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Pray Ye the Lord of the Harvest

The need of labourers for the harvest is very forcibly brought to our notice when the Lord has so recently removed one of His labourers from our midst. The removal of any of the Lord's people is a matter of solemn concern to those who have the good of Zion at heart. It means that another praying person has been taken from the earth and this is no small consideration. How much more should we be solemnly affected when the Lord takes away His own servants who declared the gospel of His grace. In both instances we have every reason to search into the question of why the Lord is doing so. Why is He removing so many of His people from our midst? Why has He taken away one of His servants almost before he had finished his course? One answer to the question is, of course, 'It is the Lord, let Him do as seemeth good in His sight'. Divine sovereignty is one way of accounting for these unusual events.

We are not allowed to rest, however, in this explanation alone, satisfying as it may be when viewing matters from God's side. We are accountable creatures, and therefore human responsibility cannot be overlooked. Have we not to ask then, from our own side, in connection with these solemn events, 'Is there not a cause?' May not an undervaluing of our privileges often account for the removal of spiritual blessings. A faithful pastor is a precious gift from the Lord and to despise such a gift may provoke the Lord to withdraw that blessing from us. If we fail to wait upon our pastor's ministry as we ought, or forget to pray for the divine blessing upon his labours, then we are being neglectful of our duties with respect to him. In such circumstances, if the Lord take him away, what grounds have we for complaint? If, on the other hand, we have waited on the ministry of our pastor, and endeavoured to pray for a blessing on that ministry, could it be that our hearts were not fully opened to receive a blessing from it? We may put our 'Amen' to the gospel we hear and yet never put into practise the duties which it teaches.

We may be hearers of the Word and not doers of it. Or we may only fulfil those duties which are pleasing to ourselves. Son, give me thine heart, is the divine command. This calls for a life of devoted service to the Lord — a following of the Lord fully at whatever cost. When we heard the gospel did we say, rather, Yes, I will follow the Lord, but in my way, and at my pace, and to the extent that I deem prudent. Did we really take up the call of Christ — “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” — when the gospel was preached to us? Did we really part with the world when we took up with Christ, or did we embrace Him with a divided heart? If so, then we have still to embrace Him, and no wonder if the Lord should remove our pastor if we have dealt so freely and loosely with the Gospel he declared. There are many other avenues also that we could search into to establish the cause of the Lord having brought a Gospel ministry to an end.

But to return to the need for labourers. The Lord of the harvest while present in this world saw that need and was moved with compassion towards the multitudes because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. The compassionate Redeemer knew the needs of men better than men knew it themselves. He knew what was in man. He knew what remedy alone would suffice to meet that need. He came to meet that need by giving Himself a ransom for many, in order that He might reconcile sinners to God. Men needed to hear the truth — the truth concerning themselves, concerning God and His claims, and concerning the salvation which He was to provide. He Himself had gone about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. But He was soon to leave them and there was still a great harvest of souls to be gathered in — “the harvest truly is plenteous”. It was to be gathered in through the preaching of the Word — so the wisdom of God had decreed. But the labourers were few. There were not sufficient labourers available at that time for the great work that had to be done. How was this to be remedied? Christ gives the answer: “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.”

To this duty then we are called — not only the duty of prayer generally, but of prayer particularly for more labourers for the harvest. Christ's servants are God's gifts to His Church on earth and while they are procured primarily in virtue of the intercession within the veil of Christ, the great Head of the Church, yet they are to be obtained secondarily by the believing application for these blessings at a throne of

grace and through the persevering intercession of the people of God. "I will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them" is applicable in this as well as in other connections. Let us then come boldly to the Throne of Grace to ask mercies of the God of heaven and, in particular, this special mercy of faithful servants to declare His truth. The eventual result would be that we could then hopefully and expectantly look forward to the ingathering of a great harvest of souls to Jesus Christ and that by the power and blessing of His Holy Spirit.

Sermon

by the Rev. George Smeaton, Auchterarder

(This sermon, entitled "A witnessing Church — a Church baptised with the Holy Spirit", was preached before the Free Synod of Perth, 21st April 1846, and was published in compliance with their request).

"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:5-8.

The last interview with a dear friend, and his last words, are wont to be embalmed in fragrant remembrance; and when Jesus, about to enter on his glory, stands before our eye, promising the Spirit, with his last recorded words, should not his holy image be indelibly portrayed on our hearts, and ever recur, in the multitude of our thoughts within us, to delight our souls? The baptism of the Spirit was not alone for early times, nor confined to miraculous gifts, but is as lasting and extends as widely as the duty of bearing witness unto Christ.

Omitting the question raised by the disciples in the 6th verse a comparison is made between the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Such as truly turned from sin to God, whose hearts were prepared as a dwelling for the Spirit, were, at a later day, baptised with the Holy Ghost as with fire.

The first repentance from dead works went before — the new unction from above came after — and this is not to be explained away.

Notice also the time — not many days hence. God is sovereign in fixing a fulness of time, and we may not ask why that time was appointed to reveal his arm. But on our part, also, it is necessary to know our want of the Spirit, and to feel it, that we may welcome him with the more delight to testify of Jesus. Had the disciples not continued with one accord in prayer and supplication till the Spirit came — or had they begun to testify of Jesus without child-like compliance with his word and will — this labour would have been in vain. And, in like manner nothing but bitter disappointment can await us, if we go forth to proclaim the tidings of great joy, not clothed with power from on High — with lips not touched with a live coal from the altar of our God. Often, alas! have we returned with nothing but the toil for our pains, because we did not wait to pray down the Spirit. How often do we run in vain, and labour in vain, when we presume on a sufficient message, and a sufficient preparation to declare it, though not glowing with the love of Jesus, nor with the savour of the heavenly things we testify?

