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What shall it Profit a Man?

Men in this world are very conversant with the matter of profit and loss as they relate to business. Men are ever anxious to make a profit and avoid a loss. In order to ensure this men will work long hours and endure sleepless nights to avoid incurring a financial loss. The failure of their business may affect others besides themselves therefore it is proper that a due regard be given by men to their business concerns.

While there is this anxiety over material wealth and prosperity, how few are anxiously concerned for their spiritual prosperity and obtaining the true riches and righteousness. How many thousands, who cannot be charged with neglecting their business, can be charged with the neglect of their souls needs. How solemn it is that men, who are accustomed to do business daily in relation to their temporal good, are totally unaccustomed to do business relating to the profit or loss of their never-dying souls. Though soul business is the main business, and ought never to be neglected by anyone, yet it is, sad to say, the most neglected business of all. Men who would never fail to make up their books year by year to see how their business fares, yet fail, year by year, to make up their books that they might know how things stand between their soul and God. What a solemn account such will have to give in the Great Day of Account when business of a most solemn nature will be transacted. In that Day God shall open His books and bring men to account. There will be no possibility of falsifying the accounts in that Day. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The truth of this text of Scripture will be demonstrated before an assembled universe in the Day of Judgment. It will be seen in that Day that even the gaining of the whole world could not compensate for the loss of the soul.

What does the loss of the soul mean? The soul is destined to exist throughout the endless ages of eternity. We, as conscious beings, are never to cease having an existence and we are never to cease having a conscious existence. In this world we may for a time be wholly unconscious of our

surroundings. This may be merely through the wandering of our mind, or through an accident or illness which renders us unconscious, or it may be just through sleep. This only applies to our present existence. It is not true of our existence in the world to come. There the soul is ever conscious of his own or her own being and of his or her own surroundings but above all the soul is conscious of the being of God. In the light of this, what will the loss of the soul mean for the sinner that goes down to a lost eternity? It will mean for that soul the ever-present reality of the God of Heaven as a consuming fire against sin and against the impenitent sinner. It will mean for that soul the enduring of the wrath of God from which there will be no escape, even momentarily to give some relief. It will mean for the lost soul the anticipation of the wrath of God as the wrath which is to come. The soul will not only be suffering that wrath but be anticipating more wrath. Could anything greater be contemplated than to be shut out from the favourable presence of God for ever? What an awful loss the loss of the soul is! What shall it profit a man if this is to be his end, no matter though he gained the whole world?

But it is not to give men over to destruction that these things are written in God's Word but to warn sinners of the wrath to come so that they may never come to that place of torment. Sinners are called to flee from the wrath to come. Men might well despair if there was no escape from the wrath to come. But this is not so, for the Bible tells us of a way of escape. When Lot exposed his life to great danger in Sodom, the Angel of the Lord brought him out, saying: "Escape for thy life: stay not in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." He was directed to the place of safety appointed of God — and so are we in the gospel of God's grace. The exhortation to the children of men is Flee to Christ, He is a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. Hide in Him, even in a cleft of that Rock, which is Christ. But why, the soul may ask, is there safety for my soul in Him. It is because Christ is the smitten Rock, the smitten Lamb of God, the sin-bearer, who in His death made an end of sin for all those who come to trust in Him. He endured the wrath of God in the law place of the guilty and brought in an everlasting righteousness. Let the poor needy sinner who is exposed to the wrath of God flee to this refuge. He will find that many have fled there already and have found refuge under the shelter of His blood and many more will yet find refuge in Him. For such it will not be loss but gain — eternal gain — the favour and fellowship of God throughout the endless ages of eternity. It is the Holy Spirit that begets faith in the soul and faith lays hold of Christ for time and for eternity.

Synod Sermon

by Rev. Donald A. Ross, Retiring Moderator.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore". Psalm 133: 1-3.

As the Lord may be pleased to help us, we shall now look for a short time at this psalm, Psalm 133, with particular emphasis upon the first verse.

As to when this psalm was penned there is dispute, but we can well imagine occasions when it would have been sung; for example, when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were joined together as a united kingdom under one king, King David; and when the house of Saul and the house of David came together in unity. How appropriate this psalm was for this occasion. On a more spiritual level, this psalm was appropriate when the people would gather to the yearly feast at Jerusalem, under that one banner of the Word of God, and around the ordinances of God. What a suitable occasion that would have been, do you not think, for this psalm to be sung; an occasion when there was unity among them. Of course it was not only in the Old Testament that there were times of unity. On the day of Pentecost, (which we read about in Acts chapter 2) there was great unity among the brethren, even the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as is very obvious from that chapter.

But sadly, of course, we see in the history of the church and in the history of God's people that there has been disunity. We do not have to look far in the Word of God to discover that. There was the case of Abraham and his nephew Lot. There was sad disunity between them, and the only way they could live at peace was at a distance from each other. Then there was disunity between Paul and Barnabas, "and the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other," Acts 15: 39. So we have these and other examples of both unity and disunity recorded in the Scriptures.

In our own day, in the Protestant world, (and we are not referring to those professed Protestants who are not Protestants at all, but to those whom we would regard as truly Protestant) it is not easy to attain to unity. Such are the differences between various protestant groups and denominations with regard to certain practices and doctrinal views, that there cannot be close unity; but only such unity as there was between Abraham and Lot — unity at a distance, as it were. However, we trust that we, as a denomination, do know something of this unity among

ourselves, and of how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. As the word "behold" indicates, it is something to be wondered at, desired and sought for.

Having said that we shall consider briefly:

1. The brethren who are spoken about here.

2. The basis of the unity that is referred to here.

3. How this unity is described by our text: "How good and how pleasant", and, "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garment; as dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion."

4. Our duty with regard to this unity.

First we shall consider who the "brethren" are. The people of Israel, of course, were brethren in the sense that they were one nation or body, and had one religion — the true religion. So likewise the visible church or church of God today is one body with one religion, which is the Christian religion. However, as "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9: 6), so not every one in this one body, the professing church of God, is truly one of the spiritual brethren, who are spoken of here.

That which puts us really among the brethren is our being united by faith to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Within the visible church, which professes the true religion, there is the invisible church, that is, those who are truly united to Christ by faith. It is this union which not only unites them to Christ but also to one another, making them brethren. This body of spiritual brethren is not made up of natural families. No doubt some seem to think that, but that is not how it is, (although there are some whole natural families in it). Those who belong to this spiritual family were gathered in to be brethren, "one of a city and two of a family" (Jeremiah 3: 14), and were brought to be united by faith to the Redeemer; and it is this which made them part of the household of these brethren.

Also, they are brethren because all of them have been born again, "not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," I Peter 1: 23. Natural brothers are born of the same parents. The spiritual brethren have all been born of the same incorruptible seed of the word of God, which has been made effectual to their regeneration by the Spirit of God. Thus they are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. At the same time they are consequently brought to be united to Christ by faith; and that also, as I said, puts them among the brethren.

Furthermore, they have this glorious Person, Jesus Christ, as their elder

brother. Surely, then, this marks them as these brethren. Christ Himself said a notable thing about those who are His brethren: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And He stretched forth His hand to His disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, and mother," Matthew 12: 48, 49. These, then, are some pointers to show us who the brethren are.

And of course, although they have this privileged position of being spiritual brethren they have nothing to glory in, as far as they themselves are concerned. It is all by the grace of God that they are what they are — that is, part of this blessed spiritual family. They have to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am", 1 Corinthians 15: 10. "by the grace of God I am brought into this number. Where was I before? Truly, I was of my father the devil, and among the children of wrath even as others." So they are not a boastful people, but a humble people; and they are full of wonder at the mercy and grace of God which reached down to them to put them among the brethren.

What a wonderful family is this: the family of God made up of these spiritual brethren. Are you in this family, friend? It is a family that will last forever: and a family that will never be broken up as the families of this world are broken up by death.

