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To the Law and to the Testimony

God did not leave men of old, nor has He left men in the 20th century without direction as to how He Himself is to be worshipped and how they are to order their lives. "Therefore it pleased the Lord," as the Confession of Faith states, "at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare His will unto His Church, and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing." In the Scriptures of truth, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, we have an infallible revelation of God's will for man. The Confession goes on to explain that though "all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear to all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them." Here we have then a revelation of God's will for man, not as was true in the Romish Church for centuries, a revelation locked in secret in an unknown tongue, but a revelation made known to men in their own language. For, as the Confession of Faith further points out, "because these original tongues (Hebrew and Greek) are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope."

In the light of this, how precious the Scriptures ought to be to us, and

how thankful we ought to be that the Lord has yet left His Word with us. How marvellous it should be to us that in the midst of all the darkness that prevails on every hand in the 20th century that the light of God's Word still shines forth, giving light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. The Apostle Peter in his second epistle, after referring to the revelation of the divine glory of the Son of man, of which he was a witness on the Mount of Transfiguration, goes on to state: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

It is by the Scriptures that all things are to be tried, as the prophet Isaiah declares: "To the law and to the testimony." It is not according to man's own wisdom that the rightness or wrongness of things is to be established but by what is written in the Scriptures of truth. In all that relates to the belief, worship or government of the Church, the Word of God is to be the sole judge. What it requires or allows that is to determine what is to be believed or practised. No other authority is to be elevated to the rank of God speaking in the Scriptures. In seeking to establish what the Scriptures teach, what we are to be concerned to know is the mind of the Spirit, who is Himself the Author of Scripture. We are not to give place to any new revelations for, with the revelation given by the Lord to John on the Isle of Patmos, the Canon of Scripture is closed for ever. Hence our appeal must ever be: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

May we be ever brought to submit ourselves to this rule in belief and in practice. It is a suitable guide for the young as well as for the old; for the rich as well as for the poor; for the cast down as well as for those who are raised up. We may come to this revelation whatever our need is and it will have something to say to us, if we do not close our ears from hearing the truth. We are commanded to hide this Word in our hearts and practise its commands in our lives. It will never put us wrong, but ever put us right. It will not misdirect us, putting us out of the way; rather will it re-direct us into the right way when we have gone out of the way. The Psalmist so prized that Word that a long psalm is taken up expressing what it meant to him. May it be the same to us as it was to him, and may we, with him, be enabled to say:

"Thy word is to my feet a lamp,
and to my path a light."

Synod Sermon

*Preached by the retiring Moderator, Rev. Alexander McPherson,
Stratherrick, in Glasgow, 23rd May, 1978.*

"For who hath despised the day of small things?" Zechariah: 4:10

The text is in the 5th of the eight visions which the Lord showed Zechariah in one night in the 2nd year of Darius. The vision teaches that it is the Holy Spirit who builds the Church (verse 6). It also uses the very fact that the reconstruction of the temple was being hindered, to yield encouragement to the builders. The work had been the reverse of straightforward. After the foundation was laid, opposition from the foreign settlers had halted the work, and 15 years passed before the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah stirred up the Jews to resume. Then again opposition arose, this time from Tatnai the local governor who demanded to see their written authority for building. They had none, and Tatnai took the matter up with Darius. Not very hopeful of the king's support, the builders continued with heavy hearts. A great mountain of difficulty lay in the way.

But not for long! The Spirit of the Lord would so work in the hearts of Darius and the builders, that every obstacle would be removed (verses 7, 9). Divine grace would be acknowledged as the power which ensures, that notwithstanding feeble and easily disheartened men and strong opposition, the Church of God will continue in the world holding forth the Word of life, and providing the means of grace by which the elect will be saved and sanctified.

So we come to the question of verse 10 — "Who hath despised the day of small things?" Probably many had been guilty of this. Undoubtedly it was a day of weakness, yet it was wrong to despise it. One factor outweighed all the others, and that was the perpetual interest which God has in his cause. This factor is represented here by the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel.

What I propose to try and say this evening on this text might be described in the covenanting term, "Preaching to the times." Some may think that we might be better employed, like Robert Leighton who is reported to have said, "If all the brethren have preached to the times, may not one poor brother be allowed to preach for eternity?"

I quote therefore a writer who loved the Covenanters. "Leighton's words have a very pious sound; but the good man who uttered them was led into queer courses and company. John Livingstone of Ancrum was

certainly under strong temptation to refrain from speaking to the times if he looked at his own and his family's worldly interests. By what considerations he was impelled to take a different and more manly course will be seen by his own aptly illustrated reference to the subject. 'You will say, may not a man be silent at least, and why should he hazard himself and his ministry, not to speak of his family and other things, by speaking of some things he had better be silent upon? Why should he do so? Let him preach faith and repentance. Very good! Faith and repentance we consider to be very comprehensive duties, and I confess I never delight to hear of a man that most of his preaching is on public and state matters. But there are times when a man's silence may bring a curse on his head.

'Take this illustration. There is a besieged town, and there is a watchman appointed with a captain and a guard at the West Port. Now he has a duty to sound the trumpet when he perceives any danger. Well, he does see the enemy coming, so, like a wise man, he does what? He marches all his men to the East Port, and there he stands where there is none to oppose him. He is a careful man; he thinks he will only preach against Popery, and not meddle with other controversies. He will preach love to God, and love to our neighbour.

'Now should a man be silent in that way, how shall he look for a happy sight of Christ on his deathbed when his Master shall say, "Ha, sir, I know you well enough. You spoke, as they say, when none speired at you. You were bold then, but when my cause came in hand, when you might have done good service in bearing up my banner when it was like to fall, you would not. Therefore, now get you gone'."

Let us therefore consider:—

1. What constitutes a day of small things.
2. The cause of a day of small things.
3. The danger of despising such a day.
4. Our duty in a day of small things.

1. What constitutes a day of small things

These Jews were keenly aware of what made their day one of small things. They were few in number, only about fifty thousand of them. They were subject to a heathen king. Hostile neighbours were hindering them in their most important task. They were poor and lacked resources to enable them to match the original temple. And they were dispirited. Verily it was a day of small things!

Turning now to ourselves, when because of the more spiritual dispensation of the Church, the features of a poor day must be reckoned

differently, we find these: (1) The Holy Spirit seems in great measure withdrawn from the Church. The awakening, quickening and sanctifying of souls which are his peculiar works are seen much less frequently than in former times. (2) As a result of the Spirit's withdrawal, the visible church has largely become corrupt, full of blind leaders and dead souls. The living branches are few, small and weak. In our own the proportion of believers is small, and most of the Christless show little concern over their condition. The spirit of worldliness has invaded even the living branches so that professing people are often little different from the world in their spirit, manner, speech, conduct and appearance, especially the younger ones. (3) Believers are content with less Bible-reading, prayer, meditation and the reading of edifying books than their fathers. There is also less regard for the finer applications of the moral law, so that selfishness, pride, gossip, slander and uncharitable feelings are common. (4) Another of the sad features of our day is the feeble degree of spiritual discernment in professing people which unfits them to detect serious faults of doctrine and character.