The doctrine then we shall examine is, a church is only so far a witnessing church as it is baptized with the Holy Ghost. For while no fitness can be found in any instrument to procure the Spirit by intrinsic excellence, or to move the sovereign Lord to reveal his arm, neither does God pour out his Spirit to any large extent without fitting for the work the instruments whom it shall please him mainly to employ. In opening up the doctrine, consider:

I. The nature of this Baptism, its mark, and on what occasions it is conferred. That somewhat more is meant than renewing in the spirit of our minds, is plain from this, that the disciples were already found in Christ. The baptism of the Spirit is the great promise of New Testament times to all the Israel of God. Before Pentecost, God's children were not wholly exempt from the spirit of bondage, nor were the saints of old; but in the days of the Apostles the saints in general seem to have enjoyed the promise of the Spirit through faith. The Holy Ghost is the first fruits of glory; and the complete inheritance, when sin shall be found no more, is just a fulness of the Spirit. Let us take whatever measure of the Spirit we enjoy below as but a foretaste of those joys, a spark of that glory, a part of that fulness of holiness, a drop of that ocean of bliss. To undervalue this baptism of the Spirit, is the beginning of all declension. Are we baptized with the Holy Ghost? — then not only condemnation ceases in the conscience, but also the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, for

which we longed, is in good part realized. Are we baptized with the Holy Ghost? — then, forgiven much, we love much, and give ourselves to him who gave himself for us, heart for heart, surrender for surrender. Thus, being ravished with the excellency of our Lord, and with a high esteem for him, our heart is full of love, and our mouth of praise. It is the nature of fire to send forth light; and when the Spirit comes to baptize us as with fire, truth is shed abroad upon our hearts as part of ourselves, and Christ is set before our eye in the bright image of his dying obedience and of his glorious reign. It is of the nature of fire to warm us; and when the Spirit comes in this fiery baptism, he comes to kindle our cold souls into a flame of love to God and man. The approach of this genial spring to the barren winter of our hearts, opens the blossoms of new life, of humility, and godliness. Not only does he confer the Divine seal of a peace that passeth understanding, but he leads us to yield ourselves for evermore to the redeemer as his dear-bought property, and to walk with God. It might be thought that the heavenly joy of this baptism would make a man secure; but, on the contrary, he now renounces all claim to himself. A believer, anew baptized by the Spirit, is like the springing fields glistening under the rains of heaven; he revives as the corn, and grows as the vine; and, feeling that he is not his own, he lives alone for his Redeemer. They who are content without this boon are just content without partaking of God's holiness. It is the nature of fire, moreover, to spread abroad. I am come, said Jesus, to send fire upon the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled? And, when the Spirit comes in this fiery baptism, the words of Jesus spread like a conflagration from mouth to mouth. In the early days, when the Apostles were under this fresh baptism, and also in the days of the Reformers, the burning words spread from home to home, from land to land.

If we would know to what extent we share in this heavenly baptism, let us ask, how far does the unction of heavenly knowledge, the self-denied humility, the boldness, the decision of the first disciples, imbue our minds? The comparison will furnish matter for deep humiliation.

I said the unction of heavenly knowledge, whereby we know all things — for no sooner did the Spirit come upon them, than they penetrated into the inmost nature of the revelation of God. They who a few days before scarcely understood the Saviour, whom he often reproved as slow of understanding, who had well-nigh forgotten what they learned from three years in his company, came, in the twinkling of an eye, to a clear, vivid understanding of the things of God. Every faint remembrance of the words of Jesus and of his office stood fresh before their eye, as if

bathed in light, and they spoke with an authority no less over-powering than had been stamped on the burning words of prophets. Would we learn how far this baptism with fire is ours? Let us ask, is the word as a fire shut up in our bones, opened up to us with living power, with Spirit and life? The Spirit, in his blessed errand, comes only in the word which he inspired at first. Is the truth then, shed abroad with such brightness, with such an overpowering flood of light, that every promise is joyously sealed upon the soul, and the word is taken up into the heart as part of ourselves? In so far only is this baptism ours.

I said their self-denied humility: for however envy and a proud thirst for honour held possession of their minds before, they now discover a single eye to the Redeemer's glory. They were only awed by what they saw of Christ's humility, in whose soul no self-seeking wish found place, but now they no more seek the highest place. They no more betray a restless craving for sitting, one upon the right hand, and the other on the left. Nor do they make Christ a servant to their wish for pre-eminence; but they longed to decrease that Christ might increase. Inflamed by a different spirit, their previous desire to stand forth as the greatest was laid in the dust. Would we learn how far this spiritual baptism has been shed upon our Church, our ministers, our people? If filled with self-complacency, as if we stood in need of nothing — if we cannot bear to be wholly laid in the dust, we have not seen the Spirit, neither known him. No church in Christendom is more exposed than ours to self-complacency for its sacrifices, its devotedness, its self-denial — more liable to be elated with unexpected success — more prone to glory in its ministers, its means, its numbers, in its contributions, in its schemes, in its prominent position before the world's eye. Let us watch and pray against the snare, and learn to glory in the Lord. Are we still full of self-complacency — of the fond opinion that we possess peculiar claims on God for self-denial in his service? Do we squander time, talents, reading, speaking upon self, while Christ's honour is not habitually our highest aim — while our absorbing desire is to enjoy distinction above others? Do we betray our self-sufficiency by censorious judgments upon other saints instead of thinking others better than ourselves? Do we betray our pride by embittered feeling against such as thwart us, as neglect our own or our Church's fancied merits, not trembling like Paul, lest men should think of us above what they see us to be, or that they hear of us. The disciples would be great, and the Redeemer tells them, that they must be as humble as the little child he placed among them; and are we still as they before Pentecost? The Lord will not give his glory to another, and

severely visited this sin upon a Nebuchadnezzar, a Herod, and even on his own beloved Moses; and are we still over-weening, self-seeking, proud? To that extent we have sinned away the Holy Ghost, and want this fiery baptism.

I said their boldness: for however timid before, the disciples no sooner receive the Spirit than they come forth like different men, to speak the word without fear. They who durst not speak a word for Christ, became of a sudden so undaunted, that they charged home their heinous sin upon the Jews; and he who, but a little while before, had trembled in the presence of a servant maid, could not but tell thousands to their face, that Jesus whom they crucified with wicked hands, is now Lord and Christ; and as far as we too are baptized with the Holy Ghost as with fire, we shall summon the world to submit to Christ as Lord of all. But do we sit side by side with the impenitent, and not quit ourselves as witnesses for God, as living epistles of Christ, as the salt of the earth? Are we a comfort to the world by conforming to its ways? Are we the cause of evil to unconverted men by our worldly spirit, by our flattering words? Does the fear of man prevent us from openly walking in Christ and Christ in us, so that he may be set in us for the fall and rising again of many? So far as we sink into inaction, content to live in friendly neighbourhood to a world lying in the wicked one, content without further aggression, do we shew we want that fiery baptism that made the disciples feel they could not without blood-guiltiness let men alone. O, if we can sit as a church or as individuals, in easy fellowship with sinners, not seeking to save souls, not daring to encounter the adversary face to face, we show that we are not baptized as with fire?

