to have a kingdom, and in our time has been allowed to control an empire which has been doing all it can to destroy the Church of God. What we are considering this evening is the tremendous extent to which this has been happening. That such a measure of devilish success was in the Saviour's mind, we can, I think, gather from the words He spoke to Peter after that disciple had acknowledged Jesus as the Christ (Matt. 16:16). Christ did not say, "I will build my Church, and the devil's kingdom will assail it in vain." What He said was, ". . . and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Which is to say, "However near the devil's kingdom comes to overcoming my Church, it will not succeed." Ours is such a day.

There are two more instances I must give of the workings of Satan's power. Notwithstanding all the wiles of the devil, there were those who held to the Bible and its truths. To deal with them, Satan used a new method, namely to multiply translations of the Word of God. This is a big subject and all I can do just now is mention some of the results of this move. By departing from the Received Text which the Authorised Version translators



had every reason to regard as the divinely inspired Word of God, and preferring the much inferior Alexandrian Text as represented by the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts, a Revision Committee dominated by Westcott and Hort, produced the Revised Version of the English Bible in 1885. Spiritually unqualified translators and a corrupt text produced a faulty Bible which in fact did not find popular favour. What it did, though, was to trigger off a fashion for more efforts of the same sort, more than a hundred up till now.

These varied from the scholarly to the crude. Most followed the faulty Westcott and Hort Text. Some were paraphrases; all omitted parts of Scripture and some included explanatory notes. Suitability for popular consumption was the aim, as if easy-reading would lead to readers becoming Christians. An outstandingly bad effect of multiplying versions which differed from each other was that they hid from view the truth that the Bible is one verbally inspired Word of God. To an inquiring sinner, the question, What does God say? can be all-important. What then is he to make of a situation in which different versions disagree on what God says?

I leave that and turn very briefly to the last of the devil's methods which I wish to glance at, namely, ecumenism. Biblical Criticism and evolution having done their work at turning the greater part of the Visible Church away from the Bible and to a wholesale liberalising of the Bible's doctrines, Satan's next move was to try to bring the parts of the sadly deteriorated Visible Church into one body, and eventually back into Rome. There is a considerable history to the ecumenical movement, but suffice to say that the keynote of the endeavour is that denominational separation is sin, and that Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one" involves all churches in the duty of becoming one church. To this end many councils have been formed, the largest being the World Council of Churches, and church unions have taken place, with others in the making. In every case, truth has been sacrificed to consensus, so that basic beliefs have been reduced to a minimum and so phrased that they can be interpreted as the parties wish. Other faiths are being welcomed, and the leaning towards Rome has become very apparent. With that I conclude my glance at the workings of the devil against the Church of God.

**Thirdly, we note the present results of these satanic activities.**

Let me mention these activities again. Before the flood there was rebellion against God, afterwards there was idolatry, then in the first three centuries after Christ, individual heresies, then Romanism, then nationalistic Biblical



criticism, then evolution, then multiplication of versions, and lastly, ecumenism. They are all still playing a part in Satan's effort to destroy the Church, even the first three. It is man's nature to be rebellious, and there is no shortage of examples of persons young and old rebelling against Christian truths and ways.

Idolatry, as I said, continues in Asia in those forms of heathenism called Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto and Confucianism. They are not aggressive religions, seeking to spread themselves, but are being reached out to by the inter-faith movement, and ranked among the ways by which man's religious instinct finds expression. To that extent, they play their part in downgrading Christianity. As for the early heresies, these crop up from time to time in one form or another.

Romanism is still a deadly foe of Christ's Church. Without changing any of its heretical dogmas, it has softened its exterior to impress doctrinally-ignorant Christians with the idea that it is not so very different from Protestantism, that it contends for scriptural morality, and has definite, scriptural doctrines. Occasionally, of course, the disguise slips, as not long ago the Pope when in South America called Protestants "sects" instead of the more usual "separated brethren." Romanism, contrary to the vagueness in the decadent Visible Church, has its dogmas, worship and claims cut and dried, and nominal Protestants have sought sanctuary there. The admission of women to the ministry of the Church of England resulted in departure to Rome. Romanists and their friends in the Church of England and elsewhere, have obtained strong influence over the Queen and other Royals to the point of signalling danger to our country's Protestant Constitution.

As already mentioned, our existence as a branch of Christ's Church is due to the efforts of adverse biblical criticism in the Disruption Free Church, which in much less than fifty years became grievously corrupted by changed attitudes to the Bible and Westminster doctrines. Separation from the spiritually diseased body had to take place if the Free Church was to continue, and this was done in 1893.

Everywhere we can see the havoc wrought by the ungodly critics of God's Word, the servants of Satan. Nominally Protestant churches worldwide have ceased to treat Scripture as the source of Christian doctrine and practice. Whether it be public worship, preaching, Sabbath observance, divorce, homosexuality or anything else, the rule is what modern man thinks, and not what God in His Word says. And, of course, the liberalising of doctrine that took place once the Bible had been downgraded, made an end of the gospel and the Christian life. Around us is the spiritual death



and moral decay that demands more and more freedom to go further, and that denigrates and tries to silence any witness that the true Church attempts.

As to evolution, accepted as factual in both the secular and religious spheres, it intrudes into so many subjects via the mass media, education, literature, scientific achievement, entertainment and religion, that for most people it cancels out the very idea of a creating God and affects the whole range of basic, Bible truths. Christ's true Church, holding firmly to the Bible, is faced with the disbelief and sometimes the scorn of the world. Evolution is a fact, they say. It has discredited the Bible and its antiquated notions of creation, sin, gospel and hell are now unacceptable.

I don't think I need to apply particularly what I have said on multiplying Bible versions or ecumenism.

In the light of what I have brought before you, do you not agree that the Church of God is faced today on all sides with the works of the devil, an assembly of forces so powerful that the Church trembles under the impact? What is experienced, say in a branch like our own, is that Christ's servants go forth to their preaching, witnessing and protesting very much aware that only a tiny audience will pay any heed to them. Of the unconverted among these, only one now and again will confess to having been savingly affected by the Word of God's grace. We fully believe that divine power, as often experienced in times past, can make hearers willing, can change communities for the better, and as at the Reformation, can win whole nations to the cause of God. But what is felt at present is the force of Isaiah's question, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" There have been years of labour, yet the careless are still unimpressed, Christless souls are growing old, death and depopulation are doing their steady work, crowds outside our church walls remain there. Neither love nor money, so to speak, will move them from their irreligion, materialism and worldliness to seek salvation from sin. Satan by the force and multiplicity of his methods, conditions people to regard the Christian religion as very much an optional extra which others may have if they please, but not themselves. And so, the Church of God occupies the position of an irrelevance, more or less, in this modern age. The minority who are religious have no time for extremists who press the authority of the Bible. The indefinable God of these up-to-date Christians suits them well enough.