(5) Our day is also one when too many among ourselves are given to belittling things that are important. For example, there has been a falling off in respect for the office of the ministry, seen often when Christ's servants warn and rebuke. God says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." But many today resent this rule when it clashes with their desires as, for example, when women are warned about the sinfulness of wearing their hair short and donning male garments such as trousers.

Also belittled, is devotion to the principle that the Church of God must adhere to the pattern of Scripture. The principal of an unchanging Church in the midst of change specially interests ourselves as it underlies our very existence as a denomination. We are here tonight separate from other churches just because there was a need 85 years ago to insist that the Church of Christ must not change simply to keep in step with men's changing views of Scripture and its doctrines. The principle can only be maintained by us in the same way as by our fathers, namely, by clean separation from bodies which violate it. Yet devotion to the principle is belittled by those who make such comments as — "You are making an idol of Free Presbyterianism" — "We must not be sectarian" — "We are too exclusive" — "We think we are perfect" — "We cannot go on living in the past," etc.

Belittled also are the endeavours of some who fear the Lord, to obey and follow Christ in all things. Their principles and conduct are styled, "Too strict," and "Carrying things too far," by those who prefer an easier way. Faced with the situation I have outlined, we can say like Asaph, "We see not our signs" (Ps. 74 v. 9). We pass on now to notice —

2. The cause of a day of small things

In the Jews' case it was not any sudden development, but the outcome of generations of infidelity to Jehovah. And as He had threatened, the anger of the Lord was kindled against that land to bring upon it all the curses that had been written, even to banishment (Deut. 29 v. 25-28). That period of judgment was now ended, but its effects remained in the form of all-round weakness, "the day" spoken of in our text. Right at the beginning of this book, the Jews are reminded of the root cause of their weakness — "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers" (Ch. 1 v. 2). A similar cause lies behind our own day of small things.

"The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers!" What was the great sin of *our* fathers? It was the rejecting of the Word of the Lord in rationalistic unbelief. That sin opened the floodgates for great forces of evil to inundate the Church and lay it waste. Let the plenary inspiration of Scripture be denied; let its unique character as the very Word of God be displaced by the view that in part or totality it is a fallible human production, and its authority as the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God is gone. That is what our unfaithful, and probably faithless, fathers did, following the lead of others in Germany and elsewhere. You scarcely need to be told what followed.

Freed from the curbs imposed on them by an infallible Bible, carnally-minded theologians gladly undertook the liberalising of Christian doctrine to the extent that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was displaced by another which was no Gospel. Then with the Scripture's testimony to a fiat creation (creation by decree and at a word) put out of the way, the theory of organic evolution received a warm welcome as a more pleasing explanation of how all things, and man, came to be. At a stroke this theory abolished for many the idea of a personal, transcendent and immanent divine Spirit to whom man is bound in permanent relationship as Maker, Preserver, Lord and Lawgiver. Men now felt free to ignore moral responsibility and sin, and regard themselves as just one form of matter whose wisdom lay in making the best of their stay here. Is not the Protestant part of Christendom materialistic in the main?

"The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers!" So today we find our land populated with a godless, materialistic people, many of

whom are puzzled as to why they exist, and are meeting with no success in their pursuit of happiness. "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2 v. 13). "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jer. 8 v. 9).

Let us be clear then that the deplorable, even horrifying, religious and moral condition of our land is as much a judgment consequent upon the sins of our fathers, as captivity and its aftermath was a judgment upon the Jews. If Scotland is experiencing a day of small things religiously, this can be traced to the infidelity of its churchmen several generations back, and to these sins accepted and made their own by the church-people, to the ruination of the Church in Scotland. A small branch like our own, still holding and contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, is an exception. But it has also to be said that we have not been untouched by the evils of such a day. This I have already mentioned. We have our own sins to confess; the Holy Spirit is not working among us as we would desire, and adverse effects have followed. The day of small things is that kind of day for us too.

3. The danger of despising such a day

Having attempted to define and account for our day of small things, we must next notice that it is not a day of no account, but of small things. If it were entirely made up of sin and divine wrath, it would be hard to understand this implied warning not to despise it. There must be something good about it. This was true of Zechariah's day. The Jews had truly repented of idolatry and other sins. By God's grace they were back in their own land. They had set up again the pure worship of Jehovah, and were rebuilding his house. God was encouraging them by his prophets, and from this they might deduce that Darius would not hinder them. Surely then it was wrong to regard their day as a useless one, and their work as futile! It was far from deserving the sort of description that Job gave to the day of his birth (Job 3 v. 3-5).

Similarly, there are things true of our day which make it wrong to despise it. There is the great boon possessed by ourselves of representing the Reformed Church of Scotland in its scriptural purity. The existence of a pure branch of the Church is most encouraging when you think of other lands. Also encouraging is that the Lord has not left us to a dead orthodoxy, has not taken away his Spirit altogether. There are godly, faithful ministers, discerning office-bearers and exercised members together with reverent, attentive worshippers making no profession.

There is, however, one thing in particular that makes it wrong, and

even dangerous, to despise a day of small things, and it is that such days are divinely appointed and serve certain purposes. The Saviour taught this before He ascended to heaven to undertake the stupendous work of opening the seals of the book of providence (Rev. 5 v. 5, etc.). The lesson is to be found in the last chapter of John's Gospel. A night's fishing had taken nothing, and we may be sure that this was not due to lack of skill, effort or perseverance. Was it then the lack of fish, and why should that be when the lake contained plenty of them?

It is when we consider what complete success they had when Jesus instructed them to cast their net in an unorthodox fashion, that we come to realise that it was the unseen watcher on the shore who had willed that not one fish should enter their net all the previous night. He rules all things including "fish of the sea and all that pass through the same." A similar incident much earlier (Luke 5 v. 2-11) had reference to their work of manfishing while Jesus was with them on earth. This one contained instruction concerning the work ahead of them when the Saviour would be in heaven while they laboured on earth. The plain lesson was that their work would prosper in the degree that He willed.

In a day of small things we need to remember that Christ reigns, and that He does save all for whom He died. Which means that our poor day is in fact one in which there are "few that be saved." The divine plan embraced such periods, there have been many of them, and some have been very long, for example, the dark pre-reformation ages. Days thus planned must also have a use, and that is the great reason why they must not be despised. Our inability to discern their purpose makes no difference. Yet there are always some who despise such days, and I now go on to mention some ways in which this is done today.

