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The Fellowship Meeting

FEW knew and loved the godly men of the Highlands of Scotland last century as well as Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall. Although he was a giant in grace and had a powerful intellect, he was ever ready to acknowledge his indebtedness to "the men". He stated, "Valuable was the help and cheering the encouragement... always received from their prayers, their counsels, and their labours." (*The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, 4th ed., p. 95).

One of "the men" of whom he spoke as a helper was godly Colin Forsyth of Killearnan. He gave good advice to young John Kennedy when he was under conviction of sin. This led to his having "a faith which, though weak in degree, was yet saving in its nature." (*Life of John Kennedy, D.D.*, Alex. Auld, pp. 7, 8). From that time his heart was bonded to Colin Forsyth, and to others like him with whom he became well acquainted in the north.

Little wonder then that Dr Kennedy was a sympathetic and able defender of "the men" when they were unjustly criticised because of their careful walk and faithful following of the Saviour, or for their stating the distinction between genuine godliness and false religion. This they did especially at the fellowship meeting on the Friday of a communion season.

At the fellowship meeting, said Dr Kennedy, "the minister presides, and, after prayer, praise, and the reading of a portion of Scripture, he calls on anyone who is anxious to propose a question to the meeting, to do so. This call is responded to by some man who rises, mentions a passage of Scripture describing some feature of Christian character, and expresses his desire to ascertain the marks of those whom the passage describes, and the various respects in which they differ from merely nominal Christians. The scope of the passage is then opened up by the minister, and the exact import of the question founded upon it is explained. He then calls by name, successively, such as are of repute for piety, experience, and gifts, to 'speak to the question'. One after another rises, as he is called, states briefly his view of the question, and, without attempting to expound the Scripture, or to deliver an exhortation, or venturing to parade his own experience, speaks from the heart

what he has felt, and feared, and enjoyed under the power of the truth. Thereafter the minister sums up all that has been said, correcting, confirming, and expanding, as may be necessary, and makes a practical improvement of the whole. The person who proposed the question is then usually called to engage in prayer, and, with praise and the benediction, the meeting is closed." (*The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, pp. 95, 96.)

How did the fellowship meeting originate? "According to Dr Kennedy's testimony," says Rev Donald Beaton, "exercised believers used to meet in private houses, and for their mutual edification discussed their religious experiences. In this way the Fellowship Meetings began, and in order to have them under the control of the ministry it was ultimately decided that they should have a place in the religious exercises of the Church, and especially on the Friday of the Communion, when they would be presided over by the minister." (*The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 43, No. 5, p. 201). We have heard it stated also that godly Highland soldiers in the Protestant army of King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, in the 1630's used to meet together for Christian fellowship, basing their discussion on a text of Scripture. When they returned to the Highlands they continued this exercise which they had found to be so beneficial. Rev D. Beaton also notes that reference was made in the Aberdeen Assembly (1640) to "certain private fellowship meetings which had originated during the persecution in Ireland and were continued in Scotland by those who fled to this country for refuge."

During the last century the fellowship meeting was widely observed in the Highlands. It was not in place of, but complimented, the preaching of the Word, and was intended as a help for believers. Dr Kennedy says, "The great object of the fellowship meeting was the mutual comfort and edification of believers, with special reference to the cases of such as were exercised with fears as to their interest in Christ." (*The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, p. 95). "Blessed indeed to many souls have these 'Friday meetings' been," said Dr Kennedy. Some ministers regarded the meetings as a threat, but Dr Kennedy thought otherwise. "Never was a godly minister's office less endangered when he was countenancing and directing their service in 'speaking to the question', and often has the time thus spent by him been to his own soul a seson of refreshing." (*The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, pp 125 and 97). To this day there are those who, while adhering to the primacy of the preaching of the Word can testify to the benefit they have received, and do receive, from the fellowship meeting. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name," Malachi 3:16. ■

The Son of Man is Come to Save the Lost

An Address

by the late *Rev James MacLeod* of Greenock ¹

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. (Matthew 18:11).

CHRIST came to seek and to save that which was lost. The lostness of man is on account of the fall of our first parents. Man is lost therefore in his state before God, lost in his nature, lost in all the faculties of his soul, and lost in all the members of his body. Man is lost in his whole person, and if Christ will not come in His infinite condescension and love to rescue the lost, they will be lost not only in time but also in eternity.

Man thinks that he is not lost as long as he is in time in this world. This is a very erroneous and unscriptural idea. When the sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit he finds himself there and then to be utterly and absolutely lost. He finds himself lost in his soul and in all his actions. He finds that he cannot think one right thought of himself and that he is under the wrath and curse of God; that he is, as the Catechism says, "...liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself and to the pains of hell for ever."

Divine power alone can convince a man of his lost state. Divine power can indeed do this glorious work in the soul of man. We have a clear instance of the exercise of this power in raising Lazarus from the dead. The same glorious power that raised Lazarus from the dead can raise man out of his spiritual grave. For a man to think that he can quicken himself out of his lost state is the greatest conceivable hallucination and deception, and one that is so common. Whatever he may read to the contrary, whatever he may hear, whatever he himself may think, no other power can call lost man out of a state of spiritual death but the creative power of the Holy Ghost.

When the sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit he finds what he never found before — what he did not know before — that he is lost. He may have tried previously to reconcile himself to God against whom he has sinned, but now the holy, divine law of God comes in its glorious, divine light and power to his soul, convicting him, and convincing him that he is under God's wrath and curse. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The Rev James MacLeod (1883 - 1962), was the minister of the Free Presbyterian congregation in Glendale, Skye, from 1920 until 1932, and of Greenock from 1932 until his death.

The sinner must realise that he cannot reconcile himself to God. He must realise his utter inability to meet the claims of divine law and justice, and that the wrath of God is upon him. He must experience that his works are utterly futile to reconcile him to God. He must be cut away from the covenant of works. Man will never let go his hold on a broken covenant until the law of God enters his conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit. We read of some that made great pretensions to religion: that their "navel was not cut", that is, they were not separated from a covenant of works. They never realised that, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." The apostle said, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Was he not dead in trespasses and sins before this? Yes! but he did not know then that he was dead. He is now assured of it, and that there is no place suitable for him but the blackness of darkness forever. A man will not realise that he is lost until God in his infinite love, mercy, and condescension, and in His eternal kindness, comes to him through the Son of man.

Now, Christ here calls Himself the Son of man — one that can mediate between lost man and the infinite, holy God. But we are not to assume for one moment that the Son of man is not the eternal God; the "I am that I am", coequal with the Father in His person, in His nature, and in all the attributes of His glory. This One, who is both the Son of man and the Son of God, can now through His mediatorial offices and by His Spirit, draw near to the lost sinner. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the lost sinner to see who Christ is, and to believe that the Son of man is the Son of God, and that the Son of God is the Son of man who is come to save the lost.

Those who deny the deity and virgin birth of Christ, and His physical resurrection from the dead, have no more way of access to God or escape from a lost eternity than the fallen angels that lost their first estate and are lost forever. Man is absolutely lost: and he will be lost forever if Christ will not come to his rescue. There is no one who is capable, or ever will be capable, to stand as mediator between us, poor, lost, ruined sinners, and the eternal God against whom we have sinned, but the Son of man, who is the eternal Son of God in our own nature. Only He is able, and He is most willing, to stand between us lost sinners and the holy God.

The Son of man came to redeem the lost from the curse of God's holy law. He took our nature in order that in our nature He would exalt the law of God. It was absolutely necessary that Christ's righteousness should be commensurate with all the claims of law and justice, and therefore it was necessary, in the infinite wisdom of God, that Christ should be "conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of

her, yet without sin". Now, this is the Son of man who is before us in the text. He is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, having "a true body and a reasonable soul" united to His own divine person. Therefore He is a suitable redeemer, a glorious redeemer, a loving redeemer. Through Him, lost sinners can be saved and justified freely by divine grace.