I said their decision: for however the disciples might be diverted from prayer and the work of Christ before, no sooner did the Spirit come upon them than they gave themselves wholly to these things. They who vacillated to and fro, who changed like the tide, had now one all-absorbing motive, and were borne along in the work of Christ, turning neither to the right or to the left; they continued daily with one accord in the temple. How can we than have received the heavenly baptism, if we are without the habit of religion, if our earnest efforts are but fitful, if we neglect present duty, and yet cherish the romantic hope of future service in a post which God has not required us to fill? If slothful in seeking God in prayer, in cultivating a holy relish for the things of God, if we never pray unless peculiarly helped, if we never put forth any activity in holiness unless God give victorious aid, can we have this fiery baptism? So intensely occupied in one pursuit were the Apostles, that public

business was handed over to others, that they might give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. If, as a church, or as individuals, we can afford time for work of a distracting nature, to lead us from prayer and from the word — if business of a public nature holds a loftier place in our esteem, so far we show that we have not the disciples' baptism. I might mention other things in the disciples, as a willingness to suffer for the Lord, their cordial love, and unanimity; but . . .

How shall we obtain this baptism, and on what occasions is it given? I do not say that a gracious God has bound himself by any promise to the impenitent in all the scriptures of heaven — that means employed by them has power with a sovereign God or prevails; but I do say, from the Word, that such as already enjoy the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, may obtain supplies of the Spirit a thousand-fold greater than any they have ever known.

Are we faithful in a little? God's rule is, To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly. Small at first were the faith, the hope, the love of the apostles; but yet a little while and the spark became a flame — the mustard seed became a tree. We, too, may yet have small delight in holiness, in prayer, in the Word — we, too, may yet be of little faith, of wavering love, of flickering hope; but be faithful in a little, and a larger measure shall be given. The least breathing of the Spirit is worth a thousand worlds; and only as we are faithful in a little is this fiery baptism shed upon a church, a minister, a follower of Christ.

This heavenly unction is conferred when we keep the Lord's word, and shew a humble, penitent compliance with his will. Behold this in the hundred and twenty-disciples who were enjoined by their Lord to tarry in Jerusalem till the Spirit came — who were neither to return home to Galilee, nor to distract their minds with worldly cares. They continued through those fifty days to wait as they were told. And if we would receive the Spirit's special presence to enlighten what is dark, to inflame what is cold, to strengthen what is weak and ready to perish, we must emerge from cold indifference to a simple compliance with the Lord's word and will. The world cannot receive him, cannot see him, neither know him. But, said the Saviour, If a man keep my words, we — that is, my Father and I, by the baptism of the Spirit — will come to him and make our abode with him. Repent, said Peter, again, to the awakened multitudes, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. And we, too, shall be filled with the Spirit, if we discover their godly sorrow and contrition — their penitent compliance with the will of Christ. Let him who was addicted to the lusts of the flesh — who could not receive the Spirit or

become his temple — daily learn more and more to abandon all fellowship with darkness, and he shall receive the Holy Ghost. Let him who was addicted to the lust of the eye, daily learn farther to give up his worldliness, his covetousness, his unmerciful hard-heartedness to others, and he shall receive the Holy Ghost. Let him who was addicted to the pride of life, learn daily to think more meanly of himself, and to take the lowest place, and he shall receive the Holy Ghost.

Another occasion is, when some heavy trial, some arduous duty, is laid on us for the sake of Christ. Witness John in the spirit amid the wilds of Patmos, or Paul glowing with the love of Christ, and singing praises in the inner prison. A special presence of the Lord, a better and more ample unction from on high, awaits us as a gracious reward for every dutiful compliance with suffering for Jesus. For the honour of the Lord, it becomes us to bear in mind that, in the history of this Free Church we have felt, and our brethren in Switzerland seem to experience at this hour, that a fresh baptism of the Spirit follows every step of faithfulness to our Lord. This is a new gale to fill our sails, and sent by him who is not forgetful of our labour of love — to waft us forward to fresh devotedness, spirituality, and success. Let us seek, then, new fields of self-denial; for we know that there is laid up for us on High the Spirit's rich communications — the full supplies of the gracious Saviour as a present reward. But, as a solemn warning to take heed lest we fall, how seldom, if ever, do we see a Church rising above its first tone — how common for all Churches to fall far below it?

Another occasion, and a rule with God in reference to this baptism, is our unceasing prayer of faith. Ten days had the disciples continued with one accord in prayer, when, of a sudden, the Spirit came to give spiritual eyes, and a joy which no man could take from them. But the prayer which brings down the Holy Ghost, is not that which ceases if not heard at once, or if the heart is out of tune — that is content to stop with praying out some little savour or enjoyment of God's presence. The prayer which prevails with him who gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, is that which will not let him go without a blessing. Might not every day be a Pentecost — might not we receive the Spirit daily — if, using what we have in all faithfulness, and pleading in faith for what we have not, we feared to grieve him by unholy passions, or by slighting his presence? Every day would be a Pentecost if we prayed like a Cornelius — if we heard the word like the three thousand, and prized it like the eunuch.

Christ is All

by Dean Henry Law

23. THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE

"If ye walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them — But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments." Lev. xxvi. 3-14.

Throughout Leviticus the voice of mercy sounds. For what is mercy, but a remedy for woe? At Sinai's base grace sweetly smiles. For what is grace, but safety for the lost? Before this mount the Gospel clearly speaks. For what is the Gospel, but God's scheme to save, while justice remains just, and truth continues true, and holiness appears more pure, and honour bends not from its highest throne? These truths here gleam in a long train of types. He, who would probe redemption's depths, will often seek this hallowed ground. He, who would drink true wisdom's cup, will often search this book with prayer.

But ere the tribes advance, God labours to impress. Truly when sinners rush to hell, they strive against a warning God — they stop the ear — they set the face like flint — they harden the proud neck. They choose perdition, and so perish.

Reader, these final pages thus instruct. Heed the awakening purport. There is a sacredness in parting words. Last admonitions usually sink deep. May the Lord's pen now touch the tablets of each heart!

