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The New Year

Another year has opened in our lives but who will see the end of it? That we cannot tell, but we do know that each succeeding year is carrying us on to eternity. Though in the providence of God we should be spared to see a few New Years yet in our life, yet after all "how short a time we shall on earth remain." It is very evident that we cannot remain in this world always. Generation after generation of the men who lived on the earth have been cut down with the scythe of death and soon it shall be our turn also —

"For over it the wind doth pass
and it away is gone
And of the place where once it was
it shall no more be known."

"Man goes to his long home and the mourners go about the street." Seeing then that our time is short, how are we to use the days that lie ahead should we be spared to the end of the year? What plans are we making as to how we are to spend our time? Are our minds wholly taken up with the pleasures we may indulge in during the days that lie ahead, even although these may not be sinful pleasures? Or are we, on the other hand, thinking more about our careers and how we can best advance our interests in this world in our secular employments? So many are wholly taken up with these things and give no thought to their higher interests.

What are these higher interests? Surely they are the things that concern our souls and our everlasting destiny. We are not to be taken up with what we shall eat and what we shall drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed. Scripture warns us against that. It has a different message for us. It says: "But rather seek ye the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." We are directed to a better pursuit than that which

belongs only to this life. We are directed to those things that concern the life to come — our need of seeking the Kingdom — our need of entering into the Kingdom of God and becoming a living subject of that Kingdom. We are to desire the setting up within us of that Kingdom over which Christ reigns as Lord. Are we not in this commanded to seek for ourselves that Christ would take possession of the throne of our heart for Himself, and in so doing dispossess the enemy of our soul of that overlordship which he has exercised over us too long?

“We with our fathers sinned have,
and of iniquity
Too long we have the workers been;
we have done wickedly.”

What a blessed New Year this would be for us if it were a new year in which we were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin unto God, that is, if we are still in the Kingdom of darkness. What translation that would be into the Kingdom of God's dear Son! What light would break on our sin-darkened understanding! What a renewing of our will would take place! What an outgoing of love to Christ and of filial affection to Him, who, by the indwelling of the Spirit in our hearts, we may now address as Abba, Father! What an unspeakable blessing it would be, through the riches of His grace bestowed upon us, to be made heirs of eternal life! How glorious it would be to be no longer a stranger and a foreigner and an alien from the Commonwealth of Israel but made nigh by the blood of Christ and so an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! What better could you desire for your never-dying soul at the beginning of another year! To have Christ come in and sup with you and you with Him is surely something worth seeking and longing for. For the Church of God can say: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

But you who are reading this, may be saying in your heart — “Oh, but I have already found Him. He is to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart.” If it is so, it is well for you that it is so. It is His doing and ought to be marvellous in your eyes. If He had not sought you, you would never have sought Him. If He had not put the constraints of His love upon you, you would never have been drawn to Him — “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” Just think of that! His love went out to you when you had no thoughts of love to Him; yea, even before you had a being in time. What a deep wonder and mystery there is in this! What unfathomable love! And think

of where He went for you — not just humbling Himself to lay hold of your nature who was God's eternal Son, but becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. What humiliation there was in that! What condescension on the part of Him, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, to make Himself of no reputation! And when you remember that He did all this for you, you who deserved to die eternally. What can you say but "Oh, amazing love, love beyond compare?" And what else have you to say? "There is none like Christ! there is none like Christ! He is all in all to me — all my hope is in Him and all my delight."

When He hides His face from you for a season you say — "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." Your desire is to Him and to the remembrance of His Name. You have a place in your heart that none but He can fill, and which you will give to none else but He. Like the Church at such a time you seek Him and in your seeking you say: "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" You hear those who address you as "O thou fairest among women" and you say, "Surely that cannot be me. I am so black." Oh, but it is you that is meant, for you are "black, but comely, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." You are black indeed, as you are in yourself. What is there in you but sin and corruption? But Christ has put a little of His comeliness upon you, so you are comely indeed. But He will make you more comely still so that ultimately you will have perfect likeness to Him. "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents." Seek Him where you found Him at first at His footstool, seek Him at a Throne of grace, seek Him in the Courts of His House where He has so often made Himself known in the preaching of the Word and in the ordinances of His House. He has promised to satisfy the longing soul so you will soon have to say, "I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go."

May the year that has opened be a year of blessing and good for many souls. May those who are yet strangers to the grace of God experience His drawing power and be brought to seek Him. May you who are His own true people, even you who are faint, yet pursuing, find this year to be a year of blessing to you — a year in which the Lord will draw near and say to you, "I am thy salvation". May it prove a year in which the courts of God's house will prove in the experience of many — Bethel, the house of God and the gate of heaven!

Sermon

by Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale

"Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." — Isaiah 1: 9.

We see that in the days when Isaiah prophesied the Cause of Christ was very low in Judah and Jerusalem. God lays to their charge that as far as stupidity was concerned they had fallen far below the level of the brute creation, for He says, "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." verse 3. He then goes on to give a very vivid description of their low condition, and the only ray of hope to be found in it is in the words of our text where the Lord sets before us His own, for whose sake His judgments are not poured on the land as on Sodom and Gomorrah. From the words of our text I would seek, as enabled, to draw your attention to three things in particular.

I. The remnant spoken of.

II. How this remnant is distinguished from the rest of the world.

III. The blessing of having them in the world.

I. The remnant. — (1) This remnant is according to the election of grace. Men may cavil at the doctrine of election, but that will not alter, in the least degree, the fact that from all eternity God elected sinners in Christ and predestinated them to everlasting life. He who saw the end from the beginning, knew that Adam would not remain in that state of innocence in which he was created, but would break the Covenant of works. Instead of leaving the whole human race to be the victims of the fearful catastrophe which was to befall them, He made another Covenant which is known as the Covenant of Grace, on behalf of those whom He purposed to save, and instead of leaving the fulfilling of it to be carried out by a finite creature, for there were none such who could fulfil its terms. He laid help on One who is mighty, even upon the Second Person of the glorious and ever adorable Trinity. Thus we find that from all eternity, God Himself became the dwelling-place of His people. As Moses says, "Lord thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Psalm 90: 1.

(2) They are spoken of as "a very small remnant." They are small in number. In every age of time they are in the minority. In the old world, immediately before the flood, Noah alone was found a preacher of righteousness, and with the exception of his family, the rest of the inhabitants of the world were drowned; Abraham was the only one in his generation who was called out of Ur of the Caldees, and the rest were

left in idolatry. In the days of Christ's humiliation the many who professed religion would have none of Him, and those who composed His "little flock" were taken from among the poor fishermen of Galilee. In every age of time down to our own, it is the same; the vast majority see not their need of Christ and prefer to go their own ways, and let Christ go His way.

Again, they are small in the estimation of the world. The world treats them as the off-scouring of all things, and as creatures fit to be trampled on. They have no room for them in their schemes and calculations, and leave them at all times out of account, except in isolated cases where their influence in certain circles might come in useful in order to advance the designs of worldly men where certain schemes, through lack of merit would fail, and if they are to be pushed through they must have a majority. For instance, politicians who have no more respect for religion than an unconverted Hottentot, if they are afraid that they cannot carry a majority at a General Election, will court the favour of ministers, and desire their presence and support at their meetings, and the more respect a minister has among his congregation the more urgent these politicians will be in soliciting his support. Yea, they themselves will appear very religious and very orthodox on such occasions, but as soon as the excitement connected with these matters is over, they fall back into their old ways and count God's remnant as poor and insignificant as before.

