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By Whom shall Jacob Arise?

We are apt to be discouraged when we see not likely instruments to carry on the Lord's work, and bring about the glorious things He hath promised, and to cry "By whom shall Jacob arise?" not minding that God can raise up children from stones, and instruments to serve Him where they were not expected. Though we be often at our wit's end, we should never be at our faith's end. God can never be at a loss to carry on His work, while He hath enough of clay and spirit to form instruments for His purpose. When the arm of the Lord once awakes for His church no impediment can stop Him. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it." The pouring of God's Spirit from on high answers all objections, overcomes difficulties, provides supplies, and affords remedies in the most desperate cases.

Oh how desperate-like was Luther's attempt in the year 1517, when he a poor monk, set himself against the torrent of idolatry and corruption that prevailed under antichrist at that time. It seemed as ridiculous as if a man had set his shoulder to a great mountain on purpose to remove it. And so it was in the reckoning of the wisest of that age; and hence when Luther opened his designs to a great doctor, who disapproved of the Romish corruptions as well as he, he bade Luther retire to his cell, and pray "Lord have mercy on us;" as if there was no remedy. Yet how wonderfully did the purity of doctrine and worship break forth and prevail to amazement, among sundry nations, so as to shake the foundations of Antichrist's throne, and give him a deadly wound, under which he hath been languishing ever since! There had been several attempts for reformation made by others long before Luther as by Wickliffe, Huss, and Jerome of Prague; but all were uneffectual, because God's time was not then come. But when once that time cometh no man is able to hinder it, more than stop the sun from breaking out under a cloud. It becomes,

then, all the Lord's people to keep in the way of duty and wait patiently, till the set time to favour Zion comes.

One thing is sure, Antichrist must decrease, and Christ must increase. And however dark and cloudy the present time be, we are well assured "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory".

from: *The Balm of Gilead* by Rev. John Willison.

Notes of Sermon

Preached by Rev. D. B. MacLeod, Dingwall, on the Friday evening of the Ness Communion in October 1986, and taken down by a hearer.

"I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." — Zeph 3: 12.

We have before us in this part of God's word the prophecy that Zephaniah was given to deliver "in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah." That was not long before this people were carried away captive into the bondage of Babylon for their sin and they were given intimation of this — the Lord declaring to them, "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast;" declaring to them "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly." The nature of the calamities can be gauged from the intimation concerning that day — it is a "day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers".

We have brought before us also in connection with the prophecies that the Lord commanded His prophets to utter that these prophecies were not altogether prophecies intimating destruction and judgment upon the people, but there were held out also promises of God, that at a future time the Lord would shew mercy, that the time would come when they would be delivered from all the judgments that were threatened and that their enemies also were to experience judgment: that was true even of the nation of Babylon, of Nebuchadnezzar and of his hosts. Though the Lord used the Assyrians and the Babylonians for inflicting judgments upon His people yet, when He had finished with them, He brought destruction upon them.

We would desire to notice particularly what the Lord is declaring in

connection with this people: though they are facing these judgments, the Lord is giving them His promise concerning a people that he was to leave in the midst of them: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord". Certainly that was true of the land of Judah — there was a remnant left in that land. We would desire to notice, as the Lord may enable us, particularly the promise that is given here concerning this people that were to be left. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people" — it was to be the Lord's doing and not man's, the Lord was to do this for them. That is true concerning the Lord's dealings with His Church in the world still, even in the midst of times of desolating judgments. The Lord has His own, for they are the seed that the Lord has blessed and the Lord is to preserve a seed to do Him service as long as sun and moon endure, however few they be at certain times in the history of the world. They are the salt of the earth that keeps the earth from wholly putrifying through sin. The Lord is to have a remnant even in the darkest days, the Lord is faithful to His promise.

We would desire to notice then, **first** of all, how they are described here — as an afflicted and poor people, it is a description that eminently suits the people of God in every age of time, and we would **secondly** go on to consider what is said concerning them — that is, that they will trust in the name of the Lord. It is a mark of this people whether it be the dark day or the bright day. They will be found trusting in the name of the Lord. Then **last** of all, that the glory of this is due unto the one who declares "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." If the Lord had not left them then they would not be there, if the Lord had not planted them they would not be there. The glory of it belongs to Him: "Not unto us, Lord, not to us, but do thou glory take unto thy name, ev'n for thy truth, and for thy mercy's sake."

We may consider, first of all, how they are described — "an afflicted and poor people". They are an afflicted people — exposed to all the natural afflictions and troubles to which all men are exposed in this world. They are not preserved from these manifold afflictions and troubles that are common to man in this world, that is part of their lot here in this world. It is through sin that affliction and trouble has come upon man; it is through sin that men are exposed to so many troubles in this world; troubles of body and troubles of mind, afflictions in their circumstances and in many ways for the world is a place where men experience many afflictions and many troubles; the world is a place of

weeping because sin has made it so. The children of God in the world experience in their own lot the trials and afflictions which are common to the children of men. That does not mean that the afflictions of the children of God in those things are the same as the afflictions of the unrighteous — they are afflicted indeed in the same way as the world but these afflictions have a very different effect on the righteous than on the ungodly. These afflictions cause the ungodly to rebel and murmur against God because of the troubles that the Lord brings them into: they quarrel with the dispensations of God's hand, they will not willingly submit but rebel in their heart and are opposed to them and to the God who sent these things. But when you come to those spoken of here as this afflicted people, who know much of afflictions of their body or troubles in their circumstances, these troubles that are common to man, they view them in a different light altogether — they have a sanctifying influence on them, they are sent to them by the Lord and they see the Lord's hand in all these afflictions and they recognise that "in all their afflictions He was afflicted". They pour out their hearts concerning these afflictions to the Lord; they cast their burden on the Lord: "Cast thou thy burden on the Lord, and he shall thee sustain." These afflictions, instead of having the hardening effect they have on the ungodly, have a sanctifying effect on the children of God. The Psalmist had to say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted". He received good out of them and that is why they are there for the children of God — that they might be sanctified through these afflictions, that they would take them to the One who is able to meet with them in their affliction.

And again, this afflicted people brought before us here, have afflictions and troubles that the world knows nothing of. This people who are an afflicted people are afflicted by reason of indwelling sin and corruption in their own hearts and the outbreakings of sin and corruption in their minds. These are trials to the people of God. They are afflicted because of the power of corruption that is within their own heart, they find this in their experience day by day in this world and that is what the world lying in the wicked one knows nothing of.

They are exposed to the persecution of the world and that means affliction and trouble. It is true that at certain times in the history of the church of God outward and open persecution is not possible. The world is prevented from persecuting the church as it would if it could. Nevertheless, there will be a persecution of one kind or another. The enmity of the world will manifest itself wherever the grace of God is; there will be opposition from the world lying in the wicked one and that will mean for

the children of God, affliction. The Saviour Himself declared that "in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The world then will be found an enemy to the people of God: the world hates the church of God and the world within the church of God will be an enemy to the people of God.

And again, they will have afflictions and that through the assaults of the Wicked One who goes about seeking whom he may devour — his aim is to devour the gracious soul: he will be firing his darts into their bosom in order that he might destroy them and cause them to fall. These assaults come at times unlooked for; when they least expect it the enemy comes, for Satan is a master in this. He knows when and where to launch his assaults against the tried and afflicted and troubled children of God.

Perhaps all these afflictions came all together, one upon the other, and that upon the poor believing soul in this world so that they are ready to be overwhelmed by these assaults within and without, from their own heart and from the world lying in the wicked one, the enemy and the oppressor.