Now, a sinner can never be justified in the sight of God, according to the justice of God, unless divine pardon is given him, and the righteousness of Christ is applied to his soul. Only then is the lost sinner saved by Christ, in Christ, through Christ and for Christ's sake. Christ is now the Mediator to that sinner. The sinner ceases to seek righteousness in himself. His righteousness now is absolutely in the person and work of the glorious Son of God in our nature, and he is resting upon the "sure foundation" laid in Sion. Christ now becomes the Rock of Ages for him. The saved sinner has a place where he can stand before God; a place in which he finds not only peace with God, but love and mercy, holiness, justice, righteousness and truth from the very bosom of the Eternal.

Also, like the Ethiopian eunuch, he goes on his way rejoicing. He is rejoicing in this fact revealed to him by the Holy Spirit: that God is forever glorified in his salvation. This is what he could not understand before; he could not see how God could be glorified in pardoning him his sin. He could not see that it would be even right on the part of God to do it. But when the Son of man was revealed to him, he saw that He endured the wrath and curse and death that were due to him. He sees that he cannot be too thankful for what Christ did for him, and therefore Christ is made very precious to him. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious". He is so precious to believers that it is utterly impossible for them to describe adequately the wonders that they see in the holy, glorious, divine person of whom Paul said, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." They are now debtors to free and sovereign grace; to the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Furthermore, Christ is now their life and their all. Apart from Christ they have no life, they have no hope, they have no light, they have nothing. They now draw their life from Christ. Like the branch drawing its natural life from the parent tree, so the believer now draws his life from Christ as the only source of his life. Apart from Christ there is no life at all; none whatever.

What now about the doctrine that is so common in this generation, and among arminians, modernists and others: that those who are united to the Son of man are not under the law because they are under grace? That's a false doctrine! The law of God, from the First Commandment to the last, is the perfect rule of life to the believer in his walk in the world. He respects the

Fourth Commandment, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," as he does the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." He cannot tolerate idolatry in any form. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." His objective now in life is to seek the glory of God by obedience to His will. His objective is also to have communion and fellowship with God in Christ. He knows that he cannot glorify Christ without the enabling of the Holy Ghost. He is now indebted as never before to the Holy Ghost, in order that he may magnify Christ in his soul and in his life. Christ is so dear to him that he has a terrible fear that he might at any moment, any where and under any circumstances, do something that might grieve the Spirit of the Lord from him. Therefore his prayer is, "Hold up my goings."

Also, the sinner saved by grace is realising now his need of the blood of the Son of man. Through the blood of the Son of man he was reconciled to God. The peace of God entered into his soul through the precious blood of Jesus. By the blood his conscience was purged from dead works to serve the living God. Can he now do without the blood of Christ? No! He must have the blood of Christ. The preaching that is destitute of the blood of Christ is no preaching to him. The ordinances of the New Testament, apart from the blood of Christ, are no ordinances to him. The water in baptism represents to him the blood of Christ which cleanses from sin. In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, the bread and wine are to him seals and symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus. This is what makes these ordinances of the New Testament so precious to him, so dear to him, so near to his heart: that they signify to him the blood of the Son of man.

The longer the child of God is left in the world, the more precious the gospel and the other ordinances are to him. Suppose the apostles or martyrs were yet in the world - they would have no other gospel but this gospel. The gospel they had is the gospel we have. And let us be thankful to God for this glorious gospel which reveals the Son of man who saves the lost, to the glory of God; the gospel that can save man from the ruin, the curse, the death and the hell that he has brought upon himself.

Can the saved sinner now go and worship in a place of idolatry with its pictures, its images, its burnings and its holy water? No he cannot! He is done with idolatry forever. "What have I to do any more with idols?" "What have I to do with Romanism and modernism?" He is now walking, not in the sparks of his own kindling or in the sparks of human learning, but in the light of God's Word. To him, the impress of heaven and of God's Spirit is on the whole Bible. It is not a dead book but a living book, because Christ is the

living Saviour revealed in it. He sees Christ in the Book of Genesis, in the five Books of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, and right on to the book of Revelation. There he meets with Christ.

Sinners saved by the Son of man do not believe in what men call the linear reign of Christ in the world: that Christ is to come in person to reign in this world for a thousand years. The believer gives no place to such utter nonsense because there is no warrant for it in the Word of God. He is assured that the Son of man is to come again on the great day of judgement "with His mighty angels" and "in the glory of His Father", to take vengeance on them who remained disobedient to the gospel of His free and sovereign grace. They are sure that He is coming on the great day of judgement.

Now, this is the time God is giving to us, so marvellously, so mercifully, that we may prepare for eternity by faith in the Son of man, who came to save the lost. By the grace of God, we are to be prepared to leave this tabernacle of clay behind until the Son of man will come again on the great day of judgement. And we believe that when He will come on that great day, the bodies of believers will be resurrected as glorious bodies, as surely as their souls were resurrected from spiritual death in time, and that they will enter, body and soul gloriously reunited, into eternal glory.

Notes of a Fellowship Meeting at Dingwall Communion in February 1962

Taken down by a listener

AT the above meeting in Dingwall, on Friday, 2nd February, 1962, the verse proposed was Matthew 28:5, "And the angel answered and said unto the women, 'Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified'." The proposer evidently asked the speakers to give marks of those who are truly seeking Jesus, as opposed to those who profess to seek Him but have no gracious desire for Him. The presiding minister, the late Rev. William MacLean, Ness, after making some explanatory remarks about the verse, called on several of the professing men present to speak. What follows is the edited version of some notes of the extemporaneous comments of some of the speakers.

Rev. William MacLean, Ness. " 'And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified'. These words were spoken to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who went forth to anoint the body of their Lord. We see that they were afraid and that their faith was tried and exercised by many things — by the stone having to be rolled away, 'for it was very great'; by their fear of the Roman soldiers on

guard around the grave; by the darkness of the morning; and by their own weakness. Still, they went forth. The uppermost question in their minds was, 'Who shall roll us away the stone?' The stone, they feared, came between them and this service which they desired to do for the Lord: to anoint His body with the spices which they had prepared.

"This is still true of those who fear the Lord. They have spices, the graces of the Holy Spirit, and they have this exercise in connection with their graces: that they seek to show their thankfulness to the Lord. This is a fruit of godly fear. 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His gifts to me?' These women showed that they had the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom; filial, not slavish fear, love to God and to all His commandments. 'Then shall I not be shamed when I Thy precepts all respect.' While Christ was in the world, these women ministered to Him of their substance, but now they met with this great trial of their faith and hope, in the death of Him who was their hope. He was crucified by wicked men and the verdict of condemnation was sealed by the highest authorities in church and state.

"Great as this trial was to these gracious women, yet it was so that the trial of their faith 'being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.' The two disciples on their way to Emmaus proved their love and devotion to the Lord, yet did not understand the necessity for His death. They thought that He was to set up a temporal kingdom, until He came and opened up to them the truth that His coming and dying was to break a yoke greater than that of the Romans, and only by His obedience unto death could sinners be delivered, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?'

"Those godly women had been tried by the death of Christ, and now were tried in connection with service to Him. Yet they desired to anoint His body. The stone lay between them and the fulfilling of their desire. Satan and unbelief said that they never would be able to roll the stone away. They would be molested by the Roman soldiers; it were better to remain at home. Yet they went forth.

"These same evil powers — Satan and unbelief — still set great mountains in the way of the Lord's people when they seek to do Him service. Great as the trial was, the women did not say, 'This is an hard saying; who can hear it?' They did not go back in the day of trial. The more grace is tried, the more it cleaves to the Lord. 'To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'

"All those in whom are the graces of the Holy Spirit, believe that only in

the path of obedience will they find encouragement, whatever great stones may be in the way. The two Marys got what Job got in his day of trial, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' In going forward, they received this assurance, that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth. They got a token for good, that they had the fear of God in their hearts. 'O all ye that do seek the Lord, your hearts shall ever live.' The stone was rolled away.