Further, this remnant is small in their own estimation. They find much with themselves to humble them before God. Sin in them, ready to draw them into outward sin, is always a cause why they should think very little of themselves. Their past life also is a cause why they should be far from having exalted views of themselves. This was the case with the apostle Paul when he viewed the grace given him to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, he referred to himself as "less than the least of all saints." Eph. 3: 8. Again, he tells us that he was not meet to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God. The centurion had a very low estimation of himself when he told Jesus that he was not worthy that He should come under his roof. It is characteristic of all the Lord's true people that this is the estimation they have of themselves, and this keeps them in the dust, always dependent on God in Christ to help them and do every thing for them. This, it may be said in passing, is to their eternal benefit, for "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." Psalm 113: 7, 8.

(3) It is the Lord of hosts who has left them. He is the "Lord of Hosts"

because of the armies which He commands, the boundless resources at His disposal, and the infinite measure of His power. He commands armies, consisting of countless numbers of angels. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Psalm 67: 17. A faint idea of the might of this army may be gathered from the fact that at Christ's resurrection one angel came down and rolled the stone from the door of the sepulchre. "His countenance was like lightening, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Matthew 28: 3, 4. The prophet Elisha in Dothan was surrounded with horses and chariots of fire ready to discomfit his enemies, which shows us that the angels who make up the armies of Jehovah are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. 1: 14.

Again, the very elements of nature are the hosts of the Lord, and are used to defend His own. It was by a strong east wind that the Lord caused the Red Sea to go back so that the children of Israel went into the sea on dry ground," and it was the same sea which came again upon the Egyptians so that Pharoah's "six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt" were but a very small thing in the midst of it. Many instances of the same kind could be brought forward from the history of the church of God in every age of time, and in all nations. You will remember reading of when King Philip of Spain purposed to exterminate Protestantism in these islands. The Spanish Armada, in 1588, left that country in all its power and glory, blessed by the Pope of Rome, and probably, in accordance with the trumpery of the Papacy, with plenty of holy water sprinkled on its sails. All that ever reached our shores of these mighty galleons went in fragments on the rocks, or sunk to the bottom of the ocean. Was it the might of England's Navy, the skill of her Admirals, and the prowess of her sailors which caused this fearful devastation? No. It was the Lord of Hosts who commanded His "stormy wind" to blow upon them, and thus they were scattered. "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God." Psalm 48: 7, 8. In the two World wars much could be told of how He who has command over the elements of nature, used these elements to defeat the forces of evil, and sometimes turned their weapons upon those who used them.

He, who is the Lord of Hosts, is the Almighty, and is in no way dependent upon these hosts to bring about His purposes, though He has been pleased to use them as instruments in His hand. It is He who works and who shall prevent it. "Who would set the briers and thorns against me

in the battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.” Isaiah 27: 4. “Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength: for he bringeth down them that dwell on high: the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground: he bringeth it even to the dust.” Isaiah 26: 4.

By leaving this small remnant among us, God manifests His interest in the world. While they are there He visits them, and often answers their prayers on behalf of poor sinners and on behalf of the kingdom, so that when any of them are taken away from a place, so much of Christ is taken away from that place, and if there are none raised to take their place, Christ has no further occasion to visit where they used to be. “Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought?” Isaiah 52: 5. It is, therefore, a good sign when some of the Lord’s people are still left among us.

II. I come now to notice how this small remnant is distinguished from the rest of the world.

In our day they can be distinguished from others by the fact that they are preserved from the general apostacy that has overtaken the generation, and no matter how churches and individuals have drifted from the old moorings, these are where God’s people in every age of time have been found.

They keep to God’s Word. It has become fashionable to look upon the Bible as a book that is “behind the times”, and those who accept it as a people who should have lived in the old world, away back in the days of Noah. In the name of scholarship, its inspiration and veracity have been attacked, and such is the enmity manifested towards it that evidences which would be held as competent to establish the authenticity of any other book, is, by critics, disallowed in the case of the Bible. Those who are of this small remnant cannot, however, treat the Bible in this way. It is to them the Book of books, and they see nothing in it for which they should discard it. Instead of it being contradictory, as is affirmed by many, they see that though it was written by different people of diverse temperaments, at different periods of the world’s history, yet, as a book, it presents one complete, harmonious whole, having as its aim the glory of God and the good of never-dying souls. Thus they can come to no other conclusion but that it is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible work of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, they keep to it as to the only rule to direct them how they may glorify God and enjoy Him.

Those who are preserved from this general apostacy accept God’s Word as their guide. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my

path." Psalm 119: 105. They have realised, sometimes by a bitter experience, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Jeremiah 10: 23. They find how true it is that "the wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies," and that it is a much easier thing to walk in the broad way that leads to destruction, than in the narrow way that leads to life. The path of least resistance to sin is much more palatable to fallen nature than the way in which the flesh, with its affections and lusts, is crucified. They have also learned that in those vital matters which concern their never-dying souls they are not to take counsel with flesh and blood, and that what they need is an infallible guide. This sends them to God's Word with the question, What saith the Lord? This was the way with the Psalmist when he says, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Psalm 85: 8.

This desire to have God's Word as their guide causes them to search it. Christ Himself sent the Jews to their own Scriptures when He said, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." John 5: 39. Where there is a real searching of the Bible it is the result of a consciousness of having a needy soul. They are faced with the all-important question, What is it that saves a soul? and they can find no answer to that question outside the Bible. Thus, searching the Scriptures is a very serious matter with them. There is a knowledge of their danger and of their need, a sense of their unfitness, a consciousness of how utterly futile it is to trust in the works of the law, and a real dread of coming short of the great salvation. Oh! what alternations of hope and fear find a place in the hearts of such! They open the Bible at times in the hope that it will speak comfortably to their souls, and they find that it condemns them; they read on and there is a ray of hope kindled, which encourages them to follow on. They get something which they feel that they cannot let go, and in fact that which they get is so appropriate to their own condition that they must accept it as their own. It is in this way that the Holy Spirit applies to the poor sinner Christ's salvation, and it is no wonder that from henceforth that individual would love in his soul to search God's Word.

Again, these feed upon God's Word. In the day of regeneration they got a faith view of Christ and the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and by that faith they were able to appropriate Him and these benefits. It was through the Word of God, though perhaps by no particular passage of it but simply by the substance of it, that they came to this, so that they must always be going to that Word for a diet for their souls as long as they are in this world. As they search on, the Holy Spirit reveals more

and more to them of the majesty and glory of the Person of Christ, of His suitableness as a Mediator, of how glorious He is in His three offices, the efficacy of His sufferings, and death, and the victory of which His resurrection is the proof, so that this is their meat and drink, yea, the more they search the Scriptures the more they partake of that “feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” Isaiah 25: 6. In the enjoyment of this, they enter into the feelings of David when he said, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.” Psalm 63: 5.

(2) Further, this small remnant is known by the way in which they are given to prayer. As the breath in the body indicates that the person is living, so prayer as the breath of the soul, indicates a quickened soul.

In their distress, these pray to God. Their troubles are often too great for human help, so that neither they themselves nor a fellow-creature can do anything for them. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” Psalm 49: 7. They often have affliction of mind or body, sometimes a crook in their lot, and also they have troubles in connection with bearing the burden of Christ’s Cause in the world. This sends them to their knees in secret to plead with God for relief or for grace to bear the burden. They do so with a consciousness of the fact that they cannot go to another. “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” John 6: 68. In their afflictions they learn that it is good for them to draw near to God, and the help which they got in former times encourages them to come again to a Throne of Grace.

They also pray when they are in prosperity. Many think that there is no real need of praying in prosperity. Everything is going smoothly, they have all that their hearts could wish, their future is assured as far as temporal things are concerned, and they think of nothing else. A child of God may be so far left to himself, at times, that he will be more taken up with these things than with higher things, but he will soon be brought to see the folly of this. There is nothing that is more liable to stupify the soul than worldly riches. He was a wise man who prayed, “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” Proverbs 30: 8, 9. Thus, they cannot do without earnest prayer when there are outward appearances of prosperity.