2. Having said that, we shall notice in the second place a few things about the basis of the unity in this family and among these brethren. Of course, the very word "brethren" suggests unity, and clearly implies togetherness. But with regard to this spiritual unity, we must remember that its basis is the Word of God. We mentioned already the words that the Saviour spoke to His disciples: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father . . . is my brother." To do the will of God is to be a doer of the Word of God, which reveals the will of God, and this doing is basic to this unity. Obedience to the Word of God is fundamental to this unity.

Those who are united as brethren in Christ Jesus, with Christ as their Head, stand upon the Word of God. It is the ground of their hope and it is the rule of their faith and practice. It is required of them in maintaining and strengthening their unity that they be standing four-square upon the Word of God. This is what they are to strive for; this is what is required by the Word itself; this is what is required by the Father; this is what is required by the Elder Brother. They take their stand upon the Word of God and seek to be united in the things of the Word of God. This is very basic to this unity, for its foundation is the Word.

Now, you hear those who speak with great lamentations about disuni-

ty in the Protestant world. Well, of course it is sad when we cannot all agree on the things of Christ; but many of those who speak of unity do not mean unity based four-square on the Word at all, and they would like to make those who want scriptural unity to feel guilty about present disunity. What they want and what they are seeking is a unity which has very little of the Word of God in it. They may be united socially, and they may be united in their own kind of religion, but that is not the unity of the Word of God, and therefore it is not the unity of the brethren.

There is much lauding of the ecumenical movement as the great vehicle of unity, but as someone once said about that kind of unity, "It is unity in the dark." It is not unity in the light of God's Word, but in the darkness of men's minds. The unity they have on the whole, is to speak well of one another, irrespective of what religious beliefs they have. The unity they desire is to have "men's person in admiration" (Jude 16) and not the person of Christ. So false and corrupt is the unity of the ecumenical movement that it embraces the Man of Sin, and in many instances has embraced the multi-faith movement. This is the kind of unity which is in the World movement. This is the kind of unity which is in the World Council of churches and this is the kind of unity that worldly men speak well of. It is a deplorable unity in ungodliness when the Word of God is put out. We read of such unity in Revelation 17: 13, 14, "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb." These words describe the unity of false religion.

The unity therefore which Christ requires among the brethren is that they be standing shoulder to shoulder on the Scriptures. That is the kind of unity in the church which the great Head of the church requires. I trust we have something of that unity among ourselves.

You will remember that it was said to certain believers in the church in Philippi "that they be of the same mind in the Lord," Philippians 4: 2. How are we to be of the same mind in the Lord? The Lord reveals His mind to us in the Scriptures and we cannot be of the same mind in the Lord unless we are observing the Scriptures. "What saith the scriptures?" must be our question in seeking unity, Romans 4: 3. But before we can be united in following the Scriptures we are to be united as to this fact: that the Lord does indeed speak to us through the Scriptures, and directs and commands us by the Scriptures, and that Holy Scripture is His revealed will. So we must "be of the same mind in the Lord", by adhering to the Scriptures especially in our doctrine, in our worship and in our practice. This is true unity. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity;" standing shoulder to shoulder in the things

of Christ, in doctrine, in worship and in practice. This is unity!

Let us remember, too, that while there are denominations that would go along with us as far as scriptural doctrine, worship and practice are concerned, there is one aspect of practice that they are very slow to go along with us in, and that is discipline. The exercise of discipline is essential for the well-being of the church Christ. There must be unity with regard to the need for discipline and in exercising discipline. That is what the church should ever seek, prayerfully and graciously.

Furthermore in connection with the business of the church and the affairs of Christ's cause, we have to make judgments or decisions. We must seek unity when doing so. Our chief concern must not be to assert our own opinion but, at the throne of grace, to seek that we would have the mind of the Lord, and thus have unity in judgment. It is by prayer, and by searching the Scriptures, and knowing the Scriptures, and by knowing the mind of the Lord through the Scriptures, that we are to attain to this unity, for, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," Psalm 25: 14. We are to seek unity, then in all the judgements that we come to in connection with the cause of Christ.

There must also be unity in love. The fact is that among ourselves we can err in our judgments in church courts by reason of human frailty, lack of discernment, false zeal, or somebody going away on a tangent of their own without considering the mind of the Lord. When there is not the unity in judgment that there ought to be, at least there is this unity in love which will keep the brethren together and be a bond between them. To dwell thus then, together in unity, is the exhortation of the Scriptures.

What about the great task of spreading the everlasting gospel — where we go and what we do? What need there is for a united front in going out to "the world that lieth in the wicked one." Paul said to the Philippians, in connection with their maintaining and spreading the everlasting gospel, that they were to have "one mind". With regard to "the faith of the gospel", they were to stand fast in one spirit and strive together with one mind. He wrote to them: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together," shoulder to shoulder, "for the faith of the gospel," Philippians 1: 27. Therefore, we today must with one mind and one spirit be propagating the faith or doctrines of the gospel so that sinners may know them: propagating the gospel in its entirety, so that sinners may believe it. To work together in unity: this is the effective way of spreading the gospel.

3. We shall now notice the descriptions that are given to this spiritual

unity. "How good and how pleasant it is," says the psalm.

Well, how good and how pleasant it is when families are together in harmony. How good and how pleasant when families hold together; when there is the bond of love between husband and wife, between parents and children; but what a sad affair when the family is broken up. Here is disunity indeed.

Surely when we say of human families as they live in unity, "How good", "How pleasant", we should be more ready to say so about spiritual affection between parents and children, between husband and wife, it is pleasant in the sight of the community, pleasant among men. How much more good and pleasant to see unity in love and peace in the family of God. How we should ever desire it, strive for it, and be careful to maintain it. It is good, it is pleasant to have the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This goodness and this pleasantness of unity are highlighted by the further description which follows: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." The sweet fragrance of the ointment was good, and pleasant. How sweet that fragrance was; and there is a sweet fragrance, I tell you, in spiritual unity. Surely we know it among ourselves. What a sweet fragrance there is when there is unity between two of the Lord's people. When there is unity in the church there is a sweet fragrance there also. Yea, it is a fragrance that enters heaven. And how good and pleasant it is when the sweet fragrance of unity wafts across, as it were, to our neighbours, a sinful world, to have an effect for good. Truly, it is good, it is pleasant.

The occasion of that precious ointment being put upon the head of Aaron was, I understand, his ordination to the priesthood. Well, when we have the ordination and induction of godly men to the ministry of the gospel, it is good and pleasant and it is a time of gladness. So likewise spiritual unity in the church is a time of goodness, it is a time of pleasantness, among the brethren.

Then the Psalmist says that this dwelling in unity is, "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." How refreshing for the grass and herbs, after the heat of the sun has been beating down, to have the dew descend upon them. Well, if we know this unity, and I am sure we do, we know that there is a refreshing in it. It is refreshing to the soul as we go through this weary wilderness. "Behold, how good and how pleasant" is this dwelling in unity, for it is as dew — refreshing to the souls of God's people.

Also have you not seen the dew in the morning, as the sun shines upon it, reflecting the light of the sun and all the colours in the garden? Well, there is nothing like unity among brethren to reflect the love of God, which has been “shed abroad in their hearts” — to reflect it in the church, and to reflect it among themselves. If there is that manifestation of love it will be seen by others. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,” John 13: 35.

Then too, when the dew settles upon the earth it causes the blessing of fruitfulness. Dew is the symbol of the blessing of the Lord. Having been told that this unity is as “the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion,” we are then told: “for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” When there is this unity, it is a time when the blessing of the Holy Spirit is most likely to be poured forth? Is there a time more likely for the Holy Spirit to be poured forth. We think not, for the Psalm says, “for there,” in that place where there was unity, “the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” This unity, then, is a precious thing.

4. Now, in conclusion, our duty is to seek after this unity. When, by the blessing of the Lord, it is in our midst, it is to be maintained. The Psalmist here is commending it when he says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is.” But not only does the Word of God commend unity — it commands it. There are many parts of scripture which, of course, command it. There was disunity among the believers in the church of Corinth, and Paul was urging upon them that there should be unity among them. This disunity was, of course, in connection with judgment, and Paul says this, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment,” 1 Corinthians 1: 10. Yes, unity is commanded. To “dwell in unity” is something we must seek grace for. Let us seek grace to have it, and to maintain it.