Again we have brought before us that they are a poor people. The people of God in this world are oftentimes found not amongst the high and mighty of this world but amongst the poor of this world — that has been the way in the history of the world. James had to declare, "Hearken, my beloved brethren. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" They are often found amongst the poor of this world and because they are of the poor of this world they are despised by the world and the world thinks very little of them: the world regards them as of little worth in their sight. Poor in this world yet rich towards God. But they are a poor people and, when they consider themselves, this is how they regard themselves when they weigh up their own standing — this is what they have to conclude concerning themselves and that with regard to their needs in this world as the children of God — they are poor and needy. That is the character of this people. They have nothing of their own and they cannot bring anything of their own because they have nothing to bring. They are poor in themselves and as they go in this world it is not richer they are getting but poorer in their own eyes as they learn more of their poverty and what needy creatures they are. They came to know more and more of their own poverty. They are a poor and afflicted people, poor in the eyes of the world and poor in their own eyes as those who are weak and helpless in themselves, as needy and as dependent for all their needs, for surely that is true of those that are poor — they must be

dependent upon others for their needs to be met. They are a dependent people whose needs cannot be met in themselves because they have come to know how great their need is. They have come to know the riches of divine grace: that is what they need and that is what the longing and the desire of their heart is for that they would be enriched with divine riches in their soul because daily they see their poverty. Therefore, they are poor and are ever kept poor in order that they may ever be kept dependent. The Lord is not to give their riches into their hand: that was done to Adam — all his riches were put into his hand and how short a time he kept hold of them. The riches of divine grace are not put into their hand but these riches are stored up in Jesus Christ so that the riches will be preserved in Him and they are to come empty and needy and poor to that fountain fulness day by day as the children of Israel came daily for the manna, the bread from heaven. They are ever to be aware of their poverty so that they might come to receive out of the fulness in the Redeemer. The carnal heart of man desires to be independent but, if we are of those whom the Lord has blessed, He will not leave us to that — He will keep us poor, He will keep us dependent and being dependent we will never lack supply for there is a fulness with Him to bestow upon the poor and needy and His ear is open to hear the cry of the poor and the needy in their distress. The Lord has what will meet their particular needs at that moment; therefore, they are kept poor that they might come to receive of this blessing.

Poor yet rich beyond compare — rich with the riches of divine grace stored up in Jesus Christ. These are their riches, the Lord Himself has purchased these blessings for them, therefore, how rich these people are — but, in this world they are a poor people, an afflicted and poor people despised by the world. That is to be their lot as they go on in this world; right on through the wilderness of this world they are to be marked out in this way — an afflicted and poor people. Men might ask, “Who are they?” and “Where are they going?” Well, they are the people whom the Lord has blessed and they are going to the heavenly Jerusalem, drawing their supply daily out of the riches of divine grace and mercy and love in the Redeemer.

“... they shall trust in the name of the Lord”. This people who are an afflicted and poor people are trusting in the name of the Lord: they have come to trust in the Saviour, they have come under the shelter of the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, they are ingrafted in the true vine; they are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, through the effectual working of the Spirit of God in them. They have come to have their

hope in the Lord, their expectation is in the Lord alone. They live a life of faith upon the Son of God: the life that they now live in the flesh they live by the faith of the Son of God who loved them and gave Himself for them. They are a people marked in this way — that they trust in the Name of the Lord; it is here their hope is; this is where their expectation is; they are resting in the Lord day by day in this world. They are not trusting in themselves. They have come to see that self-reliance is altogether vain; they have been brought to this mind — to look to the Lord and to trust in Him and not to trust in themselves. They have come to see this that it is vain to trust in man for there is no strength in man: it is like relying on the broken reed Egypt to rely upon the creature. They must look beyond the creature to the God of their salvation. They have reason indeed to trust in the Lord who have come to know in their experience His saving power in delivering them from the bondage of sin and death, bringing them into the light and liberty of His grace, delivered from the lowest hell to eternal life. Those, who have demonstrated to them in this way the saving power of God Most High in and through the divine Redeemer, they have reason indeed to trust in the name of the Lord and to rest on Him alone for salvation. He is their Deliverer. He is their Shield; therefore, they are to trust in Him at all times.

The name of the Lord is that which makes known the glory of God, and the power of God. The name of the Lord is a revelation of one aspect or another of His glory and therefore they are to trust in the Lord or in His name whose names are revealed in the Truth and which display His glory and reveal Himself as He is the Divine and Glorious One, the Almighty Deliverer and Saviour. He is One who is worthy of this — that they should put their trust in Him. Their soul never comes to this until they are convinced in the Gospel that He is worthy of this, that they should rest on Him alone and that, if they trust in Him, He will never put them to shame, and that is what they have come to do through the revelation given in His word. They have come to rest in Him that they might trust in His name who is the Divine and Almighty Redeemer.

They have been delivered by almighty power and they are looking to the same source for deliverance now and for all time. It is not to some other refuge that they are to go. They trust in the name of the Lord for deliverance — that He who delivered them is the One who delivers now and who will deliver them out of all their troubles and afflictions and dangers for He is the great Deliverer. Those who have come to trust in Him who have been brought to a living faith in a living Saviour the faith they have is tested in one way or another. The faith of Abraham was

tested when he was told to offer up his son Isaac and it was a test that Abraham's faith rose above — the one who was the father of the faithful. And so it will be true of the children of God here. Their faith will be tested. We read of Abraham who "against hope believed in hope" — to trust in the name of the Lord when everything is against the fulfilment of the promise: that is what the children of God are up against so many times in this world — that it seems an absolute impossibility that the promise shall be fulfilled but the word of God is to stand, therefore, faith will believe the promise for He is faithful who promises — faith will stand this trial.

They trust in the name of the Lord in the bright day when things go well, a day of spiritual blessing in their soul — then they trust in the Lord, but when it comes to the dark day, the day of trouble and trial are they still to trust in the name of the Lord when they walk in darkness and have no light? They yield obedience to the word of the Lord, where is the man "that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God."

When, in their own conscience, they are afraid that they have ceased to trust in this one, yet because of the grace of God in their hearts, this people are secretly trusting in the Lord in the depths of their soul because that trusting in the Lord is not sustained by their effort but is sustained by heaven in the secret of the soul: the Lord will see to this, that that lamp will never go out and they will come out on the other side of the dark night and light will begin to break again and, coming out on the other side of that night, they will come out with their faith strengthened, their hope enlivened, giving glory to Him who preserved them and carried them through.

They shall trust in the name of the Lord in life and in death. When they come to the end of their day, where is their hope then? It cannot be in themselves, for there is nothing there, it must be in the One in whom they have trusted hitherto. So, when they approach the dark valley of the shadow of death it will be trusting in Him who promised to maintain that work in them and to perfect it.