Those who must pray in all circumstances are much given to secret

prayer. The Pharisees loved to pray in public places, that they might be seen of men, and the Saviour tells us that "they have their reward." The poor child of God must betake himself to secret, there to pour out his soul to God. Public confession of sins must, at best, be more or less a general confession. It is in secret that one is enabled to confess before God sins that could not be confessed in public, and it is there that the quickened soul is enabled to approach God with a holy boldness, which is a direct result of the work of the Holy Spirit.

(3) Again, these are known by their desire to hold communion with God and with one another in Christ. It is characteristic of the Lord's people that they cannot live without holding communion with Him who is the Head. This is one of the main objects of their prayers, meditations, and attendance on the public and private means of grace. They desire to have what the Apostle John had when he was saying, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I John 1: 3. They cannot live without Christ in this world, and they are seeking to have their conversation in heaven. They got moments of that communion in the public and private means, and in the fellowship of the Lord's people, and these moments are precious to them as foretastes of that communion which they hope to have with Christ in glory.

They keep a jealous eye on everything which would mar that fellowship and communion. A great part of the Christian's duty is to watch over his own desperately wicked and deceitful heart, for he is commanded in the Word to do this. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. 4: 23. There is folly bound up in the heart of a child of God, and, therefore, it is so liable to wander into forbidden fields, and dwell on things which are injurious to grace. The Psalmist knew well what would mar communion with God for we find him saying, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66: 18. Also the world is so ready to draw one away. All the senses of the body are as open gates to receive the allurements of the world, and thus become instruments for helping on a backsliding spirit, and marring that sweet communion which His people hold with God. A consideration of these things will often send the Lord's true people to a Throne of Grace, to pray that God would deliver them from their sins, and that He would show them the evil of their own hearts. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139: 23, 24.

Their walk and conversation in the world show them to be of this very small remnant.

It can be seen in their dealings with others. As they seek to have respect to the first table of the Moral Law, so also they seek to have respect to the second table, and the great cause of their sorrow is that they have not the respect to either table which they would love to have. Their neighbours have to acknowledge that they are good neighbours, and that they will never allow others to have loss as far as they are able to prevent it, but they do not stop at that. They will endeavour not to lose an opportunity of speaking to them about their soul's concern, manifesting that they would like their neighbours to be partakers of the like precious faith with themselves. Paul's declaration before King Agrippa was, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Acts 26: 29. They also manifest their love towards their neighbours when they set a good example before them, by walking according to their profession, and thus they are living epistles "known and read of all men."

They are known in private for they are controlled by a conscience into which the light of God has shined. They are not Christians merely before the public eye; they are Christians in their own homes, so that even their brute beasts experience the benefits of the change that has come over them "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." Prov. 12: 10. Their consciences will not allow them to do what they formerly did. At the same time we must guard against the idea that the conscience alone controls their actions. It is noteworthy that the conscience alone is not a fit guide for one, for on the one hand it might neglect to warn one concerning certain sins because of insufficient light, while on the other hand it might go to extremes which, ultimately, would mar one's usefulness to the Cause of Christ. However, it is the Word of God that is a light in the consciences of the Lord's people, and that Word, when taken as a whole, will lead one aright in his dealings with God and with his fellow-creatures.

III. The third thing which I purposed to speak of was, the blessing of having this small remnant in the world. We are told that without them in our midst, "we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

(1) We should have been like unto Sodom and Gomorrah as regards privileges. Where the Lord's true people are not, the privileges of the Gospel are not. The Lord has left some of the nations of the world for centuries without the means of grace, and that was a clear proof that none of His elect people were among them; while, again, when He is sending His Gospel to a place, it as clearly proves, that He has a work to do there in awakening sinners and leading them to Christ. Sodom had none of the

Lord's true people in it except Lot, and He took him out on the day that He destroyed that city with fire from Heaven. One could go through the length and breadth of Sodom and not find a congregation there, publicly worshipping God. Oh! how different in poor Scotland, great as our declensions have been, and still are. There are Bibles, and there are congregations publicly assembled where the whole counsel of God is declared to poor sinners, and where Christ and Him crucified is set forth as God's only remedy to meet with the lost and ruined condition of man.

(2) We should have been as Sodom as to sin. It is written of others that "they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not." Isaiah 3: 9. That, in a large measure is true of us as a nation. Sabbath-breaking, immorality, love of vanities, despising of the means of grace, are sins which walk abroad among us without shame, yea, those who commit such sins among us lift up their heads in pride, and deny that such things are sin, reminding one of the adulterous woman of whom Solomon speaks, "She eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." Prov. 30: 20. Those who are high up in the social scale have set a bad example, as also have our rulers done. They have made the procuring of divorce between married persons easy, and that in order to enter into marriage again, forgetting that whatever legislation they may devise and pass into Acts of Parliament, that any marriage, after a divorce, which is not sanctioned by the Word of God, is adultery. When such conditions prevail among the upper classes we can only expect a fulfilment of the truth which says, "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted." Psalm 12: 8. This gross immorality has, almost wholly, covered our land, but the fact that it has not wholly overwhelmed us puts a difference between us and Sodom and Gomorrah. There is "a very small remnant" who have not been carried away and for their sakes the Lord is still sparing us.

(3) Again, were it not for this very small remnant we should have been as Sodom and Gomorrah with respect to our ignorance of God. There was a day when Scotsmen were known for their knowledge of, and reverence for the Bible, and it could thus be said that in Scotland, as in Judah's land, God was well known, but today it is otherwise. One has only to mention a parable or a portion of the historical part of the Bible, and ask the average person where it is to be found, and at once their ignorance of God's Book will be very apparent. When such conditions prevail with respect to a literal knowledge of the Bible no one need expect to find a saving knowledge of its truths. Yet there are some and the gospel came to them not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." I Thess. 1: 5. These are the "very small rem-

nant” which keep us, as a nation, from being like Sodom and Gororrah. They are partakers of the blessings of the Gospel, for “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.” Psalm 89: 15.

(4) In conclusion; we should have been as Sodom and Gomorrah with respect to punishment. God heard the cry of the cities of the plain for it had ascended up to Heaven, and “The Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done now altogether according to the cry of it, which is come up unto me; and if not, I will know.” Genesis 18: 20, 21. God has set up His Judgement Seat to judge the cities of the plain; He investigated their condition, weighed them in His balances and found them great sinners, who were continually provoking Him to His face. There was no reason why He should spare them any longer. His elect people were not found among them except Lot, and it was His purpose to bring him out to a place of safety; none of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were to be the means of bringing any of His elect people into the world, or to be of any use to His Church on earth therefore, there was nothing in God’s purpose for which they should be spared. The end of all flesh, in these cities, had come before the Lord, and He rained upon them fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them. We are sinners equally as great as they were, but the presence of this very small remnant among us, is the cause of our preservation. We deserve to be destroyed, but in His mercy He is sparing us. May His long-suffering be blessed to us, and may we be brought humbly to His footstool to plead for mercy for the sake of Christ, and may we improve our privileges, realise the brevity of our life here, and benefit by the exercise of His sparing mercy.

May He bless anything said consistent with the mind of the Spirit. Amen.

Letter by Rev. Hugh Martin, D.D.

Montrose, 19th November, 1879.