(a) The day of small things is despised when Christians act as if there ought not be such a day and try to terminate it by human effort. This is the seriously faulty principle behind the many attempts to "evangelize" by special campaign. Men decide that some district needs a revival, and attempt to generate it by means which I need not describe. The preaching is broadly biblical, but usually Arminian in its offer of Christ, and offensive to the Holy Spirit in its practice of calling for decisions. The divine sovereignty in election and effectual calling is little mentioned. We all disapprove of these attempts which clearly despise the day of small things.

But I believe we have also to be on our guard lest in our desire to see the Church extended, there be an unsubmitive attitude towards the Lord's ordination of a poor day, and the secret belief that if only we put

forth enough effort, a better day will begin. Surely if we take the Gospel to the churchless multitudes, something will come of it! But why do we suppose that the dry bone in the unworked valleys will be more likely to come alive than those which confront us every Sabbath in our own churches? Certainly the Lord can bless what is called "outreach," but the hard fact is that He is not doing so. Fish are not entering the Gospel net; let us not close our eyes to the main reason, namely, the will of God.

If there is one thing that the Lord has been teaching his Church in our land these last 30 years it is this, that the sovereignty of his Spirit and the impotence of men must alike be acknowledged. The message He has been spelling out is that of verse 6 — "Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Have we been learning the lesson? Are we bowing in deep humility and felt weakness before Him to whom belongs the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, and entreating his help and guidance?

More "evangelistic" effort has been made in the last 30 years than in the century before, but the land is more tightly shrouded in spiritual death than ever. The day of small things has not passed just because men have decided that it has gone on long enough, and that if they act, the Holy Spirit is bound to do the same.

(b) The day of small things is despised if we in the ministry think that our pastorate need only occupy part of our time. Our congregation may be small, years of labour have borne little fruit, hope that we shall ever see fruit is fading, and perhaps there is the feeling of being a kind of misfit, more suited to and more inclined to a different field of labour. Where there is this situation, there is the danger of concluding that our present work need only take up part of our time, and that we may spend the remainder at other useful work of our choice.

Does not this view, however, cut at the very root of the orthodox (and I think correct) conception of the work of a pastor? What is that? It is that the work to which Christ and the Church appointed him will demand *all* his time and strength. Supposing he should have only the tasks directly connected with his local ministry, these would demand all his time.

But he has other tasks. There is the work of Church Courts and committees. There is the wider sphere of vacant charges, communions and deputation work to which duty often calls. He should keep himself informed of what is going on in the world, especially the religious aspect. He may feel it his duty to improve his general education. Family duties make demands on his time. He needs rest periods, but usually has to do with less than he requires.

Returning now to his main work, he has to preach to and teach, to visit and pray with his people. How does he obtain fitness for that? From prayerful, detailed study of God's Word, from meditation, from reading theology, church history, devotional literature, etc. (A very big etcetera in this case). And from prayer, and more prayer, for himself and the souls for whom he has been made responsible!

Where now is the servant of Christ who can say to his Master, "I thank Thee that I have done all that I engaged to do when I entered upon thy work in this part of thy vineyard." Have we not rather to mourn that we have done so little, and done it faultily? We are learning the vastness of that requirement, "Give thyself wholly to them" (1 Tim. 4 v. 15). We realise that we have no spare time to devote to other kinds of work. The most devoted servants of Christ can only confess in connection with their immediate and obvious tasks, "We are unprofitable servants, for we have *not* done that which was our duty to do."

(c) The day of small things is despised by those who think it can be overcome, or at least improved, by united effort. Not accepting that the day is divinely ordained, and believing like trade-unionism that "unity is strength," their prescription for making the Church strong and influential is organic unity, and as a step towards that, co-operation. This is the grave error of modern ecumenism as embodied in the World Council of Churches with its efforts to bring about universal Church unity. This movement has been correctly exposed as a carnal and dangerous activity whose policy of united effort has accelerated the decay already going on in the nominally Protestant Churches. When we further consider that the Papacy has seen this movement as a possible agency for the recapturing of its own supremacy, it is not hard to detect Satan as the master-mind behind modern ecumenism.

Next let us note that the ecumenical principle of united effort is actively pushing in our own land the virtue of church co-operation at all levels. It is now common to find ministers and priests joining in acts of worship, and this being accepted by communities calling themselves Protestant.

Now, still on the subject of ending the day of small things by united effort, we wonder if it is not the same idea that lies behind the proliferation of agencies set up in recent times by what is called the evangelical section of the visible Church in Britain and elsewhere. A rash of interdenominational or undenominational associations, alliances, conferences and societies has broken out. They have usually provided some common ground or cause in which ministers and others may associate. Now, avoiding anything like a generalisation on the worth of

these agencies, I believe that they tend to produce the feeling in those brought together by them, that the doctrinal and other differences between the members are less important than they formerly believed. This effect is exactly what ecumenism wishes to produce by so strongly commending and promoting co-operation in religious effort. And as you might expect, it is those whose principles are most scriptural who stand the greatest danger of losing their sense of the value of them, and of sliding into compromises.

And so we come to ourselves, and the question whether this error of thinking that the day of small things may be improved by joining hands in new enterprises with people of other bodies, affects us. It does. Voices are heard — “We must not be so stand-offish” — “We ought to co-operate more” — “We need to possess a more evangelical spirit, and show that our’s is a truly non-sectarian Christianity.” Not only words, but actions! co-operation in evangelism with persons of unsound faiths, justified on the ground that the purpose is good. Which means that either this kind of evangelistic effort is conducted on a variety of doctrinal levels, according to the persons engaged in it, or it is pursued in terms of some attenuated creed acceptable to all. Neither way is God’s way. These are methods which this Church has always denounced as false and wrong. They are the methods of ecumenism and bogus evangelism.

The godly, discerning fathers of our Church saw clearly that it was our wisdom, in the ecclesiastical situation in which we found ourselves, to avoid unnecessary contact with other religious bodies in Scotland. They formed that judgment when other churches were sounder than they are today. They well understood that fraternisation would result in Free Presbyterians becoming less attached to their distinctive position, whereas others would not be in the least moved from their errors. No-one would gain, but some would lose, and their loss would be serious.

In the past we have followed Nehemiah’s example when the day of small things still prevailed. He judged that mischief would follow a meeting with Sanballat and Geshem in one of the villages of the plain of Ono. We have reason to believe that only mischief will follow consultation, conferring and co-operation with other churches and churchmen on new schemes to advance the kingdom of God in our time. Is it not our full-time task as it is, to engage in God’s work of calling sinners to repentance and faith in ways agreeable to the Word of God? We may say, as Nehemiah did, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to

you" (Neh. 6 v. 3). The work we as a Church are engaged in is the Lord's. Results will follow in his own good time.