Here God adjoins paternal counsels to a sovereign's command. He shows what blessings crown obedient paths — what miseries beset the rebel-way. Emphatic images come in to win and to deter. Two passages, as sign-posts, are upreared. The one invites to the abode of peace. The other cries, Flee, for all wretchedness is here. Alluring promises first court the listening tribes. Read Lev. xxvi. 3-13. Clusters of temporal good hang thick. Survey the dazzling catalogue — unfold the roll. It is a picture, in which plenteousness abounds. The earth in season yields luxuriant stores. Scarceness and want are buried in deep graves. Peace waves her gentle sceptre. Invading hosts scare not the quiet vales. No ravening beasts watch for their prey. And if assailing armies make attack, they move to sure defeat. A little band puts multitudes to flight. A happy progeny rejoices in each house. These are external gifts:—but spiritual delights are scattered with copious hand. God's presence is assured. His near abode is with His sons. He claims them as His own. He gives Himself to them. "I will walk among you, and will be your God,

and ye shall be My people." Lev. xxvi. 12. Such are the blessings pledged, if statutes are observed. Can any read this list, and hesitate? Can any hear, and choose rebellion's lot?

Tremendous threats forbid. Read Lev. xxvi. 14-39. The scene now changes. Peal follows peal of terrifying awe. The disobedient must wring out appalling dregs. Health shall hang down its withered head. Each pining malady — each sore disease — each racking pain — shall prey upon the tortured frame. Famine shall raise its ghastly form. Penury shall sit at every hearth. Seed shall be sown, but no crops spring. The trees shall mock with fruitless boughs. The forest shall send forth its ravenous hordes. The children and the cattle shall be mangled in the roads: and thus the homes shall be a solitary waste. The sound of constant war shall roar. The hostile banner shall deride the fallen city. The holy sanctuary shall be no refuge. If offerings be brought, God will refuse. Such is the heritage, if the covenant be not kept. Can any read this, and tremble not?

God's word is fixed, as heaven's high throne. He speaks. Performance is at hand. The sons of Israel madly scorned His sway. They rashly followed their own heart's desire. And the foreshadowed doom arrived. Witness the desolation of their beauteous land, and their tribes scattered through the world's wide breadth. The sterile plains at home — the outcast wanderers abroad — bear witness, that the threatened vengeance fell.

But there are nearer lessons from these blessings and this curse. The voice is spiritual. It pictures the fair land of grace. It shows the mercies, which gird, as a girdle, the true family of faith. It opens, too, the blighted waste, in which proud unsubmission dwells. The Gospel prized is all this joy. The Gospel scorned is all this woe.

Reader, words are an empty shade, when Gospel blessedness is the theme. He, who would know, must taste, and then the half cannot be told. In Christ God gives Himself. Who can scan God? But till our God is scanned, the treasure is not fully weighed. But come and catch some glimpse.

Believe in Christ, and you are welcomed as God's child — God's heir. Your seat is at His board. Hear His assuring voice, "All things are yours — all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." I Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. At every moment you may draw near. You may tell out your every sorrow, and your every need. The ears of love receive. The hand of power relieves. Supplies of grace are largely given. The heavens come down in showers of goodness.

The gift of Jesus leaves no gift withheld. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."

Faith finds abundance in the land of grace. For every sin there is a fountain close. For all unrighteousness there is a glorious robe. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." For every burden a succour is at hand. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Light, guidance, peace sparkle throughout the Gospel-page. When Satan terrifies, the cross is seen. When conscience trembles, the dying Jesus shows His hands and side. When the law thunders, Calvary spreads its sheltering wings. When heart-corruptions vex, the Spirit comes with renovating grace. Surely that life is blessed, in which the citizenship is above, and all the hours rejoice at heaven's gate. The past is one wide flood of mercy — the present is a stream of joy — the future is all glory's ocean.

But when the end is come, and the freed spirit wings its upward flight, who can conceive the rapture? Then Jesus is revealed. No distance intervenes. No separation can again occur. If faith finds Him so dear, what will be the realizing sight!

And when the grave restores its prey — when this poor body puts on immortality's attire, and shines more brightly than a thousand suns — like Christ — like Christ — for ever. What then? God then is fully known, and fully loved, and fully praised — while endless ages build the glory higher. Eternal love plans all this blessedness — the blood of Jesus purchases — His promise seals — His Spirit meetens — His power will soon confer the crown.

It is sweet joy to linger on this scene. But God in faithfulness presents a contrast. Crowds upon crowds reject the Gospel-call. The Saviour's charms charm not. His messages are scattered to the wind. Unhappy dupes of unbelieving pride! There is no misery like yours. God's curse embitters your whole cup. The past is dark. The present gives no light. The future is an endless night. Each day, each hour, is sin. But your feet seek no cleansing fount. Therefore your sins remain. Your inner man is filth's vile mass: no Saviour spreads His merits, as your cloak. Troubles abound: there is no refuge to protect. Satan compels you to his miserable work: no mighty succourer breaks the chain. The world enslaves and cheats: no better portion calls you from its snares. If you look upwards the heavens are barred — God frowns — each attribute condemns. Friends bring no peace. Foes wound, and no balm heals. Prosperity is no bright day. Adversity is a dark gloom. Wealth cannot help. Poverty is a

hard load. Thus life is misery. Death plunges into deeper woe. Eternity is hell. Such is brief outline of the accursed doom.

God's grace is scorned. His precious Son is crucified afresh. Mercy can show no mercy. Pardon cannot release. God is an adversary. All that God is must strive to heat the furnace of His wrath. Ah! unbelief! Your heritage is one unmitigable curse. Ah! rebel souls! How will you grapple with almightiness of wrath?

Do any such peruse these humble lines? Ah! Sirs, you see your case! Will you remain on this accursed ground? Will you still live a blighted tree — fit only for the burning? Will you thus hug the chain, which drags you to perdition? Oh! stay. You live, and Jesus lives. Who then can say, that you may not be saved? I fain would reason with you: turn not away. The Spirit's power may reach your heart.

Perhaps you abound in earthly wealth? You never knew a scanty board? But say, can gold procure God's smile — or hide your sins — or blunt the sting of death — or give a plea before the judgment-seat? You know its utter emptiness. Then cast your cheating idol to the winds. Seek Christ. He is a treasure, which can never fail. He can grant pardons. He can give title to the endless life. Be rich in Him, and then your riches reach to heaven. Escape the curse. Receive the blessing.