My Dear Friend — Do you understand the state of things in our poor church? I do not. What I am afraid for is the doctrine of the Trinity. Of course shallow folks (and they are too numerous) would laugh at my saying so. But although I cannot enter on it here, yet let me tell you that a church’s hold on the doctrine of the Trinity is affected by her hold of the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. There is an inevitable certain-

ty that when the infallibility of inspiration is questioned, in that measure Sabellianism gets a footing. For it is in virtue of a truly inspired Word — His own Word — that the Holy Spirit acts as a person. It is degradation to the Third Person of the Godhead to suppose that he would speak by the word or words of any person less than Himself. He does not speak at all as a person by any word less than His own Word, or the Word of the Son, or the Word of the Father, all which are one. To suppose the Spirit coming by a new and fresh revelation is of course Quakerism, but in His coming by a previously written inspired Word, He acts as a person. As a person He speaks, enlightens, convinces, persuades, and renews. Deprive Him of His own Word, of Christ's and the Father's Word, then the Spirit is made to be only a force, overcoming just as force overcomes, as a hatchet knocks down a bullock. Deal falsely with personality here, then the Holy Spirit does not combine with the Second Person, but falls back upon an impersonal Deity — a Thing. You have merely what is implied in "God is a Spirit," but Word is gone, Father is gone, Sonship is gone, Messiahship is gone, Mediatorial position is gone, infernal robbery has been committed, and the mists of darkness have settled down upon the church! Yea, we are not a church at all, for we are robbed of a divine revelation, of a divine record. The privileges and position of a church are given "chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God." Alas! that so many who ought to be teachers deal as falsely and irreverently with the oracles of God as a cat playing with her kitten, or a kitten with a cork.

I am sorely afraid that there is to be a great decline in our church, a great lack of holy courage in contending for the infallible truth of the entire Scriptures, and truly men that can tolerate the substitution of the natural for the supernatural, of human reason for divine revelation, are not only no longer worth their sustentation, but are no longer "worth their salt". May God raise up men taught from above, and valiant for every jot and tittle of divine truth, for it shall stand should heaven and earth pass away. And if you meet any after I am gone who do courageously stand for all revealed truth, give them my compliments, and tell them to be strong and of a good courage, for now, even at this present time, their heads shall be lifted up above their foes. Let them yield not to the current sentimental Christianity that would convert men's faith in a living, glorious, inexhaustible, infallible Word into empty-headed, empty-hearted speculations no better than chinese puzzles or acted charades. God will avenge such trifling. "The Scripture cannot be broken," is the testimony of Him who is Himself the eternal Word. And will He suffer it to go un-

punished if the divine truth which He has in infinite condescension been pleased to make known to men by means of an infallibly inspired record — will He suffer it to go unpunished if that truth be broken up into bits and shreds, into fragments and fancies? And if the “Lord will not hold them guiltless who takes his name in vain,” “He will not, assuredly, hold that church guiltless, which tolerates any profaning or abusing of that Word by which he hath made himself known.” We pity poor silly papists who ascribe infallibility to mortal men, but what are we to think of proud, self-blinding Protestants who deny infallibility to the written Words of the God of truth? — Yours, &c.,

Hugh Martin.

P.S. — I cannot get myself satisfied speaking of the blessed combination of Word and Spirit. What is it but the very manifested light of Jehovah. God dwelleth in light that is inaccessible and full of glory, and which no man can see or approach unto; with Thee, O God, is the fountain of light. Nevertheless, the church says, “In thy light shall we see light.” In Thy light which would otherwise be inaccessible, we, through the illumination of Thy Word and Spirit — Thy light — “shall see light.” Thus, whoso of the children of men hath in any measure come into this light, becomes one of God’s “hidden ones,” hidden in this world, not from *defect* of that light into which they have been brought but hidden because of the *excess* of its purity, its brightness, and its glory. H.M.

Farewell Address

By the Rev. James Kidd, D.D., Minister of Gilcomston Chapel, Aberdeen.

I feel myself advancing fast to the grave, and upon a back-look of past life, I can say in truth that God hath been very merciful to me: and now I leave my testimony to His providential care of me, from my infancy hitherto. He has given my heart’s desire to me in my standing in society, and I bless and praise Him for all; and am willing to lay down my professorship and my ministry, when He may please to call me to do so. I now bid adieu to the University, and to all things beneath the sun. Farewell, the sun, moon, and stars, which have guided my wanderings in this valley of tears: to you I acknowledge much assistance in all my attainments. Farewell, thou atmosphere, with thy clouds, and thy rains, and thy dews, thy hail and snow, and different breezes, which contributed so much to my life and comfort. Farewell, ye earth and sea, which have borne me from place to place, where Providence has ordered my lot, and with your productions have supported my bodily wants so often and so long. Ye

summers and winters, adieu.

Farewell, my native country, and every place where I have had my abode. Adieu, Aberdeen! may peace and prosperity for ever be in you. To all your inhabitants I bid farewell. Farewell, Marischal College and University, in which I have had the honour of a Chair so long. May Learning and True Religion flourish in you till the latest posterity. Adieu, ye members of the Senatus Academicus: may ye enjoy many years of health, peace, and prosperity. Farewell all ye who studied under my care; may you be useful, faithful, and successful ministers of the gospel.

Farewell, Chapel of Ease¹, may peace be within thy walls: for my friends' and brethren's sake, peace be in thee, I say. Adieu ye eldership — ye heads of families — ye young. May the Lord in tender mercy bless all I have baptised, and all I have admitted to the Lord's table for the first time, I follow all with my most earnest prayers as long as I live.

Farewell, ye little children in general all around, whom I have so often met in kindness, and saluted with my best wishes for your good.² May all good be your portion, in this world and the next. My own children, I commit you to God, in life and in death. May He fulfil to you the promise — "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up" (Psalm 27: 10). With mixed distress I leave you under the care of Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Farewell!

I bid adieu to my Library, and to my Bible, which has been my companion from my earliest days. I leave the volume, but I carry with me, as the ground of my sure hope, the contents found in Psalm 73: 23-28: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. For lo, they that are far from Thee shall perish: Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from Thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God that I may declare all Thy works." John 14: 3 — "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also." Psalm 138: 7, 8 — "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me, Thou shalt stretch forth Thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and Thy right hand shall save me. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the work of Thine own hands." Psalm 23 — "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me by the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." These I take before God, as my dying support and comfort.

Farewell Time! Welcome Eternity! Farewell Earth! Welcome Heaven! Amen, and Amen.

1. Gilcomston Chapel, where he preached.

2. The children used to line up in a row when they saw the Doctor coming, and as he passed along he laid his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Short Gleanings

The Conflict Within

"For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Rom. 7: 19). This is humbling, but a just, account of the Christian's attainments in the present life, and is equally applicable to the strongest and to the weakest. The weakest need not say less, the strongest will hardly venture to say more. The Lord has given His people a desire and will, aiming at great things; without this they would be unworthy the name of Christians; but they cannot do as they would; their least desires are weak and ineffectual; not absolutely so, for He who works in them to will, enables them in a measure to do likewise, but in comparison with the mark at which they aim. So that, while they have great cause to be thankful for the desire He has given them, and for the degree in which it is answered, they have equal reason to be ashamed and abased under a sense of their continual defects, and the evil mixtures which taint and abase their best endeavours. — *Newton*.

Growth in Knowledge

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." (Hosea 6: 3). The mysteries of Christ are not learned in a day. Some are in a good mood, maybe, and they will look into the Bible and read a chapter or two, and away they go for a week, and never practise it more; like some boys, if at school one day, truant all the week after. Is it any wonder such thrive not in knowledge? It is a good speech of one:- "The study of the

Word and the reading of it differs as much as the friendship of such who every day converse lovingly together doth from the acquaintance one hath with a stranger at an inn, or whom he salutes as he passeth by in the street." If you will get knowledge indeed, you must not only salute the Word now and then, but walk with it, and enter into daily converse with it.

— *Gurnall.*

Difference between Justification and Sanctification

by Rev. Robert Trail

I shall add but two words of advice on this head, of the difference between justification and sanctification. Do not divide them. Do not confound them.