Let us remember too, that apart from the commands of scripture, there are many other things in the Scriptures whereby we are constantly directed and urged to unity. Take for example, the Bible itself. What do we have there? We have one Word. Without contradiction, there is unity in the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation. This itself is a call to the Church to be united.

The very God whom we serve is one God; Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Head of the Church, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in His intercessory prayer, prays that as He and the Father are one, so His people

also may be one. Surely this is an aspect of that oneness: that they be united in mind, in judgment, in doctrine, in worship, in practice; and when there is that unity among them, that is an answer to His intercessory prayer. Oh such unity is indeed something which we also must be praying for.

Think also of the relationship between Christ, the Head, and His body, the church, there is unity! Think of Christ the Bridegroom and the Church the Bride; there is unity! There are so many things in the Scriptures calling us constantly to this duty and to be seeking that we would have much of this good and pleasant unity. In heaven there is perfect unity. What would be a little of heaven on earth? It would be "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

As I said already, how necessary and effective is this unity with regard to our spreading of gospel. We cannot labour in the Lord effectively if we are not of one mind in the Lord. The Saviour says that a house divided against itself cannot stand. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand," Matthew 12: 25. Unity is something to be sought after very much when you read such a solemn truth as this.

Well then, when we are blessed by having scriptural doctrine, worship and practice; when we are blessed in being given the mind of Christ in His Word in connection with these things; and when we are favoured to have the Reformed Faith among us, it ever becomes us to continue to be of one mind in these things.

Let us remind ourselves too, that prior to 1893 there was much disunity in the church. What caused that disunity? Error! Error caused disunity in the Free Church of that time. Rev. Donald MacFarlane came out from that church, and many with him, to come to this: unity in doctrine, worship and practice; and there was wonderful unity indeed among those brethren who stood fast. We have often heard older ministers and others say, that there was extraordinary unity in our church in those early years. There was a remarkable bond, a wonderful togetherness among the people throughout the whole church.

Then coming down to 1989, we know that prior to the Synod of that year, and at that Synod, there was grievous disunity. There were those who were seeking to bring into the church unscriptural things that were never in the church before, and who were making excuses for back-sliders; all that caused disunity. Some would have us believe there was no wrong in one's attendance at Romish mass, although we had always believed and taught that it was wrong. Thanks be to the Most High we were not left to go along with them. Had we done so, then the world would have had

every right to brand us as hypocrites, for we would have been going back on a Scriptural belief which was always in our church. Then too, disunity was caused by those who insisted on the idea that one can be brought back into office, or brought back into membership without showing repentance. How ludicrous! Even in the family we expect the child under chastisement to acknowledge that he is wrong before there is going to be a proper relationship restored between the parent and the child. So there were those among us who were striving to bring such things into our midst and who were thus causing disunity; but they have taken their leave. How thankful we should be that there is a goodly measure of unity among us. They have gone their own way and we are in the old paths where we have always been; and it is to the Lord Himself that our thanks are due for enabling us to hold fast. Now we should prayerfully seek to ever maintain this unity among us and to avoid those things that cause disunity.

There are many things that will bring disunity. Sadly, Peter erred and brought disunity into the church in Antioch, Galatians 2: 11-14. Let us remember that Peter was a man of God, but on that occasion he was the instrument for bringing in disunity. We should be careful then to be on our guard lest we be ensnared by the devil to embrace something that is quite erroneous, and be the cause of disunity. We need to be kept; and let no man think he is above such things as embracing error and causing disunity. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," 1 Corinthians 10: 12.

Also, we must avoid enmity, because enmity is something that can quickly bring in disunity. Jealousy can cause disunity. "Having men's persons in admiration" — that can cause disunity. Then, in the church in Corinth there was indifference to the presence of a certain scandalous sin in their midst — that was creating disunity. In certain of the churches mentioned in Revelation there was the condoning of sin in their midst: and such condoning of sin causes disunity, and results in spiritual death.

Most certainly, it is possible for that sad, sad state of indifference to prevailing sin to come into the church, and for those who are truly God's people to be asleep; but, says the great Head of the church, "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Ephesians 5: 14.

Well, these are things that we should remember so that we would be of those who are prizing unity and seeking and striving for unity. It is such a blessed state for the church to be in. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Peter says this: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as

brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." I Peter 3: 8, 9. Let us ever be of one mind, whatever problems or tasks the church is faced with. Whether it be it in connection with erring brethren or in connection with false brethren, or in connection with heresy; be it in connection with judgements or church courts, or whatever, let us be seeking this: to be ever of one mind. It is a strong church in which brethren stand shoulder to shoulder. That is a church that is powerful against the devil. United we stand, but a house divided against itself shall fall.

May God bless His Word to us. Let us conclude.

Letter

by Rev. Hugh Martin D.D.

Maryton
Montrose,
12th May, 1880

My Dear Friend, — I long to hear from you. Have I never an affliction that you seem to wish to be apart from me in your sorrow; I, from whom, what is it can you tell, that the Lord hath not taken? What would become of such as I am, were it not that the "will of God" is to be seen coming forth in and through the sufferings of Christ to "sanctify, or set apart and make godly" the lonely ones for Himself, and to bring them more and more into experimental conformity with Him who had to say, "I am become a stranger to my brethren, an alien to my mother's children." Therefore, though we be afflicted it is for your sakes, as Paul says; or whether we be comforted it is also for your sakes, for our hope of you is steadfast, yes, steadfast as the everlasting hills, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolations.

I do not know when I have suffered more in sympathy with a bereaved one than with you, not only at the first, but since I got your message, that you lacked the faith that would follow the forerunner within the veil. But, my dear friend, the glory within the veil does not need your faith of it in order that its tides of blessing may keep pouring in upon the spirits of the just made perfect. We are sometimes apt to mistake between faith and imagination, and to think that if we have not lively views of heavenly things we have not faith. But faith is not a view. At least it is not a view *of a scene*, it is a crediting and honouring of God on the ground of His

own Word, and He has Himself told us by the mouth of the apostle what is the place and the work of faith both as regards Divine truth and human destiny when it is said that salvation "is of faith, that it might be by grace." That text is like a delicate and beautiful balance — its two scales being grace and faith — "it is of faith that it may be by grace," and you cannot touch the one scale without affecting the other also. Now, in self-jealousy you doubt concerning the one scale — your faith — but do you doubt concerning the other — God's grace? Do you not believe that in and through Christ grace reigneth, grace aboundeth; yea, that Christ is grace and gives grace, and is given by grace? You do believe that. Then let that scale alone, and let us examine the other — your faith. Both God and you are agreed that salvation is by grace, but that in order to your actually obtaining it, it must be of faith. The grace is certain and undoubted, certain on God's part and undoubted on yours. But the faith must exist also, in order to your salvation. But have you not just said that you believe that salvation is by grace, and is that not faith? If you believe in grace, is not that faith? If you accept of grace, is not that faith? If you welcome grace, is not that faith? If you submit to grace, is not that faith? What are you puzzling at? The only need-be for faith is, that it may be by grace. Are you to make a god of your faith, as if it were the source of salvation, whereas it is only the empty space into which grace pours a free, full, and finished salvation. Therefore, look up to God, and confess your unbelief, your ignorance, and your folly, and tell Him that you must be indebted to Him not only for salvation from sin, but for salvation from unbelief, and from error too. Is not that as good faith as there is need for? And tell Him also that you are resolved to stick to His own terms, that salvation is by grace; and since He has said that it is to be by grace your believing His Word makes it yours by faith.

Now, I have given you a few sentences, which may the Lord be pleased to bless, for your help and comfort.