Let us notice then last of all, seeing that this is true of this people — afflicted and poor — to whom does the glory of all this belong? It is to the One who says: "I will also leave in the midst of thee and afflicted and poor people . . ." They are a people planted by God's grace in His house: "They shall grow up, and flourish all in our God's Holy place"; they are to be "like the palm tree flourishing" and the glory of it is to the One who brought them to be of this afflicted and poor people and to trust in

the Name of the Lord. The glory of it must belong to the Lord in this — that if they are to trace the beginning of this back to its ultimate beginning, it is to the electing love of Him who embraced them in His electing love to be a people united to Him. It was the electing love of the Father that embraced them before the world was, else they would never be among this people — this afflicted and poor people. They are to trace it to this also — the redeeming love of the Divine Redeemer: all who have been embraced in the divine electing love, have been embraced in the redeeming love of the Son, because the eye of the Father was upon the Son, when His love went out to a number that no man can number of this fallen race of Adam, that He would redeem them by His blood. They are an afflicted and poor people and would never have been so were it not for the sanctifying love of the Spirit of God manifested toward them and that when they were regenerated by the Spirit of God, for, as the Spirit of grace, He wrought effectually in their heart in a day of grace and mercy and, had it never been so, they would still be in the world, godless and in their sin. But the Spirit of God visited them; the Spirit of God came to them and wrought effectually in their souls, delivering them from the bondage of sin and death, bringing them to know their guilt, to see the wonder of the revelation of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, to lay hold of it by the implantation of faith in their hearts that they might embrace this glorious One as their Saviour, their Redeemer, their all. This is the work of the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Therefore, to Him be all the glory and all the praise. That is true of the redeemed now and will be true through endless ages — praise and thanks, world without end to Father, Son and Holy Ghost, because of the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, where Christ is all the glory in Immanuel's land, when they are to experience affliction no more, when their afflictions will give way to the joy and blessedness that awaits the redeemed in Mount Zion above. Lazarus was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom to receive his reward and what a reward that was. "The troubles that afflict the just in number many be" but the promise is that the Lord will deliver them out of them all: the troubles that afflict the just in number many be but yet at length out of them all the Lord doth set him free." That will be your experience whose hope is in the Lord your God: the day is coming when your tears will be wiped away and when you will see God's face revealed in Jesus Christ, when you will see it unveiled.

These afflictions to the eyes of men may be very heavy but the Apostle had another view of them — "our light afflictions" — that is in the light of the afflictions of the afflicted One, placed beside the sufferings of

Him who was God's Suffering Servant. What are their troubles and afflictions compared to the One who said, "Is there any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fiery anger." They are light afflictions which are to work for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". The afflictions of the afflicted children of God in this world are not to prove a hindrance to their enjoyment of the glory that awaits them, to their enjoyment of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ but, rather, will enhance the glory of heaven for all the tried, afflicted children of God. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Surely, then, we have to say, "Blessed afflictions which will work such an end."

The use of faith, if Popery should return upon us

Over 300 years ago the great Dr Owen turned his mind to this subject and delivered the discourse which follows. The views and sentiments expressed are, in our view, very relevant to our times, Popery having returned upon us to such an extent that 1988 is predicted as the likely year of decision in Anglo-Catholic unity. Owen's text is, "The just shall live by his faith", Habakkuk 2: 4, and this is the third of four sermons which he preached on the words.

Our inquiry is, how we may live by faith, with reference unto those difficulties we have, or may have, to conflict with in the days wherein we live. The last head we spake to was, how we may live by faith in reference to all the reproaches and scornful contempt that are cast upon that way of worship, that order and fellowship of the gospel, which we cleave unto, and the persecutions which we may undergo upon that account. I now proceed:—

The second difficulty that we have, or may have, to conflict with is, *the return of Popery into this land*. Half the talk of the world is upon this subject. I have nothing to say to some among ourselves; but I verily believe, that those who have the conduct of the papal antichristian affairs throughout the world are endeavouring to bring it in upon us. I remember what holy Latimer said when he came to die, "Once I believed Popery would never return into England; but," said he, "I find it was

not faith, but fancy." I wish it prove not so with many of us. Now, that which I am to speak unto is this, — how we should live by faith, both in the prospect of the danger of it, and if it should come upon us. I shall name unto you a few things which I exercise myself with. If you have more supporting thoughts, and a better guidance of light, I pray God confirm it unto you.

(1.) The first thing I would exercise my thoughts upon, and that my faith rests in, in this case, is this, — *that there is a fixed, determinate time* in the counsel of God, when Antichrist and Babylon, and idolatry and superstition, together with that profaneness of life which they have brought in, *shall be destroyed*. It is so fixed, that it shall not be altered: all the wisdom of men, all the sins of men, and all our unbelief, shall not hinder it a day; it shall assuredly come to pass in its appointed season. This time is reckoned up in Scripture by days, by months, by years; — not that we should know the *time* of it, but that we should know the *certainly* of it; for if it hath but so many days, but so many months and years, then it must have a certain period.

Under the Old Testament we see this all along. Saith God to Abraham, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they shall afflict them 400 years; and also that nation will I judge," Gen. 15: 13, 14. They knew not the beginning nor the ending of this 400 years; but they knew that at the end of them it should be as God had said: and "the self-same day it came to pass," Exod. 12: 41. Likewise God threatens the Jews with a 70 years captivity in Babylon: "and it shall come to pass," saith God, "when the 70 years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation for their iniquity," Jer. 25: 11, 12. The church knew not when they began, or when they would end; but this they knew, that the same day they were accomplished it should be as God had said. And so it was.

The fixing and computing of the time of the Man of Sin, of Antichrist, by days, and months, and years, is to secure our faith in the punctual determination of the season, but not to satisfy our curiosity when the season should be. But the consideration of this, that there is such a time, or a determinate season, is a great foundation of faith and patience. Isa. 60: 22, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time." But if there be a fixed time for the accomplishment of this promise, you may ask, "How can it then be hastened?" Why, if you live in the exercise of faith and patience, it shall surprise you; it shall come when you do not think it will, nor expect it: "I will hasten it in his time;" — "I will not bring it before its time, be

ye never so patient or impatient; but exercise faith and patience, and I will so order it, that it shall be a sweet surprisal unto you." And it is a means of patience, Hab. 2: 3, "If the vision" seem to "tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come." When we know it will come, when we know there is such a determinate time, and that it will surely come, it is a great ground of patience to wait for it. This is a great consideration with me, and I leave it with you. Here I can exercise faith, without fancy or conjecture, that there is a certain determinate time in the counsel of God wherein he will pour out all his judgments and plagues upon the anti-christian world, until Antichristianism be destroyed and rooted out.

(2.) Another thing that comforts my heart is this, — it is *no less glorious* to suffer under the *beast* and the false prophet than it was to suffer under the *dragon*. The book of the Revelation is chiefly made up of these two things, — of the persecutions of the church; one by the dragon, and *he* is conquered; the other by the *beast and false prophet*, and *they* shall be conquered. The dragon was the heathen power of the Roman empire; and it was a glorious thing to suffer under that power. They that did so are described, Rev. 7: 14, 15, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." And of those that suffered under the beast and the false prophet it is said Rev. 12: 11, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." We account them great and glorious persons who won the liberty of the gospel and the Christian religion by suffering against the pagan power, and who destroyed all idolatry by their blood, starving and "famishing all the gods of the earth," Zeph. 2:11. Never were men more glorious than they. These made up the "Turba palmifera;" that is, the company who, with palms in their hands, and a new song in their mouths, give glory unto God, Rev. 7: 9-12. I say, it is not less glorious to suffer under the beast and false prophet, the second persecuting power, — that is, the papal, antichristian power, — than it was before under the pagan. This the church hath for many ages conflicted withal, and must continue to do so, until the time is come when they shall have a perfect and complete conquest over this also. It is a glorious thing, and I would have you reckon upon it as such. If a time of going into Smithfield should again come, — if God shall call us to that fiery trial or any other, whatever it may be, — remember that to suffer against Antichrist is as great and glorious as to suffer against Paganism.