Firstly, Do not divide and separate them: no man can do so, but in dream and notion. Justification and sanctification God hath joined together, and no man can put them assunder.

They are everlastingly united together, and every one that is a partaker of either is a partaker of both. Secondly, Do not confound them. I am persuaded that one of the main causes of the disorder that is in the spirits and the conversation of the most part of Christians, lies in their confounding these two great blessings. They do not give them their proper place; they are not rightly exercised about them in their due sphere; therefore I shall offer a word or two of advice for preventing this confounding of them. When you are seeking justification, let there be no mind of sanctification, I mean as to any merit; but when you are seeking sanctification, have a good mind to justification. To make this matter plain to you; when you are seeking justification, you should have no thought of sanctification; the reason is, because justification is an act of pure grace, that we must betake ourselves to God for, as poor condemned sinners. If men will perplex us with qualifications, pray let it run this way, What is it that qualifies a sinner for justification? it is this only, that he must be a condemned sinner; God's law must condemn him, and the man must come into God's court with this sentence in his hand, "Lord, justify a poor sinner for Christ's sake; the law hath condemned me, and sentenced me to hell, and thither I must go except gospel grace relieves me in Christ Jesus." When I say that in seeking justification you should have no mind of sanctification, my meaning is only this, that when you come to plead at God's bar for justification, do not dream of bringing your sanctification with

you: for it is altogether improper and impertinent at this court. Let men varnish their doctrines which way they will, and cover them what pretences they please, they do but murder souls, who pretend to advise them to bring something with them to God for the grace of justification. Bring thy sins with thee, and bring the curse of the law upon thy conscience, and lay these before the Lord, saying, "Lord, here is an undone sinner, have mercy upon me, for Christ's sake:" there should be nothing else heard there but that. But when you come for sanctification, you have good reason to mind justification, for it flows from it. When you would try your justification, in God's name try it by your sanctification, that is allowed you; the reason is, it is but a trying the tree by its fruit. If the question be, Am I a pardoned, forgiven, accepted sinner in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Christ? if that be the question, try it by your sanctification; for all who are justified by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are also sanctified by the Spirit of God. Now sanctification being the work of God in us, is far more easily discernible than justification, which is an act of God about us. Justification is the sentence of a judge, but sanctification as you have heard, is a gracious work of God on the heart and soul of a poor sinner, and that may be more easily known: therefore try your justification by your sanctification. In short, they who bring sanctification as a title to their justification, they err the breadth of God's whole heavens: and they who pretend to the blessing of justification, and cannot justify it by the practice of sanctification, do but deceive themselves. *If any man, saith the apostle, abideth in him, he ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*, 1 John 2: 6. I would only add, it is the Spirit of God alone that can make the word of God, and the truths of it, powerful upon us; it is he alone that can let us into them, and make us know spiritually and savingly the great blessings of justification and sanctification; our acceptance with God through the righteousness of another, and our being adorned by the Spirit of God with a holiness of his own implanting in us. We must not make our holiness our righteousness, nor our righteousness our holiness; our righteousness belongs to another, and only the benefit of it accrues to us; our holiness is the work of the Spirit in us, and Christ is the root of both. He is the person we are justified by or through, and his Spirit is the root of all holiness in us; and both give us the possession of eternal life: justification, by the sentence of the judge, is the ground, and sanctification is that which makes us meet for it in his time and way.

A Table in the Wilderness

by Rev. J. A. Macdonald

Psalm 78: 19 poses the question — “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” This psalm itself is ample proof that the Lord indeed provided for his people in the wilderness when he sent bread from heaven and brought water from the rock. Despite this, how often did they grieve and provoke him with their unbelief. Fear not, people of God, saving faith can overcome unbelief.

This psalm which is the second longest in the Bible shows the loving care God has for His church. “In the day time he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire,” (verse 14). How bravely they followed their leader as if they were hearing Him saying, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” We are instructed as to the necessity of giving ear to what the Lord is saying to us at all times. We see how ill it fared with those who refused to listen to His commands, like the children of Ephraim who turned back in the day of battle. That was a day when their stand would have pleased and honoured God.

Oh, the wonderful accounts we have given in the Word of God to prove over and over again that nothing is impossible with God — to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. The return of the prodigal son proves this beyond all doubt. His father was daily looking for this. When he saw him coming home he went out to meet him and falling on his neck kissed him — the kiss of reconciliation which he shall never forget. The father then ordered his filthy garments to be taken away and the “best robe” put on him. He then ordered the fatted calf to be killed. Oh, what a table in the wilderness this was going to be — a good example of the beautiful gospel table. The Holy Spirit had provided him with a spoonful out of the pot of the sweet honey of repentance and he longed for more and more of it. He saw on the table another pot — that of saving faith and this refreshed his soul. He also tasted some cups of assurance of faith for which he had longed. He then remembered that it is written: “For he the soul that longing is doth fully satisfy,” and he drank more and more of it for his soul’s comfort.

Oh, yes, yes, God can furnish a table in the wilderness, such as the table spread to feed thousands of which we read in Mark, chapter 8. His disciples doubted the matter and so asked Him: “From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” He then asked them: “How many loaves have ye?” They said, “Seven”. Jesus then commanded

the people to sit down. When he had given thanks he gave the loaves to the disciples to give to the people. There in the wilderness where there had been no prospect of food, they ate and were satisfied. All this was the doing of the Lord and we believe they thanked God for His good and kind providence.

There is a lovely parable found in Matthew 22 and it is a clear proof that nothing is impossible with God. It begins by telling of a certain king who made a marriage feast for his son. Many were invited. Let us listen to the gracious invitation: "I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are now ready, come ye to the marriage" — what a table was spread there in the wilderness. But we are told that "they made light of it". How sad! It is to be feared that to this day the vast majority make light of the invitations so freely offered on the gospel table.

You will remember the account given in the Bible of a very severe storm on the Sea of Adria. There Paul discovered, more than ever before, God's infinite wisdom, strength, power and authority over all things. The swelling heavy seas broke the ship to pieces. It was feared that all on board would be lost. In the kind providence of the Lord all got safely to shore. "Some on planks and some on broken pieces of the ship." Was this not a blessing from the table of providence? So sure will it be for all those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. They shall all reach the shore of Immanuel's land in safety and shall be received "with gladness great and mirth on every side." "This is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes."

There was a happy family in Bethany — Lazarus, Martha and Mary — who feared the Lord exceedingly. However, this did not prevent them from having their portion of the sorrows and sufferings of this world. We learn that Lazarus was sick and died and was buried. The sisters doubted not that all things were possible with the God of eternity. In the midst of their sorrow He assured them: "Thy brother shall rise again."

Jesus asked: "Where have ye laid him?" He was invited to "come and see". He then standing beside the grave commanded with authority: "Lazarus come forth" — and this he did immediately. The One who knoweth all things knew that Lazarus would yet sit at the table with Jesus and his people in this world. On the day of judgement and before the great white throne Jesus will say: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" to be forever with Him whom they loved and served in this world.

Happy are the parents who will live to have the pleasure of seeing their offspring sitting at the Lord's table in this world. Let us once more hear

what David says on the matter: "And with Thy likeness when I wake, I satisfied shall be."