The Bible-based Church of God is, I repeat, extremely small, and makes no impression on the worldly mass around it. And when a branch like our



own looks for support from another, it usually has to look a long distance. Then, what it sees is partial agreement, but also differences that do not permit full agreement on doctrine, practice and other matters. So that the cause of Christ worldwide, not only exists in small numbers widely scattered, but in a measure of disarray because of variations in adherence to Scripture. Just another factor that makes clear that whichever way you look, the cause of Christ is in a state of utter weakness.

**Fourthly: let us consider the response to all this.**

It is in the text: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Bearing in mind that it is the Church aspect rather than the individual case that we are dealing with this evening, what is the Church to do when faced with the surrounding forces of the devil that I have tried to present to you in their awesome magnitude and malignity? These demonic hordes are invisible; we accept their existence and intentions on the authority of God's Word. On the same authority we accept that these gates of hell will not prevail against Christ's Church. Therefore, although the besieging forces are more frighteningly large and powerful than the one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians who surrounded Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day, there is no case for giving up the struggle or running away. "Withstand" and "stand" are the commands here (vv. 13, 14). Omit the question, "For how long?" The answer lies with the divine Head of the Church, and only time and events will reveal it. What Scripture tells us is that in due time revival, reformation and the overthrow of Satan's kingdom will come. The Reformation in Europe came in due time; minor revivals came in due time, and the millenium will come in due time. Meanwhile, the command from heaven is, "Stand."

Not, let it be emphasised, that we are to stand quaking in apprehension of whatever next is to be done against the Church, but stand, "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." The spiritual union between Christ's people and their Lord in heaven is to be realised by them, and from their felt weakness there is to be a looking to Christ. There is to be such trust in Him and His power over the devil, as would strengthen their hearts and animate them to stand fast, and to do all that is required to ward off the devil's attacks, and rout him when that time comes. "Be strong in the Lord," remembering that all power is His, and that He is "stronger than the strong man armed." Faith draws upon that divine arsenal, and invigorated by it (which is what "strong in the power of His might" means), quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked and uses the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, to strike at the foe in every way possible.



Verses 13 to 18 amplify what verse 10 commands. All I can do this evening is mention what the seven parts of the armour are. The first is the cordial acceptance of Scripture truth as the final arbiter on all matters religious and moral. Next, there is dependence on Christ's imputed righteousness against which charges of sin fall to the ground. After that there is the strengthgiving consciousness of a state of peace with God through the gospel. Then there is faith, that reliance upon God that can ward off every kind of attack. Next, the consciousness of being saved that, like a helmet, protects the mind from false doctrine, carnal thoughts and depression. After that comes the sword of the Spirit, the one offensive item. I quote Charles Hodge: "In opposition to all false philosophy, all false moral principles, all sophistries of vice, all suggestions of the devil, the sole, simple and sufficient answer is the Word of God. This puts the powers of darkness to flight."

Lastly, there is "all prayer," and with this I conclude because it is most appropriate to our subject, that is, the wiles of the devil engaged against Christ's weak and weary Church today. Look at the final words, "supplication for all saints," prayer for the Church in its deadly conflict with an empire of evil. Christ's Church is to be remembered in our prayers at any time, so important is its security, spiritual health and enlargement. But today, from our text, we have glanced at the attacks from all quarters, secular and religious, which attempt to completely destroy the Church of God, and that make earnest, importunate prayer a pressing duty.

It could be that the present all-out attack on the Church by Satan is to be reversed before long by the infinitely superior power of the Saviour. But whether the time for that be near, or further away, importunate prayer for it is, I believe, the duty of every follower of Christ. I mean, that whatever else Christ's people pray for, they should in great earnestness and very often pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Plead the honour of God's name, now so terribly besmirched by all that Satan has done. Plead the lostness of the millions of poor sinners. Plead the weakness and sadness of Christ's people; pray, "Wilt thou not revive us again; that Thy people may rejoice in Thee." Plead, "O come for our salvation; stir up Thy strength and might."

If you, members of Synod, accept that I have not exaggerated the situation in which the Church of God finds itself today, will you consider the relevance of the case to Isaiah's words, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." □



## Sir William Mackinnon of East Africa - 1823-93

*Rev. John Goldby, M.A.*

William Mackinnon, born in Oban and brought up by pious parents, joined the Free Church when it was formed in 1843 and loyally adhered all his life to the Biblical principles upon which it was founded. He set up in business, eventually established the British India Steam Navigation Company, and dedicated his wealth to promoting the cause of Christ. He was called by the British Government to administer its territory in what is now Kenya and Uganda. He therefore formed the Imperial British East Africa Company in 1881, which had very praiseworthy objectives. It was observed at the time that Sir William Mackinnon and his fellow directors were "full of zeal for the extension of Christ's kingdom".

### Part Three - The Closing Years

ONE day in 1994, as we entered the main door of the large St. Andrew's Church near the centre of Nairobi, we saw a prominent brass plaque bearing the following inscription: "This plaque was erected in September 1991 to commemorate the 100 years of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. The Missionaries from Scotland arrived at Kibwezi in 1891. To the Glory of God." This first mission at Kibwezi was started as a private endeavour by Sir William Mackinnon. The reason for his choosing private sponsorship for the mission rather than seeking Free Church sponsorship may have been his lack of confidence in the leadership of the Church.

During our visit we noted with sadness that the sermon and form of worship in that Presbyterian church in Nairobi did not bear the hallmarks of those precious scriptural doctrines which adorned, and were the foundation of, the worship of God in the better days of Presbyterianism. The scriptural rule for preaching is, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Death, eternity and the judgement seat of Christ are before us. What we need is the clear and heartfelt preaching of the Word of God with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Practical application of Biblical doctrine and powerful appeals to the unconverted, with suitable encouragements for believers, was the mode of preaching which God was pleased to bless in former times. The minister must not preach himself but Christ Jesus the Lord.

It was the loss of such scriptural preaching that men like Sir William Mackinnon feared would be a consequence of the introduction of the Declaratory Act in the Free Church in 1892. He was not mistaken. The watered-down gospel preached in this country and abroad today shows the ill effects of allowing a spirit of doctrinal compromise to come into the churches.