But perhaps the humble cottage is your home, and daily toil scarce earns the daily fare. The poor man without God is poor indeed. It is not penury, but grace, which saves. But Jesus never scorns the lowly hut. Many a Lazarus rests on Abraham's breast. Admit Him to your heart. His presence brings content, which gilded palaces can never buy. His favour sets above the monarchs of this earth.

Is learning yours? The cultivated mind may roam through every field of science — and ransack all the stores of thought. But no philosophy gains heaven's key. This can be found in Christ alone. He, who knows all, which mind can grasp, and knows not Christ, is but a splendid driveller. A Christless life goes down to a fool's grave.

Perhaps days are in the wane, and you look back on a long track of years. Bless God, that yet forbearing pity spares the worn-out thread. But the review is sad. What opportunities of seeking Christ have perished profitless! But is "too late" your doom? Is the door barred? Arise and knock. It has oft opened to an aged hand. May it be so to you! Oh! what a change, if like the aged Simeon you depart in peace, clasping the Saviour in rejoicing arms!

It may be so, that youth is in its bud. Who can regard you, without anxious thought? The world is watching to ensnare. Satan prepares his

most beguiling baits. But grace can win you to the cross. Would you be wise? True wisdom is in Christ. Would you be great? He raises to a Godlike path. Would you be happy? He fills the cup with never-failing joys. Would you win others to a blessed life? He, who lives Christ, strews blessings all around. But linger not. Youth must soon fly. It often sinks into an early grave.

Are children yours? How much may turn upon the early bias, which you give. Tell them of Christ. They who have intellect to grasp one thought, may learn the truth of a redeeming cross, and of pure joys beyond the grave. When hearts can feel, they may love Christ. Remember, apart from Christ, all here, and ever, is a dark curse. Christ, and Christ only, is eternal life. Blessed are they, and only they, who know, and love, and serve Him.

Ye ministers of Christ, behold your theme. So awfully denounce the curse, that you and yours may flee it. So sweetly paint the blessing, that you and yours may grasp it. So fully preach the Saviour, that you and yours may be for ever saved. Blessed are they, who, living — preaching — dying — make Christ their All.

Spurgeon's Sermons

"The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12). What a devastating effect the Word of God has on the enemies of the King, and what a balm to weary pilgrims when applied with the Holy Spirit's power! Who unaided can fathom the depths of God's Word? It is by the preaching of that Word that sinners are effectually drawn to Christ as the Westminster Confession states: "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word an effectual means of enlightening, convincing and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves and drawing them unto Christ." In the preaching of the Word Christ is our great exemplar, and what example of preaching can compare to that left on record in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ Himself is the foundation, the corner-stone, the rock upon which all who proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ must be firmly established.

The Gospel has been proclaimed from generation to generation by a succession of faithful ambassadors of Christ, who like Paul could say to

those to whom they ministered the Gospel, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." One of those shining lights was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. In him we have an outstanding example of one whose written sermons, as well as his preached discourses, made a great impact upon men, and were the means of leading many sinners to Christ. It is estimated that about one hundred and fifty million copies of his sermons have been published, to which has also to be added the immense number of his sermons issued abroad in various languages. In all, more than three hundred million of his sermons have gone out on their evangelistic mission.

His own comments on the subject of preaching are a wonderful revelation. "Preaching Jesus Christ is sweet work, joyful work, heavenly work. Whitefield used to call his pulpit his throne, and those who know the bliss of forgetting everything besides the glorious, all-absorbing topic of Christ crucified will bear witness that the term was aptly used. It is a bath in the waters of paradise to preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Scarcely is it possible for a man this side the grave, to be nearer heaven than is a preacher when his Master's presence bears him right away from every care and thought, save the one business in hand, and that the greatest that ever occupied a creature's mind and heart. No tongue can tell the amount of happiness which I have enjoyed in delivering these twenty years of sermons, and so forgive me if I have wearied you with this grateful record for I could not refrain from inviting others to aid me in praising my gracious Master. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name'."

As an indication of the blessing that followed the distribution of Spurgeon's sermons throughout the world the following is illustrative. "At the close of one of our services, a poor woman, accompanied by two of her neighbours, came to my vestry in deep distress. Her husband had fled the country; and, in her sorrow she had gone to the house of God and something I said in my sermon made her think I was personally familiar with her case. Of course I had really known nothing about her; I had made use of a general illustration which just fitted her particular case. She told me her story, and a very sad one it was. I said, 'There is nothing that we can do but kneel down and cry to the Lord for the immediate conversion of your husband.' We knelt down, and I prayed that the Lord would touch the heart of the deserter, convert his soul, and bring him back to his home. When we rose from our knees I said to the poor woman, 'Do not fret about the matter, I feel sure your husband will come home; and that he will yet become connected with our church.'

She went away and I forgot all about her. Some months afterwards she reappeared, with her neighbours, and a man she introduced to me as her husband. He had indeed come back, and he had returned a converted man. On making enquiry, and comparing notes, we found that, the very day on which we had prayed for his conversion, he, being at that time on board a ship far away on the sea, stumbled most unexpectedly upon a stray copy of one of my sermons. He read it; the truth went to his heart; he repented and sought the Lord; and as soon as possible he came back to his wife and to his daily calling."

Spurgeon's sermons found their way to Australia. One gentleman spent a considerable sum of money week by week having Spurgeon's sermons printed as advertisements in several Australian newspapers, by which means they were read far away in the bush. Of the hundreds of letters received from people to whom these sermons have been of immense benefit the following is an example:

"Having seen an advertisement lately at the head of one of the sermons published weekly in 'The Australasian' asking for an expression of opinion as to their usefulness, I venture respectfully to offer the following brief statement in reply.

"I have been, for some five years or more, one of those unfortunates who are commonly called 'swagmen.' Travelling about, a few months since, looking for employment, I came to a public-house by the roadside; into which I went for a drink, and an hour's rest, as I was very tired. A newspaper was lying on the counter, containing Mr Spurgeon's sermon on the text, 'Turn O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you.' I read it through with increasing interest as I went along; and it exactly met my case. It aroused me to a sense of my utterly lost condition as a sinner of the deepest dye, and, at the same time so encouraged me to seek for mercy and peace at the foot of the cross that I could not resist doing so; and I humbly hope and believe I did not seek in vain. I left that public-house resolved never to enter one again unless absolutely compelled by circumstances to do so. Since then I have enjoyed a peace to which I had been long a stranger. I now make God's Word my daily study, and attend Divine service whenever I can.