'God doth the counsel bring to nought
Which heathen folk do take;
And what the people do devise
of none effect doth make.'

The sealing of the stone could not thwart the counsel of the Lord, for His counsel and purpose shall stand. An angel rolled away the stone, and in going forward to duty the women got this encouragement, 'Fear not ye: I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.'

"The children of Israel saw the salvation of the Lord at the Red Sea. 'Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which He will shew to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever.' They saw the manifesting of God's power and they sang a song of deliverance on the other side of the Red Sea. 'Fear not ye: I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified'."

Finlay Beaton, Inverness. "Marks are asked of those who seek Jesus who was crucified, but is now risen, as distinguished from those who profess to seek Jesus, but do not. They that delight in the place in which God's honour dwells have a right to say that they seek Jesus, even if they are afraid. No one else knows where His honour dwells. They came to know it because drawn by Christ crucified. They saw His glory — the glory of Him who was dead, and is alive for evermore. Like the women at the grave, the Lord's people have fears. Their faith may be almost hidden, but it works by love, and where their treasure is, there will their heart be also. What they are at heart must come out. Their greatest desire is to see Jesus.

"They seek to walk in the way of His commandments, because they beheld His glory. Nothing is so offensive to the natural man as the crucified Redeemer. These people may have the question thrust at them, 'Many people walk as orderly as you, and yet they do not profess faith in Christ, and what have you to say to that?' It is good that others conduct themselves in an orderly way, and may they meet the Lord there; but the Lord has met with His people, and they know it although they may fear that it is not the right faith they have. The older they grow, the more they see that the good work will be tested, and they seek to make their calling and election sure.

"They are a searching people who dig deep in the Scriptures, and they are the only people who do that. It is not just curiosity that makes them search the Scriptures. They love to hear the Gospel preached. 'Come ye into His courts, and bring an offering with you.'

"What offering? Oh, a broken spirit and a contrite heart. If only they could. This is contrary to nature. The natural man must bring something, but not a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Those who seek Jesus are afraid that though they have a sore heart, it does not come from a truly contrite spirit. They desire, with trembling, that the Lord would search and try their ways, for they know that He will search and try His people and their work.

"They tremble at the word of God. Why? Because they know that God is as holy as well as a gracious God. He draws them out to Himself as He is in Christ. The world does not understand or care for God in Christ. The Lord's people desire to know truly what it is to be reconciled to God. 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.' They betray that they are being taught by calling on His name. They cannot do without prayer, and yet they pray that their prayers be pardoned. They desire to be taught to pray. They often feel more guilty coming off their knees than when they knelt in prayer, and yet they must pray. Like the Greeks their cry is, 'We would see Jesus.' Though they have fears that their spots are not the spots of His children, they expect the King of Glory to meet with them."

Robert Watt, Inverness. "It was the angel who said to the women, 'Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus. They were afraid but they also feared the Lord, because it is written,

'The angel of the Lord encamps,
And round encompasseth
All those about that do Him fear,
And them delivereth.'

Those that seek Jesus will find Jesus, and a mark on them is that they seek in hope of finding. It is not a false hope, or a hope set on anything apart from the word of God.

"They are also a people who know well Satan's devices. He would desire to lead them anywhere but to the Lord.

"They came to know well that they must be born again. If not born of the Holy Spirit they have nothing. When they look back on their past life they wonder at the mercy of God to them — hell-deserving sinners who were on the way to a lost eternity. They know it was the power of the Holy Spirit that led them to seek Jesus. When they found Jesus in a day of mercy, they were not pleased with themselves, but with Jesus.

“Jesus filled their souls with His love. ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love.’ When Christ revealed Himself to His people they got a view of His loveliness and they could sing of the Lord’s mercy in that day. It was a special day for them. They are different from the world now, though they still find in themselves something that causes them to fear. They fear with a gracious fear because they love and yet they are afraid because they do not love enough. The Lord’s people are a strange mixture — often mourning over the depravity they find within.

“Often at communion seasons they meet with Christ who died in their room and stead, a propitiation for the sins of His people. They expect something from the mercy of God in Christ, who brought them from the miry clay, set their feet on a rock, and put a new song in their mouth. And they will be singing this new song eternally — glory to God and to the High Priest who gave Himself to satisfy the demands of justice. They love Him and fear Him, whereas they once loved sin. Like Paul, they can say, ‘By the grace of God I am what I am.’ The Holy Spirit revealed to them the awfulness of sin and the danger of their state. They are not ignorant of Jesus; no, though they have their doubts and fears. Yet they have a principle within, the seed of the Kingdom, and they are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

“They desire a better country, a city which hath foundations eternal in the heavens. They seek the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. Often they seek in tears, but they do not spread their troubles before the world but before the Lord. ‘This poor man cried, God heard, and saved him from all his distresses.’

“They love their brethren and the ministers who preach the Gospel faithfully. They love to hear a good law and gospel sermon, and rejoice that there are yet those sent by the Lord to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to their fellow creatures. ‘He is not here, for He is risen.’ The Lord’s people know that this is true. He is risen a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.

“Not only do they know the truth of this, but they know Christ Himself for they have seen Him by faith. Where did they get faith? It is the gift of God, and without faith it is impossible to please Him. ‘Unto you, therefore which believe, He is precious.’

“They hope for a better resurrection. This hope goes right in yonder, whither the forerunner has entered, even Jesus. ‘O Lord, my hope and confidence is placed in Thee alone.’ Blessed Jesus, come to this communion season. Many a happy time we had in this place, Dingwall, with those who have gone home to glory.”

Angus Macleod, Ullapool. "As we have been hearing, these people are ashamed of themselves when they stand before their fellow sinners on a day like this. How much more reason we have to be ashamed before Him who searches the hearts, and tries the reins.

"These people came to be drawn to Jesus with cords of love. They may have been taken in childhood to the house of God, but it was not love to the house of God that brought them there. It may have come to be a duty which they feared to neglect, but in the case of those who seek Jesus which was crucified, a day came when they were drawn by love and brought to see Christ Jesus crucified for them.

"Through grace they received a good hope; they were enlightened to see something of the mystery of God manifest in the flesh and that Christ died their death, His blood cleansing them from all sin. They were bound to Him with cords of love, and constrained to follow Him. They were brought to the banqueting house, but they were also brought through testing times. Faith must be tested, yet the cord which binds them to Christ in His love is not broken, though stretched. 'The smoking flax shall He not quench.' Love is the principle that enables them to follow Him.

"This drawing power enables them to go forth in weakness, trusting to His grace. I believe that these women, in preparing the spices, though they had many fears, were supplicating the grace of God before they ventured forth. The Lord's people must seek grace for every duty, not relying on themselves. 'Their strength is God alone.' They make mention of His righteousness, even of His only. Their walk shows plainly that they seek Jesus and they desire to be found where He has promised to be.

"They seek in weakness that the cause of Christ be upheld, and His name exalted. It is true of them as was said of Mary: 'She hath done what she could'. They are enabled, by grace, to follow on to know the Lord, and they come to taste of His goodness in upholding them and giving strength and grace to deliver, removing mountains, as He rolled away the stone for these godly women. They never expected to see Jesus crucified or laid in the grave, yet that did not sever their love to Him. It was a day of small things — how small and dark! — yet they came to the grave. 'Many waters cannot quench love.'

"They could not understand. They were walking in darkness and had no light but they trusted in the name of the Lord. In the path of duty they saw the wonderful kindness of the Lord in giving them a view of His glory. 'He is not here, for He is risen.' He is gone before you; follow after Him in the means of grace and you will find Him there."

Alex. MacPherson, Daviot. "Man by nature knows nothing of gracious fear. His fear is that God will bring him to account, and he thinks that if he could get rid of this, he would live happily. The fear of God is not before his eyes. But when God has a purpose of mercy for a sinner, He will put gracious fear in his heart. Where He begins His good work, He will carry it on. The Lord has different ways of bringing sinners to Himself. He uses His Word in the hand of the Holy Spirit. 'When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will convince the world of sin.' We must be brought face to face with sin. How else can we confess sin? If we confess sin and believe in Jesus we shall be saved. There must be repentance, a grieving for sin. 'Gainst thee, thee only, have I sinned'. 'They that come to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.' Their desire now is to know God in His appointed way. 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' They are brought to believe in Jesus.