The missionaries referred to by the plaque were Dr. James Stewart from Lovedale and certain others. The mission, called the Scottish East Africa Mission, was conceived and paid for by Sir William Mackinnon and his friends out of their private resources. It had four objectives which were aimed



for by its religious, medical, educational and industrial activities. In September 1891, Dr. Stewart set out on the 200 mile journey to Kibwezi. He employed 273 porters to carry the necessary supplies and equipment for the new mission. The walk was very hot and the path took them through a thick jungle of thorns, cactus and mangoes before crossing the burning Taro Desert. On arrival, a 500 acre site was purchased from the local chief, and the mission village, with church, school and houses, was established. (Subsequent to the death of Sir William in 1893 the mission passed into the hands of the Church of Scotland and later developed into the Presbyterian Church of East Africa). One of Sir William's last acts was to commission the construction of 200 miles of road from the coast to Kibwezi.

The providential effects of Sir William's Christian generosity may be seen very clearly on a personal level in the case of a Free Presbyterian divinity student, Neil Cameron, later minister in Glasgow. Mr. Cameron records in his memoirs that as a young man in the 1880s he had been watching the departures of the Free Church from the Word of God and the doctrines and principles of the Reformation. To his deep grief he saw that the doctrine of the absolute infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible as the Word of God had become a thing of the past. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, that once highly prized and excellent statement of Bible doctrine, was repudiated as an antiquated document. He perceived that the majority of the ministers of the Church were either pleading for anti-scriptural teaching, or were conniving at serious departures from God's Word.

It was impressed upon Neil Cameron's mind that he would have to study for the ministry. The difficulties in the way were enormous. "The Alps," he said, "were like molehills in comparison with the mountains of unsurpassable difficulties which I saw standing in the way." Having received comfort and strength from the words of Psalm 90:17, he decided that should the Lord be pleased to open a door he would go to study and that he would continue as long as the door remained open. How it would open he could not see. "I spent day after day pleading with the Lord to give me a portion of His Word as my warrant for proceeding to such a very responsible and important work, but received no answer. At last I concluded that He did not mean that I should go... As I was walking up the side of the bank in which the cave was, it occurred to me that I should stand under a bush that was there, and pray this once for His guidance. I took off my hat, but I had hardly said a word when the scripture came to me as if it were spoken: 'And the Lord said to Moses, wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward' (Exodus 14:15)." This decided his mind. (*Memoir*, pp 26, 27).



In October 1886, he set off to begin his studies at Edinburgh University. "It was evident to me," he wrote, "that unless the Lord would provide for me, my purse would be empty by the end of January; but as the condition upon which I bound myself was that I would proceed while the Lord kept the door open, and that whenever it was closed I would stop, to go seemed to be my duty. So I went, feeling quite ignorant of how my way would be opened. My purse came so near its bottom that I had only what would pay the next amount due for my lodgings and one pound over, which I would require for my passage home. I made up my mind that the Lord was going to close the door, and that in accordance with the condition upon which I began to study I should stop." On the Friday of the same week that his money supply was exhausted he received the then generous amount of £12 from Sir William Mackinnon! "This sum he continued to give me all the time I was in Edinburgh. I was now enabled to proceed with my studies till the end of the session. I saw the hand of the Lord clearly in a way that I least expected." (*Memoir*, pp 30 and 33).

Sir William himself felt strongly about the downgrade in the Free Church. He was especially opposed to the introduction of the infamous Declaratory Act which vitiated the Free Church constitution. He foresaw its evil consequences. "So passionately did he believe in his version of orthodoxy, that he refused to accept a Declaratory Act passed in 1892 relaxing the stringency of subscription to the Confession, and he provided financial assistance to the small number of congregations mostly in the Highlands who rejected this 'dilution' of the faith." (*The Scotsman*, Obituary, June 23, 1893). He looked upon the subscribing of creeds in the same way as he looked upon subscribing a charter or making a business contract - as binding the subscriber to honourably adhere to it and interpret it in the sense originally intended.

His view of these departures was made clear on Friday, 11 September 1891, at Inverness, when he laid the memorial stone of the new church building of the Free North Congregation - a congregation which was formed in 1836 and had the Rev. Archibald Cook, later of Daviot, as its first minister. In his address at the ceremony Sir William took the opportunity of speaking against the innovations which Principal Rainy and others of the Free Church leadership were supporting. He spoke of the ancient landmarks being removed by these men who were indifferent to the sufferings to which their forefathers were subjected for the sake of the truth. He warned against tendencies toward Popery, ritualism and other deviations from the scriptural form of worship. There were clergymen in the Free Church, he said, who were turning the church into a political engine and not consulting the wishes of the people, and it was for this reason that he had joined the Laymen's League, formed in 1890,



with the worthy aim of preserving the Establishment principle and promoting the reunion of Scottish Presbyterians in accordance with the scriptural principles enshrined in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. We should note that the Rainy party sought union with other churches at the expense of scriptural principles'. Sir William concluded his address with a quotation from the metrical version of Psalm 74:6,7.

But all at once with axes now  
and hammers they go to,  
And down the carved work thereof  
they break, and quite undo.  
They fired have Thy sanctuary,  
and have defiled the same,  
By casting down unto the ground  
the place where dwelt Thy name.

Sir William took a much stronger stand against the Declaratory Act than the majority of the Constitutional Party who, unlike those who formed the Free Presbyterian Church in 1893, remained in the Free Church despite the passing of that Act. Drummond and Bulloch wrote of those who remained, "Deeply unhappy, they felt in their hearts that the Free Presbyterians had been right and that they had allowed themselves to remain in a Free Church which had slipped its moorings and was adrift in uncharted seas" (*The Church in Late Victorian Scotland*, p. 315). The Constitutionalists were not ready to withdraw their support from a church which was now constitutionally unsound, but Sir William was of a different mind, as his last will and testimony reveals.

In 1884 he had made a will leaving £10,000 for Free Church bursaries, £10,000 for Free Church Missions, and £20,000 for Free Church Missionaries. In April 1893 Sir William revoked his bequests to the Free Church by the following codicil: "I hereby revoke, cancel, and annul and withdraw, the bequests of all and every kind made by me in my trust, disposition and settlement, dated 21st April 1884, to or in favour of the Free Church of Scotland, or all or any of its schemes, whether for its missionary purposes or otherwise. I take this step because of what I consider is its departure in many ways from the constitution and principles of the Disruption Church of 1843, and last of all by its acceptance of what is now known as the Declaratory Act, which will in my opinion have a baneful effect on the Church's future usefulness." How true his opinion turned out to be.