"To my personal knowledge, these sermons are extensively read in the country districts; and for my own part I look to the arrival of the weekly paper — which my employer always lends me — as the messenger of joy and comfort to myself; and I pray that it may prove to be the same to hundreds of others also. I would just, in conclusion, ask you to offer this

expression of my humble and heartfelt thanks to the friend who pays for the advertisement of Mr Spurgeon's sermons."

In America too, his sermons had an unprecedented circulation. No less than 500,000 volumes have been sold in that country, and when one adds the almost innumerable republications of single sermons in the transient periodicals of the day, it is safe to say no other preacher has had so extensive a hearing in America as Charles Haddon Spurgeon. These sermons scattered throughout that continent were greatly blessed. One peculiar illustration will show how the power of the Holy Spirit can be applied effectively:

When aboard a steamer going up the Pacific coast to Oregon a passenger had in his possession a volume of Spurgeon's sermons. On the Lord's Day he asked each person on board the steamer to read a sermon aloud. All declined until he came to one man who agreed to act as reader. Quite a company gathered round him, which gradually increased as he went on with the discourse until, after some time, he saw that not only the passengers, but all the crew who could possibly be at liberty were among his audience, and that all were very attentive.

The informal service was soon over, but not so the effect of the sermon, for, some months after, being in San Francisco, the reader of this discourse was abruptly saluted in the street, one day, by a stranger — a sailor — who seemed overjoyed at meeting him. "How do you do?" said he. "Don't you know me? Why, I heard you preach!" "I am not a preacher my friend, so you must have made a mistake." "Oh no! I have not; I heard you preach. Don't you remember the steamer that was going to Oregon?" "Oh, yes!" replied the gentleman; "I recollect, and I read one of Mr Spurgeon's sermons." "Well," said the sailor, "I never forgot that sermon, it made me feel that I was a sinner, and I have found Christ, and I am so glad to see you again."

The legacy of this honoured servant of the Lord is still, after more than eighty years, in wide circulation. Truly it can be said of him, "Though dead, yet speaketh." It is fitting to conclude this article by showing how Spurgeon himself received a special message through one of his own discourses. He describes it thus:

"I once learnt something in a way one does not often get a lesson. I felt at that time very weary and very sad and very heavy at heart; and I began to doubt in my own mind whether I really enjoyed the things which I preached to others. It seemed to be a dreadful thing for me to be only a waiter and not a guest at the gospel feast. I went to a certain country town and on the Sabbath day entered a Methodist Chapel. The man who

conducted the service was an engineer; he read the Scriptures and prayed and preached. The tears flowed freely from my eyes; I was moved to the deepest emotion by every sentence of the sermon, and I felt all my difficulty removed, for the gospel, I saw, was very dear to me, and had a wonderful effect upon my heart. I went to the preacher and said, 'I thank you very much for that sermon.' He asked me who I was, and when I told him he looked as red as possible, and he said, 'Why, it was one of your sermons that I preached this morning.' 'Yes', I said, 'I know it was; but that was the very message that I wanted to hear, because I then saw that I did enjoy the very Word I myself preached.' It was happily so arranged in the good providence of God. Had it been his own sermon it would not have answered the purpose nearly so well as when it turned out to be one of mine."

W. T.

Tribute

To the late Rev. John Nicolson

It is with deep sorrow that we record the passing of our friend and brother minister, Rev. John Nicolson. His passing leaves a great blank, not only in his own immediate family circle, but also in the congregation at Tain and Fearn and in the Church at large. His removal at the comparatively early age of 58 years is a reminder to us that the Lord claims the right to take away His people and His servants at whatever time it may please Him. "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?" was the lament of Zechariah in his day. Mr Nicolson's death is a solemn reminder to us that the ministry which we are privileged to enjoy today may be taken away from us tomorrow. So it has happened here. The lips which proclaimed the gospel of God's grace in Tain and Fearn during the past six years now lie silent in death. For Mr Nicolson himself his preaching has given place to praising — praising that shall know no end.

John Nicolson was one who had a 'Damascus road' experience. In the very midst of a godless course, the Lord was pleased to arrest him and bring him to a saving knowledge of Himself. The change in his life was so evident that none could deny it. Doubtless men began to say of him then, as was said of the Apostle Paul, "Behold, he prayeth." From that time on, through the strength of divine grace, John Nicolson lived a new life — a life of faith on the Son of God. He set out on a new course from which he never deviated till he closed his eyes in death. For him now to

live was Christ, as on Wednesday, 24th August, for him to die was gain. Like Paul, he was not only called to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, but a preacher of the great Evangel. With earnestness and vigour he pressed upon his fellow-sinners the claims of Christ and their need of closing in with Him for eternity. His ministry was marked particularly by his setting before sinners life and death, blessing and cursing. It was evident that he intended to be free from the blood of his fellow-men; that if they died in their sins, it was because they chose death rather than life. He delighted in setting forth Christ as the sinner's only refuge and the believer's only righteousness. The ministry which he began 13 years ago, he carried on with all the energy at his disposal to the very end. His last hours were spent proclaiming the glories of Christ. Early on in his studies he resolved never to refuse an invitation to preach Christ crucified. A crucified Saviour was his theme to the end. If he desired to live any longer on earth, it was only to preach the glorious Gospel. Still, when it was evident that His Master's will was otherwise, he uttered no complaint but submitted himself to the will of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will and who knows what is best for His servants and for His church.

John Nicolson never ceased to be in his own eyes anything but a poor needy sinner. The expression of Poor Joseph in the well-known story aptly fitted him:—

“I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”

So, too, would the letters S.S. (Saved Sinner), which William Huntingdon appended to his name, be suitable in his case also. He never ceased to be a saved sinner — a sinner, saved by grace. His oft repeated ‘Why me?’ on his death-bed gave utterance to the wonder of his heart that the Lord should ever have looked in mercy upon such a vile wretch as he felt himself to be.