I have brought to your notice three ways in which I see our day of small things being despised. Let me state them again briefly. It is despised by those who think that increased effort or combined effort will end it, and by those who are content with reduced effort. In my judgment, and it is one not hastily formed, these errors have a foothold among ourselves. Now error breeds rapidly in today's moral climate. If these dangerous despisings of the day of small things continue (and the last described I regard as the worst), I foresee this Church's testimony becoming so diluted and weakened, that we shall at last become merged with some other body. If that happens, then we shall have betrayed the sacred cause which meant so much to our fathers, and the Church of the Reformation in Scotland will have ceased to exist.

4. Our duty in a day of small things

This is bound up with the question, What is our future course as a Church to be? Are we to continue on the same simple course as that on which our Protestant fathers set out, a following of the old scriptural paths and rejecting of innovations which have their spring in the carnal mind? It cannot be denied that that is a course which the Lord has blessed. Or is our future course to be one of experimentation with new methods, for example, shorter sermons, and the abolition of the fencing of the tables as we know it? It is to be a course where contacts with other churches and their ministers would be encouraged, and the adoption of a generally more flexible attitude towards those beyond our borders?

Let the very envisaging of such a course be enough. Let us determine to keep to the well-tried, divinely-approved ways and await the Lord's time to crown them with success, a time of his Spirit's power. Let us call that our first duty.

Our second, then, must be confession of sin. That is what Ezra did in the day to which our text originally referred. He unhesitatingly associated himself with those who were actually guilty of serious sins (Ezra 9 v. 5-15). Nehemiah in the same period also subscribed to the confession of sin in the 9th chapter of his book. May we not adopt the words of verse 33? "Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou has done right, but we have done wickedly."

None of us can say that we are uncontaminated by the sinful spirit of our day. Let us then confess that the weakness we feel within ourselves, and the weakness we observe in our Church, is connected with our sins as well as the sins of others. And whoever has been guilty in any way of

despising the day of small things, let him confess that. And let those who have been guilty of condoning this despising in any of its forms, confess that. It is only those who confess and repent of this sin who will rejoice at the prospect of a better day, or rejoice when it comes.

Thirdly, we have a duty to attend to what we are told here regarding the Lord's own interest in a day of small things. The Trinity are involved. It is the Father who speaks (v. 8). His eye, one of complete vision and knowledge as signified by the term "seven eyes," is ever upon the cause He loves and cherishes. It is in infinite love that He arranges for that cause to pass through days of small things. Such times are necessary for reasons mostly beyond our grasp. What we do know is that the Church's course and the world's course run concurrently, and in order that the members of the Church may be taken out of the world and given to Christ, the divine plan includes such days as ours. It is one of the things that should cause us to exclaim — "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

The verse also contains a notable reference to Christ. The prediction is that the temple on Mt. Zion would be completed. Zerubbabel the governor who had been a leader in the work is depicted holding a plumbline against the finished walls. But behind Zerubbabel is a higher Governor, the Son of God in our nature. We see Him here, exalted to God's right hand and possessing all power, going on with his great work of building his Church. He must save all whom He redeemed. He, the great Master-Builder, is engaged in laying each of his blood-bought ones upon Himself, the sure foundation and chief corner-stone. In this way a spiritual house is built up to be a holy temple in the Lord. At certain times there will be few of his elect to be gathered, but these periods are put to such use by Christ, that they will be succeeded by others in which the building will rise rapidly.

Then, although the verse does not expressly mention the Third Person of the Godhead, his activity as the executive of Christ's will in applying redemption is the principal subject of this vision. He is symbolised by the oil, but referred to in plain language in verse 6. Unless He work, not one sinner will turn to God. But when He does work, no-one will resist Him — a willing people will come to Christ. Do we know this, and prove that we do, by really depending on God's Spirit to accomplish all work of this sort? How do we expect to be sanctified? How do we expect sinners to be converted? How do we expect the Church to expand? How do we expect our nation to turn from its idols to God? How do we expect the Jews to

receive Christ, and the whole earth to be filled with his glory? — "Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Lastly, we have a duty to attend to every task that the Lord has laid upon us. The ruling elders must do all they can to serve the Lord, consistently with the claims of their worldly callings. The ministers must devote themselves to all the tasks of their special calling, as those who know that they never dare be satisfied with their efforts. We do not know how soon better days may come, nor the demands that a coming great work of the Spirit may make upon us. Therefore we cannot be too diligent in preparing now, and all the time, for preaching, advising, warning and comforting. It is the endless labour of study and prayer behind the four walls of our studies, unseen by men, but witnessed and blessed by God, that will principally make us able ministers of the New Testament. Let us at all costs shun any of the forms of despising a day of small things, and with a quiet and hopeful mind pray, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven," and, "Fill the earth with thy glory, O Lord."

Obituaries

Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale

This worthy minister of the Church was born in September 1896 at Leinnish, Colbost, Glendale, Skye. His parents were Duncan Colquhoun and Marion Morrison and he was the second of a family of four, the eldest of whom died in infancy. When about 10 years of age the family removed to another village, Milivaig, Glendale, where he attended the local school till he was 14 years. Being of an independent and studious turn of mind, he profited by the advice and help of the local school master in the use of sound literature from the school library, both Gaelic and English. A godly neighbour supplied him with religious works, especially in Gaelic and with the religious instruction from his mother who taught him to read the Gaelic Bible at a very early age, he laid the foundation of a sound education in early life. This taste for good literature followed him through life and as a student in Glasgow, he was well known in the second-hand bookshops which in those days abounded in the city.

What were undoubtedly the first religious impressions that he experienced, to which he referred in later life as giving a decided religious character to his life, occurred at the time of the Glendale

communion. He was at this time between the ages of 16 and 17 years. It happened that Rev. N. Cameron, St Jude's, Glasgow, came to assist at the Glendale communion and as was his custom John attended the services. On Thursday forenoon, Mr Cameron preached from the words: "O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2). As he meditated on these words on his way home, the thought forceably struck him: "I have no work in me to revive." So great was the distress of mind occasioned by this realisation which he suffered at this time that he said: "I do not yet know how I walked the three miles back to my home." That evening Mr Cameron preached from the text: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119:9). But as he said: "If I was brought to realise in the forenoon that I had no work in me to revive, Mr Cameron simply tore me to shreds in the evening." This was undoubtedly the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing him of sin.