Sir William Mackinnon, a kind, warm-hearted, faithful Christian man died on Thursday 22 June 1893, and so did not live to see the beginning of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, formed a month later in order to preserve



alive those Scriptural doctrines which he held so dear and that gospel which he himself had learned at his mother's knee. *The Times* correctly described him as "a perfect type of the old fashioned Scotch Presbyterian." Professor Galbraith says, "Mackinnon, was no 'Sunday Christian'; no shadow of scandal ever touched his name, no suggestion of impropriety or sharp practice. He acted in accordance with God's injunctions as revealed by the Bible and God's favour had been bestowed upon him". (*Mackinnon and East Africa*, page 31).

He was loved by his brethren as is shown by the remarks of James Hall, one of the subscribers to the British East Africa Company, and a long time associate of Sir William. In a letter to Sir William he laments his friend's absence, and adds, "Truly His Goodness and Mercy have followed us, and our hands still join. May we, when the journey here is ended, resume again and sit together in the house of the Lord forever." After Sir William's death in 1893 James Hall said, "My home in Kintyre is not the same to me since he went away, and as long as I am in the flesh I shall miss him and mourn him."

Concluded

---

## Which Church?

This article, prepared by the Outreach Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, is an answer to those who ask about the Church and also to commend the Church to those who may be interested in joining her fellowship. Free copies are available from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE (Tel. No. 0141 332 1760), as are free sample copies of the Church's magazines, *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and *The Young People's Magazine*. A booklist of new and secondhand books is available on request from the Bookroom, which stocks a large selection of Reformed literature.

**I**T has become common nowadays to hear people say, "What does it matter which Church one belongs to? They all worship the same God anyway. They just do it in different ways." The assertion falls easily from the lips, but what has the Bible to say on the question?

Let it be said, at the outset, that the most important thing is that one is a member of that Church which is made up of true believers - those who are born again, and whose sins have been forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 16: 16-18).

No particular Church on earth dare arrogate the claim to itself that it alone comprises the true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. To say, however, that it does not matter which particular Church one belongs to is not true. Scripture requires us to "prove all things", to "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). The choice of one's Church does matter. Plainly, a Church that does not,



for instance, proclaim a pure Gospel, or that practises what is inconsistent with the Word of God, does not deserve our support, for Christ requires the Church to teach "all things whatsoever I have commanded you".

Our concern, therefore, should be to support a Church that comes nearest to the New Testament pattern, which is the divine blueprint for the Church of Christ in this world. If we turn to the Bible, we shall find that certain fundamental principles are laid down for the conduct and government of the Church on earth. These principles are not optional - for us to take or leave as we please. They are stamped with the divine imperative. Therefore, we are bound to adopt them. The Church that most faithfully does this, comes nearest to the New Testament model; it is the Church most worthy of our allegiance and most likely to promote our spiritual welfare. If we do not take the Holy Scriptures as our standard, in this and other religious questions, we will go very far astray in our choice. Let it be remembered that God is not the author of confusion; He is the God of order, and His Word cannot sanction contradictory doctrines and systems.

The Word of God tells us that no flesh is to glory in God's presence; if any glory, he is to glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:29,31). What is enjoined here with respect to the individual Christian may with equal propriety be expected of a body of Christians. There is no room for boasting. No Church on earth is so sound as to be free from imperfection.

With the above preface in mind, we would submit that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland shows by her doctrine and practice that she is a rightful and respectable member of the universal Church of Christ. But such a generalisation may be made of other Churches. Therefore, we must be more definitive; we must enquire more particularly into the characteristics which constitute a faithful Christian Church. What are her attributes?

First, she acknowledges none but the Lord Jesus Christ as her Head and King. Then, she takes the Word of God as her doctrinal foundation, and shows a determination never to permit any human writings or traditions of men to encroach upon the unique place of Scripture, as the standard of her faith and practice. She preaches the Word and administers the sacraments; her government and discipline are according to the mind of Christ. What is of the world, or of man's invention, is not permitted to adulterate her worship. Of course, the more faithful she is to the voice of Christ, the purer she will be.

These are the basic principles for which our great Protestant Reformers, Calvin and Knox, contended, and it is in line with these principles that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland stands.



### **Our creed**

There have always been those who have objected to the use of creeds. Such objectors are loud and clamorous today. Under the pretence of piety and greater devotion to the Bible, there is widespread defection from the historic creeds of the Protestant Reformation. They are disowned because, as some allege, they are an infringement of the truth of God.

The proper object of a creed or confession, however, is simply to exhibit the truth of the Bible in a system, and to define and to defend the doctrines of Christianity in clear and precise language. So far from usurping the supreme place of Scripture, Bible-based confessions support and defend it; so far from obscuring the glory of Christ and His Cross, they define and reflect it. Those who call for their abandonment, it will be found, either are ignorant of their worth and usefulness, or wish to be free to hold loose views of Scripture, and nebulous opinions of the Christian Faith. A creedless Church is an absurdity.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland maintains a wholehearted allegiance to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* - a confession which, for scripturalness, comprehensiveness, and precise definition, has not been bettered. This document, the outcome of several years' labour, was formulated by some of the ablest and most learned Scottish and English divines of the 17th Century. It was approved by Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647. After "mature deliberation" it was judged to be "most orthodox and grounded on the Word of God". Thankful acknowledgement was made to God for His great mercy "in that so excellent a Confession of Faith" was agreed to in both Kingdoms, and it was looked upon as a "great strengthening of the Reformed religion against the enemies thereof". It was ratified by the Scottish Parliament in 1649, and again after the Revolution in 1690. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* has, therefore, the force of state law.

It is this Confession that forms the subordinate standard of our Church - subordinate, of course, to the Word of God. There was a time when every major Presbyterian Church worldwide subscribed this Confession. We believe that the Church in Scotland cannot prosper until she returns to the doctrine it presents and the practice it requires.

### **Distinctive features**

While the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland precisely coincides with the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession, there is a certain distinctiveness that colours her particular testimony. This distinctiveness does not lie in any addition to, or subtraction from the



Westminster standards. It resides rather in the Church's adherence to certain doctrines which other Churches have either entirely abandoned, or else in respect to which they hold defective views. These are:

*1. The Headship of Christ.*

He is the sole Head of the Church and has appointed Church officers to administer its affairs, distinct from the civil magistrate. These officers possess spiritual jurisdiction, coordinate with, and not subordinate to, the civil jurisdiction of the civil magistrate. But, further, we hold that Christ is not only King of saints, but also King of nations, "Lord of lords and King of kings" (see Jeremiah 10:7, Psalm 2, Revelation 17:14, etc.) and that the State, as such, is under obligation to acknowledge and support His cause and truth. This is what is called the Establishment Principle.