Hoping to hear from you soon. — Your true friend,

Hugh Martin

Mr Malcolm Macleod, Ness

Malcolm Macleod was born of upright and respectable parents at Swainbost, Ness, about 73 years ago. He proved, in common with the rest of Adam's children, that he was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. As he himself would confess, he endeavoured from childhood to act according to his own will, though conscience testified that that nature and will were

opposed to God's law. An incident in the early boyhood of Malcolm illustrates the truth of that Scripture which says:— "A word spoken in due season, how good it is." A godly woman in Swainbost saw him chasing an animal near her house on the Sabbath. She administered a solemn rebuke in the name of the Lord of the Sabbath which kept Malcolm from such actions ever after, and which was as fresh in his memory at the age of 70 as it was on the day it was spoken.

It was Malcolm Macleod's happiness to have become a trophy of saving grace in youth when about 17 years of age. He used to tell how, on a prayer meeting night in Ness, he was on his way to spend the evening "ceilidhing" (meeting in a house for amusement), when a passage of the Word arrested him and showed him his sin of going "ceilidhing" when others were met to worship God. He thought at first he would defy the message and the Messenger, but the same Word spoke again with overwhelming power. Malcolm had to go back home, and having changed his garments, he went off to the house of prayer and crept in behind the worshippers. With a mind awakened to a sense of his state as a sinner, he left Ness for Dingwall to learn his trade as a blacksmith. His spiritual troubles increased upon him, so that he could not for a time rise from his bed. His kind master sent a doctor to find out Malcolm's disease and to cure him. The doctor prescribed medicines, but Malcolm never ceased all his lifetime from pitying that doctor who thought he would cure a wounded spirit with his medicines.

He waited on the ministry of Dr Kennedy all the time he was in Dingwall, and often spoke lovingly of the doctor's preaching, which was a well of living water to so many, but it was not in the public means that Malcolm's mourning was turned into joy. There is a spot in or near Dingwall where Jesus made himself known to Malcolm Macleod as his Redeemer and Saviour. It was there that the union was affected which shall never be broken in eternity, as it was never in time. It was then that he saw that "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The first prayer we remember hearing from him was at the close of a discourse on "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them?" He said in that prayer:— "Lord, we thought one day that we were not only the children of the bridechamber, but that we were married to the Bridegroom, but we have been well acquainted with fasting since that day." The last time he was in Dingwall he was with Mr Macfarlane in the manse. Malcolm rose to go out, and Mr Macfarlane asked him where he was going. "There is a spot here," he said, "that was very sweet to me on one

occasion. I am going to see it once more.” When he came back Mr Macfarlane asked him how he found the place. “The place is the same, but it was not to me today as it was on that occasion.” “I thought that would be the way you would find it,” said Mr Macfarlane.

Malcolm came back with his household to Swainbost and worked at his trade as a blacksmith till he retired a few years ago. He greatly valued the ministrations of the godly Mr Macbeth, Ness. A number of pious people used to wait near the church for the evening service on Sabbath, and would spend the time together speaking on spiritual matters. Each Sabbath evening Mr Macbeth would take up the subject the men were discussing among themselves and set it fully forth in the light of men’s truth, though there was no earthly way whereby the men’s topic could reach the study of the minister. Thus in Ness, as in other places, brethren dwelt in unity, and the precious ointment was on the head of Aaron and went down to the skirts of his garment.

There were a few outstanding men in Ness who viewed with dismay and deep grief the disastrous attacks that were made on the principles of the Free Church, which culminated in the passing and confirming of the Declaratory Act in 1893. Malcolm Macleod was one of a few that resolved to continue the Free Church on her constitutional principles, and though he had to endure hardness on account of the stand he made, he faithfully adhered to the position then taken up to the end. He used to say publicly and privately that they did what they did before they ever saw the “dosanan” (faces) of the ministers who went back to the Free Church after the Union of 1900.

In due time he was appointed missionary in the Ness congregation, and his affectionate and faithful dealing with souls, as well as his great ability as an expounder of the Word of God, won for him the love and respect of all our people, young and old, and of all who knew him. He was a most precious speaker at the fellowship meetings on the Fridays of our communions. We will give only one saying of his on such an occasion. He said that the Lord’s people loved to walk in the footsteps of the flock. “When our fishing boats,” he said, “would be leaving for the English fishing grounds, the boats behind would try and keep those in front always in sight; each boat would aim at steering as directly as possible in the line of the one going before.” His comment on that simile was that the Lord’s people would endeavour to follow in the way of those that went before them in everything in which they followed Christ.

Mr Macleod’s illness began about a year and a half ago. He was for some months confined to bed, but was enabled to be at the services fairly

regularly to the end. Latterly he could only attend the weekly meeting owing to his inability to walk to the church on the Sabbath. The Lord had been sending messengers to him from time to time during these months, who made plain that the King would not permit him to be much longer away from His immediate presence. On Sabbath evening he retired once again, as he had often done that day, to his closet, where he was wont to wrestle in prayer. His wife, anxious on account of his longer delay than usual in coming forth, entered and found that he was not able to return unassisted. He was helped to bed, and in about an hour's time he passed peaceably away into the desired haven where the weary rest from their labours. He left a widow and four daughters and one son, with whom we would express sympathy in their great bereavement, and pray that they may be partakers of that grace for which her late husband and their father was so conspicuous. The Ness congregation mourn under a sense of their loss, which is a loss to Lewis and to the Church at large. May the Lord who has taken away so many of His people from our midst speedily raise others to fill the breaches in the walls of Zion. M.G.

The Darkness Before the Millenium

by Rev. Lachlan MacKenzie

Behold, darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people. — Isaiah 60: 2.

God Almighty shall always have a Church to serve Him while the world remains; but the Church, as to her outward appearance, has been often like the moon — sometimes increasing and sometimes decreasing. For some little time before the change the face of the moon cannot be seen. It has been thus with the Church formerly, and it is probable it will be so for a little time before her most glorious appearance upon earth. I shall give my objections for this opinion, and then answer any objections that may be formed against it.

1. As to Pagans* and Mahometans, they must remain naturally in the state they are in, and proceed from bad to worse, till the time appointed for their conversion appears. That time is not yet come; there must be such a spirit of grace and supplication in the Church, that would find missionaries to convert them, as shall convince them that God is with them of a truth. The superstition, idolatry, and immorality of many who call themselves Christians is an invincible bar in the way of such an event, so that any attempt to convert them would only bind them faster in their

* Since this was written many in pagan darkness have been brought to the light.

chains of error and delusion than ever; the darkness shall only increase more and more.

2. As to Popery, there is no appearance of a reformation among its adherents; all the trials and afflictions that idolaters meet with send them only to their idols. Instead of forsaking the gods of silver and gold, brass and stone, when the chastening hand of God is upon them, we hear only a multitude of processions and masses, of so many prayers to saints and angels, and such trumpery as would excite the laughter of infidels and the pity of pious Christians. Though their errors and delusions have been exposed ten thousand times, we may adopt the words of the prophet concerning them, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." It is no wonder though Popery should spread far and wide; they have a pompous parade of worship, to bewitch and captivate the eyes of the vulgar. The honours and riches with which their higher clergy are endowed are a bait to men of birth, of learning, and of eclat. And though they must see, when they open their eyes on the Word of God, that their religion is a system of lies and falsehood, it is no greater wonder to see them support such a false religion than it is to see in every country where Old and New Testaments are to be found men of learning, of power, and parts, steal, murder, commit adultery, though they see these sins forbidden in the Word of God. Popery is calculated to make the common people perfectly superstitious, and to make the learned people mere infidels. To prove this we have only to cast our eyes upon France, and if these infidels will not embrace the pure and genuine precepts of Christianity, they shall return to their own religion again, or establish a new kind of Paganism. That Popery shall greatly prevail before the Millenium appears from this — that it is said a certain great enemy who would appear against the Church would build his palace in the glorious high mountain between the seas. This cannot apply to Antiochus Epiphanus; it must apply to the great persecutor, of whom he was only a type. Mount Zion has been always called the holy mountain; and if it be said by some that by the glorious high mountain is meant the Church, it may be asked what place has been built in the holy mountain, between the seas. Perhaps it will be said the Vatican. We acknowledge that the Vatican is the mount of His Holiness, and a good Catholic will acknowledge that it is accordingly the holy mountain. Even some of the followers of the beast are of opinion that, after the destruction of Rome, the Pope shall dwell at Jerusalem; and as mankind are often very ready to go from one false opinion to another, what should hinder many of the Mahometans to transfer their veneration from the false prophet to the beast, or from one false prophet to another?