" 'He giveth meat unto all those who truly do Him fear.' If not, their fear might be too much for them. Their comfort is that, 'underneath are the everlasting arms'. If this were not the case, how long could they stand? 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' Their prayer is, 'Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide in those thy paths divine'. They must, in this world, follow on to know the Lord. 'O send thy light forth and thy truth, let them be guides to me...Then will I to God's altar go, to God my chiefest joy.'

"Without shedding of blood there is no peace and no satisfaction to law and justice, but Jesus came into this world, taking a true body and a reasonable soul, to suffer and to die in the room and place of poor sinners. 'Who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.' They know that eternal shame would have been their portion if He had not taken their law place.

"These women followed Christ not only when He was in the world, but followed to the place where His body was laid. They seek to follow Jesus even to the grave, as if to say, 'Come, see the place where the Lord lay'. His work was done lovingly and willingly for His people and He left them the promise, 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also'. The hope and confidence of the Lord's people is not in themselves but in the Saviour. 'Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified'."

Donald Campbell, Plockton. " 'He giveth meat unto all those that truly do Him fear.' The women got meat from the Saviour who died and rose again. He is the living One. He made an end of death and His flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed. Those women so feared, that they

could not do without Christ crucified to meet the guilt of their consciences before God. They sought the Lord and desired to know Him as the One through whom alone they could have pardon. He was their life.

“ ‘The Lord our God is merciful.’ Who but He can speak peace to longing souls? He will supply all their need out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. It is a mercy that one is not driven away, but closed in to the Lord, when a great stone confronts us. The Lord’s people have learned their dependency. They have seen their photograph in Scripture. I remember seeing a sailor, who was not favoured with good looks, shave himself at a looking glass. He said to his own reflection, ‘I never saw such an ugly man as you since I was here last’. The Lord’s people see their photograph in Scripture, and know that the seed of every sin is in their fallen nature. But they know also that there is balm in Gilead, and are sure that there is power in the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, to cleanse from all sin. They are prepared to go on oath that this is so. They earnestly desire this cleansing, and daily pray for it. I think such persons bear all the marks of saving grace and are seekers.

“I would like to say also that a sure mark of those seeking Christ is that they like to be where Christ has promised to be. That is, if possible, they make a point of being at the weekly prayer meeting as well as at the Sabbath services. Secret prayer is a sure mark of those who seek Jesus who was crucified. Love much, pray much. Love little, pray little.

“I believe that those who seek Jesus are often confronted with difficulties and have to say, ‘Who shall roll us away the stone?’ The Lord Himself can do this, however great the stone may be. If they are seeking Him, He will speak peace to their souls. They mourn over cold affections, a hard heart, pride and self-seeking, and these are like mountains in the way, especially in the public means of grace.”

Kenneth MacRae, Lochcarron. “It is very difficult, at times, for the Lord’s people to believe that they are His people. It is difficult for them to find in themselves true marks of grace, but Christ sees the marks of grace in each one of His people.

“God has a people in this world whom He loved from all eternity. I remember visiting a godly woman a few days before she went to heaven. After worship she said, ‘I will soon be in eternity, and I hope to see the King in His beauty, and my soul shall rejoice’.

“What cause for rejoicing His people will have when they enter heaven and see Jesus whom they were seeking in this world. The Lord has begun the good work in them, and He will carry it on. Each one of them can say, ‘Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God’.”

Alex. MacLennan, Muir of Ord. "I would like to confine myself to three clear-cut marks. First, the Lord's people desire to be in the safe path of duty. I have heard it said of a cyclone tempest that while it tears up trees in its fury, there is a safe place in the dead centre, where a leaf would not stir, and we believe it.

"It is also a mark of those who seek Jesus that they believe in His humanity and divinity. He is the God-man. The great God of eternity took our nature and came to this earth. This is a wonder that the Lord's people can never fathom. When talking with an electrician I asked him, 'What is the good of an earth wire?' He replied, 'For safety. Your house might go on fire without it'. If I have not the earth wire, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I am in danger of the fire that never shall be quenched.

"These people who seek Jesus trust in the Christ of revelation, not of imagination. 'Let the heart of everyone rejoice that seeks the Lord.' 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' So, we believe that the person who is not on his two knees seeking the Lord will be without excuse at the day of judgment."

John Kelly. "We note the names of the women who were seeking Jesus at the tomb, 'Mary Magdalene and others'. They were followers of Christ, and were at the cross of Christ. These women, although having the natural fear of women, came in the darkness to the tomb and were not kept back by the Roman soldiers from paying their last respects to the One whom they loved, and who saved them from sin. As they were coming, they said, 'Who shall roll us away the stone?' When they came they found the stone rolled away, and they were told that Jesus was not there, He was risen. They must have believed that He went to glory, as He said, for they were told to go and tell the disciples. They knew that the Saviour was alive and not dead.

"The seeking soul is fearful because of sin and a past life, and they may try in their own strength to merit forgiveness, but there is a stone in the heart and no light enters because of this stone. When God the Holy Spirit removes the stone, the sinner sees the light and realises that he is dealing with a just and merciful God who is waiting to save. The light of the glorious Gospel enters the heart. He knows that, of himself, he can do nothing. 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.' He casts himself absolutely on the mercy of God in Christ.

"He believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He is raised from the dead. He believes that Christ is alive for evermore at the right hand of God, and that He is able to save to the uttermost, and will in no wise cast out those who come unto Him.

"In the mirror of God's Word he sees something of his sinfulness, and he longs for holiness. He has ceased to put his trust in an arm of flesh. He now knows a little of his own weakness. But God's strength is made perfect in his weakness and those who trust in Him are not put to shame.

"I was glad to hear that a man who served with me in the army and who was killed in action, had this verse written on his Bible, 'Fear not ye: I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified'. His Bible was sent home. It gave comfort to his people, and I may say that I rejoiced when I heard it.

"It is a mark on this people that they rejoice to hear of others testifying that they are for Christ. Their question at communion times is, 'Did anyone come forward to profess Christ?' They desire God's cause to be advanced and to give Him the glory.

"God will not leave a poor, seeking soul to wander about in his own strength, but will draw him to Himself. They that seek shall not seek in vain. They will never be absent from the means of grace if they can be there, but sympathise with those who are not able to go. They hope that God will be glorified and that they will be kept."

Rev. D. A. MacFarlane. "I would desire to say over again what one or two of the brethren said, 'At morn let me Thy kindness hear; for in Thee do I trust.' Where that is, there is the breathing of the Holy Spirit. That soul is alive, and among the living in Jerusalem, begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. They desire to know the way, and to be in it, and it in them."

The Rev. Angus Finlay MacKay, M.A. **A Tribute**

by the Rev. D.M. Boyd

This tribute by the Rev. Donald M. Boyd was read at the funeral service in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, on Wednesday, 14th August 1996.

THE Rev. Angus Finlay MacKay, M.A., was the oldest minister in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland at the time of his death on Saturday, 10th August, 1996, in Ballifeary Home of Rest.

His father, Donald MacKay, was from Breasclete and his mother, Alexina (Lexy) Matheson, was from Kyle. His father joined the Royal Navy and moved to Portsmouth where Angus was born on 28th June 1908.

During the First World War his mother and family were evacuated from

Portsmouth to Muir of Ord. Here he attended Dingwall Academy and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Mr MacKay remembered visiting the Dingwall manse as a young boy when he was attending the Sabbath School. He had fond memories of the late Rev. Donald Macfarlane, the founding minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, whom he described as having "a bright eye and an active intellect". Mr MacKay told me that the Rev. Donald Beaton never knew a minister like the Rev. Donald Macfarlane for getting to the heart of a text.