*2. The Biblical doctrine of the atonement as presented in the Westminster Confession of Faith.*

We believe that Christ died for the elect only, and we are opposed to the doctrine of universal redemption, as also salvation by man's good deeds. We stress the sovereignty of God in salvation, but we also emphasise man's responsibility. Hence, in line with Scripture, we proclaim Christ crucified for sinners, "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

*3. The doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture.*

We disown all theories of partial inspiration. We maintain that the Bible is the Word of God, inspired and infallible, from beginning to end.

*4. Purity of worship.*

We oppose the use of instrumental music in the public services of God's house, and at the same time maintain that the Book of Psalms is the divinely appointed manual of praise in the worship of God. Consequently, we do not employ uninspired hymns or paraphrases of Scripture in our public devotions.

*5. The exercise of firm discipline, in the spirit of the Gospel.*

This discipline is not lordly but ministerial; it is delegated by Christ to those who rule in the Church (Hebrews 13:7,17). To dispense with discipline is to dispense ultimately with the Gospel. Without it the purity of the Church is jeopardised.

All the above points have their basis in Scripture, and are enunciated in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

## **Church government**

It need hardly be said that our form of Church government is Presbyterian. While this aspect of the Church, we admit, is not essential to salvation, still, it



is a point of divine revelation, and therefore cannot be overlooked. How can the whole counsel of God be conserved if a scriptural government is not established and maintained? While we agree that the rigid detail of organisation which marked the Old Testament Church is not to be looked for in the New, which enjoys greater liberty, yet we do assert that the principal features of the new mode of government may be clearly discerned in the history of the early Christian Church. We are, therefore, to follow the pattern shown us in the New Testament.

An examination of the main principles which entered into the policy of the early Church of the apostles shows that the form of Church government was Presbyterian. The central feature of this system of ecclesiastical government is that it entrusts the rule of the Church under Christ to presbyters or elders in their corporate capacity.

The following six principles characterised the government of the early Christian Church (see *Witherow's Apostolic Church*):

1. The office-bearers were chosen by the people.
2. The office of bishop and elder was identical.
3. There was a plurality of elders in each Church.
4. Ordination was the act of a presbytery - that is, of a plurality of elders.
5. There was the privilege of appeal to the assembly of elders; and the power of government was exercised by them in their associate capacity.
6. The only Head of the Church was the Lord Jesus Christ.

A fair comparison of the three principal forms of Church government into which the Christian world falls - Prelacy, Independency, and Presbytery - shows that Prelacy conforms to none of the above principles; Independency to only three of them; while Presbytery conforms to all six. We conclude, therefore, that Presbytery, since it has the approbation of Scripture, is of divine right, and by the will and appointment of Jesus Christ.

### **The Church's message**

Immediately before His ascension to Glory, our Lord gave His apostles the Great Commission; to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all men everywhere. Ever since, this has been the Church's obligation. The Gospel which Christ would have us preach must be determined by the Word of God.

#### *1. It is a message, first, that deals with man's sin.*

The teaching that man is a sinner, that he is guilty before God, and that his sin, if not repented of, will bring him to everlasting ruin, is peculiarly unpalatable to the natural man. The Bible itself recognises this. But whatever we may think about it, it is a doctrine which is inscribed in the Word of God as with a pen of



iron. Our Lord said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). If man is not a sinner; if he is not in danger of God's punishment, there is no point to the Gospel. It is a Gospel of salvation through Christ Jesus. But salvation from what? Man's guilt and condemnation lie at the back of preaching. So, first, man's sin much be emphasised.

*2. It is a message which stresses man's inability to save himself.*

The currently popular gospel teaches that man can by his supposed good deeds win his way to the favour of God. This teaching is just the essence of Pharisaism - something against which Jesus thundered. No! Man cannot save himself. He is, as far as human power and ingenuity is concerned, beyond redemption. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21). "If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). The Bible teaches that man is spiritually dead, and that only by the power of God's Spirit can he be given life and brought to trust in Jesus. Unless man is convinced of his utter hopelessness, Christ Jesus is of no relevance to him. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" (Mark 2:17).

*3. The Gospel message, however, does not abandon man to his lostness.*

It comes to him where he is. It proclaims the remedy; it points out the way of deliverance. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). What does this mean? It means that God has provided for man's lostness. Christ Jesus, by His holy, sinless life, has met the claims of God's law and justice; by His death on the cross, He has endured the sinner's punishment. He died the innocent for the guilty. Hence, the way of acceptance with God is through Christ and Him crucified. The requirement of the Gospel, in order to our being saved, is "repentance toward God, and faith toward Jesus Christ." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

*4. The Gospel calls for a life of holiness.*

Those who, by the grace of God, respond to the Gospel call and who believe in Jesus, will manifest their trust in Him and their love to Him by a life of obedience to His Word. This is the proper order because it is the divine order. The sinner rests in Christ alone for salvation and acceptance with God: but this being done, the new life is expressed in holy, fruitful conduct, and effective witness-bearing. The motive is love to Christ. This response to Him, we call evangelical obedience. Multitudes who profess to believe in Jesus as their Saviour contradict their profession by living unchristian lives. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).



This adherence to the whole Word of God represents what the Free Presbyterian Church stands for. We do not believe in accommodating the Bible to appease the prejudices of men. We let Scripture speak for itself, and when it has spoken, we say: "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

We invite you to join in our worship. We hope you will be blessed among us, because we trust you will find what you cannot get everywhere: "The whole counsel of God."

---

## Obituary

### Miss May MacLeod, Gisborne, New Zealand

**A**FTER about six months of failing health, Miss May MacLeod died at Gisborne on 29th April 1995, at the age of eighty-five years. She was born at Fielding, New Zealand, on the 12th October 1910, a niece of the late Rev. D.N. MacLeod, Ullapool.

This church connection resulted in a warm welcome being given by her family to church deputies visiting New Zealand, some of whom preached in the MacLeod homestead at Fielding.

It is not known when exactly May was spiritually enlightened. Her early years were characterized by worldly living. It was not until she was well into her forties that she first started to make the long journey to Gisborne and appeared in the public means of grace.