But all this is at an end now. He has left sin and sorrow behind. He has entered into the joy of his Lord. “There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest.” He now rests from his labours, having received the Saviour's “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Having served Christ here in much weakness, and conscious of many imperfections and shortcomings, he now serves Him in glory as he would have desired to serve Him while here. He gazes no longer on the face of his congregation here on earth but on his King of grace. He can now say with Samuel Rutherford:

"I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace,
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

We mourn the loss of Mr Nicolson from the Courts of the Church and particularly this Presbytery, and from the ranks of the ministry of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Church to whose testimony he faithfully adhered to the end. We rejoice, however, in the abundant entrance he had into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To the sorrowing widow, Mrs Nicolson, in her great loss and to his two sisters, Mrs Hector Macleod and Miss Annie Nicolson, in the removal of a beloved brother, we extend our loving sympathy; also to his brother-in-law, Mr Hector Macleod, Mrs Nicolson's daughters and other relatives. We pray that the Lord, into whose loving care we commit them, will sustain each of them with His own comforting presence. With the congregation we mourn the loss of a faithful pastor and true servant of Jesus Christ and desire that they may be sustained by divine grace in this their time of sorrow. Though loved ones and pastors must leave us, there is One who says to His people and Church, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Eadar-Mhineachadh air Salm CXXX

Le Iain Omhain, D.D., Eadar-Theangaichte, Le Alastair Macdhughall

Anns a' cheud àit, Ciod a tha air mhodh àraidh air a chiallachadh leis na *doimhneachdaibh peacaidh*, anns am feud anaman gràsmhor tuiteam, an déigh mòran comh-chomuinn a shealbhadh ri Dia.

Anns an dara àit, *Cionnus gu feud iad mar so tuiteam anna, agus gu bheil sin gu tric a tochairt dhoibh.*

A thaobh a' cheud ni, tha cuid no an t-iomlan de na nithibh so a leanas mar aobhairibh nan doimhneachdan a tha 'nan cuis-ghearain:

1. *Call a' mhothachaidh de ghràdh Dhé, a b' àbhaist do'n anam a bhi roimhe so a' mealtuinn.* Tha mothachadh dà-fhillte de ghràdh Dhé de'm feud creidich a bhi 'nan luchd-comhpairt anns a' bheatha so. Air tùs, *oibreachadh neo-ghnàthach* an Spioraid Naoimh air a' chridhe le h-aobhneas do-labhairt agus coimh-éigneachaidh, ann a bhi 'mothachadh

gràidh Dhé, agus ar dàimh ris ann an Criosd. Goirear de so, no de a thoradh neo-mheadhonach, “Aoibhneas air dol thar labhairt agus làn de ghlòir,” 1 Phead. i., 8. Tha an Spiorad Naomh a’ dealrachadh anns a’ chridhe, a’ toirt dearbhaidh shoilleir do’n anam air a chòir ann an uile thròcairean an t-soisgeil, ionnus gu bheil e ’leum le h-aoibhneas, agus ri buaidh-chaitheam anns an Tighearn, air bhi dha ré seal air a ghiùlan os ceann gach uile mhothachaidh peacaidh, no buairidh, no àmhghair. Ach mar a tha Dia a’ toirt arain a thighe d’ a chloinn uile, is amhuil sin a tha e ’gleidheadh nan tràthan sòghmhor agus nan toil-inntinnean àrda so fa chomhair nan àm anns am bi iad feumail, agus do’n mhuinntir sin a mhain aig am bi feum dhoibh. Feudaidh duine ’bhi làidir, slàinteil aig am bheil lòn fallain, ged nach òladh e cungaidhean-neartachaidh gu bràth.

A ris; *tha mothachadh gnàthach de ghràdh Dhé ann, a tha ’fantuinn* air cridheachaibh a’ chuid a’s mò de’n dream mu’m bheil sinn a’ labhairt, aig an robh comh-chomunn ré ùine fhada ri Dia, agus a tha ’coimh-sheasamh ann an dearbh-bheachd bhuadhach agus shoisgeulach air gu bheil iad gabhta le Dia ann an Criosd: Rom. v., 1, “Air dhuinne ’bhi air ar fìreanachadh tre chreidimh, tha sìth againn ri Dia.” Tha sinn ag ràdh gur dearbh-bheachd buadhach e, an dà chuid do bhrìgh nan *ionnsuidhean* leis am bheil Sàtan agus am mi-chreidimh a’ cur ’na aghaidh, agus an *éifeachd* a ta ann chum a bhi buadhachadh orra. Is e so am freumh o’m bheil gach uile shìth agus chomhfhurtachd ghnàthach a’ fàs, de’m bheil creidich ’nan luchd-comhpairt anns a’ bheatha so. Is e so a tha ’gam beothachadh agus ’gan cur thuige ’nan dleasdanas, Salm cxvi. 12-13, agus is e so an salann a tha ’deanamh an lobairtean agus an deanadas taitneach do Dhia agus tarbhach dhoibh féin. Tha so ’gan cumail suas ’nan deuchainnibh, a’ toirt sìthe, agus dòchais, agus comhfhurtachd dhoibh ann am beatha agus ann am bàs: Salm xxiii. 4, “Ged shiubhail mi troimh ghleann sgàile a’ bhàis, cha bhi eagal uile orm, oir tha thusa maille rium.” Tha mothachadh de làthaireachd Dhé ann a ghràdh na’s leòir a chur gach imcheist agus eagal air theicheadh anns a’ chor a’s miosa agus a’s eagalaiche a dh’ fheudas a bhi, agus cha-n e mhain sin, ach a thoirt fìor chomhfhurtachd agus aoibhneis do’n anam ’nam measg uile. Is amhuil a tha am fàidh a’ cur an céill, Hab. iii. 17-18, “Ged nach toir an crann-fige uaith blàth, agus ged nach fàs air an fhìlonain cinneas; ged fhàilnich meas a’ chroinn-oladh, agus ged nach toir na machraichean uatha lòn; ged ghearrar an treud as o’n mhainnir, agus ged nach bi buar air blth anns na buailtibh; gidheadh ni mise gàirdeachas anns an Tighearn, ni mi aoibhneas ann an Dia mo shlàinte.” Agus is e so

am mothachadh gràidh a dh' fheudas na creidich a's barraichte a chall tre'n pheacadh. Is e so, ma seadh, aon cheum a dh' ionnsuidh nan doimhneachdan. Cha bhi iad 'an comas a' shamhuil sin de mhothachadh soisgeulach a ghleidheadh dheth as a bheireadh suaimhneas no sìth dhoibh; no a bheireadh toil-inntinn dhoibh ann an dleasdanas, no cumail suas ann an àmhghar.