A train of circumstances may make the transition very easy, and instead of going on a pilgrimage to Medina or Mecca, they may be encouraged to come to Jerusalem, not from a spirit of devotion, but the spirit of superstition. A good Christian may have a holy curiosity to see the Holy Sepulchre, but we may believe that the beast will convert it to one of the worst of purposes — that of promoting idolatry. It may be to him, while he has possession of it, a source of great riches; and if he allows and commands his followers to worship their little crucifixes, and what they call the images of Christ, is it not still more likely they will worship the spot where the sacred body lay? During the few years that he shall have possession of the Holy City, the grossest idolatry will prevail. The most spiritual Christians, and the most remote from idolatry, would have a veneration for the place where the Saviour of the world was laid; and oh! how will the Pope rejoice to have such a rich mine to fill his coffers! And whereas the poor have the blessings of the Gospel freely offered to them, on the contrary, the richest will have here the best chance of pardon and acceptance. Miracles, without doubt, will be multiplied, and cures performed without number, at this holy place. A dissipated rich man, by paying a round sum, will have permission to kiss the stone that was at the door of the sepulchre, and to kneel at the place. He will then obtain the remission of his sins, and a Papal indulgence to commit as many more as he shall pay for; and if he be a very great man, he may obtain a piece of the stone to carry home with him as a relic. They will very likely have an enclosure about the sepulchre, and the earth in this sacred enclosure will be made to work miracles; and as thousands will make a demand for a bit of the stone, miracles will be alleged to make the stone last; and instead of discouraging a superstitious and idolatrous attachment to what cannot profit their souls, this spiritual adultery shall be promoted by all the arts and ingenuity of priestcraft. Instead of worshipping the Saviour himself, they shall worship the place where he was buried. By this time the Pope shall seem in a great measure to forget his old patron, the Apostle Peter; idolatry shall be so gross, and the darkness so thick, that Papists themselves shall but seldom pray to the Queen of Heaven; they shall worship towards the holy Sepulchre. Prints and paintings of the Holy Sepulchre will be sent into all quarters of his dominions.

The veneration that was once paid to Rome shall now be paid to Jerusalem. All the relics of the saints shall be carried by a miracle to the Holy City. The destruction of Rome shall, perhaps, be imputed to their want of zeal in persecuting heretics, or to some other cause, which the time will suggest to the Pope. As all the saints and angels will go to

Jerusalem, with the Head of the Church, some holy virgins will see visions, intimating to the faithful that they must now transfer their veneration from Rome to Jerusalem. The Pope will easily discern what spirit of idolatry the bulk of his followers like best, and he will avail himself of this; and it is more than probably that a new kind of idolatry not yet thought of, and not discovered till then, will be the religion of the Pope. The darkness shall be more than Egyptian darkness — a darkness that may be felt. The Pope never reigned with such triumph as he shall then reign. He shall be the Head of the Greek and Latin Churches. Perhaps the Grand Signor shall conquer Persia, and the Pope may assist him in so doing; and to reward his services, the Emperor of Russia may cause his clergy to submit to the Pope as Head of the Universal Church. But it may be asked — Will this darkness overspread even the Protestant Churches? I fear it will, in a great measure. My reason follows:— If the spirit of Popery and the doctrines of Popery will pervade the Protestant Churches, may it not be said that the darkness will overspread them, whether they retain the name or not? What is the spirit of Popery? Persecution intolerance and tyranny. And are Protestants free of this spirit? They are not. Even good men themselves have not so much zeal in appearing against the sins and corruptions of the times as they ought. If they had, they would see that Protestants can persecute as well as Papists. Let a man in England or Scotland preach against the corruptions of the times, and see if he can escape persecution. The Saviour preached against the sins of all ranks, and what was the consequence? They impeached him for treason, in that He called himself Christ or King. The prophet Nathan said to his sovereign, “Thou art the man”. In a word, let a man tell plain truth and he will meet with rough persecution even from a smooth, plain Protestant. The Popish Church rules over the conscience: but was ever the Head of their communion guilty of greater tyranny than forcing people to submit to a man whom they cannot in conscience hear? He is settled, perhaps, with a party of soldiers at his ordination or admission, and perhaps not a soul of his parish waits in church; and he very solemnly takes the charge of the souls of the people whom he knows will never hear him; and though the people complain, they get no redress. If they complain that they cannot get good to their souls, their arguments are laughed at, and they are looked on as a set of enthusiasts, who ought to be crushed. The consequence is clear. Is this, or such-like tyranny, in any Protestant Church? Let us mention some of the Popish doctrines and practices, viz, idolatry, justification by works, free will, etc. 1. The idolatry: this practice and darkness we are pretty clear of. We have another kind of darkness — many

Protestants worship nothing. Whether is he the more respectable character, who bows to the image of Christ or one of the saints, or the pretended Protestant, who rises in the morning, passes the whole day, and goes to bed at night without discovering the least symptom of worship to any supreme being? It is even alleged of several clergymen in Protestant Churches that they have no prayer, no worship in their families; and it is clear that such men would not worship God on the Sabbath but for the sake of a bit of bread.

Bad as idolatry is, men cannot deny but it is better than to be without worship of any kind. The idolater is in darkness. The man who worships no being is in gross darkness. The clergyman who does not worship in his family is but mocking God in the pulpit; he worships he knows not what; he is in midnight darkness; may God awaken him in mercy. And if the clergyman does not worship in his family, is it not probable that a great number of his parishioners will follow his example? He may be a social, good-hearted, honest fellow, and a good countryman, and his people will be unwilling to believe that he shall be condemned though he does not pray in his family, or show them a good example. They love him because he accommodates himself to their humours and does not frighten them with wild doctrines that might put people out of their wits. He has a sweet salve for their consciences, by telling them they have as good a claim for Heaven as your hypocrites who can pray; and yet their neighbours and he believe, for their part, that all your pretenders to religion are of a fanatic spirit, but cannot deny that some of these enthusiasts are honest men. The plague is in them. They are so censorious, so bigoted in their opinions, that they do not believe any will go to Heaven but themselves. He makes them, therefore, the butt of his ridicule, laughs at their absurdity, and looks upon them as men who have their heads turned with a religious frenzy. When such a man is the spiritual guide of souls, what can be expected but that he will lead his people to perdition with himself? If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch; and if there are already numbers of such characters in the Church, I fear they will increase. A succession of such men, for a number of years, will introduce the darkness of Deism, and the darkness of Deism will have the way for the darkness of Popery; and the ruling powers would establish a new religion, and threaten the clergy that would rebel with the loss of their stipend. They would find men of such low principles very pliable. And as no religion is so much calculated for tyranny in Church and State as Popery, it is probable the attempt will be made, and that the clergy will yield; but as it would be dangerous to make the attempt till a spirit of lukewarmness,

moderation, and indifference shall universally prevail in Protestant countries, the time is yet at some distance. When it arrives, the most of the clergy will turn their coats. The few that will not will be turned out of their livings; and thus the Protestant religion will be without a legal establishment. The persecution, however, shall be short. The resurrection of the witnesses shall be the dawn of the morning previous to the sunrising Millennium. Another Popish doctrine is justification by works. We know what is the doctrine contained in the Protestant Confession of Faith: but what is the doctrine preached in many Protestant pulpits, and what are the doctrines given in several modern compositions of Protestants? The very reverse. They laugh down such a foundation for Christianity, as a heathen would have done before the Gospel appeared, with this difference, that some slight compliments are paid to the Saviour. Instead of preaching salvation by Christ, and the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, we are taught to be good neighbours, good servants, good members of Society. There is not a word of our need of Christ, our misery and corruption by nature. Instead of this we hear the joyful doctrines of free will, virtue — virtue is the great word: that is the Diana of the Ephesians. They do not believe we are born without some virtue. This virtue must be the work of a man's own right hand, for many protestant divines laugh at the doctrine of the work of the Spirit of God upon the soul. In this, however, they do not imitate their heathen masters, for they acknowledge that this must come from Heaven. Regeneration, spiritual poverty, and being indebted to our Lord Jesus Christ for everything, they do not believe or understand; and doctrine that is lamentably worse than any of the doctrines of Popery is tolerated in the Protestant Church: and it is to be feared that the Protestant Churches will be greatly eclipsed, for, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." My reasons for this opinion I shall briefly mention:— 1st, God is just. We are sure that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Our short-sighted reason may suggest such a thought as this. Why doth not the Providence of God send the Gospel to the poor benighted heathen? Why did he permit the delusions of Mahometanism and Popery to overspread the greater part of the earth? But God is just and good in permitting Pagans, Papists, and Mahometans to be tainted with their delusions, in consequence of the sins of their forefathers, who made a bad use of the light while they had it. God Almighty permits a wicked couple to have a numerous family, and to train up their children in sentiments and practices that will endanger their salvation, and yet God is holy and good: and as the Protestant makes a bad use of the Gospel, there is cause to fear that their posterity, for several years, will sit in darkness and the