When she went to Scotland, she counted it a privilege to be able to care for her aged uncle, the late Rev. D.N. MacLeod, in his old age, in the manse in Ullapool. It was during this period that she came to know many, if not all, of the ministers of the church as well as many of the members. Because she had an outgoing and friendly disposition, she made many Christian friends then. She became a member in full communion during her period of residence in Scotland at a communion season in Dingwall. Which portions of the truth were blessed to her soul is not known, but what is known is that she became a loyal Free Presbyterian whose delight was to attend the means of grace according to the divine direction: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is". Indeed, she delighted in all the means of grace, private as well as public, and also took great pleasure in entertaining like-minded Christians, who always received a hearty welcome from her.

May was such a cheerful and bright Christian that she knew little of the



doubts and fears with which other believers are only too often plagued: and yet that in itself became a temptation to her. When she mentioned it to her uncle, Mr MacLeod, in the manse in Ullapool, he said to her, "The gospel came to the Thessalonians in power and in much assurance."

She had an ardent desire that the gospel witness of the Church should flourish both in New Zealand and abroad. To that end she sent books and tapes to her relatives and others with the prayerful desire for spiritual blessings to be imparted.

During the last six months of her life her strength greatly failed her and she had to be cared for in a hospital first and then in a home for the aged. There she was faithfully visited by her friend, Mrs. Molly van Dorp, and other members of the congregation. She continued her practice of distributing the truth whenever she had the opportunity. The hospital chaplain would go away with a tape-recorded sermon, as did some of the nurses also. When approaching May's room one would often become aware at a distance that she was listening to a taped sermon by one of the ministers.

As she became weaker, she increasingly desired to depart from this vale of tears. It was often her expressed desire to depart and to be with the Lord. She said to her friend Molly a few days before her death, "I am a useless thing but I love the Lord."

One of the clear marks of that love to the Lord was her love for the public means of grace. It was her great delight to be in the house of prayer whenever that was possible. Consequently when she was not quite fit to be out she resorted to sitting in a room behind the pulpit where she could follow the service by means of the loudspeaker installed there. Her cheerful witness is much missed in the congregation. Another clear mark she had was her love of the brethren. This influenced her to remain in Gisborne rather than move to some more convenient place in her old age. She never regretted the decision as she greatly appreciated the company of Christian friends.

May other witnesses on the side of the truth be raised, and may there be the fulfilling of the promise: "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

(Rev.) *J. van Dorp*

---

## Book Review

**Whom Shall I Marry** by *Andrew Swanson*.

Banner of Truth booklet, 30 pages, £1.00. Available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

THIS booklet contains seven short sections which show that the believer is not to be unequally yoked in marriage with an unbeliever: he or she is to marry in



the Lord. The author, who is a Baptist missionary working in the Middle East, deals with the responsibility of entering upon married life and emphasises that marriage is a commitment for life; not an arrangement that can be conveniently dissolved if it doesn't work out. He also briefly shows the responsibility of rearing children in the fear of the Lord.

Brief testimonies are added for warning and show the misery of some professing Christians who have ventured upon marriage with unbelievers. The folly of a believer marrying one who is not converted, in the hope that through the marriage that person will be savingly changed, is clearly exposed.

The booklet closes with advice on seeking a marriage partner. This is the most useful section of the booklet.

Because of the brevity of this publication many things have had to be left out. However, we would not have omitted a warning of the danger of a Protestant marrying a Romanist. This danger is not addressed, though the danger of a Christian marrying the devotees of other religions is. "Our young people cannot be too frequently or too emphatically warned against it. What a terrible prospect to be instrumental in bringing children into this world *to be reared in the God-cursed atmosphere of anti-christian popery*," (*Young People's Magazine*, Vol. 21, No. 76). We may also add that it is a great mistake and a sin to leave a denomination that is sound in doctrine, worship and practice, for a degenerating denomination, to obtain a marriage partner.

The publication is marred by the use of unfamiliar and unsatisfactory versions of the Bible. The use of the term "Sunday" for the Lord's Day is also disappointing. However, we do believe that the book will be of use to godly young men and women. It has some very good pieces of advice, and some sound warnings, to guide them in the choice of a marriage partner.

Rev. R.M.

---

## African Missions News

### Zimbabwe

THE John Tallach School and Ingwenya Primary have reopened after the holidays. It was interesting to hear that there is a new Headmistress in the Primary School, a daughter of the late Rev. Alfred Mpofu, formerly a highly esteemed minister in Lobengula Church, Bulawayo, but who passed away at an early age. She is a married lady with a family and is a member of the church. We hope she will be a useful and happy member of staff.

The teachers in the John Tallach School were very sad to hear of the death



of a former pupil who left John Tallach School for further studies. He was a highly intelligent boy who came from a poor home. His fees were paid by an Anglo-American Company. He had been on holiday in Lupani near Mbuma when he contracted cerebral malaria and died after a brief illness. Norma MacLean was his Scripture teacher and took a special interest in him.

The Sabbath School classes are very large. Katie MacAulay has 320 pupils, Ishbel MacCuish has 120, and Marion Graham, Headmistress, has a large number of little ones at 2 p.m. when their mothers go to the afternoon service. Each week they learn a new Sindebele text, sing a few verses from various psalms and listen to a simple Bible lesson.

To quote a letter which came from Ingwenya recently: "Rev. A.B. Ndebele was in Bulawayo last Sabbath and he was really encouraged by a large attendance at Lobengula Church. Among the congregation are young men, chiefly ex-pupils from the John Tallach School, some of whom are in high administrative posts. They are regular in their attendance and Mr. Ndebele feels very strongly that, with the Lord's blessing, these young men and others also would benefit greatly from a course of Systematic Bible instruction. He himself is not able to attempt it having a number of congregations dependent on him especially since the deaths of two senior elders." Is anything too hard for the Lord?

One of the Nkai elders passed away recently. He was Sidney Siso from Matatshaneni. He had a slight stroke and was thought to be recovering, but he passed away shortly afterwards. He taught in a local school and all his family passed through the John Tallach School and did well.

The malaria season is about over. One of the Nursing Sisters at Mbuma writes, "It has been estimated that 1300 people died in Zimbabwe from malaria during the last two months. Five and a half thousand cases passed through Mbuma Hospital during April alone. Providentially, two fully trained nurses were sent from Nkai Government Hospital thirty miles from Mbuma. This was a great help. We do acknowledge the Lord's great kindness in giving us daily strength and health to cope". It is a great help and pleasure for the staff to have Peta van de Ridder with them even for a short period.

## **Kenya**

When one reads in the June magazine of the various activities at Sengera, of the teaching and preaching and administrative work of Mr. Ian MacLean, one cannot but feel that help is urgently required. Likewise the medical work is most demanding. The help being given by Dr. Tallach during his present visit, even if only for a short period, is greatly appreciated, especially as there is still much malaria there.