This same year he went south to begin work on the railway at Kilmacolm and although it meant a walk of 24 miles each Sabbath, in coming and going, the six miles to the Greenock Church to attend the morning and evening services, he was regularly in his place at public worship. He suffered much persecution in this place on account of Sabbath work, but strength was given him by the Lord to remain steadfast. For instance, at one time when he faced dismissal for refusing to do Sabbath work, the late John MacKenzie, student, came to supply Greenock on the Sabbath, and John said: "He described my case and condition as if he had been told all about it, and I can never forget the comfort and strength I received that day through John MacKenzie." One Saturday, however, when he refused to go out to work on the Sabbath, the foreman dismissed him and, as the country was at the time engaged in the 1914-18 World War, gave him the necessary documents with instructions to report on Monday at the Military Headquarters at Stirling for military service. The Commanding Officer who interviewed him told him that he should not have been sent, for his work on the railway exempted him from military service and sent him back to his work. He moved to Eglinton Toll, Glasgow, but again was compelled to leave because of Sabbath work. Eventually, he made the acquaintance of the late Norman MacKay, one of St Jude's elders, who helped him to find work at Buchanan St. Station, Glasgow, where he was himself employed. His joy knew no bounds. This had always been his desire that he might

find work in Glasgow so that he might be under the ministry of Rev. N. Cameron. Here he experienced the liberty of the Gospel and was received into full communion with the St. Jude's congregation.

Mr Cameron took a deep interest in him, often having him up to the manse, and many a precious evening he spent in his minister's company, evenings which he used to refer to in after years as those occasions on which he received advice and counsel which were to prove of great help to him in his future ministry. It may be that Mr Cameron had some premonition that the young man before him would one day be a minister of the Church and deliberately drew upon the fruits of his own early struggles and experiences and recounted the events which led to the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church in which Mr Cameron himself took such a large part, for his future guidance. For some years he held the office of deacon in St Jude's congregation until he was received as a student of the Church by the Southern Presbytery in August 1927.

The work of the Gospel Ministry had for some time before this been on his mind, over which he was greatly exercised, and prayerfully sought to ascertain the Lord's will, as he felt called to the office of the ministry in the Church. The passage of God's Word which confirmed him in the decision to enter the ministry also prepared him for the trials and sufferings which every tried servant of Christ must expect to meet in the Lord's service: "Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel" (2 Tim. 1:8), and of the truth of these words his long ministry was to provide ample proof. He completed his Arts course, of which one year was given to our London congregation during which he attended London University, and thereafter studied Divinity under Rev. D. Beaton, Oban, the Church's tutor. He was duly settled over the Glendale congregation in his native parish, being ordained and inducted to the charge on 28th September 1933. The parish in those days was largely populated, and 650 names were attached to the Call, but of this large congregation he had the sorrow during his long ministry of seeing the large part removed by death. Some time after coming to Glendale, he was united in marriage with Miss Jessie MacKay, Clydebank, who proved a true help meet to her husband in the Master's service and a like-minded follower of the Lamb. He relinquished his charge in 1974 because of failing health and retired to Inverness.

Mr Colquhoun was much sought after during his ministry by congregations who wished to secure him for their pastor but he could not be prevailed upon to leave his first love. In the pulpit his statement of doctrine was clear, well reasoned and solid for he loved the old paths in

theology and practice. His knowledge of the History of the Church, which was detailed in some periods of the Scottish Church and particularly of his own Church, was full and accurate which made his contributions to the work of Church Courts, in the pages of the Church Magazine and in the public press, valuable and helpful. He published two pamphlets dealing with the "Free Offer of the Gospel" and the "Sacrament of Baptism" which were constructive and useful. For 22 years, till failing health led to his resignation, he acted as Clerk of the Western Presbytery besides holding the position of Convener over long periods of the Jewish and Foreign Missions and of the Religion and Morals Committees, the account of whose proceedings, yearly presented to the Synod, was largely from his hand. Twice he was Moderator of Synod.

In his own congregation, his affections and sympathies were attracted to the young, over whom, no doubt recalling his own early experiences, he yearned and grieved, when they had to leave home to seek employment in the south. From the pulpit he warned the young of the dangers that beset them in youth, often dwelling on the words: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10). In warning them of the perils of strong drink, he would often quote the words: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). He spared no trouble to oppose and to warn his people against the inroads of strong drink and appeared at innumerable meetings of the Licensing Board to contest the dangerous readiness of these Boards to grant drink licences, and was at times successful. He was completely attached to our Church's Testimony against unsound doctrine, unscriptural practices and lack of discipline found today in the professing church, the fruit of the church's declension since the passing of the Declaratory Act of 1892 by the old Free Church into law, and made no effort to conceal his strong feelings when any laxity or wavering from that Testimony came to his notice. He served his generation nobly by the will of God and has now entered upon his reward.

He was spared to enjoy a short period of retirement in the evening of his days, ready to help when he could with the services of the House of God and glad to welcome to his home his old friends. On 3rd February, 1976 he took the prayer-meeting in the Inverness congregation, in the absence of the minister on Church work in Rhodesia, and spoke from the words: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is. 54:10). This proved to be his last appearance in public, for he took ill the

following day, a week later was removed to the Royal Northern Infirmary, Inverness, and passed away in a coma on 17th February, 1976, aged 79 years. His remains were interred at Tomnahurich Cemetery, Inverness. To his sorrowing widow we offer our sincere sympathy and commend her to the Lord's gracious care. She was a succourer of many, a tower of strength to her husband, and to her loving interest and care in preserving the main facts of her husband's faithful service and witness, we owe the bulk of what is written here. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether" (Song 2, verse 17).

A.F.M.