shadow of death. Again, this shall be for the glory of God. It is a Scriptural doctrine that all things will terminate in His Glory, though we do not know how. It may satisfy us that it will be so. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. To me it appears probable that there was never such darkness upon the face of the earth as there will be a few years before the dawn of the Millennium, from the resurrection of the witnesses. But before it appears the darkness will be thick, and the persecution severe. The faith of the Church will be at a low ebb. They will adopt the language of the Psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be angry evermore? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore?"

Lastly. This is His usual method with His Church. Let us consult Scripture and experience and we will find that this is the case. A little before the plot of Haman was defeated, the Church was in extreme danger. A little before Jacob was made happy, he is brought to say, "All these things are against me." A little before the dawn is the darkest time of the night. The dawn of the Millenium will be the resurrection of the witnesses. A little before this the darkness will be very thick — the Protestant religion will be persecuted, and their interest very low. It is likely that many of them will receive the glorious crown of martyrdom during the three and a half prophetic days. Popery will reign triumphant. They will then rejoice and send presents to one another. They are happy that the men who galled their consciences and exposed their errors are removed out of the way. The courage and constancy of the martyrs will animate the rest of the Protestants to suffer the utmost effects of the rage of the Popish party. God will wonderfully secure their persons, and hide them from their rage. The beast, however, and his adherents are still uneasy; and, in order to make sure work, they enter into a plot. Very like themselves, they are suspicious, and not without cause, that all their new converts are not sincere. The Pope and Cardinals, to promote the cause of the Church, engage a number of the most zealous Catholics in all his dominions, and bind them with an oath of secrecy, to cut off in one night all the new Protestant converts; and with this view they are to engage men they can depend on, in every corner, and these are to be prepared for the bloody field. The miserable victims are to be invited to partake of the universal joy. No sooner do they get them within their power than a cruel carnage ensues. They spare neither friend nor brother. This is the cause of God and of the Holy Mother Church; and therefore they think they do good service. They imagine it will be an easy matter for them to manage the few fugitives that are hiding themselves in caves and mountains. As for those half converts and others who did not turn, being protected by the favour

and interest of great friends, they are all cut to pieces. The bloody butchers spare no age nor sex, friend nor foe. All the Papal dominions are filled with woe and lamentation. The people of God are wonderfully protected by Him; they look as believing their temporal salvation to be nigh. They agree privately to appoint a night for watching, fasting, and prayer. The night they appoint for wrestling with their God is the night the bloody Papists appoint for their cruel work. There will be remarkable downpouring of the spirit, and they are made to believe that God will work wonders for them, and they are not disappointed. He doth so unknown to them; and next day they hear of the murder of their unhappy brethren. They see, however, the hand of God in their safety. The Papists think they have fixed Popery on an immortal basis. Instead of this they shall find to their cost that they have given it a most terrible blow. The bloody deed disgusts all the Powers of Europe. They are shocked at the bloody spirit of Popery. Even Catholics of humanity shudder at the deed. They cause the bloodhounds who killed their friends and relatives to say that the people they murdered were Papists. In consequence of this there is an edict in favour of Protestants to profess their own religion without molestation. The Gospel is preached with success, and the Church looks forward for better days. The resurrection of the witnesses is the morning of the Millennium, and a prelude of that wonderful and glorious era. But it may be objected and there is a great degree of knowledge in the world — that there is a spirit of liberty extending among all ranks — that, therefore, such events are improbable: besides, we have the Gospel in Protestant Churches preached in its purity, and it is hoped the candlestick will never be entirely removed. But the darkness may overspread and be very thick, notwithstanding, in many places. The Romans were a learned people at the time when the Gospel was first preached to them, for it appeared soon after the Augustan age: but we know that in a few centuries the most fertile provinces were overrun with numbers of barbarians, who spread havoc and ignorance wherever they appeared. What people were ever fonder of liberty than the Romans? Yet they were first enslaved by their Emperors, then by the hands of Goths and Vandals, and last of all, by the infallible Head of their Church. The barbarians enslaved their bodies, and the Pope enslaved their minds.

As to our having the Gospel in purity among us, can we pretend to have it in greater purity than it was preached at Rome? It is acknowledged that we have the Gospel preached, and the ordinances administered, in great purity among us. But we must say that the Gospel was preached with greater purity to the Romans than it is to us. They had the personal

presence of the Apostles, and they had this additional advantage over us, they had the faith of the Gospel confirmed by miracles. They had ocular demonstration, which bore down all opposition. Notwithstanding of all this, the Roman Church, in process of time, became a corrupt and idolatrous Church. If they fell, so may we; "let us not be high-minded, but fear." Contempt of the Gospel, and immorality, provoked God to bring in barbarous nations among them, to punish them for their sins. Ignorance overspread the Empire, and this ignorance became the mother of Popish delusion. Our sins, in like manner, may bring similar punishment. We have luke-warmness in religion, and we know the express threatenings that are levelled at that particular sin. The Protestant Church is doubly infected with this sin. If God did not spare other Churches, what ground have we to expect that He will spare us? There is cause to fear that our contempt of the Gospel, our lukewarmness in religion, and the immorality of many false Protestants, will bring all but total darkness upon our posterity. From what has been said of the Pope's religion, some may be apt to suspect that we exclude all of that communion from salvation. It is answered, that if God reserved to Himself seven thousand souls in the Kingdom of Israel, may He not reserve many thousands in the Church of Rome from the contagion of idolatry. Many might escape the plague if it visited the city or metropolis; but a man would advise his friend to leave it, because he believed it would be dangerous to stay. The words of Scripture to the people of that Church are, "Come out of her, that ye be not partakers of her plagues" — a proof that he has some in that idolatrous Church.

Church Centenary Committee's Report

(Through lack of space this report was obmitted from the Proceedings of Synod).

Several years have passed since this Committee was appointed. The centenary of the Church then seemed a long way off but it is now only a year until the time to celebrate the centenary will come. Work on the Centenary Volume has continued and it is hoped that the final preparation of the manuscript will be completed in time to have the volume published by May 1993 (D.V.). We wish to thank the writers of the chapters for their contributions.

The Committee had hoped that it would have been possible to produce a history of the congregations of the Church. This has not been possible but the Committee recommend that the preparation of the history of the congregations continue and that they be published in a series in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

The Committee would acknowledge the contributions made by congregations to the Centenary Fund and would recommend to our people and to our Deacons' Courts that they would continue their support of this Fund for another year.

As indicated in earlier reports of the Committee, the purpose of the Centenary celebrations is not to give glory to man, but to acknowledge the Lord's good hand in giving to the men who stood on the side of truth in 1893 grace and strength to stand firm in the midst of abounding apostasy. It is our prayerful desire that the commemoration of one hundred years of the Free Presbyterian Church's witness will bring the people of the Church to acknowledge humbly before the Lord what He has done for the Church in the past, and in faith to look to Him for the revival of His Cause and for His blessing in the years to come.

Book Reviews

WORKS OF JOHN OWEN DD. VOL. XVIII.