Angus MacKay went south to study for the M.A. degree in Glasgow University. During his studies, he applied to be a student for the ministry, and began his lifelong interest in books. At the time of his retiral, he had amassed a large and valuable library, some of which formed the basis of the present library in the Inverness congregation. After graduating at the University and completing his studies for the ministry, he was ordained and inducted to the Applecross congregation on 24th September 1935.

While in Applecross he was appointed as a church deputy to Canada for 16 months, where he met his future wife, Iona Steedman. After the Second World War, she crossed the Atlantic to join Mr MacKay when he moved from the Applecross congregation to be inducted to the Inverness congregation on 8th January 1947, where he laboured for 40 years.

As one of the largest congregations in the church, it involved him in much pastoral work. For years he held three services on the Sabbath and two Prayer meetings weekly, one in Gaelic and one in English.

Besides these heavy pastoral duties, he continued to serve the church at large. As well as further deputations to Canada, he also went to Australia and New Zealand, and to the Church's Mission in Zimbabwe, and he was the Church's tutor in Greek and New Testament studies for many years.

The Synod honoured him by appointing him Moderator of the Church's supreme court on three occasions, in 1945, 1969 and 1984. He was the Clerk of the Northern Presbytery for 33 years, and his brethren in the Presbytery marked the occasion of his retiral from the Clerk's office with a suitable presentation to him, on 24th September 1985, the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the ministry.

Two years later, on completing 40 years in Inverness, the Rev. Angus MacKay retired from the active oversight of the congregation in 1987. The appreciation of the congregation for their former minister was seen in providing Mr and Mrs MacKay with a flat in Inverness for their retiral.

However, his work did not cease. He was called upon to hold services in vacant congregations, which he willingly supplied. Then in 1989 he

witnessed the split in his large congregation caused by the APC secession, and he took steps to calm the troubled minds of the people. He wrote a letter which was read to the Inverness congregation on the first Sabbath after the secession advising and exhorting them to hold fast and to remain with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

As the senior minister in the Presbytery, Mr MacKay convened the first emergency meeting of the Northern Presbytery after the split and thus contributed to the re-establishing of the work of the Gospel in our midst. His health suffered a set-back through a stroke in the early months of 1989, but, as soon as he recovered, his ministerial services were willingly given to help the over-stretched congregations in the north which had been decimated of ministers overnight. He assisted most weekends in neighbouring congregations until new ministers were inducted into these localities, to Inverness towards the end of 1989, to Daviot, Stratherrick and Tomatin in 1990, to Dingwall and Beauly in 1992, and more recently to Dornoch in 1996. He recovered sufficient health to be appointed Moderator of the Northern Presbytery in 1990 which was his last official appointment. He was keen to continue the Gaelic Prayer meeting in Inverness, but in the summer of 1992 the weekly Gaelic Prayer meeting was changed to a monthly one as his strength was failing, and now there is only an English Prayer meeting.

Latterly, he became a resident in the Free Presbyterian Care Home for the elderly, Ballifeary House. Here he was tenderly cared for by the staff until he passed away quietly on the morning of Saturday, 10th August, 1996.

Mr MacKay is survived by his widow and three married sons with their families. We extend our sympathies to them and other relatives today. They have happy memories of a father who set before them a pre-eminent example of Christian behaviour. All that knew Mr MacKay do not need an explanation of the statement that he was a Christian gentleman in manners, speech and behaviour.

On meeting Mr MacKay one was struck by his demeanour towards God and man, which marked him out to be a man of God. His addresses to the Most High in the public sanctuary were replete with rich devotional language rarely heard, and his daily conduct was befitting his profession — all acknowledging him to be a Christian gentleman. He laboured to preach the Lord Jesus Christ freely to others, to set forth God's only begotten Son as the Father's glorious provision for a sin-ruined world. The older generation in our midst will remember him as a faithful pastor, and some as their father in Christ. He practised what he preached, and he has now gone to his eternal reward.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them,” Rev. 14:13. “Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours,” John 4:38. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God,” Hebrews 4:9.

The Discipline of Children

Rev. K.D. Macleod

A 12-year-old boy has taken Britain to the European Court of Human Rights claiming that the Government failed to protect him from being physically punished. The Court has agreed to hear the case, but it is likely to be more than a year before a final judgement is issued. The boy's lawyers have argued that Britain has failed to enforce its obligation under the European Human Rights Convention to protect citizens from “inhuman and degrading treatment”. Obviously, we do not support any form of punishment which is genuinely inhuman or degrading, but any suggestion that all forms of physical punishment, including a gentle smack, are inhuman and degrading is patent nonsense.

Now, what are the facts in this case? As reported in the press, the boy was beaten by his stepfather with a cane three years ago after he tried to stab another child with a kitchen knife. The stepfather was taken to court on charges of assault, but the jury found that the punishment was within the bounds of “reasonable chastisement”. The boy's mother claims that the boy is “totally out of control” since the age of 2. Clearly the boy desperately needed firm discipline, and proper physical punishment has its part to play. Yet the very fact that the boy's parents are living apart suggests that at least one of them is not free from blame for the state of discipline which the boy has reached, just as at least one party is not free from blame for the breakdown of the marriage. And the natural father is backing (presumably instigating) the boy's court case.

The danger is that this case may lead to all forms of physical punishment being outlawed in the UK, for all decisions of the European Court are legally binding on the member states. It is long past time that western societies ignored the ideas of humanistic liberalism and listened to the Bible. We read in Proverbs 13:24, for instance, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”

As far back as 1846 Charles Bridges wrote in his *Commentary on*

Proverbs: "Among the many theories of education, how often is God's system overlooked!" His comments (slightly edited for clarity) go on, "The rod of discipline is its main character; not harsh severity, but a wise, considerate, faithful exercise: always aiming at the subjugation of the will, and the humbling and purifying of the heart. Here, however, God and man are at issue. Man often spares the rod, because he loves the child. This at least he calls love. But is not our Father's love to His children inconceivably more yearning than that of an earthly parent? Yet He does not spare the rod - 'what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?' (Heb. 12:7). Is the rod the proof of His hatred? No, but of His love. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth' (Heb. 12:6). On the other hand, 'he that spareth his rod, hateth the child.' Does he not act at least as if he hated him; omitting a duty so necessary for his welfare; winking at the indulgence of vicious habits and a wayward will, which so surely issue in bitter sorrow?

"The discipline of our children must therefore commence with self-discipline. Nature teaches us to love them much. But we want a controlling principle to love them wisely. The indulgence of our children has its root in self-indulgence. We do not like putting ourselves to pain... All our children are children of Adam. Foolishness is bound up in their hearts, (Pro. 22:15). All choose from the first dawn of reason, the broad road of destruction (Isa 53:6). And can we bear the thought that they should walk in that road? We pray for their conversion. But prayer without teaching is mockery, and Scripture teaching implies chastening. Discipline there therefore must be. All need the rod, some again and again. Yet it must be the father's rod, yearning over the chastened child (Ps 103:13), even while he dares not spare him for his crying (Prov. 19:18). The rod without affection is revolting tyranny.

"But often do we hear mourning over failure. And is not this the grand reason? We do not chasten betimes. Satan begins with the infant in arms! (Psalm 58:3, Isaiah 48:8). The cry of passion is the first stir of the native corruption. Do we begin as early?... But fearful indeed is the difficulty when the child has been the early master; to begin chastening when the habit of disobedience has been formed and hardened... Rarely indeed does this late experiment succeed; while the severity necessary to enforce it is not less dangerous than painful. 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth' (Lam.3:27)".

We hope and pray that the UK will not come under any obligation to follow other European countries in banning reasonable, restrained physical punishment. But Britain is following other European countries in forsaking the Word of the Lord, and what wisdom is to be expected? Any code of law

which ignores the Scriptures will inevitably find itself at some points failing even the straight-forward test of common sense.