(3.) Though our *persons* fall, our *cause* shall be as truly, certainly, and infallibly victorious, as that Christ sits at the right hand of God. Among the heathens, men of courage did not value their own lives, so their cause was carried on. Now, however your persons or my person may fall in this trial, yet the cause in which we are engaged shall as surely conquer as Christ is alive and shall prevail at last. Upon the first rise of the beast, it is said, Rev. 13: 7, "He made war with the saints, and overcame them." The poor Waldenses looked upon themselves to be the people there prophesied of; and said, when they were under the butcheries of the papal power, "We are the conquered people of God; but there shall come forth conquerers." When going to die, they knew and believed their cause would conquer. And so, after Antichrist hath conquered and prevailed over persons for a season, at length it will come to a final issue. "They shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful," Rev. 17: 14. The gospel shall be victorious. This is the third thing that greatly comforts and refreshes me, — that if God should give me the honour, the strength, and grace to die in this cause, my cause shall be victorious, as sure as if I had the crown in my hand.

(4.) *The judgments of God shall come upon the antichristian world when they look not for them*; when the kings of the earth do not look for them; yea, when believers themselves do not look for them; — they shall come so suddenly. The Holy Ghost saith so expressly, Rev. 18: 8, "Her plagues shall come in one day, death and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire." How is it possible that one that is in the state and condition wherein she is, should have her plagues come upon her in *one day*? The reason is added, "For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." Almighty strength shall be put forth for the accomplishing of it. And if this be not enough, the 17th verse tells you that it shall come in "one hour". And I do verily believe that the destruction of this cursed antichristian state (of the head of it) will be brought about by none of those means we see or know of; but that the strong Lord God shall break in upon her and destroy her by ways unknown to us. It may be tomorrow; it may be not these hundred years. She herself when it is done shall look for no such thing. Verses 7, 8, "She hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day." When she is boasting herself, destruction shall come; — when the kings of the earth shall have no expectation of it; for they shall

cry, verse 16, "Alas, alas! that great city, Babylon, that mighty city; for in one hour so great riches is come to nought." And believers themselves will be such as the children of Israel in Egypt. When Moses came they could not believe, because of the cruel bondage they were under: it is like the day wherein God's judgments will come upon Antichrist, the old enemies of Jesus Christ.

(5.) I would consider very much with myself the greatness of *the indignation of God against those that shall in the least comply with Antichristianism* when it doth come upon us. In Rev. 13: 11, there is mention of "a beast that had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" (which, I think, is the pope), "and he exerciseth all the power of the first beast;" that is, he exercises a power answerable to the pagan power. And what then? Verse 16, "He caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark." No matter what the mark is; but to receive any thing of him, is to receive his mark; either in our foreheads where we shall show it unto all the world; or in our right hands, more privately, where it may be shown when opportunity serves. What then? Why, in chapter 14: 6,7, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." When Antichrist would bring his mark on the foreheads of the people and into their hands, God, by his gospel, calls men from their false worship and idolatry. But what if they do not obey? The 9th and 10th verses tell us a "third angel followed, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," etc. Some will be apt to say, "Let us make a fair composition, and use some compliance, to put an end to these disputes." No; do it at your peril. God saith you shall drink of the wine of his wrath, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and that for ever and ever. And I believe with all my heart and soul that this will be the portion of all the men and women in this nation that shall comply with any return of antichristian idolatry among us: — God shall pour out his indignation upon them.

(6.) Remember that *if the trial comes, it is a day of battle*; and it is not for you, when you should just engage in a battle, to be considering of this or that way or contrivance to escape. No; it is courage, and constancy, and faith alone, must be set on work, or you will not be preserved. All your wisdom and contrivances will not preserve you; but it being come to the issue between Christ and Antichrist, "it is the girding up the loins of your mind," and a "resisting unto blood against sin," and abiding in it, that is your duty, and must preserve you. Nothing will save you but faith, courage, and constancy.

(7.) There are in the Scripture *intimations*, that those who, in an especial manner, cleave unto God and his worship, with faith, love, and delight, shall be preserved and saved. I do not propose this unto you as an object of your faith; all the rest I do: but I say, there are intimations that give me some satisfaction; that they who with quick and lively spirits do act faith, and love, and delight in God and his worship, or that are worshippers in the inner court of the temple, shall be peculiarly secured at such a time. But I am afraid few of us shall have it; because I see so much coldness and deadness grown generally upon us and the churches of Christ. It makes me think exercises will come upon us all; for we have need of them.

To conclude,—

First, Let not your talk about *strange things* keep the thoughts of these things you have been hearing out of your hearts; for you will be tried with Antichristianism before you die. We talk of news, and great things we look for in the world, and that Antichrist shall be destroyed: and so he will; but I do believe he will try us sorely in the meantime.

Secondly. Take heed of *computations*. How woefully and wretchedly have we been mistaken by this! We know the time is determined, — its beginning and ending is known to God; and we must live by faith till the accomplishment.

Thirdly. So many of us have afresh engaged ourselves in covenant unto God, let us remember that we have taken the "mark of God upon our foreheads;" and it will ill become us to set the mark of Antichrist by it.

This is all I have to offer unto you as to living by faith under the apprehensions of those difficulties we have to conflict withal, in reference to the coming in of profaneness and idolatry, wherewith we are threatened by hell and the world, which are at this day combining together to bring them again upon this nation.

Towards 1988

by Rev. Dr. Donald M. Boyd.

This is an edited copy of the paper which was delivered at the Theological Conference on 4th December 1985 during the debate in the Church of Scotland whether they should unite with the Scottish Episcopal Church, involving the change of their constitution.

This paper is a survey of the movement in the Church of Scotland in the past 30 years with respect to their constitution and relation to the Westminster Confession of Faith. This is of great interest to us when we view it in the context of the larger ecclesiastical scene. It is therefore necessary to prelude my remarks with a brief survey of that wider scene.

The wider ecumenical scene

The Religion and Morals Report for 1985 says " . . . the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity is predicting 1988 as a likely year of decision in Anglo-Catholic unity. He names this year because it is the time of the next Lambeth Conference. Concurrently, a meeting at Lambeth Palace has announced a search for a basis for church unity in three stages — the third will be in 1987 in which there are to be three regional, and a final national conference." This concern for 1988 has been taken up by others. The Protestant Reformation Society held a Conference in September 1985 called, "Spirit of '88". The same society circulated a news-sheet drawing attention to the approaching Lambeth Conference and that the 2nd Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission is expected to be completed by 1987¹. It gives the following assessment:

"1988 is going to be an important year for the culmination of ecumenical endeavour. Many enterprises are now about to bring the Church of Rome and the Protestant Churches together in a significant way."

The important point to notice is that the Presbyterian Churches, including the Church of Scotland, are also involved in these worldwide ecumenical manoeuvres. By virtue of its membership of and association with many worldwide ecumenical bodies, the Church of Scotland finds itself regularly studying and reporting on ecumenical documents, e.g. the recent Lima Document of the World Council of Churches and "God's Reign and Our Unity" (a report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission) which both espouse episcopal government.

1. ARCIC II has published, in January 1987, an agreed statement "Salvation and the Church" which professes to explain that the disagreement about justification at the time of the Reformation was simply a misunderstanding.

In the Church of Scotland there has been an attempt in the last 30 years to remove the Westminster Confession of Faith, alter "the 1926 Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland in Matters Spiritual", and introduce bishops into the church. Concurrently since 1967, there has been a Multilateral Church Conversation between six Scottish Churches, notably the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church. These conversations have reached the point at which they are now pressing for unity, very likely with 1988 in view.

Ecumenism and the 19th Century scene.