Eadar-Mhineachadh Air Salm CXXX

Tha iomadh slochd eu-dionach air am bheil peacaich ullamh air aghaidh a chur air son saorsa 'nan àmhgharaibh; a tha dhoibh mar uisgeachaibh a dh' fhàilnicheas. Tha iad so de dhà sheòrsa, — féin, agus nithe eile. A thaobh na féine, tha i air seilbh a ghabhail de'n chinne-dhaoine gu léir, agus tha i 'riaghladh os an ceann-san uile a tha fo'n lagh; is e sin, chum a bhi 'g iarraidh fuasglaidh o imcheistibh peacaidh le oidhirpean na féin-fhlèantachd. Uaith so tha mòran a dh' anama bochda nach seall gu brath 'nan teann-tachdaibh ni' s àirde na iad fìn. Tha sùil aca ri leigheas o'n làimh cheudna a rinn an lotadh. B'e so gnàth nan Iudhach, mar a tha an t-abstol a' cur an céill, Rom. x. 3. Agus tha na h-uile dhaoine fo'n lagh air an cur thuige leis an ni ceudna. Tha iad a' pilleadh, ach cha-n ann ris an Tighearn. Air dhoibh iad féin fhaotainn ann an doimh-neachdaibh timchioll a' pheacaidh, ciod air am bheil iad a' cur aghaidh? Ni iad an dleasdanas so a nis a choimhlionadh; ni iad an t-olc ud a sheachnadh; gabhaidh iad an dòigh so timchioll nam peacaidhean beaga, agus an dòigh ud eile timchioll nam peacaidhean mòra; ni iad ath-leasachadh far an d' thug iad an t-oilbheum o'm bheil an an-shocair a' sruthadh, agus uaith so bithidh sùil aca ri slth, mar gu'm bitheadh Dia agus iad féin air na cumhachaibh ceudna. Air a' mhodh so tha cuid a' cur seachad an làithean uile a' peacachadh agus ag ath-leasachadh, ag ath-leasachadh agus a' peacachadh, gun a thighinn gu brath gu aithreachas agus slth. Is e gnothuch nan creideach a bhi 'deanamh faire an aghaidh so. Tha iad ag amharc orra féin mar dhilleachd-anaibh: "Annadsa gheibh an dilleachdan tràcair;" is e sin, mar mhuinntir gun chuideachadh, — gun bhunait dòchais sam bith anna féin no uatha féin. Tha fios aca nach dean an cuid aithreachais,

agus ath-leasachaidh, saorsa 'thoirt dhoibh. Feumaidh iad a bhi ri aithreachas, agus ath-leasachadh, ach aig a' cheart àm tha iad a' toirt fainear nach ruig am maitheas air-san ris am bheil an gnothuch, agus nach buannachd dha-san an cuid fireantachd.

Tha dòighean eile ann mar an ceudna trid am bheil anaman peacach 'gan sgrios féin le saorsa mheallta. Ni nithe sam bith an toileachadh leis an toirear an smuaintean a thaobh o'n imcheistibh. Ni iad gréim air ni air chor-éigin nach urrainn an eucail a leigheas, ach a bheir dhoibh a mhain a dhì-chuimhneachadh gu bheil iad tinn. Na meadhonan ceudna ghnàthaich Saul; an toiseach ceòl, 'na dhéigh sin leannan-sìth. Cha-n 'eil ni sam bith a's gnàthaiche le daoineibh na bhi 'buntuinn air a' mhodh so r'an coguisibh a tha fo chiont. Tha iad a' faicinn an tinneis, agus a' mothachadh an creuchda, agus an sin a' dol chum an Asirianaich, Hosea v. 13. Agus tha so ceum air cheum 'gan treòrachadh a dh' ionnsuidh bhi 'g àicheadh Dhé féin. 'N uair a tha leigheasan claona a' chreutair féin air an comh-chur gu tric ri coguis chlàntaich, is meadhon ro chomh-araichte e air a bhi 'daingneachadh an anama fa dheòidh anns a' chruas. Theagamh gu bheil cuid a mhisgearan nach bitheadh gu bràth mar sin, mur bitheadh an coguisean roimh sin fo bhuaireas timchioll pheacaidhean eile. Tha iad a' strì ciont aoin pheacaidh a mhùchadh le peacadh eile. Théid aid air theicheadh uatha féin d' an ionnsuidh féin; o'n coguisibh a dh' ionnsuidh an ana-mianna, ag iarraidh saorsa o'n pheacadh le tuilleadh peacaidh a chur an gnìomh. Is co fad a tha so o chreidich, as nach fhuiling iad do nithibh ceadaichte féin a bhi 'mùchadh an àmhgharan. Feudaidh iad nithe ceadaichte a ghnàthachadh, agus ni iad sin, gidheadh cha-n ann chum a bhi 'claonadh an smuaintean a thaobh o'n trioblaidibh. Tha fios aca gur nithe iad so a dh' fheumar a cheartachadh eadar Dia agus iad féin. Cha chaith iad air falbh, feumar an giùlan air falbh. Tha an t-anam gràsmhor, tha sinn ag ràdh, a' toirt fainear a bhi 'seachnadh nan creagan so, agus an samhail eile a tha gun àireamh. Tha fios aige gur e Dia a mhain a's Tighearn air a choguis, far am bheil a dhoimhneachdan a' luidh; an Dia sin a mhain an aghaidh an do pheacaich e; an Dia sin a mhain a's urrainn a pheacadh a mhaltheadh. Cha-n fhuiling e, ma seadh, a bhi air a thàladh no air a chlaonadh air falbh o ghnòthuch a dheanamh ris. "Thugad-sa, O Thighearna, tha mi teachd," tha e 'g ràdh; "is e d' fhocal-sa mu'm thimchioll d' an éigin seasamh; ort-san a mhain feithidh mi. Mur 'eil do thlachd d' am thaobh, bàsaichidh mi. Tha fios agam gur breug gach òc-shlainte eile. Cha-n e mo rùn mo neart a chaitheadh air ni nach aran. Thugad-sa, O Thighearna, tha mo ghlaodh." Is ann an so a dh' fheumas an t-anam a tha fo

iomguin peacaidh e féin a shocrachadh. Tha trioblaid 'ga chur thuige a dh' iarraidh fuasglaidh. Tha iomadh ni an leth a muigh a' tairgseadh a smuaintean a thoir a thaobh o'n imcheist; agus iomadh ni anns an leth a stigh a' tairgseadh an leigheas. "Leig do dhubhachas air dhì-chuimhne," deir an dara aon; "Gabh an leigheas a th' againn dhuit," deir an t-aon eile. Tha an t-anam 'gan cur air cùl maraon, mar léighibh nach fù, agus a' cur aghaidh air Dia a mhain. Is e Dia a leòn, agus is esan 'na aonar a's urrainn leigheas. Agus gus an tig anam sam bith a tha mothachadh cionta peacaidh gu bhi 'dealachadh ris gach meadhon saorsa eile chum gnothuch a dheanamh ri Dia a mhain, is dlomhain dha sùil a bhi aige ri saorsa 'fhaotainn.

Book Reviews

Sermons to the Natural Man. W. G. T. Shedd. Banner of Truth Trust. £3.50.

When these sermons were first published in 1876, they were reviewed by Dr A. A. Hodge. His review is given on the dust-cover of this new edition. He considered these sermons of Dr Shedd "if not absolutely the best, yet of the very best doctrinal and spirited sermons" produced in that generation. "We have known much of their power in convincing sinners, and in deepening, widening and exalting the experience of true Christians. Doctrinal preaching although not in fashion is the preaching that we need, and the preaching which always best vindicates itself when put to the test of practice."