The Trinitarian Bible Society Report

THE latest Annual Report of the Trinitarian Bible Society presents yet another encouraging picture. The General Secretary's Report states that during the past year over 8,500,000 portions of the Word of God were distributed in 39 languages among the peoples of 122 countries. This figure includes more than 621,000 Bibles, (191,000 of which were in the English) more than 5,450,000 New Testaments and more than 1,048,000 Golden Thoughts and Words of Life Calendars.

As well as the many copies that were supplied at realistic prices, large quantities were supplied at subsidised prices, and Scriptures to the value of over £333,000, including the costs of distribution, were supplied free of charge mostly to those who would be unable to afford to purchase copies.

The Society has been encouraged by the increase in the number of copies of the Bible that have been distributed in the English language. Copies of the Authorised Version have been supplied not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the world where the English language is spoken. Although the number of new versions continues to escalate, it is interesting to note that a recent poll in the USA indicated that the Authorised Version was still the Bible which was most read on a daily basis. More people appear to be questioning both the textual basis and the translation techniques underlying many of the modern versions. It is pleasing to note that during 1995 the Society distributed over 5,500 copies of its edition of the Received Text - the Greek text underlying the New Testament of the Authorised Version.

In Brazil the Society's edition of the Portuguese Bible has been widely accepted. Elsewhere in South America, in Central America and other parts of the world where the Spanish language is spoken, large quantities of the Society's edition of the Spanish Bible have been distributed. A new edition of the Spanish Bible is being prepared which will adhere more closely to the Received Text of the New Testament.

With regard to membership of its General Committee, the Society has suffered a sad loss in the passing away of Mr. A.J. Levell. He joined the Committee in 1976 and in the years that followed ably held office as Honorary Treasurer, Chairman, and President. New members of the Committee are the Rev. B.W. Garrard, Winchester, the Rev. K.M. Watkins,

London, and Mr. I.G. Carvell, formerly Principal of the Law Society School of Law in London. The Report adds, "Your prayers for the blessing of the Lord to attend the meetings of the General Committee will be valued. Many, and often difficult, are the decisions that have to be made as they, on behalf of all the Society's members and supporters throughout the world, attend to the affairs of the Society."

A substantial operating deficit arose in 1995. As a result, it has been necessary that the Society restrict its budget for 1996 in certain areas of its work. This action has been taken in the interests of prudence and we hope, as the Society itself does, that it will be only a temporary restriction.

Wherever the Society is able to be of assistance in providing the Scriptures among the nations, whether in those with a major language or a minor language, it is happy to seize these opportunities. It is conscious of the fact that in such a vast field, its contribution in supplying the pure Word of God is comparatively small, but it prays "that the Lord may be pleased graciously to bless our endeavours to circulate the Word of God among all nations'."

The Editorial Manager's Report states that the demand for Bibles in foreign languages is increasing, and that, for example, people inside and outside China have indicated an interest in providing a faithful translation for the one billion people in that spiritually dark country.

The Editorial Manager notes that in the field of Bible translation today, the principle of political correctness has found its way into new Bibles. This move to make language "inoffensive" to all readers is best seen in the use of gender-inclusive language. Another more recent principle, Functional Reading Deficiency (FRD), popularly known as "dumbing down", was used in the Contemporary English Version and in the New International Readers New Testament (published in the USA). "Dumbing down" is concerned with people not being able to read and understand the Bible, for whatever reason, and goes far beyond simple "dynamic equivalence". The result is a translation which lacks faithfulness to the original language texts of the Bible, and takes general Bible translation another step lower than before.

The Secretary says in conclusion that the Society looks to the future with the consciousness that in all things it is wholly dependent upon the goodness and blessing of the Lord. "The Lord is not dependent upon the Society and therefore only as the work and witness of the Society is found in the path of His will can we expect that the Lord will continue to use it as an instrument in His hands for the furtherance of His Kingdom... We have the wonderful assurance that the Word of the Lord will not return unto Him void.

"The millions of people who have no access to the Word of God in their own languages, who are living under the cruelty of heathen darkness, who are enslaved by the curse of Islam, who are engulfed by the miserable deceits of Popery, who are ensnared by the deceptions of the cults, or who have been brought up in the sterility of 'post-Christian' societies, need the Word of God and the liberating and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit" - and all in order "that those to whom the Almighty will yet, in His eternal purposes of grace, show mercy, might have revealed to them the glory and divine perfection of His beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"May the Lord, therefore, be pleased to use the Society in the coming days to the glory of His name through the circulation of Protestant and uncorrupted versions of the Holy Scriptures among all nations.

"Brethren, pray for us!"

Book Reviews

Gateway to the Old Testament by *Noel Weeks*

Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 308 pages, £5.95. Obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

THE author of this book rightly fears that in our day "the riches of a large portion of the Word of God are largely untapped." He is referring to the Old Testament. "There is grace in the Old Testament!"

The book begins with an eight-chapter survey of the whole Old Testament. Although it proceeds chronologically, it is no mere historical summary of events and people, but rather an account of "the main truths revealed in each historical period". Thus the approach is more theological than historical, focusing on the developing message of God to His people — it is this that truly opens a gateway to this part of Scripture. We wholeheartedly recommend the reading of this accomplished survey.

The second part of the book comprises more detailed studies of the revelation given in Genesis, Exodus and Deuteronomy. All 28 chapters end with questions for discussion. The more helpful chapters adhere most closely to the author's design, showing how God increasingly revealed His mind and will through His Word.

One passage is especially valuable: "Why do we read the Scripture? Some people read it for some feeling and fall into the danger of continually trying to excite themselves: unless they have the feeling, they have had no blessing. Scripture is the record of the progressively greater revelation of God. It is the

wonder, the excitement, as that light shines brighter and brighter that is the true blessing of Scripture. Read it not for the feeling but for its disclosure of God. If your knowledge of God grows, then the feelings will follow."

Sadly, Scripture quotations are mainly from the New American Standard Bible, and God is addressed as "you". There are several distasteful worldly comments. Nevertheless, there is much to be commended, and the reader is led in plain language to a more informed appreciation of this part of the Bible.

K.M.W.

The Art of Prophesying - William Perkins

Banner of Truth Trust paperback, 191 pages, £2.95. Obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

THIS is a reprint of two of this excellent English Reformer's treatises concerning the ministry: *The Art of Prophesying* first published in Latin in 1592 and in English in 1606; and *The Calling of the Ministry* first published in 1605, which helpfully expounds Job 33:23-34 and Isaiah 6. Although approximately 400 years old, Perkins' writings remain relevant, and therefore we welcome the aim of the publishers.

However, this is no mere reprint but a revision: "The text of this reprint has been carefully revised by Dr Sinclair B. Ferguson." Comparison with the original reveals much unnecessary alteration. For example, "papist" and "popish" are changed to "Roman Catholic", and "the summe of the summe" becomes "the heart of the matter". The graphic original, "So a man cannot but be extreame astonisht, if he knowe himself to bee in God's presence with his sinnes, which God's soul hateth", is weakened and almost trivialised to, "In the same way we experience deep spiritual shock when we realise that we are in God's presence with sins which he hates". An updating to retain the force of the original without distortion is so easily reached: "So a man cannot but be extremely astonished, if he knows himself to be in God's presence with his sins, which God's soul hates".

Regrettably, the New King James Version is used for Scripture quotations, and God is addressed as "you". We recommend that students for the ministry and existing ministers, as well as any men considering the ministry, read the original if they can lay their hands upon it, rather than this modernisation. If they do, they will find such pointed comments as the following. "A new act of sinne requires a new act (or worke) of faith and repentance." "But God's Spirit worketh not but upon the foundation of the word." "The summe of the summe - Preach one Christ, by Christ, to the praise of Christ."

K.M.W.

African Mission News

Zimbabwe

THE Rev. John MacLeod, in his capacity as a deputy from the home Church, arrived in Zimbabwe on September 5th.