The 20th Century is the century of ecumenical endeavour. The general loosening of the foundations in the 19th Century allowed a new foundation for ecumenical endeavour. It is important to appreciate that these are contemporaneous and that the Declaratory Acts of the 19th Century had in view ecumenical endeavour as well as the relief of conscience. This is clearly seen in the case of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church which united in 1900. It is no surprise that 1910 was the beginning of the ecumenical movement worldwide. It is old history that the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 eventually led to the World Council of Churches. In the same year, the Church of Scotland altered the formula of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The desire for union between the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland resulted in the 1921 Act of Parliament for declaring lawful the (ensuing) 1926 Articles Declaratory of the Church of Scotland in Matters Spiritual (hereafter, the 1926 Articles Declaratory). So while relief of conscience has been a cause of Declaratory Acts, the real reason for this 'Declaratory Act era' has been ecumenical. Men who have signed the Westminster Confession of Faith which they do not wholly believe can live without Declaratory Acts — but when one wants union of Churches, there "must be" Declaratory Acts.

It is in this light that we are to see the current adjustments to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the 1926 Articles Declaratory. It is the stance of this paper that these adjustments are not primarily for the relief of men's consciences, nor to satisfy the wishes of some theologians who think that the Church is too liberal — but it is primarily ecumenical. Therefore all the events which will be discussed need to be seen in this ecumenical light.

Historical survey of the past 30 years.

I briefly refer to 1957 and the Bishop's Report as a starting point

because it is a tangible mark of the effect of ecumenism. This was resolutely defeated, and prudence, if nothing else, required that matters be allowed to lie low and be given more time for grass-roots opinions to be leavened. However, in 1960, on the occasion of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Scottish Reformation, Dr Neville Davidson of Glasgow Cathedral attacked the Westminster Confession of Faith. He returned to the theme in 1962 as Moderator designate, and in 1966 he discussed the need for a new Confession along the lines of the United Presbyterian Church of the USA which authorised a new Confession in 1967.

1966 also saw the exposure of the Holland House affair, a secret attempt to bind the Church of Scotland to episcopacy, and expounded by Prof. Ian Henderson in his book, "Power without Glory". In spite of this, 1967 saw the beginning of the Multilateral Church Conversation between the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and four others.

In 1968, significantly, the Panel on Doctrine was asked to review the place of the Westminster Confession of Faith as a subordinate standard and reference to it in the Preamble and Questions. This has been said to be due to rising discontent with the subterfuge and use of the escape or conscience clause, but it is more likely to be due to ecumenical pressure. This may not have been said at the time, but the present stage of the debate regarding the Westminster Confession of Faith does admit of an ecumenical element. Prof. John Reid, a founding editor of the Scottish Journal of Theology, has written recently that "the Church should now disown the Confession as 'subordinate standard'" and that because of the wider ecumenical interests.²

The method of approach adopted by the Panel on Doctrine, which was put to the 1969 General Assembly, was not the old method of Declaratory Acts, but whether to **remove** the Westminster Confession of Faith as the principal subordinate standard from the 1926 Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, to depart from the concept of subordinate standards, and use a revised Preamble containing certain fundamental doctrines.

It is important and convenient to recall that the Constitution of the Church of Scotland consists of these 1926 Articles Declaratory as well as the legislation of the General Assemblies and its constitutional practice. Article II of these 1926 Articles Declaratory says that the Westminster

2. The Westminster Confession in the Church today, edited A.I.C. Heron, St. Andrew's Press p 139.

Confession of Faith is the principal subordinate of the Church of Scotland.

This method of approach, I suggest, is with an ecumenical eye eventually to Rome; in spite of all the difficulties of this approach (after 16 years it is still not resolved) they are persisting with it, while Prof. Francis Lyall has suggested that Declaratory Acts would be a sufficient method. I suggest that Lyall is legitimately trying to address himself to the legal matter in hand, but is not seeing that as the ultimate aim is ecumenical, such Declaratory Acts are not enough. Others, thinking that the discussion with respect to the Confession is purely too much liberty of opinion through the conscience clause, have asked for a list of fundamental doctrines. Again, this is to lose sight of the fact that a list of fundamental doctrines is NOT the primary aim, but the removal of the Westminster Confession of Faith as principal subordinate standard is.

What are the difficulties the Church of Scotland is encountering and to which I have just referred?

In 1970 the Procurator's opinion was that Article IV of the 1926 Articles Declaratory allowed the Church to remove the Westminster Confession of Faith as principal subordinate standard, but in 1971 the National Church Association was given a different legal opinion, that the Church could **not** do so, according to its own 1926 Articles Declaratory. This latter opinion had three main points; first, the Church could add to or modify its subordinate standards, but could not eliminate them; second, it would alter the Church from being confessional to a credal Church; third, the Treaty of Union 1707 preserved the status of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the Confession of the Church of Scotland which it is doubtful that any subsequent legislation can alter.

The danger was that the Church, in the eyes of the law, may lose its identity and thereby incur property loss in the event of there being a dissenting section of the Church. This would necessitate another Scottish Churches Commission as in 1905 to divide the property, or at least an out of Court settlement as in 1929. Prof. Francis Lyall states that the Church of Scotland constitution does not allow her to change her identity.

In spite of this divided opinion, the General Assembly, encouraged by Presbytery returns, instructed the Panel on Doctrine to prepare an Overture to the effect of removing the concept of a subordinate standard, that the Westminster Confession of Faith cease to hold its present place, and that there be a stricter formulation in the Preamble of the ordination service which specified certain fundamental doctrines. This was approved by a majority of Presbyteries but with a powerful contrary vote, so the

1974 General Assembly, on the Rev. Dr. Andrew Herron's advice, did not proceed. He suggested they should not remove the Westminster Confession of Faith till they had a better confession. This was remitted to the Panel on Doctrine.

This confused result of the 1974 General Assembly is analysed by the then Secretary of the Panel on Doctrine, Rev. Rod Pettigrew. He observes that the General Assembly's retreat from implementing the Panel on Doctrine's overture was due to fear of a split in the Church. The conservatives in doctrine and liberals in doctrine are viewed by him as "two small but powerful groups" who opposed, on the one hand, removing the Westminster Confession of Faith and, on the other hand, defining fundamental doctrines too closely. He gives most weight to the legal issues — the sovereignty of the UK Parliament, the power of self interpretation by the Church, although he avoids the question of loss of identity. There were also pragmatic matters raised, which all resulted in the 1974 General Assembly "not amend(ing) the Articles Declaratory and the Preamble . . . and depart(ing) from this matter until a new Statement of Faith is accepted by the General Assembly."

There was confusion as to what was expected from the Panel on Doctrine. They decided against preparing a new Confession because of this age of conflicting theological ideas, and the 1975 General Assembly concurred in their decision to produce instead a Statement of Belief for Popular Use. Preliminary drafts proved unsuccessful and the Panel on Doctrine was released from its remit in 1978. The Rev. George Dale suggested that this chapter was now closed — it will be impossible to formulate a new statement in the light of many recent failures to formulate even simple doctrinal statements — and he gives a list of five failures within 15 years.

However, the matter did not rest there. The General Assembly in releasing the Panel on Doctrine from its remit, gave it a new remit to reconsider the status of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the Church's subordinate standard. It may be possible to re-interpret these events between 1974 and 1978 as the Panel on Doctrine's method to get round the 1974 Assembly's refusal to act upon its overture. That is certainly the effect of it all. In 1978 the Panel on Doctrine was released from the 1974 remit and given a remit similar to before 1974!