Notes and Comments

Dismissal of Mr David C. C. Watson

The dismissal of Mr David C. C. Watson from his post as head of Religious Education at Rickmansworth Comprehensive School by Hertfordshire Council, and the upholding of this decision by an Industrial Tribunal, has shocked Christians throughout the country. The Tribunal unanimously decided that Mr Watson was justifiably dismissed for refusing to carry out what was a legitimate requirement of his employers: namely, to teach in accordance with the agreed syllabus of the county. In a letter, which appeared in the "Daily Telegraph," Mr Watson made clear that what he refused to teach from the agreed syllabus was the assertion in the syllabus that "the Genesis stories of Creation are of course only part of the collection of myths, legends and Hebrew folklore . . ." He had refused to give a written assurance that his teaching would conform to this statement.

One serious aspect of the case is that an agreed syllabus containing assertions of this kind should be drawn up and approved by any responsible authority, and the fact that this is so must create alarm in the minds of true Christians everywhere. The enforcement of this kind of teaching, even to the extent of dismissal of the teacher who refused so to teach, is an instance of such callous bigotry as should call forth the condemnation of all right thinking people. How strange it is that an age so tolerant of any and every false view and of every kind of evil should manifest such antagonism and intolerance towards Biblical teaching! Perhaps it is not so strange after all. The truth has always been hated by the natural man.

It is clear that action will have to be taken by those who embrace the orthodox Christian position that the early chapters of Genesis are factual, in order to secure a change in the Hertfordshire agreed syllabus, and to prevent a repetition of this incident in other parts of the country. So, too, should every effort be made to secure Mr Watson's reinstatement.

Violence on T.V. Programmes

Dr Belson, a reader in research methods at the North-East London Polytechnic has produced firm proof that T.V. violence breeds real life violence. This conclusion — long asserted by lay people — will induce the B.B.C. to re-examine the matter of T.V. violence and will result, it is to be hoped, in a considerable reduction of violence on television. The B.B.C. have conceded that they will consider carefully the implications of the new findings and evaluate the report in relation to their existing code of practice.

The need for action in connection with this aspect of television has been long overdue. It is to be regretted that it has taken the B.B.C. so long to waken up to its responsibilities in this matter. The influence of television is tremendous and, where programmes glamorise what is evil, nothing is to be expected from it but more evil. How essential it is that control of the mass media ought to be placed only in the most responsible hands, otherwise the potential for evil of the media is beyond what we can grasp.

Free Church Record

In the July/August issue of the Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland the new editor, the Rev. Donald Macleod, in his opening article under the title 'Peculiar People,' attempts to assess the present position of his Church, its relations with other Churches, and its difficulties and prospects.

In dealing with the Free Church in its relations with other bodies, Mr Macleod states: "Our separation from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is the saddest of all." He goes on to claim that, as the Free Church rescinded the Declaratory Act of 1892, the two Churches now have identical constitutions and the same unqualified commitment to Westminster theology, Puritan worship and Presbyterian discipline, therefore the way is open for union, while the few foreseeable difficulties would soon be removed if faced with a little brotherly love and Christian wisdom.

From the early years of the century Free Church writers on the Churches Question have alternated between wistful wooing of, and outright condemnation of the Free Presbyterian Church. The present 'rough wooing' lies perhaps somewhere in between as it carries the sombre warning that if the F.P. Church is not taken into the protective custody of the Free Church there is every likelihood of her falling a prey to a worse fate. Such warnings have often sounded before so we are not

unduly alarmed by them. Since the beginning of its history the F.P. Church has had to face opposition from within and without, yet the Lord has been pleased to uphold it in its uncompromising witness for the truth. The Lord alone can maintain it still. For our part we are certain that, when the Churches in Scotland are one in doctrine, worship and practice, there will be no difficulty in securing their union. We have little hope, however, of this taking place until the Lord is pleased to pour His Spirit out upon the Churches of the land. Then, being of one mind and heart, they will be united in the truth. Any other union would only be external and at the expense of truth, a union in which nothing is gained and much is lost.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 4th October at 11 a.m.

Western: At Laide on 4th October at 12 noon.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 15th November at 11 a.m.

Northern: At Bonar on 15th November at 2.30 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 29th November at 6 p.m.

Northern Presbytery Protest

Rt. Hon. R. MacLennan, M.P.,
House of Commons,
Westminster,
London.

Free Presbyterian Manse,
11 Auldcastle Road,
Inverness.
5th September 1977.

Sir,

The Northern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church at its meeting at Dingwall on 30th August 1977 considered with disappointment and indignation the request which you are reported in the press to have made to British Rail for the operating of a train service between Inverness and Wick on the Lord's Day. We feel constrained — and I have been instructed to express our strong feelings on this matter — to make known to you our condemnation of this unwarranted demand for open unnecessary travel on God's Holy Day.

The reply which you received from Mr Leslie Sloan, the General Manager of British Rail, makes it clear that no demand has come from either the local authorities or from the Railway staff for such a

service. The only ground you can offer for this Sabbath train service, apart from the familiar pretexts of people wishing to visit sick relatives in hospital and the connexion that such a service would provide for Sabbath travellers for London and the Continent is that it would be popular with tourists. On this ground you are evidently prepared to persuade British Rail to depart from their declared policy of providing no Train service on Sabbath, which holds good throughout the whole Highland area apart from the short Sabbath train service between Inverness and Lairg which the North could do well without.

We wish to point out that even amidst the complicated conditions of modern life, the Lord's Command remains unaltered: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy". We read in God's Word that Mary, the mother of our Lord, when Christ lay in the grave on that first Sabbath day, oppressed and distracted as she was, nevertheless "rested according to the Commandment".

We wish to appeal to you, Sir, to cease this agitation for further expansion of Sabbath desecration on the Railway, and to abide by God's holy commandment.

It is encouraging to us to read in the same press report that the economic reasons of expense would make such a train service on Sabbath prohibitive and impracticable.

The present alarming condition of our country, morally, religiously and economically, with discontent and violence filling the land and unemployment steadily rising, call for national repentance for, among other sins, our great Sabbath desecration. This is not a time for our public leaders and Parliamentary representatives to immerse our land in further sins against the Divine Law of the Sabbath.

On behalf of the Northern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church,

A. F. MacKay, *Clerk.*

God can never be exhausted. His fulness is overflowing and ever-flowing.

Thos. Watson

It is better to limp in the way, than run with the greatest swiftness out of it.

John Calvin

A true saint carries Christ in his heart and the cross on his shoulders.

THOS. WATSON