It was a deep sense you had of the love of God to poor perishing sinners, such as you felt yourself to be, that caused you to pray: "Draw me, and we will run after Thee." Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, fresh desires began to arise in your heart to witness for Him by sitting at His table with His people who now, in the mercy of God, were counted dear to your heart. Before any person goes forward to the Lord's table which He has spread in the world, they should examine themselves as to whether a saving change has taken place in their hearts by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. If so, the Lord puts this duty upon them: "This do in remembrance of me." That wonderful day when you were enabled to do that, you will never forget. Although many years have passed over our heads since we took that step, and we have met with many trials and sorrows in this world, we have never regretted taking that step of witnessing for the Lord at His table. It is an honour to be allowed to witness for Him at His table spread in the wilderness for His own blood-bought people. The late Rev. James MacLeod served the Lord's table on that occasion. For my own part, I saw as if his face was shining like that of Moses as he spoke so touchingly from these words: "For they that needy are shall not forgotten be alway, the expectation of the poor shall not be lost for aye." Ps. 9: 18. Oh, what a blessed day of the gospel that was as he went on to address the people at the table with much liberty from on high. I do not think there was a dry eye at the Lord's table.

You will remember when the Lord Jesus Christ told the centurion that he would come and heal his servant. He fully believed it and so it came to pass. Matt. 8: 5. "Faithful is he that promised who will also do it."

The late Rev. Malcolm Gillies often spoke about the angels in heaven veiling their faces before the great white throne and Him that sat upon it. The Church said of Him before: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." Is Christ all that to yourselves? my dear friends. If so, then you will know that He has set a table in the wilderness for you from which you have been fed to your everlasting blessing and good. You will use the language of the church when she said: "He is altogether lovely." On another occasion we see her coming up through the wilderness leaning on her Beloved, who was to her such a precious Saviour that she prayed: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." Song of Sol. 8: 6. How we should praise and bless the Lord for all the feasts he has provided for us in the wilderness of this world. You, too, will be praising Him for your deliverance when He raised you

and restored you from a bed of sickness or from the operating table, where the skill which he gave the surgeons was the means used for your recovery.

We recently met a new group of so-called Christians who never bother to give thanks to God after partaking of food. They would do well to study the word of God and note what was said to the lepers whom he had cured of that dread disease. By way of rebuke Jesus said: "Were not ten lepers cleansed, but where are the nine?" Only one had returned to give thanks to God.

When thinking of the provision made by the Lord on many different tables in the wilderness we cannot help but remember the heaven-sent words which the godly Rev. Donald Macfarlane placed on the table of the Assembly in 1893 when he made his stand for the truth of the gospel. Surely this was the doing of the Lord. What need we have of the Lord's keeping until we close our eyes in death so that we may prove faithful to His cause in this backsliding day. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." II Cor 12: 9. His people have to say:

"My table thou hast furnished
in presence of my foes;
My head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows." Met. Psalm 23: 5

Dear friends, follow you the Lord Jesus Christ as diligently as Ruth followed Naomi and let her prayer be yours: "Intreat me not to leave thee, to return from following after thee." Ruth 1: 16. His door is open and His ear is open to your cry. "For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Psalm 72: 12. Be of good courage for God is still saying: "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." John 6: 37.

The Last Days of John Knox

*Knox is often remembered today only because of his strength of character. Yet if, in the words of Regent Morton, he was "one who never feared the face of man", it was because he believed: "I am not master of myself, but bound to obey Him who commanded me to speak plainly and to flatter no flesh on the face of this earth." In the opinion of the great Reformation historian, Merle d'Aubigné, Knox was probably the most eminent Christian in the Reformed Church after Calvin. His eminent, yet humble, godliness comes out particularly clearly in the closing scenes of his life as recorded below. This article is based on Thomas M'Crie's *Life of John Knox*, now reprinted by Free Presbyterian Publications (216 pages, large paperback, £5.95). Although a number of biographies of Knox have been published over the years, none have ever approached M'Crie's *Life* for its spiritual understanding of this giant among Scotland's Reformers. B. B. Warfield called the book "a worthy biography of Scotland's great Reformer". And William Cunningham referred to the author as someone*

who "exhibited the finest combination of learning and judgement". Scotland's debt to the reformation and to John Knox in particular, should never be forgotten, and there is no better way of preventing such forgetfulness than by reading M'Crie's book. K. D. M.

Since the time when he had been a slave on the French galleys, Knox's health had never been robust. At last, in 1570, when Knox was about the age of 56, he had a serious stroke. He soon recovered his power of speech and was able, at least on Sabbaths, to preach again, but for the remaining two years for which he was spared in this life he suffered from serious physical weakness. It was during this period that James Melville, another of God's special gifts to the Scottish Church and at that time a student in St Andrews, was relishing Knox's lectures on the prophecies of Daniel. "Of all the benefits I had that year," wrote Melville of 1571, "was the coming of the most notable prophet of our nation, Mr John Knox, to St Andrews." "I saw him," Melville went on, "every day of his doctrine, go . . . a staff in the one hand, and good godly Richard Bannatyne, his servant, holding up the other oxter¹, from the abbey to the parish kirk, and by the said Richard and another servant lifted up to the pulpit, where he behoved to lean at his first entry, but ere he had done with his sermon he was so active and vigorous that he was like to ding the pulpit in blads² and fly out of it."

Conscious of the weakness of his body, Knox was now, in his own words, "weary of the world" and "thirsting to depart". When publishing one of his religious letters, he wrote in the dedication, "John Knox, the servant of Jesus Christ, now weary of the world and daily looking for the dissolution of this my earthly tabernacle, to the faithful that God in his mercy shall appoint to fight after me". And he concluded by saying, "Call for me, dear brethren, that God in His mercy will please to put (an) end to my long and painful battle. For now being unable to fight, as God sometimes gave strength, I thirst (for) an end, before I be more troublesome to the faithful. And yet, Lord, let my desire be moderated by Thy Holy Spirit."

To the dedication Knox added in a prayer: "To Thee, O Lord, I commend my spirit. For I thirst to be resolved from this body of sin and am assured that I shall rise again in glory, howsoever it be that the wicked for a time shall tread me and others thy servants under their feet. Be merciful, O Lord, unto the Kirk within this realm; continue with it the light of Thy evangel; augment the number of true preachers. And let Thy merciful providence look upon my desolate bedfellow, the fruit of her bosom, and my two dear children, Nathanael and Eleazer. Now, Lord, put (an)

1. Armpit.

2. Beat the pulpit in pieces.

end to my misery.”

During Knox's absence from his ministry in St Giles, his colleague John Craig had left Edinburgh to labour in another part of the country. In his place it was decided to call James Lawson from Aberdeen to be Knox's colleague and successor. In this connection Knox wrote to Lawson, “All worldly strength, yea even in things spiritual, decays, and yet shall never the work of God decay. Beloved brother, seeing that God of His mercy, far above my expectation, has called me once again to Edinburgh, and yet that I feel nature so decayed, and daily to decay, that I look not for a long continuance of my battle, I would gladly once discharge my conscience into your bosom, and into the bosom of others, in whom I think the fear of God remains. If I had had the ability of body, I should not have put you to the pain which I now require you, that is, once to visit me that we may confer together of heavenly things, for into earth there is no stability except the Kirk of Jesus Christ, ever fighting under the cross, to whose mighty protection I heartily commit you.” And as a postscript he added the words, “Haste, brother, lest you come too late.”

Lawson duly accepted the call, and he succeeded in reaching Edinburgh before it was too late to see Knox. Indeed Knox was able to preach at his induction. Then, after addressing both pastor and congregation as to their duties, he protested as in the presence of God, before whom he expected soon to appear, that he had walked among his congregation with good conscience, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in all sincerity, not studying to please men or to gratify his own affections. He praised God that He had been pleased to give them a pastor in his room, when he was unable to teach. (In fact, this was the last time he came out of his house). He prayed fervently that any gifts which had been conferred on himself might be augmented a thousandfold in his successor. And, very seriously and impressively, he exhorted and charged all present to adhere steadfast to the faith which they had professed.