The Panel of Doctrine decided at this stage, 1978, to set up a working party which recommended and eventually published in 1982 "The Westminster Confession in the Church Today" in order to acquaint the Church generally with the debate surrounding the Westminster Confes-

sion of Faith. This book consists of a series of articles by 16 contributors (with a strong Aberdeen bias) edited by Alasdair I. C. Heron (Editor of the *Scottish Journal of Theology*).

Meanwhile, Prof. F. Lyall, Professor of Public Law at Aberdeen, had published in 1980 "Of Presbyters and Kings" dealing with the Church and State in the law of Scotland since the Reformation³. He contributes a chapter to "The Westminster Confession in the Church Today" in which he expands some points. In this article he re-iterates three times the danger of a split if too much is done too soon too quickly. He gives an argument for the irremovability of the Westminster Confession of Faith but he prefers the proposition that the position of the Westminster Confession of Faith can be adjusted. It cannot involve deletion because of loss of identity. He therefore suggests it should remain as principal subordinate standard and further Declaratory Acts could be employed with or without raising other confession(s) to the status of subordinate standard if it did not prejudice the position of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

This legal opinion that the position of the Westminster Confession of Faith could possibly be adjusted was no doubt welcomed by the Panel on Doctrine. At least, they took courage to proceed in line with these proposals although they did not implement his suggestion of further Declaratory Acts.

The Panel on Doctrine proposed to the 1984 General Assembly to add to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed and the Scots Confession. They also tried to implement the wishes of those who wanted a list of fundamental doctrines by limiting the scope of the "conscience clause" in Article V. This would allow liberty of opinion only on points not contained in Article I⁴. The General Assembly agreed to this, but the measure failed under the required Barrier Act-like procedure. The ineptness of the proposal is summed up by the heading in the *Life and Work* magazine — "Panel loses to coalition of right, left

3. This includes a useful section on the Settlement of 1921 and debates the Church of Scotland's current questions in the context whether the Westminster Confession of Faith debate could be used in law as a test case to determine whether the 1921 Act was ultra vires of the UK Parliament! His conclusion is that while it may be strictly speaking so, under Scottish Law, yet he feels that the English (or Oxford!) maxim of the sovereignty of Parliament would prevail and that the Church of Scotland would be able to remove the Westminster Confession of Faith from its place as principal subordinate standard. However this would involve property consequences because there would nevertheless be a change or loss of identity — unless this was not challenged, which is very unlikely.

4. Article I (which Lyall calls "the unalterable ground of being of the Church of Scotland") covers the doctrine of the Trinity and the Scottish Reformation.

and centre"! It seems the conservatives voted against altering the Westminster Confession of Faith's status while the liberals voted against the restriction of liberty of opinion. This result appears to be 1974 repeated.

If the Church of Scotland has had liberty of opinion since 1910, why all this fuss? Some say, we want honesty. Commendable, but this has always been the case — why the fuss now? Some say, because some are making a wrong use of liberty of opinion and it should be defined. Commendable, but this has been so in the past. Why the interest now? Others say the Westminster Confession of Faith is simply wrong, e.g. on election and covenant theology. But why raise this now? Some say the Westminster Confession of Faith has a wrong emphasis and does not say enough regarding the Holy Ghost, Evangelism or Missions, Sanctification and Reconciliation — but why raise this now?

The common thread is the ecumenical one. These other arguments are employed opportunely to accomplish the required end. This can be seen in a letter of the Panel on Doctrine to Life and Work (October 1984) where they show that their proposals for change are in an ecumenical context.

To look at from the ecumenists' viewpoint — if there is to be a final reunion of Christendom including the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, then the Westminster Confession of Faith must be weakened, and from Rome's point of view so must liberty of opinion be weakened. These are the two strands running through the debate on the Westminster Confession of Faith.

(To be continued — the second half of the lecture deals with the ecumenical discussions the Church of Scotland has been engaged in, the reactions to these discussions and gives a brief assessment.)

The Life and Death of a Faithful Minister

By the late Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale.

When a faithful minister of the gospel is removed it is a great loss. Such a one is an ambassador of Christ in this world, and when an ambassador is withdrawn who can tell what will happen next. Christ puts a great honour on a congregation or a community where He has an ambassador, for by this He reveals that His delight is in the welfare of

that congregation or community. The ambassador has his instructions from Christ and must not speak his own words or do what seems right in his own eyes, and, therefore, he must endeavour to be in constant communication with Christ through His Word. He must also look after the interests of his Master in the situation where he is placed, and to the utmost of his ability preserve and protect that which has been entrusted to him.

He has his commission from Heaven and that commission is, "Say unto them, 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'" In fulfilling his commission he must be able to give clearly from Scripture marks on those who have grace, and his duty is to give instruction, counsel and guidance to such in their troubles and trials. Those who are weak and halting must have his special care, and he must administer consolation to them in their trials. Those who are living in sin and rejecting Christ's overtures of mercy must be firmly rebuked, tenderly warned, and diligently followed with counsel and exhortation, showing them that Christ has no pleasure in their death. He must continually declare to them what his commission is. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor.: 20.

In terms of his commission as an ambassador of Christ, he must labour in season and out of season. Not only must he preach the whole counsel of God in the ordinary services of the sanctuary, but he must admonish them in their homes, on the road when he meets them, or wherever he may be able to communicate with them. Not only must he prosecute his labours when there are signs of the message taking effect but he must do so also when there are no signs of fruit. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Eccles. 11: 6. Whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, there is no respite for him in the execution of his commission, neither does a faithful ambassador wish for a respite for it is the joy of his life to serve his Master.

Such a faithful servant of Christ is a great boon to a congregation, for he has their highest interests at heart. He casts his eye about him in his allotted sphere of labour and views with sorrow of heart the great many souls who are careless and indifferent. His message is listened to with a cold indifference as if the subject of it was none of their concern. Particular truths are emphasised again and again with apparently no effect

but he does not give up. He still continues, presenting old truths from new points of view in the hope that an arrow of God's Word, driven by the power of the Holy Spirit, may find a joint in the harness and wound them so that they might be brought to value the Balm of Gilead. The claims of the holy law of God, and its fearful curse of those who do not satisfy its claims, the total depravity of man and his utter inability to obtain life by the works of the law, and Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" are presented to their view with all the fervour of which he is capable, but alas! with how little effect as far as can be seen.

It is not merely the careless that he is concerned about. There are those who have passed from death unto life and in connection with whom the Apostolic injunction is given, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." 1 Peter: 2. They need the Scriptures explained to them, light thrown on the path of duty, strange and trying experiences shown to be the real experiences of the Christian, and things new and old brought out of the treasures of the Christian, and things new and old brought out of the treasures of God's Word in order to feed their famishing souls, and they look to their faithful under-shepherd for these things, and they will not look in vain. He does not give them what cost him nothing. The Lord often causes faithful ministers to experience much of the terrors of the Law, the sweet consolations of the Gospel and a large measure of the temptations of the devil, in order that they may be able to enter into the trials of the Lord's people and thus be able to comfort and encourage them, and feed them with food that is suitable for them.