Dr Shedd was a profound student of divine revelation which makes souls wise unto salvation. He was gifted by the Lord with a special style of his own in the wording of his discourses. One outstanding aspect of them is their solemnity. This can be inferred from the titles. Some of them are, "The Future State a Self-Conscious State," "God's Exhaustive Knowledge of Man," "Self-Scrutiny in God's Presence." Dr Shedd puts searchingly before readers fallen man's relation to the immaculate, eternal, holy God and to His laws. He himself, states that these sermons have a mono-chromatic hue, and while one may agree that the one-coloured hue is largely predominant, yet he does not conclude one discourse without pointing to the God-glorifying remedy offered to sinful beings — the efficacious self-sacrifice of the Redeemer. He lays emphasis at the same time on the need of being enabled to receive it with mind

and heart. The following extracts show how he handles the divine truth of law and gospel.

"The human mind in eternity will have a distinct and unvarying perception of the character of God. . . . In eternity the immaculateness of the Deity will penetrate the consciousness of every rational creature with the subtlety and the thoroughness of fire . . .

The future state of every man is to be an open and unavoidable vision of God. If he delights in the view, he will be blessed; if he loathes it, he will be miserable. This is the substance of heaven and hell. This is the key to the eternal destiny of every human soul. If a man love God, he shall gaze at Him and adore; if he hate God he shall gaze at Him and gnaw his tongue for pain."

The next quotation is from the sermon — "Sin in the Heart the Source of Error in the Head": "Sinful man shapes his creed in accordance with his wishes, and not in accordance with the unbiased decisions of his reason and conscience. He does not like to think of a holy God, and therefore he denies that God is holy. He does not like to think of the eternal punishment of sin, and therefore he denies that punishment is eternal. He does not like to be pardoned through the substituted sufferings of the Son of God, and therefore he denies the doctrine of atonement. He does not like the truth that man is so totally alienated from God that he needs to be renewed in the spirit of his mind by the Holy Ghost, and therefore he denies the doctrines of depravity and regeneration. Run through the creed which the church has lived by and died by, and you will discover that the only obstacle to its reception is the aversion of the human heart."

The final quotation for our present purposes is from the last sermon in this volume, "Faith the Sole Saving Act": "Faith is an active principle that carries the whole man with it, and in it — head and heart, will and affections, body, soul and spirit. There is no act so all-embracing in its reach, and so total in its momentum, as the act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this sense, it is a 'work.' It is no supine and torpid thing; but the most vital and vigorous activity than can be conceived of. When a sinner, moved by the Holy Ghost the very source of spiritual life and energy, casts himself in utter helplessness, and with all his weight, upon his Redeemer for salvation, never is he more active, and never does he do a greater work."

Dr Shedd gives as a reason for the need of these discourses in his day "the fact that multitudes are expecting a happy issue of this life, upon ethical as distinguished from evangelical grounds. They deny that they

deserve damnation, or that they need Christ's atonement. They say they are living virtuous lives" (p. viii). May these evangelical sermons be graciously owned by the Triune God in our day when mere ethical preaching is evidently so common.

D. A. Macf.

Sermons Vols. I-X, by Rev. J. C. Philpot. Gospel Standard Baptist Trust. Price Vols. 1-8 £1.85 each plus 29p postage; Vol. 9 £2.40 plus 29p postage; Vol. 10 (shortly available) £3.50 plus 29p postage; or complete set of 10 Volumes £18.50 plus £2.50 postage.

The Gospel Standard Baptist Trust has now printed no less than ten volumes of Rev. J. C. Philpot's sermons, the last of these volumes being shortly available when it comes from the press. These are well-bound hard-back volumes so should be long lasting. Some of these volumes have already been reviewed and recommended in the magazine as highly spiritual and edifying experimental discourses. The exercised soul, under God's blessing, may derive much comfort from them, but not before being searched and emptied of all that is his own.

As is well known, Philpot did not hold the free offer of the Gospel, and so even with those texts where that offer appears to be so patent that it would seem impossible to avoid it, it is still absent. For instance, in Volume 8 in his sermon on Matthew 11:28, he says of God, "He would not lavish His gracious invitations upon an ungodly and rebellious world; and yet in these very invitations, He would use language which, though within the bounds of due circumspection, should fully reach unto and embrace every quickened soul." Again in his sermon on Isaiah 45:22, in endeavouring to establish who "all the ends of the earth" are, he says, "An expression is Psalm 61:2, throws a light upon the question, 'From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I'. The ends of the earth, then, represent characters at the farthest possible distance from God in their feelings, at the remotest bound of creation, and separated by all this wide interval from that God whom they desire to fear, and in whose approving smile they long to bask."

Volume II contains two of Philpot's well-known sermons — "Winter afore Harvest" and "The Heir of Heaven walking in Darkness, and the Heir of Hell walking in Light." These two sermons and another sermon, "What is it that saves a Soul?", are available as single Sermon Booklets at 40p each plus 10p postage.

Titles of other sermons which may appeal to readers are:— Balm in Gilead (Vol. I); Zion's Gates and the King's Highway (Vol. IV); The Cry of Jonah out of the Belly of Hell (Vol. V); The Precious and the Vile, also The Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax (Vol. VI); Wrestling Jacob (Vol. X). These titles may give an indication of what the series contains and we believe that deeply exercised Christians will value the sermons.

D.B.M.

Ears from Harvested Sheaves, by J. C. Philpot. Price £2.00 plus 54p postage.

Through Baca's Vale, by J. C. Philpot. Price £2.25 plus 54p postage.

These two volumes consist of daily portions selected from Philpot's works by his daughters. The daily portions in "Ears from Harvested Sheaves" are shorter than the portions in "Through Baca's Vale." As they contain choice quotations from Philpot we have no doubt that they will prove helpful to those who read them daily throughout the year. There is just one portion for each day, not two daily portions as found in many daily portion books. We are glad to commend them.

D.B.M.

Notes and Comments

Bibles for Communist Lands

From time to time statements appear in the public press and often from Church leaders closely connected with the World Council of Churches stating that Bibles are available behind the Iron Curtain through the recognised and registered Christian organisations. While it is true that a limited circulation of Bibles is allowed in certain Eastern European lands, it is also true that this supply does not in any way provide for the needs of Christians in these lands. Furthermore, if Christians belonging to unregistered Churches obtained Bibles in this way, having to sign for them, they would immediately be marked men and subjected to the pressures which Communist regimes bring to bear on those who refuse to abandon the Christian Faith. Consequently, statements about the availability of Bibles in Communist lands should not be taken at their face value, and every support should be given to the supply of Bibles to Eastern Europe, as well as elsewhere.