Less than two months before Lawson's induction, news of the St Bartholemew massacre in France reached Knox. It was a sore blow to him in any case, but especially because he knew personally some of those who were murdered, among them people of great godliness and learning. Besides, it meant that the Reformation in France ceased to be an effective force; in one week alone seventy thousand Protestants — men, women and children — lost their lives amid scenes of unbelievable cruelty. Knox summoned up his dwindling strength to warn from the pulpit of the vengeance of heaven against the King of France, who had ordered the massacre. He wished the French ambassador to tell his king that divine

veangance would never leave either him or his house unless he would come to repentance, and that none of his descendants would enjoy the throne in peace.

Anxious to meet his elders and deacons, Knox called them to his home for a final farewell. They gathered in his room along with the minister of Leith. "The day now approaches," Knox told them, "and is before the door, for which I have frequently and vehemently thirsted, when I shall be released from my great labours and innumerable sorrows and shall be with Christ. And now, God is my witness, whom I have served in spirit in the gospel of His Son, that I have taught nothing but the true and solid doctrine of the gospel of the Son of God, and have had it for my only object to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the faithful and the distressed by the promises of grace, and to fight against the proud and rebellious by the divine threatenings.

"I know that many have frequently and loudly complained, and do yet complain, of my too great severity, but God knows that my mind was always void of hatred against the persons of those against whom I thundered the severest judgements. I cannot deny that I felt the severest abhorrence at the sins in which they indulged, but I still kept this one thing in view, that if possible I might gain them to the Lord. What influenced me to utter whatever the Lord put into my mouth so boldly, without respect of persons, was a reverential fear of my God, who called, and of His grace appointed, me to be a steward of the divine mysteries, and a belief that He will demand an account of the discharge of the trust committed unto me, when I shall stand before His tribunal

"In the meantime, dearest brethren, do you persevere in the eternal truth of the gospel; wait diligently on the flock over which the Lord hath set you, and which He hath redeemed with the blood of His only begotten Son. And thou my brother Lawson, fight the good fight and do the work of the Lord joyfully and resolutely. The Lord from on high bless you and the whole Church of Edinburgh, against whom, as long as they persevere in the word of truth which they have heard of me, the gates of hell shall not prevail." Knox was exhausted after speaking; the others were filled with a mixture of joy and sorrow. In that spirit they prayed and parted.

On the day before Knox died he told Bannatyne, "I have been these two last nights in meditation on the troubled state of the Church of God, the spouse of Jesus Christ, despised of the world, but precious in the sight of God. I have called to God for her, and have committed her to her Head, Jesus Christ. I have fought against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places and have prevailed. I have been in heaven and have possession. I have

tasted of heavenly joys where presently I am.”

Because he had difficulty in breathing, someone asked Knox if he felt much pain. His answer was that he was willing to lie there for years if God so pleased, and if He continued to shine on his soul through Jesus Christ. He seemed to be asleep, but off and on he was preaching and praying aloud. “Live in Christ,” he was heard to say, “and then the flesh need not fear death.” And his petitions continued, “Lord, grant true pastors to Thy Church, that purity of doctrine may be retained. Restore peace to this commonwealth, with godly rulers and magistrates.” Some time later he lifted his hands towards heaven and said, “Lord, I commend my spirit, soul and body and all into Thy hands. Thou knowest, O Lord, my troubles; I do not murmur against Thee.”

When struck by increased weakness Knox had told his wife and Richard Bannatyne that he wished one of them to read to him each day John 17, Isaiah 53 and a chapter from the Epistle to the Ephesians. He also asked at various times to have particular Psalms read to him and some of Calvin’s sermons on Ephesians in French. On his last day in this world he asked his wife to read to him 1 Corinthians 1. When she had done so he said to her, “Is not that a comfortable chapter? O what sweet and salutary consolation the Lord hath afforded me from this chapter!” Then about 5 o’clock on that 24th of November, 1572 he again asked his wife to read to him. “Go read where I first cast my anchor,” he told her. So, probably for the last time, he heard read the 17th chapter of John. And then she read to him once more from the sermons of his old friend and colleague, John Calvin.

After a sleep that evening he was asked why he was sighing so deeply. He replied, “I have formerly during my frail life, sustained many contests and many assaults of Satan, but at present that roaring lion hath assailed me most furiously, and put forth all his strength to devour and make an end of me at once. Often before hath he placed all my sins before mine eyes, often tempted me to despair, often endeavoured to ensnare me by the allurements of the world; but with these weapons, broken by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, he could not prevail. Now he has attacked me in another way; the cunning serpent has laboured to persuade me that I have merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God, who has enabled me to beat down and quench his fiery dart by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these, ‘What hast thou that thou hast not received?’, ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am’, ‘Not I, but the grace of God in me.’ Being thus vanquished, he left me. Wherefore I give thanks to my God

through Jesus Christ, who was pleased to give me the victory, and I am persuaded that the tempter shall not again attack me, but within a short time I shall without any great bodily pain or anguish of mind, exchange this mortal and miserable life for a blessed immortality through Jesus Christ."

After family worship they asked Knox if he had heard. "Would to God," he answered, "that you and all men had heard them as I have heard them. I praise God for that heavenly sound." About an hour later he said, "Now it is come." Richard Bannatyne went over to him and counselled him to think on those comforting promises of the Saviour Jesus Christ which he had so often declared to others. At once he realised that Knox had lost the power of speech, so he asked him to give a sign that he was hearing and that he was dying in peace. Knox lifted one hand, sighed twice and died peacefully. One of Scotland's greatest sons had passed to the eternal blessedness of heaven, there to receive the reward of his faithful labours.

Notes and Comments

Supermarkets and Sabbath Trading Laws

Tesco, Asda and Safeway Supermarket chains declared their intention of defying the Sabbath legislation in England and Wales and opening their stores on four Sabbaths in December. Government ministers instead of condemning this high handed action by the supermarkets, has more or less given its tacit approval to this breaking of the law of the land on the lame excuse that the European Court is reviewing the matter. The enmity of the natural heart to any Sabbath legislation is seen in the repeated attempts to remove the Sabbath legislation from the Statute Book of the land, although so far these attempts have proved unsuccessful. The profit motive appears to urge men on to trample the Sabbath under their feet. However a day of reckoning is coming for those who engage in these activities. They will then find out to their eternal loss that the law of the Sabbath was not instituted by man but by the God of heaven who gave it to man for his good.

Britain and the Common Market

When Britain joined the Common Market it was represented as a trading partnership from which Britain would derive much prosperity. Whatever material prosperity may have followed this alliance of trading nations in Western Europe, it is very clear that no moral or spiritual blessing has

followed our membership of this organisation, but rather the reverse. At the time of our joining the Common Market of Western Europe the idea that it might lead to a political union was loudly decried. It is now clear that this is the end in view, so far as most of the members of this alliance are concerned, and strong pressure has been exerted to try and force Britain to make common cause with these other nations. Should this attempt succeed, and Britain succumb to the temptation of a political alliance with these largely Roman Catholic nations the future looks black indeed, so far as the religious freedom, so long enjoyed by our nation, is concerned.

An alien, Roman Catholic controlled, federal government would be able to impose its will on any rump of a British parliament which still remained. Already, without such a political union being in existence, a European Court is already issuing decisions which the British government must submit to, however destructive to family or social or religious life these decisions may be. That the Vatican has a conspicuous hand in the present situation is seen in the pan-European Synod, the first in the Roman Catholic Church's history. Bishops and Cardinals from Eastern and Western Europe convened in Rome to plan for a future in a united "Christian" Europe. Such a Europe will be one dominated by the R.C. Church.