A faithful minister of the gospel is eminently a man of prayer, and his flock have a large place in his prayers. He knows the sick and the afflicted in his congregation, the sorrowing and the bereaved, the careless and the indifferent, the anxious enquirer, the weak and those easily overcome by temptations, and petitions suitable to the case of each are often set up at a Throne of Grace, but few in a congregation realise how much they are indebted to these petitions on their behalf by a pastor anxiously desiring their spiritual and eternal welfare, yet the Great Day will reveal it all. Such ambassadors can say of their flock with the Apostle, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

When such a faithful minister is removed by death it is a solemn call to his congregation. A great privilege is withdrawn for they will hear his voice no more in this world; that voice which rebuked and exhorted with

all authority and long-suffering is now silent, except, perhaps in the consciences of some in the congregation. His prayers are for ever ended and particular mention of the names of individuals at a Throne of Grace has ceased. Alas now! for those who do not frequent a Throne of Grace themselves. The man with the large heart and wise counsel is laid low in the dust and his congregation is left as a flock without a shepherd, in danger of being scattered by the destroyer. He who directed them to the Saviour whom he himself found in this world has now gone to be for ever with that Saviour, and he who was a burning and a shining light, in whose light the poor of the flock has rejoiced for a season, has his light put out in this world, but lit before the Throne on high where it shall never be put out. The loss caused by the withdrawal of such a privilege is incalculable.

The withdrawal of such a privilege is a token of God's displeasure. The privilege has been great but the fruit has not been correspondingly great. God could say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Under such circumstances God is just in withdrawing His gift of a gospel ministry because men did not value it, and thus showing His displeasure with the congregation, yea, one may read in it a threat, on the part of God, to remove His candlestick from their midst. A congregation that had gospel privileges for many years and that did not bring forth fruit are in danger that God will say of them, "And now, go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down."

This makes the removal of a gospel minister a matter for self-examination on the part of his congregation. This was their own minister to whom they gave a call to take charge of their souls. How have they dealt with his message? He faithfully set life and death before them and many of them has he left even in a worse condition than he found them. For if the preaching of the gospel is not blessed it has a hardening effect on those who hear it. While he was setting before them a crucified, risen and exalted Redeemer, as God's only remedy to meet with their lost and ruined condition, they were taken up with other things and refusing to receive the gospel message. They promised to give him all due obedience in the Lord, but of many of them, especially among the young, it could be said that they broke his heart by going, in the face of oft-repeated warnings, after the vanities of the world. Did they try to help or hinder him in his work? This is a question, in the answering of which, in spite of

themselves, their very conscience will testify against them, for it will testify concerning the many unkind words said, behind his back, of the best earthly friend they ever had, and concerning the many ways in which they endeavoured to undermine his influence in the congregation, and thus with might and main they rendered evil for good.

There is no doubt but there are many in the congregation of a godly and faithful minister who imagine, that when he is taken away, they have seen the last of him, and will be congratulating themselves that he will no longer alarm their consciences, but such are altogether forgetful of the fact that he shall meet them at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This ought to be solemnly considered by the careless sinners in a congregation, as they are also forgetful of the fact that a faithful minister shall be clear of the blood of his congregation when all shall appear before Christ at the Great Day, but the blood of the unregenerate shall then be on their own heads. "Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." On the other hand, there shall be many who heard him in this world as the messenger of God to their souls, who shall, on that day, be his joy and his crown. Many of these he never heard of in this world, but who heard him preach and the good seed found a place in their souls and sprung up after many days.

The Scriptures: A Supernatural Revelation of God

By the late Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale.

The Bible was once the glory of Britain, and the secret of its greatness. At that time many among our rulers feared God, and our laws were framed with an eye to what the Lord said in His Word. It had the chief place in the teaching of our schools, so that children leaving school had a good knowledge of the letter of God's word, and as they grew up to manhood and womanhood, what they had been taught in school had a salutary effect on their lives, thus building up a nation who were outwardly moral, and in all matters circumspect in their dealings with their fellow-creatures. When the Spirit of God came with power to apply the doctrines of God's word in a saving manner to such as had this advantage, they turned out to be not only useful members of the Church, but also useful members of society, who feared God and honoured the powers that be. This was largely the fruit of the labours of such men as Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley in England, Knox and others in Scotland.

In putting the Bible in the hands of the common people our Reformers recognised the necessity of a Divine revelation; that the Bible was that Divine revelation, and that nothing else would make up for the lack of it.

This revelation is given in a miraculous manner, for the men who were used as instruments to give it were inspired by the Spirit of God, and this was true of them all. This inspiration is claimed by an inspired Apostle on behalf of them all. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." II Tim. 3: 16. Another Apostle says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." II Peter 1: 21. Thus we have in the Scriptures not only a sufficient but a perfect revelation of the mind and will of God, given for His own glory and the good of His people. It is so perfect that the Lord Himself forbids the adding to it or the taking from it under pain of God's most severe displeasure. Rev. 22: 18, 19. We thus see the goodness of God towards us in giving us an inspired revelation.

In the sad day in which we live the Bible is despised and its authority is undermined, so that it makes little or no impression upon the lives of most of the inhabitants of this once favoured land. Those who framed the Declaratory Act of 1892, while professing to clarify the Westminster Confession of Faith, aimed their foul shafts at the Bible, for the Confession of Faith is based four-square upon the Bible. In thus acting, they did all in their power to take the Bible out of the hands of the people, representing it as not a revelation from God. Thus it was left to men who claimed to be men of intelligence and learning, to declare what was the mind of God. In this they ranked themselves with the Deists who maintain that the light of nature is sufficient to reveal God to men. Man, however, needs more than the light of nature to reveal God to him, for, as the Confession of Faith puts it, "Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation." Chap. I: 1. A Divine revelation is necessary to that end. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1: 18. This revelation, which we have in the Bible, is that which makes sinners wise unto salvation. "This is our wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." Deut. 4: 6. The Psalmist, being taught of the Holy Spirit, could say, "The testimony of

the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Ps. 19: 7, 8.

The Saviour shows the error of the Sadducees, and, incidentally, of the Rationalists of our own day, to be the fruit of their ignorance of this revelation when He says, "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." Mark 12: 24. Such ignorance confounds the sophistries of men who are wise in their own conceits. "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of God; and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. 8: 9. The folly of the Sadducees, and of all who do not receive the Scriptures as a revelation from God, is also the fruit of their pride. They put their own puny reason above revelation, and whatever that reason cannot grasp they reject. The Rev. John Dick, D.D., puts the matter in a very clear manner when he says, "They (the Scriptures) call for docility and humble submission to Divine authority; and wherever these tempers are, revelation will be cordially received. But the men who are elated by the pride of science, will not stoop to authority, and refuse to believe what they cannot comprehend. They must do as they have a mind. If, notwithstanding the luminous evidence with which revelation is attended, they will reject it because every part is not adjusted by the square and compass of reason, they only betray their own folly and presumption, and they must abide the consequences." **Lectures on Theology**, Vol. I. p.48. 2nd ed. This revelation, was originally communicated to men directly by God, on account of the long lives of the patriarchs, was passed on to those coming after them without being corrupted. It became necessary for the sake of future generations to commit to writing. In these writings we see the guiding hand of God in the fact that though they were written by various persons at different times, there is a complete harmony between all the parts of it, and "the scope of the whole, which is to give all the glory to God, the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof," shows it to be the Word of God.

This is the Word of God which the Holy Spirit makes use of to reprove of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. In the hand of the Spirit the Scriptures discover to man his lost and ruined condition, the entire corruption of his nature, his absolute inability to make himself more acceptable to God, the suitableness and sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, and the work of the Spirit in glorifying Christ by taking of the things that are Christ's and revealing them to God's elect. By this revelation, the

believer for the rest of his life continues to make fresh discoveries of Christ as the incomparable One, enabling him to say, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Micah 7: 18. This revelation, thus committed to writing, is suited for men in all ages and in all circumstances. Here we have, as someone said of the Book of Proverbs, the philosopher's guide, the statesman's manual, and the inspired monitor of the young man going out into the world. It is so important that no one can afford to despise it. It was the commandment and the law of the fathers and mothers of past generations, and it would become us to take heed to the injunction, "Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Proverbs 6: 21-23. If we shall receive it we shall have a great reward, but if we reject it the loss shall be ours. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it." Matt. 7: 24-27.