This volume is written to prepare the way for a better understanding of the author's work on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Without any show of learning the vast fields of Jewish literature concerning the Messiah are traversed and their fanciful imaginations disproved, while an abundance of light is cast on the many portions of the Old Testament brought under discussion. The theophanies of the Old Testament are shown to be for the instruction of the church in the Person, nature and office of the Son of God, and in the mystery of His eternal distinct subsistence in the Deity, as also, His future incarnation and condescension unto the office of King and Head and Saviour of His church.

The real objection of the Jews is stated to be their ignorance of the kind of Messiah that they, as sinners, required. In this connection he answers a difficulty which T. V. Moore raises in his book on Haggai in connection with the words "the desire of all nations", which words T. V. Moore relates to all the things that the nations desire, that is worldly things, and so he argues against it relating to Christ. Owen's analysis is that it indeed refers to Christ who ought to be the desire of all nations *de jure* and is the desire of all nations *de facto* "He is the desirable one". The ceremonial law and the whole Mosaical economy is expounded in such a way as to afford great light into some passages of the Epistle to the Hebrews as well as having application to other expressions in Scripture re this "law of com-

mandments contained in ordinances.”

For Owen there is no room for argument about the penman being the apostle Paul. Not only so, but the chief motive which led Owen to write his exposition was his observing that all other commentators had failed (not withstanding all their sedulous labours) to realise that the epistle is directed to the past, present and future conditions of the church of the Jews. That love of the apostle of which we read elsewhere when he could wish himself accursed for his brethren's sakes, permeates the whole epistle.

Throughout the volume what shines forth clearly is — that there was a Messiah promised, that that Messiah has come and that the Messiah is Jesus. Let no one think that it is but an unnecessary prelude to a greater work — rather let him look upon it as a key which is necessary to open the epistle.

Like all his other works this one too breathes the spirit of devotion and humility.

Alfred MacDonald.

SERMONS ON SECOND SAMUEL by John Calvin. Banner of Truth. £19.95.

The sermons in this suitably bound volume have been translated into English from French, for the first time, by Professor Douglas Kelly, of Reformed Seminary Jackson, Mississippi. To this scholar we owe a debt of gratitude for executing his task so well. The ground covered, is the first thirteen chapters of 2nd Samuel. In our view, Calvin as an expositor of the Word of God, is without rival and that is exemplified in this production. From the youthful author of the Christian Institutes we expect a high theological and hermeneutical standard, and we are not disappointed. At a time when discourses from the Old Testament are, in certain circles greatly outnumbered by those from the New Testament, these sermons are particularly welcome. The author states the main theme or subject to be dealt with in the chapter caption, and then proceeds to elucidate, develop and apply with unusual sanity, caution, precision and fidelity. As we read his observations, and arguments, we found ourselves exclaiming, not only — what an able mind, but what a gracious deeply taught man of God! — what a tender painstaking pastor, and what reverent insight into the Word of God. Whatever the theme in each chapter as a rule, the majesty, the grace, the purity of God are set over against the vanity, the pride and the deceitfulness of man. The sermon entitled ‘Great David’s Greater Son’ is full of the covenant grace of God in Christ. Each chapter concludes with an impressive sweet, solemn holy refrain or cadence.

Just listen to this final paragraph on page 338 “Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God in recognition of the infinite offences of which we are guilty. Let us pray to him that although we are unworthy of the rank even of a worm of the earth, and are totally full of rottenness and infection, yet may He not fail to accept us as His children in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as He promised us. And although we are poor sinners, may He sustain us in the frailty of our nature, until we are stripped of it; and may He so reform us by His Spirit that we are truly confirmed in this promise of being His inheritance and of bearing His image and His glory in ourselves; and may He bestow this grace not only upon us, but upon all peoples and nations of the earth. . . .”

One marked defect only; we greatly miss the reverential savour of the Authorised Version in quotations. Otherwise, we cordially recommend to our readers the perusal of this precious volume, which grapples with, both difficult and delicate, yet abidingly relevant topics, both for the Church and for the world.

F.M.

Notes and Comments

Sabbath Trading

The Advocate General of the European Court of Justice ruled it was for English courts to decide whether Sabbath trading restrictions interfered with the right of free trade with the Community. This is a set back to the Sabbath trading lobby yet some supermarkets said that they would continue trading. It would appear that these large supermarkets will continue to defy the law and will press the Government to change the Sabbath trading laws in England and Wales. The Government on its part is only too willing to change these laws if only they can get a measure of agreement on how they should be changed. The fact that the law of the Sabbath is an integral part of the unchanging law of God is lost sight of by the supermarkets and the Government. The Lord, however, will defend His own Day and will bring men and nations to see that they violate and trample underfoot the Sabbath Day at their peril.

R.C. Professor of Theology at Southampton

Dr Mary Grey has been appointed Professor of Contemporary Theology at Southampton University. The convent-educated Professor specialises in feminist theology. She plans to teach feminist, creation, political and

liberation theology to students at Anglican colleges in the Southampton area. Her radical approach to theology she believes could be the salvation of the declining Churches. In fact, her influence can only lead to a further deterioration in the Church of England so far as theology is concerned. What need there is for men to be raised up in Universities and Divinity Colleges who would be committed to the Reformed Faith. Only then can we hope to see a change for the better in Churches that have long since departed from the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

Illegitimate Births

There is serious concern even in government circles over the high percentage of illegitimate births among teenagers. It is reckoned to be 80 per cent of all teenage births. In some areas the percentage is even higher. These figures give an indication of the low moral state of the nation. Only a change in the spiritual state of the nation will bring a change in the moral state of the land. How applicable are the words of Isaiah to our day — “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.”

The Pope's Mortality

Notwithstanding the adulation of his infatuated followers, the recent illness of the Pope is a reminder that soon he must die. His mortality is as certain as his fallability. One moment “he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God”, and the next moment he may be lying in the dust and his soul in a lost eternity. So is the end of all the Popes of Rome. The present Pope has survived two assassination attempts. Even the one designated by Scripture as — “that Wicked . . . whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” — cannot depart this life until the purposes of God concerning him are fulfilled. For the destruction of the Antichristian system of Rome the true Church prays, yet even the people of God must wait the Lord's time for the fulfilment of their petitions. On the book of Revelation the souls under the altar, that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held, “cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, does thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” They were given white robes and told “that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled”. The papacy must go on until her cup is full

and then she shall be destroyed. What a day it will be on the earth when the cry is heard: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen."

European Sabbath

In a debate in the European Parliament, MEPs expressed their concern that Sabbath working might spread from the UK into other EC States. The Parliament voted for a general ban on Sabbath working except for essential services and where there was an agreement between management and the workforce. The Council is also moving towards the same position and a ban could be agreed at the next Social Affairs Committee meeting on 30th April, when the proposed Directive on working time will be discussed.

This should encourage Christians that it is quite feasible in this modern age to expect whole nations to honour the Sabbath rest. But the Government are considering how to deregulate restrictions upon Sabbath trading. The European Court of Justice has recently ruled that under present legislation, it is for Member States to decide on Sabbath working. While this means that the present Shops Act 1950 is to be honoured, it also means that the Government will now set about its repeal in earnest. This is causing countries such as Germany to fear the threat of increased international competition to their own Sabbath and is leading to the present debate. The "continental Sunday" was always a bit of a myth.

D.B.M.

Mission News

In a recent letter we learn that on 13th July the Rev. P. Mzamo and the Mbuma Hospital staff at Mbuma met in the new dining-room, to bid farewell to Neil Murray and Cathie Ann as they were about to leave, to take up residence in Bulawayo, where Neil will (D.V.) be engaged in full-time missionary work.

There were seventy-five present in the dining-room. The Rev. P. Mzamo read the 10th chapter of Romans verses 11 to 21. He then spoke appreciatively of the work done by Neil and Cathie Ann in the hospital and without, over a period of sixteen years, and wished them every blessing in the future. Sister Jessie Coote and several of the nurses also expressed their good wishes. Neil and Cathie Ann were presented with a copper plaque in the shape of Africa, surmounted with the figures of some of the wild animals found there, and everyone signed a large decorative card. In conclusion all sang the 121st Psalm and the meeting ended with prayer.