It was with great alarm and a heavy heart that we heard that Rev. A. Ndebele was knocked down by a bus near Inkai, on 9th September. We understand that he and Mr MacLeod, on their way to Mbuma by car, pulled off the road and got out of their car. Mr Ndebele, who was standing on the gravel verge, was struck by the bus as it swerved to avoid another two vehicles and mounted the verge. He was taken to Inkai hospital, and then to a hospital in Bulawayo. There it was discovered that his injuries were not as serious as was first feared. He has a broken rib and a slight fracture of the skull, but is recovering. We have great reason for thankfulness to the Lord that his life has been preserved and that he is making progress. We hope and pray that he will make a full and speedy recovery, if it be the Lord's will.

Mr Macleod expects to assist at the communion season at Ingwenya, which is to be earlier than usual. He will remain in Zimbabwe until September 20th and then go to Kenya to be present at the Induction, by the Zimbabwean Presbytery, of Rev. John Goldby to his charge at Sengera Mission on September 25th, God willing. Mr MacLeod will be accompanied by Mr. Ian MacLean (senior), Inverness, and Mr. Buthi Mziya, Bulawayo, as well as the minister who will take the place of Mr Ndebele.

Norma MacLean returned to Zimbabwe on September 3rd, and Marion Graham on September 9th, after their visit to Scotland. A letter was received by one of the teachers at the John Tallach School quite recently from a former pupil who had been showing a real interest in the gospel. He says, "I am more worried about my family's lives than I am for myself because I am the only one who seems to practise Christianity whilst the rest mix it with ancestral worship, and worse still, I am the last born and cannot teach them. I do not know how to convince them to leave ancestral worship. They know something about God but they want to mix the two. I know it is wrong because the Word of God says you cannot serve God and Mammon."

This letter brings forcibly before one's mind the difficulties young people experience when they are moved by the truth of the Gospel, but are in a family circle where the same old family superstitious practices are continuing. Witchcraft and ancestral worship are still very widely practised in Zimbabwe. It is believed that when a person dies his spirit leaves the body and continues in an after life and is thought to have an influence on the

community it has left in the world. Immediately after death the spirit is thought to be unpredictable and dangerous and therefore rituals are gone through to purify those involved in the funeral and to prevent the spirit returning to trouble those left behind. A few weeks later, further ceremonies are gone through. A year or more after the death, a final and more important ritual is gone through which is thought to bring the spirit home. It is now settled, they believe, among the ancestral spirits. Family spirits are thought to have some control over all that affects the physical welfare of the community they have left behind, but no control over more powerful spirits and can be defeated by witchcraft. It is believed that no witch can kill without the consent of the spirit guardians of the victims.

Only the Spirit of God can deliver people from the dread influence of ancestral worship and witchcraft. The prayers of the Lord's people for those young people anxious to follow the truth would be valued. *J.N.*

Kenya

THE Rev. John and Mrs Goldby and their two children, Shona and Jennifer, arrived safely in Kenya on 31st July. Having previously spent some months there at the end of 1994 and beginning of 1995, they were given a very warm welcome by the friends at our Sengera Mission.

I quote from a letter of Mr Goldby: "Services have been well attended so far. There is a great deal of building going on to provide housing for additional staff, and to complete the Medical Centre..."

Soon after he arrived he was asked to conduct the worship at a funeral of a little child of one of the workmen. It was an opportunity to impress on the large gathering of people the necessity of thinking seriously of death and of their need of Christ. It was an especially sad occasion for Mr Goldby as the child, who died of malaria, was named after him.

The local community are more and more appreciative of the Mission and its staff, and gratitude has been expressed by the community leaders for the help being sent to the hospital and the church.

We hear that Sisters Truus and Celia have made good progress in learning the local dialect, Eke-gusii, despite their nursing and other mission activities.

There is an urgent need at Sengera for a teacher to teach the missionaries' children there. They are: Ian Charles MacLean, 13; Jonathan MacLean, 9; Shona Goldby, 13; and Jennifer Goldby, 5. When Dr de Jong and his family arrive, his 5-year-old son will be added to the roll. We hope that a missionary-hearted teacher will offer his or her services for such a worthwhile work. *J.N.*

Protestant View

The Pope and the Virgin Mary

THE Pope has emphatically reasserted Roman Catholic claims that Mary the mother of Jesus had no other children. Indeed, many Protestant writers have understood the passages in the Gospels which refer to His brethren (James and Joses and Simon and Judas) and His sisters as referring to other close relations such as cousins - although it seems more natural to understand that they were Joseph and Mary's four sons and their daughters. The Pope, however, has gone further. In line with Roman Catholic ideas he has also repeated the assertion that Mary remained a virgin to the end of her days. For this there is not one shred of Scriptural evidence. In fact, the suggestion is preposterous in the light of such a scripture as: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." (Heb 13:4). But such claims are very much in line with the dangerous Roman Catholic teaching that celibacy is a higher state of spirituality than marriage.

On the other hand, a Church of England spokesman, referring to "His brethren . . . and His sisters", said that most New Testament scholars, including some Roman Catholics, "see no need to speculate about their being half-brothers, half-sisters, or cousins". Obviously he believes that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and therefore denies the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ, as clearly revealed in Scripture. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"; and the relationship of Joseph and Mary is thus described: he "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son". Whatever modern scholars may write in their unbelieving speculation, the One who came to be the Saviour of the world must not be tainted with original sin; He must be holy, harmless and undefiled.

It is always the tendency of Rome, when she proclaims a doctrine of Scripture like the Virgin Birth, to add to the truth. The present Pope has been a particularly enthusiastic promoter of the cult of Mary. He claims it was due to Mary that he survived the assassination attempt against him in 1981. That attempt was made on "the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima", and he donated the bullet to the shrine at Fatima.

As to her soul, Mary is indeed in heaven, a sinner saved by grace, through the merits of Christ — although as recently as 1950 the then pope ruled that the doctrine of her bodily assumption to heaven (that is, both her soul and body were taken to heaven at the time of her death or shortly

afterwards) was a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith. There is no suggestion whatever in the Scriptures that this was to take place. We can therefore be sure that it never happened. O that those who are deceived by Rome's false doctrines would follow the faith of Mary, who exclaimed, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!"

The evil of enforced celibacy

THE ordination of former Anglican clergy, who are married, as priests of Rome, has had a double effect on many Roman Catholic priests. It has lowered the morale of those of them who have been struggling with the problems caused by compulsory celibacy. Secondly, it gives hope to some of them that celibacy will yet be dropped as a requirement.

How realistic their hope is remains to be seen, but the fact is that "forbidding to marry" marks out the Roman Catholic church as a body that has long departed from the faith.

Increasing reports of sexual abuse

WHATEVER Rome may say about celibacy being a higher state of spirituality than marriage, it is a fact that were it not for enforced celibacy, far fewer priests would stand convicted of vile crimes of a sexual nature.

Far from being a rarity, as an editorial in *The Herald* would have us believe, sexual abuse cases in the Church of Rome are being reported more frequently. The National Conference of Priests recently considered a report which accused the Roman hierarchy of sweeping such cases under the carpet by, for example, moving offending priests to another parish, and some of the priests at the conference are concerned about what the report condemns as a "culture of disbelief" among them regarding these cases.

It would be their wisdom, in their concern, to heed the call of Scripture, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

Vatican influence in the United Nations

A report to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches criticises the "unique and certainly questionable" status enjoyed at the United Nations by the Vatican. No other religious body, Christian or otherwise, has the same privileges there as the Vatican. Its right to have a voice (although not a vote) allows it to influence debate at the highest level and impose its own political and moral agenda.

Of course, the Papacy has meddled in the affairs of nations for centuries. Its power is seen today in the European Union also, where it constantly and effectively influences social policy especially. Let us not underestimate the influence of the power-hungry Man of Sin.

Notes and Comments

A challenge to the ordination of women priests

A Church of England vicar, Rev. Paul Williamson, has been challenging the lawfulness of ordaining women priests. He has now taken his case to the Court of Appeal, claiming that the Queen has broken her coronation oath by allowing such ordinations and agreeing to this "theological heresy", now enshrined in the canon enacted for this purpose.