Church Notes

Zimbabwe Mission News

As I write on March 4th, Miss Sheila Macleod will, D.V., be flying out to Zimbabwe on her annual visit, to go over the accounts, and to finalise them for 1986. Apart from the relief of having her do this very necessary work, the Mission Staff look forward with great pleasure to her short visit, on this occasion, lasting for only three weeks.

Mr William Campbell, now back in his former post in Bulawayo since January 22nd, has an African Trainee working with him, Mr Budhi Mziya, who will eventually D.V., become Treasurer of the Mission. This is Government policy, not only with regard to Missions, but also with regard to Government offices and Banks. On Mr Campbell's arrival in Harare he was given a six weeks' Resident's Permit, but it is a great relief to learn that he now has a Work Permit for an indefinite period.

Mr Mziya is well known to the Mission Staff as he was for many years Headmaster of Ingwenya Primary School, and, latterly, a teacher in a Bulawayo Council School. Mr Mziya is an elder in the Bulawayo congregation and has been taking services regularly since Mr Mpofu's illness.

Mr Mpofu's illness has been a matter of great concern to all. He has been back and fore to hospital for temporary remedial treatment, but is still far from well. He was enabled to take at least one service during February, and is wonderfully bright despite his weakened state. We trust many prayers are being offered for Mr Mpofu. He has a large congregation consisting of young families, and young men and women employed in the city.

Each letter that comes from Zimbabwe mentions appreciatively the presence of the Rev. D. B. MacLeod, of his preaching and of his visits to the various Mission Stations. The three Malawian and the three Kenyan young men are being instructed by Mr MacLeod in the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is hoped that despite some immigration difficulties the men will be permitted to remain in Zimbabwe until April 1st.

Mbumba Hospital is short staffed. Despite appeals for a Work Permit for Miss Margaret MacAskill, none has so far been forthcoming.

The John Tallach Secondary School is also in need of Maths and Science teachers. Two of the African teachers already engaged for these classes were sent unexpectedly to Harare University for further qualifications. It is hoped that Mr Lamont, at present in Skye, may be given a Work Permit to enable him to begin work once more at Ingwenya, for a short period.

It was with great sorrow that his many friends heard of the sudden passing of Mr James Taylor on February 27th, two months after his return from Zimbabwe.

Although very well known in Educational circles in Edinburgh while Headmaster of Tynecastle High School, he became more widely known among many of our Church people when he went out to Zimbabwe to assist briefly in the John Tallach Secondary School. There he was in his element, teaching Maths and Science, in addition to Scripture.

Then during 1986 there was a great need for someone to relieve Mr William Campbell, whose 'leave' was long overdue. Mr Taylor agreed to go out to an unfamiliar work as Treasurer/Administrator of the Mission for a period of four months, which became nine months, owing to the difficulty of securing a renewal of Mr Campbell's Work Permit.

The work was exceedingly heavy and uncongenial. However, Mr

Taylor mastered all the intricacies of Government and Mission Finance, and the delicacies of Mission Administration. When he returned home at the end of 1986, he left everything in a streamlined, orderly pattern.

No one could help being impressed with Mr Taylor's integrity, his fine mind, and his forthrightness. Above all, he was a Christian gentleman.

— J. N.

Death of the Rev. Alfred Mpofu

We regret to intimate that the Rev. Alfred Mpofu, mentioned in the foregoing notes, passed away on Tuesday, 17th March. That, we believe, is immeasurable gain to him but a great loss to us. Our sympathy is extended to his widow and family, his congregation at Bulawayo, as well as his ministerial brethren in Zimbabwe and our Mission staff. A fuller notice will, no doubt, appear in a subsequent issue of this magazine.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 14th April at 11 a.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 21st April at 12 noon.

Western: At Laide on 16th June at 11 a.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 16th June at 6 p.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 16th June at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 29th May at 2.30 p.m.

Notice to Clerks/Conveners of Standing Committees

The Conveners/Clerks of all Standing Committees should note that all Committee Reports should be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by 31st March, 1987 for printing purposes (D.V.). These Reports should contain information of the work of the Committees during the year. Recommendations and proposals should be sent up as separate items for the Synod Agenda.

(Rev.) Donald MacLean, Clerk of Synod.

Notice re Synod Agenda

Clerks of Presbyteries, Conveners/Clerks of Committees and all other interested parties should note that all items of business intended to be placed on the Synod Agenda must be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by Friday, 3rd April, 1987 (D.V.).

(Rev.) Donald MacLean, Clerk of Synod.

Barnoldswick Congregation Appeal

The Deacons Court of the Barnoldswick Congregation are pleased to intimate that through the kindness of the Most High and with help from

other congregations, friends and the Finance Committee of the church, the debt of the Church building has been cleared.

The congregation was raised to the status of a Church Extension Charge by the Synod of 1985. Before proceeding to call a minister, a suitable manse will have to be provided. With this in view the Deacons Court have agreed to keep the Church Building Fund open as a Church and Manse Fund. As the congregation is numerically small, and excluded from help from the Forsyth Legacy by virtue of the terms of that bequest, the Deacons Court appeal to friends of the Church for help in the purchase of an appropriate manse. There is "a great door and effectual" in these parts. Contributions should be sent to the Congregational Treasurer:- Mr C. Metcalfe, 47 York Street, Barnoldswick, Lancs., BB8 5BD.

(Rev.) Donald MacLean, Interim-Moderator.

R. K. MacCuish, Clerk to the Deacons Court.

This appeal is supported by the Southern Presbytery.

D. J. MacDonald, Clerk to the Presbytery.

Acknowledgement of Donations

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

Foreign Mission Fund: D. F. G. Moore, Lewes, Sussex, £12; Friend, Leicestershire, £100; Dawn, Skye, £10 for Blind Child, Mission School.

Dominions Overseas Fund: In memory of the late Mrs R. S. MacKenzie, \$2000.

Sydney Church Building Fund: Anon., £100.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Bracadale Congregation, £50.

Ballifeary Home: The Matron acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:- A Friend, Stornoway, £5; Anon., in appreciation, £10; A Wayfaring Man, £10.

The Treasurers of the following congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:-

Aberdeen: Friend, Skye, £10 for General Funds per E. M. M.

Bracadale: Envelope in plate, £70 for Sust. Fund.

Dornoch: Anon., £10 for Congregational Fund per D. M.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh Friend, £5 for T. B. S.; Anon. Friend, £2 for "The Bulwark"; both per envelopes in plate.

Fort William: Friend, Caol, £10 for Sust. Fund per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow (St. Judes): Mrs Mack, £5 for Congregational Purposes; Anon., £5; Anon., £20; Matt. 6v3 (2 donations), £20; "In ever-loving memory of Hamish B. Grant" — Mother, £100 per Rev D. M., all for Bus Fund; T. McL., £10; Anon., £5; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; Anon. £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £20; Anon., £50, all for T. B. S.; I. G., £26, "Sponsor a Blind Child".

Rogart: Anon., £10 for Congregational Fund per D. M.

Stornoway: C. B. McK., £10 per Rev. J. Macleod; Anon., £10; Anon., £5; all for Communion Expenses; M., £50 for Car Fund, per Rev. J Macleod; Anon., in plate, £30 for Sust. Fund and £10 for Jewish and Foreign Missions Fund; Anon. in plate, £15 for Sust. Fund; Anon. in plate, £20.50, "Where most needed".