AIDS Crisis

The World Health Organisation predicts that 18 million people will be victims of AIDS by the end of the century. To try to combat the disease great efforts are being made to educate people and especially young people on the danger of contracting it. What is so sad in the face of this divine judgment on unnatural vice is that governments refuse to take any action against the unnatural vice which has given rise to it. On the contrary, our own Government is threatening the Isle of Man Government, where there is still legislation forbidding sodomy, that if their Government will not remove that legislation, the British Government will intervene and do it for them. What moral and spiritual blindness there is in this in the face of this terrible plague! So, too, in counselling the young, the Government refuses to take a high moral stand and warn the young of the evils of loose moral conduct and of their duty to honour the law of God.

There is only one answer to the AIDS plague and that is by the nation being brought to repentance for her sins and turned from the way of sin and death to the way of uprightness and truth.

Mission News

In a recent letter from Mbuma, Mrs Neil Murray writes, "It is quite alarming to see how T.B. and AIDS are on the increase. The Isolation Ward is full. It often comes to my mind what Dr Pugh, the Medical Superintendent in Bulawayo, said about five years ago, that Mission hospitals throughout the country would soon be filled with AIDS patients. It is good to have Dickson Mhlanga to read and pray with them. (Dickson is the hospital evangelist.) Who knows but a word in season may be blessed to them."

They had a pleasant Communion at Mbuma. On Sabbath morning the Rev. A. B. Ndebele preached from Zechariah 12: 9,10. "And I will pour upon the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of Grace and of Supplications." Mr Ndebele said how much we needed, as a Church, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit — and when He comes a spear will pierce the hearts of sinners, and there will be a true mourning for sin each one saying, "We have crucified the Lord of Glory".

They enjoyed the Rev. P. Nzamo's Table address on, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?"

The drought in the Berengwe area has been very serious. It is hoped that the seasonal rains have come by now. The Rev. Z. Mazvabo wrote in his last report of a very small church at Zungwi, so small that the preacher had to stand in the doorway. It was also the coolest place in the building. It was decided to build a larger church. Where would they get the necessary water? They chose a site which included a large rock. They noticed a large hole in the rock which seemed to contain damp gravel. They continued to dig and it appeared that they had discovered a source of water, perhaps a well of water. Someone remembered that some time before, an old woman had a house on the rock, and that she often complained that her house was damp. We await with much interest the latest news on the well in the rock.

The Missionary Aviation Fellowship, known as the M.A.F., are once more in the Bulawayo area represented by Jon Cadd, the Pilot, and his plane. It was hoped that Rev. John MacLeod would travel by this plane whenever possible, shortening the journeys, and avoiding the fatigue of travelling by road in extreme heat. For instance, the journey by road from Bulawayo to Mbuma, in the best circumstances, takes two and half hours, while the plane covers the distance in half an hour in perfect comfort. The Pilot always begins the flight with prayer.

Most of the pupils in the John Tallach School at Ingwenya would have gone on holiday before the Rev. John MacLeod arrived, which was disappointing. When speaking of Ingwenya, one is reminded of some of the dear old Christians who were once to be seen there, especially at Communion times. One very attractive little Christian woman was Ma Hlabangana, one of the chief wives of the last Ndebele king. On Sabbath mornings she used to knock at the doors of the huts near her at Induba, where she lived, and call, 'Time for church! Time for church!'

Ma Hlabangana had a son in Durban, on the east coast of S. Africa, on the shores of the Indian Ocean. It was reported that her son had died, and as he received a small Government pension, Ma Hlabangana was asked by the District Commissioner to go to see if the report were true. This meant a journey by rail of two days and two nights. On her arrival it was found that it was indeed her son who had passed away. The late Rev. John Tallach went to see her on her return. After sympathising with her on the death of her son Mr Tallach asked her, "What was the most wonderful thing you saw when you were away, Ma Hlabangana?" She hesitated and then said, "The sea, the wonderful sea! It stretched so far before me, and yet it was always coming towards me. It was like the mercy of God."

J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 21st January 1992 at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 24th January 1992 at 2.30 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 28th January 1992 at 12 noon.

Skye: At Portree on 4th February 1992 at 11 a.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 18th February 1992 at 6 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 13th March 1992 at 2 p.m.

Canadian: At Inverness on 20th March 1992 at 9 p.m.

Church Deputies

Rev. D. A. Ross and Rev. N. Ross returned from their visit to Eastern Europe in November after contacting Christians there and delivering Bibles and medical supplies to them. Rev. D. A. Ross also made a short visit to Italy to visit the friends there. Rev. John MacLeod expected to return to the U.K. at the end of December after his visits to Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe. We trust that the Lord

will bless these efforts to spread His Word and to set forth the glorious gospel of His grace. It is to the Lord we owe the safekeeping of the Deputies in the long journeys which they have undertaken.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr R A Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE, wishes to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations.

Eastern Europe Fund : Anon., £10 per K. G.; Miss M., £10; Friend, £15; Anon., Inverness, £100, last three per N. M. R.; Anon., £30; Miss J. N., £30; Mrs J. M., £10; Chesley Coll. box \$40 per D. R.

China Mission Fund: Anon., £2099.18.

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Skye, £100 for Zimbabwe, £100 for Kenya and £100 for Malawi; Chesley Coll. Box \$1300 per D. R.

Dominions and Overseas: London Congr., £100; Chesley Congregation, \$2000 per D. R.

The treasurers of the following Congregations wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:-

Beauly: Anon. (Inverness Postmark), £20 for Sust. Fund.

Bracadale: Friend, Glasgow, £100, where most needed per Rev. G. G. H.

Broadford: Raasay Friends, £50 for Broadford Manse Repairs.

Edinburgh: D. & A. MacL., Strathconon, £10 for Ch. Funds per Rev. D. B. M.; Friend, Glasgow, £20.

Gairloch: N. Tolsta Friends, £20, £10, £10; Stornoway Friend, £20; Glasgow Friend, £30; Raasay Friend, £30, all per Rev. A. E. W. MacD. and all for Sust. Fund.

Glasgow: Anon., £8 (envelope in plate); J. M., £15 for church heating per A. G.; J. C., £20 for Comm. Exps.; J. C., £30; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £5; all for Bus Fund; N. M. H. (Lochgilphead), £10 for Sust. Fund; Anon., £20 for Dominions and Overseas Fund; M. B., £10 for East European Fund; Anon., £40 for T. B. S.; Anon., £100 Sponsor a Blind Child; K. M. S. £500 for the benefit of the Church in Harris.

Glendale: Two Glendale Friends, £25, where most needed; Portree Friend, £10 for Congr. Purposes; Two Glendale Friends, £20; Portree Friend, £30, both where most needed, all per Rev. D. Nicolson.

Inverness: Anon., £15, £2, £20, £20, £5, £100, all for Publications Fund; Anon., £10 for College and Library Fund; Anon., £10 for Bus Maintenance, all per envelopes in plate.

Portree: Tolsta Friend, £20; Friend, £10; Two Friends, £30, all where most needed, all per F. M.; Anon., £20; Anon., £5, both for T. B. S.; Anon., £4 for Bus Fund, last three by envelope in plate; Portree Congregation, £145 for T. B. S.

South Harris: Anon., Edinburgh, £5 for Seilebost Door Coll.; K. M. S., Glasgow, £250 per K. Gillies for benefit of the Church in South Harris.

Stornoway: Edinburgh Friend, £20 for Car Fund; Miss K A MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish, £20 for Sust. Fund; Anon., £5 for Congr. Funds; Anon., Stornoway, £50 "Towards Deputy's expenses in visiting the African Mission"; M. & C., £100 for same purpose, all per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon., £5 for Bibles for Russia; Anon., £50 for T. B. S.; Anon., £50 for Jewish and Foreign Mission, all in church plate.

Uig: Anon., £5; Anon., £20; Anon., £10; B. B., £10, Friend of the Cause, Breasclete, £10; Friend of the Cause, North Tolsta, £10, all for Comm. Exps. all by envelope in plate.