At her coronation she was asked: "Will you preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof as by law established in England?"

The Appeal Court judges dismissed his appeal, a decision that is not surprising in the light of the Church Society already failing to prevent Parliament agreeing to the introduction of the canon.

However, the fact of "theological heresy" cannot be denied. Scripture so plainly prohibits the woman from usurping authority over the man in the spheres of the Church and the home. Nothing short of obstinate obtuseness in both the Church of England and many other churches throughout the world lies behind their repudiating Scripture and ordaining women to hold office in the Church.

Lord Runcie and the Prince of Wales

THE forthcoming biography of the former Archbishop of Canterbury confirms what many suspected, and what the Dimbleby interview with the Prince of Wales made clear — that the Prince of Wales has no enthusiasm about being head of the Church of England, preferring to have a pluralistic approach to religion. This approach evidently does not include love for the Protestant faith.

The Hindu and Muslim communities in Britain are buoyed by his multi-faith enthusiasm and his manifest goodwill towards their religions.

It augurs ill for a nation when its rulers or rulers-to-be do not hide their low esteem for the faith once delivered to the saints. May the Lord bring them to truly value our Reformed heritage.

Television and the subversion of morality

IN Britain today, we have "a militant, well-organised and influential movement which wants to smash taboos and push them aside, a movement which is currently scoring success after success." So said a recent press article — and it is true.

The article was drawing attention to the latest depths to which the TV programme, *Brookside*, has descended by featuring incest in one episode. One producer declared that the clip broke the "last taboo", but added, "I'm sure

there are no more. But if there are we will find them, I'm sure."

Scripture speaks of those who defiantly say, "Our lips are ours, who is lord over us," and who show the spirit of the Pharaoh who asked, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" Those who broadcast corrupting material with evil intent will yet discover that God Himself will deal with them.

The Lord Chancellor's defence of the Family Law Act

SCRIPTURE allows divorce, but only on the ground of the adultery or wilful desertion of one of the parties. The implication of this fact is that in God's sight a court is obliged to ascertain which of the parties is at fault before granting a divorce. The removal of the fault element from the divorce process is the glaring flaw in the Family Law Act.

It is therefore difficult for those who believe the Scripture teaching on divorce to understand how the Lord Chancellor can defend the absence of the no-fault element from the Family Law Bill. This he did recently at the annual meeting of Family Mediation Highland.

He also asserted that the Bill would "support the institution of marriage". We think otherwise. Legislation which is contrary to Scripture, while it may bring some benefits, must sooner or later and overall, have an undermining effect.

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, 17th December, at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Tuesday, 5th November, at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 10th December, at 1.00 pm.

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

Committee Meetings

THE following Synod Committees will meet in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church as follows, God willing:

Tuesday, 1st October

10.00 am - 11.00 am Magazines Committee

11.00 am - 1.00 pm Foreign Missions Committee

2.00 pm - 3.30 pm Welfare of Youth Committee

2.00 pm - 5.00 pm Finance Committee

5.00 pm - 6.00 pm	Sabbath Observance Committee
5.00 pm - 6.00 pm	Outreach Committee
6.30 pm - 8.00 pm	Publications Committee
7.00 pm - 8.30 pm	Dominions and Overseas Committee
8.00 pm - 9.30 pm	Bookroom Committee

Wednesday, 2nd October

9.00 am - 11.00 am Religion and Morals Committee

11.00 am - 12.00 am Training of the Ministry Committee

There will be no meeting of the Church Interests Committee.

Eastern Europe Mission

IT is hoped, God willing, that the Rev. Neil M. Ross and Mr Edward Ross will depart for a visit to Eastern Europe on Monday, 21st October, and return on Friday, 8th November. It is intended that they travel by Ramsgate to Oostende, then to Moldova and the Ukraine. It is anticipated that the usual work will be engaged in: preaching and the distribution of the Word of God, Christian literature and material aid. The prayers of the Lord's people for their safe travel and the Lord's blessing on the work, especially of preaching and teaching the Word of God, would be deeply appreciated. *D.A.R.*

Ballifeary Home of Rest: Assistant Matron

APPLICATIONS are invited for the post of assistant matron in Ballifeary Home of Rest, Inverness. Applicants must be in sympathy with the principles and practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Apply in writing to the Convener, Mr A. N. MacRae, 20 Inshes View, Westhill, Inverness IV1 2DS, by the 31st October, 1996. *Rev. D. M. Boyd, Clerk pro tem*

Teacher for Missionaries' children, Kenya

AT the Sengera Mission, Kenya, there is urgent need for a teacher to teach the missionaries' children in both primary and secondary subjects. There are several children to be taught at present, and the course for children at all stages will be based on a curriculum, yet to be decided upon by the Committee and the parents, which covers all necessary subjects.

The new teacher will also have the opportunity to give religious instruction, under the guidance of the Mission minister, to the African children in the large Mission-sponsored primary school there.

For further information please contact the Clerk of the Foreign Mission Committee, the Rev. J. R. Tallach, Free Presbyterian Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB. Telephone and Fax No. 01478 660216.

Donald A. Ross, Committee Clerk pro tem.

Inverness Prayer Meeting

THE Kirk-Session of the Inverness congregation has decided to move the weekly Prayer meeting from Monday to Wednesday evening at 7.30 p.m. with effect from the first week in October, D.V.

Rev. D.M. Boyd, Moderator

Theological Conference - Preliminary Notice

A THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE will be held in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church, on Tuesday and Wednesday, 3rd and 4th December, God willing, and the subjects and speakers will be as shown below. Fuller details will be given later.

The Need for Creeds and Confessions, Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow

Personal Piety, Rev. Alex. MacPherson, Perth

The Church of Rome at the Bar of History, Rev J MacLeod, Stornoway

Alexander Henderson, Rev. K. D. MacLeod, Leverburgh

The Toronto Blessing, Rev. K. M. Watkins, London

(Rev) D.J. MacDonald

Acknowledgements of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

Eastern Europe: Anon, Glasgow £100; Anon £2,000 per McClure Naismith Anderson & Gardiner; Anon Cheshire £100.

Foreign Mission (Kenya): Anon, Glasgow £100; Anon Cheshire £100;

Foreign Mission (Binga): Anon, Cheshire £100.

Dingwall: *Dingwall Congregational Fund*, Anon £50 per N.M.R; Support of Rev. J. Goldby, Kenya Mission, a friend from England £20 per N.M.R.

Uig: *Communion Expenses* - Mrs. C. Morrison £50; Anon £30; Anon £20; Anon £20; Anon £10; Church Funds, Anon £60; Mrs. L. Matheson & M.A. 10 Reef £80; Kenya & Malawi Mission: Anon £40; Anon £20 all per envelope in plate.

Laide: *Sustentation Fund*: Friend Aultbea £20; Friend Aultbea £20; Friend Aultbea £20 all per Rev. D.A.R. Anon £10 per collection box; Dutch Friends £50; Mrs. M. MacKenzie £20 both per Rev. D.A.R; Anon £3 per collection box. Tape Fund: Friend South Harris £5 per Rev. D.A.R. For Manse Use: Anon £10 per collection box. Eastern Europe: Anon £1; Isle View Nursing Home £10.50 both per Rev. D.A.R.; Isle View Nursing Home £11.00 per Rev. J.G: M.M. Prov £:27 £50; D.O.C. £50; P.M.J. £100; Friend North Uist £20; Friend North Uist £30; Friend Edinburgh £40; N.B.M. £50 all per Rev. D.A.R.; Friend Edinburgh £25 per C.R.; C.R. £10 per collection box; J.A.M. & I.F.M. £100 per Rev. D.A.R.

Portree: *Congregational Purposes*: Mr. & Mrs. D.N.M. £50 per envelope in plate; Ebenezer £100 per S.Y.M: *Communion Expenses*: Friend £10 per S.Y.M.: *Bus Fund*: A.N. £5 per J.G.