As well as now completing the two semi-detached nurses' houses, Mr MacLean is supervising the building of two other houses. One is for Mr Goldby and his family and the other for Dr. De Jong and his family. The staff are pleased that the compound now has electricity from the national grid.

It is good to hear that Rev. J. Goldby is to go soon as a missionary to Kenya, God willing, accompanied by his wife and children. *J.N.*

---

## Eastern Europe Mission News

### Concern over decreased giving to the Eastern Europe Fund

THE Eastern Europe Mission Fund had a deficit of more than £1000 at the end of 1995, and during this year the deficit has increased considerably. This is not due to an increase of our activities in Eastern Europe but to a decrease in donations. In 1994 the income was £15,794; and in 1995 it was £9,284.

We regularly visit Eastern Europe, especially the Ukraine, twice each year. As is well known, we carry Bibles, reformed literature and various goods, and distribute them to needy people. It would be a loss to the Church if this work ceased because of lack of funds. While there will always be an open door for giving humanitarian aid to people all over the world, there is not always an open door for spreading the Word of God. Indeed, it is not so long ago that the former Soviet Union had its doors closed fast to the entry of the Scriptures. Those who dared to breach that barrier were in danger of being severely punished. At the borders of Soviet countries, in the early days of our trying to bring the Word of God to Eastern Europe, we were asked in connection with the books we carried, "Are you in possession of pornographic literature or Bibles?" How dreadful that the Word of God was classed with vile pornography. But that is how it was, and it shows something of the enmity of man to the Word of God. Thankfully the Scriptures can now be freely taken to, and distributed in, these lands. The door is open!

True, there are many calls to our people to support the work of the gospel. This is yet another call. People in our church and beyond have wonderfully responded in the past so that our work in Eastern Europe has been brought to its present strength. I trust we will never look back, but continue to press on with the good work as God enables us and provides for us.



We hope, God willing, to make our usual visit to the Ukraine in autumn, and we ask once again for your support. May we ever have a heart to distribute the Word of God to those who were denied it in the past. Only the Scriptures, in setting forth Christ as the Saviour of sinners, will bring them eternal life and happiness. Spreading the Word abroad is a worthy and obligatory work for every one of us.

### **Literature in the Russian language**

It will interest those who have the opportunity to post religious literature to Eastern Europe to know that our Church has now translated a number of items into Russian. First, there is the *Shorter Catechism* in which we have included the proof texts in full, as well as Rev. Roderick Lawson's helpful divisions (though not his comments). The *Shorter Catechism*, being thoroughly biblical and an excellent and valuable summary of Christian doctrine, is most useful for sending along with a Bible to anyone in the Former Soviet Union.

We have also translated the Rev. John Willison's *Mother's Catechism*: "The simple truths of the Bible for young children - in question and answer form". We have changed the title to *Children's Catechism*; a title more suited to the contents and for distribution purposes.

Two leaflets about Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses have been translated. These are: *Mormons - Their Lies Exposed and Their Doom Foretold* and *Jehovah's Witnesses - Their Lies Exposed*. These thorough exposures by the late Rev. Willaim MacLean, under the pseudonym of Ergatees, are published in English by the Westminster Standard, New Zealand. One of our Outreach Committee's gospel tracts, *The Unknown God*, was also translated and has been well received.

I may also add that *The Westminster Confession of Faith* has been translated into Russian by Reformation Christian Ministries, U.S.A., and is obtainable from Dr. Stephen Westcott, 39 Falmouth Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8PX. We are assured that the translation is faithful to the text of the *Confession*. This is a most valuable contribution to the promoting of sound teaching in the Former Soviet Union.

We hope, God willing, to translate more gospel tracts and other literature. The items of literature already translated by our Church and mentioned above may be obtained from The Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE in Glasgow, which will give prices on enquiry.

Rev. D.A. Ross



## Protestant View

### Luther and present-day reconciliation with Rome

THIS year marks the five hundredth centenary of the death of Martin Luther. It is therefore appropriate to recall the tremendous achievements of the Reformer, by the grace of God, in awakening so much of Western Europe to the spiritual freedoms which come when biblical Christianity is faithfully presented. In particular, it was Luther's great emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith alone which broke in pieces for many the spiritual chains under which they had been bound, bringing them out into the clear light of gospel truth.

But such achievements mean little within the greater part of today's Church. So, with an eye to the Pope's visit to Germany last month, leaders of the German Evangelical Church (present-day Lutherans) appealed to him to make "a gesture of ecumenical goodwill" by visiting, however briefly, a town of significance to German Protestantism. In particular, they hoped he might visit the Wartburg, the castle where Luther was taken for his protection when he was kidnapped by some of his supporters after the Diet of Worms.

In fact the Pope's schedule did not extend beyond Berlin, yet it shows how far modern Lutherans have drifted from the Reformer's position when they wish to have any recognition from the Pope. But who can believe that Luther himself would have welcomed any such recognition by the head of a body which he condemned so thoroughly?

There was also a suggestion in the German magazine *Focus*, that the Pope would revoke the excommunication passed on Luther by a papal bull in 1520. This was denied by a Vatican spokesman, who was quoted however as saying that the Pope was working for the reconciliation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions in a spirit of ecumenism in the run-up to the millennium.

Rome's idea of reconciliation is very much one-sided; it is entirely on Rome's terms. In any case, the Protestantism of those who engage in dialogue with Rome is already very questionable. But there was no question about Luther's Protestantism. In reacting to the bull of excommunication he described the Pope as "an antichrist, an adversary, an oppressor of Holy Scripture, who dares to set his own words in opposition to the Word of God". The decisions of the Council of Trent placed the Papacy even more firmly in opposition to the Word of God. Nothing has happened since then to reverse that.

Our responsibility is to proclaim the whole Word of God, and to pray for the destruction of Antichrist and the deliverance of those who are deceived by its doctrines - and to pray also that nominal Protestants would submit to the whole counsel of God.

KDM



## Notes and Comments

### **Increasing violence — decreasing respect for life**

OVERALL crime figures in the UK are down. In Strathclyde they have fallen for four successive years. This is a welcome development, but it is disturbing to find that crimes of violence continue on an upward trend, 10% higher in 1995 in Strathclyde than in the previous year. And the increase in the murder rate was even greater.

This reflects the decreasing respect for human life which confronts us at almost every turn. When large numbers of abortions take place every year and when support is increasing, even within the medical profession, for the killing of the terminally ill - so-called euthanasia (literally, but falsely, a good death) it need not surprise us that the number of murders continues to increase.