Football Madness

The entry of Scotland into the World Cup Football Competition in

South America was the occasion of extraordinary scenes of excitement and of the adulation of the players taking part. The manager of the team was almost exalted into a demi-god by sports writers and by the team's supporters. Some supporters were reported to have mortgaged their homes to procure sufficient money for the cost of their fare to South America. When the team and manager failed to live up to expectations scenes of hysteria resulted in which the broken idols were disowned and derided by those who a short time before had worshipped them. What a lesson all this teaches us. How foolish to give such a place to sport that when our expectations there are lost, we have lost our all! What need there is to seek a better portion than the empty pleasures of this life. How much better to seek an interest in Jesus Christ with the promise as well of the possession of those pleasures which are at God's right hand.

Africa

The situation in Africa continues to be serious through Communist involvement in that Continent. It is likely to remain the scene of much intrigue and bloodshed for some time to come. It is at least heartening that the Western nations appear to be waking up to the threat posed through Communist activity.

In Rhodesia the internal agreement has held but progress to peace and stability is slow. Lives continue to be lost through guerilla attacks. It is to be hoped that a stable government may yet be set up which would permit the continuation of the spread of the Gospel in that land.

We sympathise with those on the Mission Field in their trying position. We trust, however, that they are conscious of the Lord's protecting care over them in the midst of all their difficulties. May Rhodesia — yes, and the whole of Africa — experience a day of the Lord's power. It is this that would put the Communist armies to flight.

Church Notes

Perth Communion

We wish to intimate that, God willing, we hope to hold a communion in Perth on the last Sabbath of August (27th). The minister who is to assist is Rev. R. R. Sinclair, Wick (D.V.).

Dundee

From its inception, the Dundee congregation has met in the Brook Street Y.M.C.A., Broughty Ferry. It has been felt for some time that a

meeting place nearer the centre of the city would be more suitable. Such a place has now been found, and services are to commence there from the first Sabbath of July. The new address is: Y.W.C.A., 27 Crichton Street, Dundee. We trust that this move, under the blessing of God, will be to the benefit of the congregation.

Theological Conference

The Conference will be held this year in Inverness on Tuesday and Wednesday, 5th and 6th September, the Lord willing. The speakers and the papers are expected to be as follows:—

Tuesday, 2.30 p.m. — “The Doctrine of the Person of Christ and some attendant heresies” — Rev. Alexander Murray, M.A., Applecross.

Tuesday, 7 p.m. — “The letters of John Hus” — Rev. John M. Brentnall, B.A., Dumbarton.

Wednesday, 10 a.m. — “The Arminian Heresy Today” — Rev. John W. Ross, Lochcarron.

Wednesday, 2.30 p.m. — “Missionary Principles in the Modern World” — Rev. John Tallach, M.A., Kinlochbervie.

Wednesday, 7 p.m. — “Religious Experience” — Rev. Donald M Campbell, Shieldaig.

The paper on Wednesday evening will be in public.

The chairman this year will be Rev. Donald Maclean, Glasgow.

Publications Fund

In its report to the Synod, the Finance Committee expressed the view that since the College and Library Fund showed such a good balance, it would show the Church's appreciation of our people's contributions, if that particular collection would not be taken up in December of this year. At a later stage in the Synod, it was felt that the Publications Fund needed support and it was agreed “That the people of the Church be invited in the Free Presbyterian Magazine to make contributions to the Publications Fund and further that this year a collection be taken for this fund in December instead of the College and Library Fund.” Any such contributions should be sent to the Publications' Treasurer, Mr R. MacKenzie, C.A. (Rev.) Donald MacLean, *Clerk of Synod*.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 1st August, at 6 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 24th October, at 11 a.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 12th September, at 6 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 5th September, at 11.30 a.m.

Western: At Laide on 29th August, at 12 noon.

Tribute to Rev. D. M. MacLeod, Auckland

The Clerk of the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery, Rev. J. van Dorp, wishes to intimate that it will not be possible to present a Presbytery tribute about the late Rev. D. M. MacLeod, Auckland, until after their Presbytery meeting at Gisborne on 20th October (D.V.).

Abortion Act

At its meeting in May, the Synod sent an Appeal and Protest regarding the Abortion Act to Government ministers. The Clerk has received the following reply from the Scottish Home and Health Department of date 15th June and it is reproduced here for the interest of readers of the magazine

Dear Mr MacLean,

I have been asked to reply to the letters of 31 May which you sent to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland, enclosing a Protest and Appeal prepared by the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in relation to the Abortion Act 1967.

The Ministers concerned are aware that you will be writing with the Scottish position particularly in mind, though the substance of Synod's observations relate to an Act which, as you may know, applies in its present form throughout Great Britain.

Following expressions of public concern about the working of the Abortion Act after it had been in operation for a very few years, the then Government decided in 1971 to establish a committee to review the operation of the Act. This committee, chaired by Mrs Justice Lane, reported in April 1974. In February 1975 a Bill in the name of Mr James White, which provided for certain restrictions in abortion practice, had its second reading in the House of Commons. The House decided that any requirements for new legislation in this field following the Lane Committee Report should be considered by a Parliamentary Select Committee.

The Select Committee established in the same sessions as a result of this decision produced a report which recommended a series of measures designed to improve the operation of the 1967 Act, none of which in fact required legislative change. These recommendations were fully accepted by the Government and action to implement them has been taken for the most part in Scotland as in other parts of Great Britain. A further report by the Select Committee following its re-establishment aroused controversy because of the resignation of some of the members and this

report was not debated. In the following session Parliament had before it Mr William Benyon's Bill, which would also have reduced the circumstances in which abortions could be carried out, but which failed to progress beyond Standing Committee because of lack of parliamentary time.

In relation to all three Private Member's Bills (and Sir Bernard Braine's Bill in the present session) the Government has maintained an attitude of neutrality, in accordance with its view that in respect of the main elements of the law regulating this subject, Members should be free to vote according to conscience. It is seen as a necessary part of such neutrality that assistance should not be given to a measure which favours one side or other in the argument for changes in abortion law and for which no clear consensus is seen to exist.

I am asked to assure the Synod that the Government is very much aware of the sincerely held views of those who are opposed to the provisions of the Abortion Act 1967 (and the views of those who feel that these provisions are unduly restrictive) and fully accepts that fundamental moral issues are involved in the surrounding controversy. It is for the reasons that the Secretary of State, along with his Government colleague continues to adopt a broadly neutral attitude to the question of future legislation.

The account of events since 1974 serves to indicate the very extensive consideration which has been given by Parliament to the law on abortion over the past few years. Against this background I am sure that Synod will see the very severe difficulties of the proposal made for repeal of the present law on the initiative of the Government. I appreciate that this reply may not give the satisfaction required by the Petition but I can assure Synod that the matter has received the very close attention of the Secretary of State as the Government Minister responsible for the law of abortion in Scotland. — Yours sincerely,

D. A. Bennet.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr W. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Glasgow G12 0HE, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:

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