It was a happy and sad occasion as Neil and Cathie Ann looked back over varied experiences of light and shade, but they could both say, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us'.

On a recent visit to distant Binga, when they were accompanied by Dutch friends, there were congregations of one hundred and of one hundred and fifty respectively at Samende and Lubu. All listened most attentively. At Lubu they were greatly encouraged to learn that the people there had collected among themselves three hundred dollars to build a church. One would have to realise what deprivation they have suffered after two years of severe drought to appreciate fully their efforts in collecting this money. Neil concludes his letter with a prayer that the Lord would bless his Word to the people of Binga. 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?'.

In a central place in Ingwenya grounds there is a small cemetery. The first to be buried there was the late Rev. J. B. Radasi, in 1924. There are a few other graves including the unmarked grave of MaMlotshwa, one of the wives of the last king of the Matabele, Lobengula. MaMlotshwa lived at Libeni, a few miles from Ingwenya, where in Mr Radasi's day and since then there has been a church, and for many years a school. MaMlotshwa was a tall, handsome woman, but had a reputation of being rather wild and often the worse of drink. On one occasion, on her way either to or from a beer-drink, she lingered to listen to the preacher at an open-air meeting held by one of our elders. Many times after that she stopped to listen. Eventually she began to attend the local services.

After a time she came before the Kirk Session at Ingwenya, and the minister and men seemed to be satisfied with her account of her experience. However, the elders continued to question her. 'Are you going to continue drinking beer?' they asked. 'I shall never go to a beer-drink,' MaMlotshwa replied, 'but I do not think there is anything wrong with drinking a little beer in my own home.' 'It is a bad example,' the elders said. 'Go home and pray about it.'

In three months' time MaMlotshwa returned. When being questioned she rose up and raised her arms above her head. 'The Lord has taken away all desire for beer from me. I never want to see it again.' MaMlotshwa remained a faithful member at Ingwenya and when there was a dissension in the congregation for a while and some ceased to attend, MaMlotshwa was always present. When she came to leave this world her last words were 'Receive thou me, Oh Lord of Glory!'

J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Southern: At Glasgow on 15th September at 6 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 15th September at 6 p.m.

Canadian: At Inverness on 5th October at 9 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 6th October at 1 p.m.

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

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisbourne on 23rd October at 2.30 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 27th October at 11 a.m.

Finance Committee Meetings

In addition to the ordinary meetings in March and October, the Finance Committee will meet in future (D.V.) on the 4th Tuesday of June at 11 a.m. in Inverness and on the 4th Tuesday of December at 11 a.m. in Glasgow.

(Rev.) A. E. W. MacDonald, Convener.

Tomatin Church Opening

The opening of the Tomatin Church will take place on Wednesday 23rd September 1992 at 7 p.m. (D.V.). It is expected that the opening service will be conducted by Rev. A. MacPherson.

Committee Meetings (D.V.)

The following Committees will meet in the Inverness Church on Tuesday 6th October.

9.00 a.m. - 10.00 a.m. — Church Centenary Committee. Outreach.

10.00 a.m. - 10.45 a.m. — Training of Ministry.

10.45 a.m. - 11.00 a.m. — Board of Examiners.

11.00 a.m. - 11.45 a.m. — Church Magazines.

11.45 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. — Publications.

12.30 p.m. - 01.15 p.m. — Sabbath Observance.

02.00 p.m. - 04.30 p.m. — Finance.

03.00 p.m. - 04.30 p.m. — Religion and Morals.

04.30 p.m. - 05.30 p.m. — Dominions and Overseas.

07.00 p.m. - 09.00 p.m. — Foreign Missions.

Halkirk Communion

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is expected to be administered in the Halkirk Congregation on the 3rd Sabbath of September (D.V.).

Rev. Donald Boyd

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Rod Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Synod Expenses: A.G. £30.

Foreign Mission Fund: H. £40; Ullapool Friend, £100, both for Famine Relief; Ullapool Friend £50 for Binga; Two Lewis Friends £200 for Kenya Free Presbyterian Mission; Miss W. S., Wick £50 for Kenya, where most needed.

Sustentation Fund: Anon., £20, where most needed.

Eastern Europe Fund: A. Forgie, £10; "Wolverhampton" £30.

Binga Fund: Mr Neil Murray acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations: Dr J. M. £100; Mr G. W. and S. G. £100; Mr D. M. £20; Friend, N.Z. £287.30; Inverness Congr. £3040; Daviot, Stratherrick and Tomatin Congr. £500; Tain, Lairg, Bonar and Dornoch Congr. £500; Dingwall and Beaully Congr. £670; S.B. Church, Oxford £171.61, all per N.M.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Beaully: Mrs M.M., Reasaurie £10 for Door Coll. per envelope in plate.

Bracadale-Strath: In memory of the MacNeils at Bridge Cottage, Struan £10, where most needed; Friends, Struan £37 for Zimbabwe Famine Relief, both per D.G.B.

Daviot-Stratherrick-Tomatin: Friend, Beaully £20; Mrs and Mrs R. MacB. £50 per Mr J. C. M., both for Tomatin New Church.

Dingwall: Mrs C. M. £15; Mrs A. G. £15 and £10, all for Sust. Fd.

Edinburgh: From Miss E. O. Gunn's Estate £3000 in memory of her late sisters, Barbara and Margaret and herself for Congregational Funds per Messrs Lindsay W.S.; Anon., £100 for Sust. Fd.; Anon., £100 for Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund; Anon., £60; Interested Friend, Inverness £125 and £150 for Zimbabwe Famine Relief, last two per Rev. D.B.M.

Gairloch: Miss S., Wick £50; Friends, North Tolsta £20, £10; Friend, Lochcarron £10, all for Congr. Purposes, all per Rev. A. E. W. M.; Friends £50 for Comm. Exps.; Friend £100 for Door Coll.

Kames: Friend, Glasgow £50 for General Funds.

Laide: Friend, Cheshire £200; Friends, Edinburgh £30; Residents Isle View Nursing Home £6.15; Stornoway Postmark £5; Anon., £50; Cheshire £200; Anon., Sheffield £20; Coll. from Isle View Nursing Home £5.56; Anon., Lochcarron £30; Anon., Lochcarron £20; Anon., North Tolsta £10; J.M.M., Edinburgh £50; Anon., Inverness £50; Anon., £4; Isle View Nursing Home £5; J. MacK., London £200, all above for Eastern Europe Mission, all per Rev. D. A. Ross; Friends, Italy, £10; Friends, Gairloch, £100; Friends, Cove £50, all for Italian Mission, all per Rev. D. A. R.; Friend, Holland £10 for Tapes; Anon., Friend £55 for Sust. Fund; To do with as the Lord may guide you — for Church door coll. £10; Friend, Aultbea £40 for Church Funds; Friend, Gairloch £10 for Comm. Exps; Friend, Aultbea £20 for Church Funds all per Rev. D. A. R.; Anon., £10 in Church Plate for Sust. Fund; Friend, Inverness, £10 in Church Plate for Sust. Fund.

Lochbroom: P.A.S £10; D.M.C. £15; M.R.S. £7, all for Tape Fund, all per Rev. N.M.R.

North Harris: Friend, Stockinish £5; £10; £5, for Door Coll., per R.M.C.; M.M., Cluer £10 for Bus. Fd. by envelope in plate.

Portree: Friend £10, where most needed; Friend £10, both per F.M.; Friend £7 (envelope in plate); Mrs D. N. £20 per S.Y.M., last three for Church Door Coll.

Shieldaig: Anon., £10; Anon., £20 per D.A.R. both for Comm. Exps; Anon., £50; In grateful memory of a dear husband and father £100 for Sust. Fund.

Staffin: Three Friends, Portree £10, £5, £10 towards Comm. Exps per Rev. A.M.C.; Anon., £20 where most needed. A Friend £10 for Church Door Coll., (Portree Postmark).