Because to take away human life unlawfully is a unique crime, one is also disturbed at Government proposals to introduce a life sentence for repeated crimes of violence. It may indeed be necessary to increase sentences for particular crimes, but in the regrettable absence of the scriptural punishment for murder, that is, the death penalty, the life sentence should be reserved for murder, to indicate that murder deserves a specially severe punishment. The fact that the term life sentence is a misnomer - it almost always means something very much less than life - already reduces the distinction between murder and other crimes.

It is long past time that the UK and other nations recognised the importance of recovering a biblical outlook on life and death. KDM

### **No-hope addicts in the “no-hope nineties”**

IT is said sometimes that while the nation has greatly declined morally, it has not sunk to the depths of decadence which began in, say, the 1660s. Be that as it may, there is a section of the rising generation which is living in the squalor, hopelessness and wretchedness of a bygone age.

The Chief Constable of West Yorkshire, who is also a national spokesman on drug abuse, says that numerous young people, because of their drug abuse, are living in what he calls the “no-hope nineties”, and in the “Dickensian conditions” of poverty, crime and degradation associated with Victorian times. Many of them, he said, are taking heroin as their first drug, and the number of addicts is increasing. “They live in misery,” he continued. “They live, many of them, in filth. They live in a dream, in a world that is perhaps unacceptable and unimaginable to us, a world of petty crime, of prostitution, of violence, of fear, of threats, of no hope.”



While something can be done in a very limited measure to relieve the misery of some of these poor young people and lead them back to normality, there is nothing that will help and heal them so much as the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation". We believe that the day will come, and perhaps sooner rather than later, when the Lord will visit our land in mercy and gather multitudes, including the abandoned wrecks of society, to follow and serve Him. For this we are to pray and work. Previous awakenings and revivals have resulted in numerous hopeless and helpless misfits being transformed and becoming holy, happy and useful members of their community. Is anything too hard for the Lord? "It is nothing with thee to help," King Asa said to God. May we go to the throne of grace in the same trusting spirit.

---

## Church Information

### Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

NORTHERN: At Dingwall on Tuesday, 8th October, at 2.00 pm.

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 12th November, at 6.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 3rd September, at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Staffin on Tuesday, 9th July, at 7.00 pm.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 3rd September, at 1.00 pm.

ZIMBABWE: At Bulawayo on Tuesday, 8th October at 11 am.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND: At Auckland on Friday, 24th January, 1997, at 2.30 pm.

### Synod news

PENDING the publication of the Report of the last meeting of Synod, we may mention that the new Moderator of Synod is Rev. Dr. James R. Tallach. At the time of writing he is visiting our Mission in Kenya for a month to give urgently needed help there.

The Synod released Rev. John Goldby from his pastoral charge of Farr, Tomatin and Stratherrick so that he may be appointed as a missionary on our Mission in Kenya.

Mr A. M. MacPherson, elder in the Perth, Dundee and Stirling Congregation, has been appointed as a full-time home missionary to work in the Southern Presbytery.



## Acknowledgements of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

*Bookroom Fund:* J.L.R., £19.85.

*Foreign Mission Fund:* Portree Sabbath School, £300, for Zimbabwe; Anon, Canada, \$100, for where needed; Gift Aid donor, £800 for Kenya.

*Welfare Of Youth Fund:* Youth Conference fees, £756, per Rev N.M.R.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

**Aberdeen:** *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £40, per envelope in collection plate marked "For pulpit supply".

**Greenock:** *Congregational Fund:* Mrs. I. Church, £100, in memory of a loving husband.

**Kyle-Plockton:** Correction in May issue: "Where most needed: Anon, Portree, £250, per Rev. D.A. Ross", should read, "per Rev. F. MacDonald".

**Laide:** *Congregational Fund:* Anon, £40, per collection plate; Friend, Aultbea, £20; £20; £20; £10; £20; all per Rev. D.A.R. B.M., £10, per C.R. R.S., Toronto, £20, in memory of a dear mother, per Rev. D.A.R. *Council Tax:* Friend, Laide, £100, per collection plate. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Residents of Isle View Home, £11.50; £12.50; £10.50; £10; £15.50; all per Rev. D.A.R. Friend, Gairloch, £50; £100; £20; £20; all per Rev. D.A.R. Friend, Aultbea, £10; £40; both per Rev. D.A.R. Friend, Isle of Lewis, £50; Friend, Ullapool, £10; Friend, Portree, £20; D.J. and E.M.P., £5; all per Rev. D.A.R. Friend Tolsta, £40; £20; Friend, Stornoway, £20; all per C.R. Anon £40, per envelope in collection plate. D.McK., £40; Anon £100; Friend, £1; Friend, Laide, £10; £60; all per Rev. D.A.R. Mr. & Mrs. D. McL., £100 per C.R. Anon, £20, per envelope in collection plate. De Yonger, £40, per C. McLeod. Church of England Continuing, £70, per A.R. Price. *Bibles for Eastern Europe:* Friend, Inverness, £50, per Ullapool collection plate. R. Kershaw, £40, per Rev. D.A.R.

**Ness:** *Congregational Fund:* Friend, Stornoway, £10; Anon, in plate, £50; Envelope in plate £60; Mr. & Mrs. A. Graham, £50; Anon in plate, £10; Anon in Plate, £10; Friend, Breasclete, £10, per N.T; A friend, £10, for where most needed, per M.G.; Mourner in Sion, £10, per M.F.

**North Harris:** *Sustentation Fund:* Anon £7.00; Friend, Tarbert, £10, both per Rev. R.McL. *Bus Fund,* R.M.L., Cluer, £4.00, envelope in plate. *Manse repairs,* Friend, Kyles, £10, per Rev. R.McL. *For where most needed for Church use,* On behalf of the late Mrs. Mary Morrison, Tarbert, £200, envelope in plate; Friend Stornoway, £10, per Rev R.McL. *Home Mission,* Friend, Stockinish, £10, per Rev. R.McL. *Communion Expenses,* Friend, Stockinish, £10; Friend, Stockinish, £10; Friend, Stockinish, £10; Friend, Stockinish, £10; Friends, Stockinish, £10; all per Rev. R. McL.

**Raasay:** *Foreign Mission,* Anon, £10; *Omorembe Health Centre,* Anon, £25; *Car Fund,* Mrs. J. Allan, £10; all per Rev. J.R. Tallach. (Correction: In May issue, "M. Duncan, £50" should read "M. Duncan, £5").

**Shieldaig:** *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £10, £10, £10; *Where most needed:* Anon, £10.